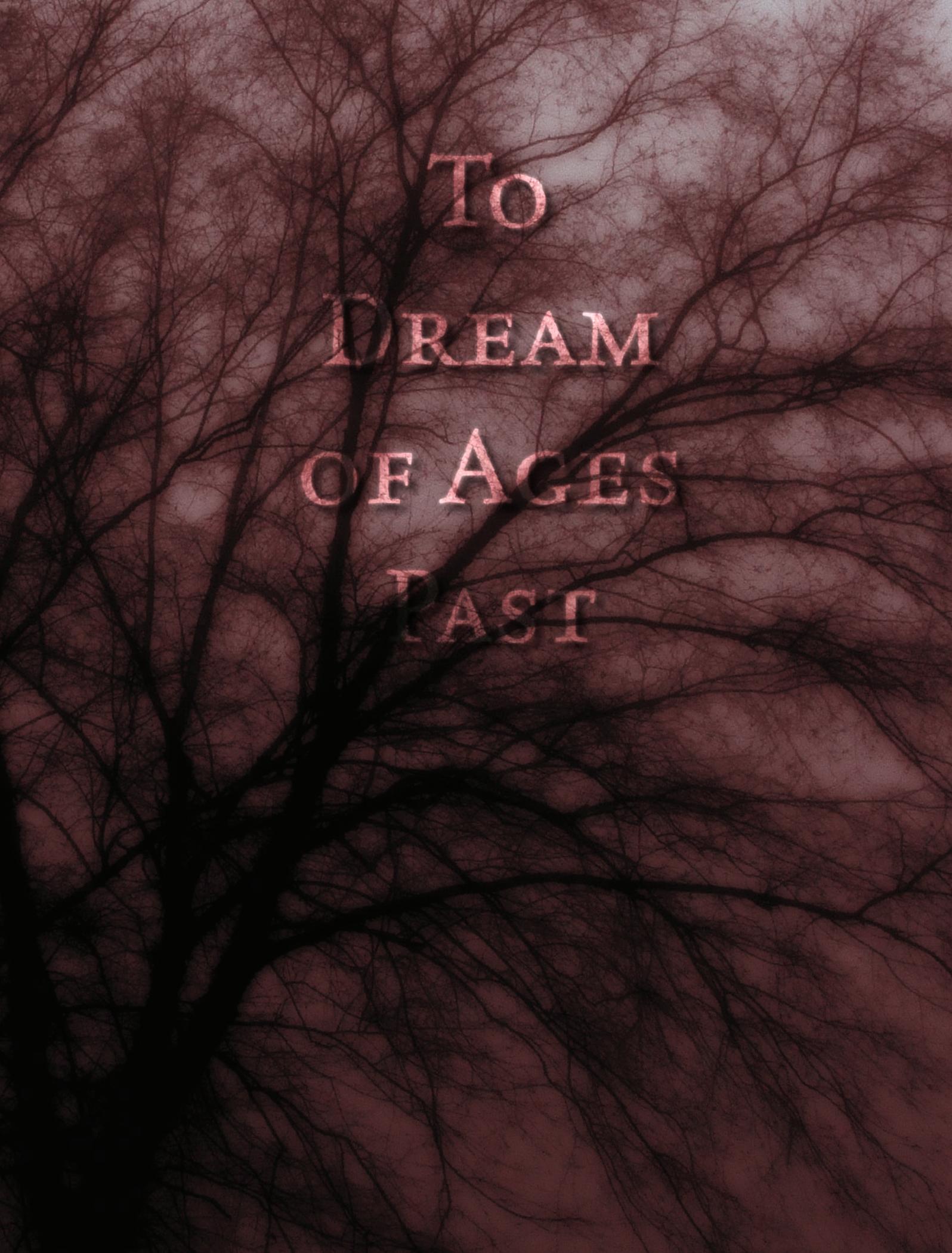


ANCIENT

*Bloodlines*



a sourcebook for  
**Vampire**  
THE REQUIEM



TO  
DREAM  
OF AGES  
PAST

All it took was a brief caress, the slightest touch of my hand against the ancient papyrus. The scroll seemed harmless, but I should have figured that nothing sitting inside a sleeping ancient's sarcophagus could possibly be. My world simply vanished before my eyes, replaced by another, foreign landscape filled with pyramids, desert sand and a woman.

Oh, the woman. I couldn't look away, even if I had wanted to. Her eyes consumed me. It felt as if I was being dragged into them. My body, mind and soul were all spiraling down into the deep, dark well of her pupils, her history, the gravity of her, pulling me into their depths. When she smiled, blood streaking down her full red lips, I decided that I no longer cared. I just let go, allowing myself, my self, to vanish into whatever waited for me, with only her eyes and her smile as a guide.

For what it was worth, I smiled back.

\* \* \*

At first, I couldn't see a thing. I had been swallowed whole and regurgitated into a bleak, desolate universe. Then, the brightness erupted and I felt the Beast inside me scream in agony, heard my own voice bellow in fear. The sun had begun to rise, illuminating obelisks, pyramids - monuments to hundreds of dead pharaohs, their families and riches - wind-driven sand dunes and a single, wide ribbon of muddy, brown water that was both life and death for the people of Egypt.

I cringed, wanting more than anything to run, to hide, to burrow beneath the dunes... but instead I stood, spellbound, transfixed by a sight I hadn't seen in over a century. I could feel the warmth of the Sun's rays strike me, but rather than become a blistering, smoldering corpse, I felt something akin to renewal. I was being reborn, free of the curse, and a lifetime of seething rage and bloodlust just melted away into unbridled joy. This could only be one thing: a second chance to live and to love!

Around me, throngs of dark-skinned men and women knelt and offered supplication to Ra as He climbed above the Earth's edge, once again victorious in His battle against the demons of the Underworld. I knew I should also kneel and give thanks, but I didn't want any part of my body to be hidden from this miracle before me. I stripped naked, spread my arms and felt salty tears, watery and clear, spring from my eyes and cascade down my cheeks.

I heard her step up behind me. "Is everything all right?" she asked. I knew her name, even as I pictured those emerald green eyes that I couldn't live without.

"Rabakti," I whispered, "I cannot recall a happier moment in all my life."

She, too, was naked. I felt her breasts push against my back and her arms wrap around my waist. She nestled her body against mine and, at that moment, I felt complete. Rabakti stood with me as I watched the sun rise and I cried like I had never been able to in life. If this wasn't Heaven, I told myself, then Heaven could not possibly exist.

"We have little time to prepare," she told me, sliding around my body to stand proudly by my side. She took my hand and we quietly watched what we knew was our last sunrise together. Because of that, I wanted to take Rabakti into my arms, make love to her day and night, never let go of her. Sadly, I knew with a terrible heart-wrenching certainty that it could never happen. We had both been chosen by the High Priest of Ra for initiation into His covenant of mystical warriors. In His service was sacrifice. There could be no time for love, no time for children, no time at all.

I wasn't sure what the initiation would entail and felt dread at the thought of what was to come, yet I refused to show my fear, especially to Rabakti.

She knew my mind. "Are you well?" she asked.

I tore my gaze away from Ra's magnificence and looked into her eyes, those incredible eyes, and they sparkled at me. For a brief moment, I could see Rabakti as a Queen, loved and honored by all, and a spark of jealousy filled my heart. She could be the consort of the High Priest himself! Why would she want me by her side?

My jealousy quickly fled, replaced by both great longing and great fear. Rabakti was aware of my feelings. She grasped my chin in one perfect hand and pulled me to her. I tasted her mouth, her tongue,

and the world existed only there at that moment. When she bit at the flesh of my lip, ripping it open with sharpened teeth, I let her, basking for a moment in the pleasurable pain of her bite.

When she finally pulled away, some of my blood lingered on her lips. She licked it clean and slid her arms across my back, holding me so close I could hear her whispery breath. "The ritual must happen tonight."

Whatever she wanted was hers for the asking. The simple feel of her breath on my skin made my living, beating heart flutter madly within my chest. I lived for her, I would happily die for her, and with both Ra and my beloved Rabakti at my side, guiding me to my future, I hardly seemed to mind the finality of those thoughts.

\* \* \*

All it took was an eyeblink to break the vision of vast desert sands, Ra gazing down upon His people, warming them. Sadness overwhelmed me for a moment and I realized that I had gasped.

The woman, Rabakti, was lying mummified before me, sleeping soundly in her gold-encrusted sarcophagus. All my previous thoughts (memories?) were fading rapidly, including the taste of my own, mortal blood and the desperate sense of longing for what was to become of us.

I could sense my brothers and sisters standing beside me, all of us staring at the desiccated form in the ornate coffin. What could I tell them? What should I tell them? The ritual had to be completed tonight. Ra demanded it. Rabakti expected it. The High Priest, however, could not enact it. He had long since become dust. Something had to be done. The ritual had to happen tonight. Rabakti commanded it. So it must be.

"I have an idea," I said, knowing what I needed to do, but unsure, exactly, how to get the cooperation I required to ensure my success. So, I opened my arms and offered a smile I hoped appeared genuine and unthreatening. "I need your help, though, and I need you to trust me."

I almost expected them to laugh at me. After all, to ask our kind to give trust to one another is patently absurd. My brothers and sisters surprised me, however. They no doubt sensed the power of the magnificent sleeper lying before us and they turned to me for the answers they sought. They all had quizzical looks in their eyes, but there was more. Certainly some skepticism, but mixed with something else, something more powerful than confusion or mistrust.

I knew then that I had them all. Curiosity had taken hold. A Kindred's lust for power had blinded them as surely as if they had stared into the very essence of Ra's glory. They had taken the bait. Now, all I had to do was reel them in.

I once again touched the small scroll rolled up next to the sleeping corpse, the one that had transported me to another time and place just moments ago. This time, I picked it up and unrolled it, displaying several lines of Demotic text and a series of hieroglyphs.

"What is that?" Jenni asked. I glanced at her. Jenni was a Nosferatu neonate, barely five years turned, and she had an unpleasant tendency to ask too many questions. She wasn't, I knew, long for this world, but I decided to answer her anyway.

"This," I whispered reverently, "is the key to a power greater than any of us have ever known."

"How do you know that? Looks like a bunch of scribbles and nonsense to me," another of my companions, Vladimir, said. He was Ventrue.

"That's why you're a gravedigger and I'm an historian," I snapped. I saw Vlad squint, the insult hitting home. He shivered and scuttled to the other side of the sarcophagus, attempting to reign in his Beast, no doubt.

"Sorry," I muttered, not wanting to lose him, yet not wanting him to know I needed him. He grunted, but didn't turn away. I took it as a victory.

"What do you need us to do?" the Gangrel in our party asked. She called herself Patina and I liked her. I would miss her more than any of the others.

In the top left corner of the sarcophagus, near the tip of the ornate headdress worn by the torpid vampire, was a cup made of gold and inlaid by a row of scarabs. I grabbed it and lifted it up toward the low ceiling. "I need an offering. That's why I think the five of us were summoned here."

Clarita, the Daeva in our ensemble, licked her lips. I had the disturbing notion that she, too, knew what was about to happen, but then realized that she might just want me to feel that way. I mentally cursed the Succubi, and allowed myself to imagine what my fangs would do to her flesh. "Why are we here?" she finally asked.

I looked at my four companions one at a time. A Ventrue, a Gangrel, a Nosferatu, a Daeva and, myself, a Mekhet. We had all been compelled to seek this place out. Now, because of what had been shown me when I had touched the scroll, I knew why.

"To awaken a god," I whispered.

I raised my right wrist to my mouth and tore into it, forcing the black, coagulated blood to ooze out of my dead veins and spill into the golden chalice.

I then went to each of my brothers and sisters, in turn, allowing them to open gaping wounds in their flesh, waiting as they, too, forced the Vitae out from rotted arteries and veins into the offering cup. When all five of us had made our donations, I once again lifted the chalice toward the ceiling.

"The blood which once belonged to each of us, which once belonged to the living, is now returned to the One, who has waited for this night and her triumphant return to the glory of Ra and all He surveys. I offer this to you in His name."

"What the hell are you talking about?" Vlad asked, alarm in his voice.

I ignored him. He was inconsequential. He was an unbeliever. He had not gazed into her eyes. He had not given himself to her those many centuries ago. He had no idea what was about to happen.

I tipped the cup and watched as our collective blood slowly made its way to the edge and fell over the side. The first drops hit her ancient lips and her jaw immediately snapped open to receive the rest. I lifted the bottom of the cup higher and a steady stream of blood poured into her gaping maw. A hissing sound, like hot steam escaping from broken pipes, escaped her withered throat and filled me with a terrible excitement.

My brothers and sisters surrounded us and watched in fascination as her blackened, dehydrated skin began to lighten, to stretch and become smooth. Her tongue lapped at the offering and her throat convulsed as it swallowed each drop, consumed it even as her eyes had consumed my own soul minutes, centuries, earlier. Ebony hair, which had calcified to her skull, became filled with shine and luster. Lungs, long since rotted and decayed, filled with oxygen sucked in with the blood. I knew she had no need for breath, but I also knew that, after three thousand years of sleep, nothing could be a more potent reminder of life than taking in air. She gasped and, Ra bless me, she opened her eyes. They sought me out, found me and we both smiled.

"Rabakti, it's me, your beloved," I whispered. I knew the others would think me mad. They were about to learn otherwise.

When she spoke, her voice was a smooth, deep, rich melody that dissolved my fears and filled me with a lust I hadn't felt since 1903, the last time I had made love to my wife, the last time I had seen the Sun set. Her voice was a gentle command I felt I had no choice but to obey. That I wanted to obey. "More," she said to me.

I leaned forward, offering myself to her and I felt her hands grasp my head, turn it to the side, and pull me closer to her waiting mouth. Closer.

Closer.

\* \* \*

I awoke some time later. The torches that had lit the tomb sputtered to stay aflame. I heard only the soft shuffling of feet until I opened my eyes and suddenly, instinctively, pushed myself back up against the wall.

Jenni and Clarita lay on the floor, hands grasping each other's shredded throats. They were already rapidly decomposing in one another's arms.

Patina stood spread eagle against the far wall, staked to it. Rabakti was suckling her neck, ensuring that she took in every possible drop of her blood.

When she heard me rustle on the ground at the foot of her sarcophagus, she turned to face me. I sat, frozen, unable to move, unsure why I would even want to.

Her lips were full and red, her eyes brilliant and dazzling, her skin pale and well-nourished. She was Rabakti and she looked as she had three thousand years ago. She was a radiant presence, calling to me without a word, requesting that I join her at her side. She was my beloved. How could I refuse her?

I stood, legs trembling, and managed to keep from stumbling as I made my way to her open arms. She greeted me. "Beloved," she whispered. The single word pooled within my ears and threatened to send me into orgasmic bliss. I leaned back and gazed into the dizzying eddies of her green eyes.

"I came for you, as you knew I would," I said.

She merely nodded, the smile never faltering, her eyes never leaving mine. "You understand who you are now, yes?" she asked me.

It was my turn to nod in response. "Of course, Rabakti. I am yours to command."

She took my chin in her hand and pulled my mouth to hers. She kissed me gently.

"What of the others? Where are my children?"

"Most are still at war with the Underworld, I believe, or hiding in fear of destruction by the enemy."

"The conquerors still exist?"

She had continued to hold my chin in her hand and was now applying pressure to it. I struggled not to flinch and focused on her eyes, recalling the feeling of serenity within them. Instead, I saw swirling clouds of uncertainty and rage.

I recoiled and instantly felt my mistake, as the bones of my jaw suddenly shattered. I tried to pull away as her other hand slammed into my chest. I felt my sternum snap and at least four ribs break as my body became airborne and flew across the tomb. My cries of terror ended as a rock jutting out from the far wall slammed against my upper spine, just below my skull. I heard a sharp crack and fell limply to the ground below. What blood I had left was already beginning to knit the worst of my injuries even as my beloved Rabakti returned to the side of her coffin.

She reached in, grabbing the scroll I had inadvertently touched. "My diary reminds me of who I was," she whispered. It had sat next to her for thirty centuries. Now, she looked at it and spoke to the papyrus as if it were her only child. "But who am I in this new age of unreason? What is this Ra-forsaken place I have awakened in and why now, after so long spent in the Underworld?"

She stood motionless, as if waiting for a response. I dared to speak to her, praying for answers of my own.

"How did you defeat the others?"

She twisted her head back and gazed at me with what I took to be pity. "You are not the only one who once had brothers and sisters. I count among my closest allies the Kindred of Osiris, who have ways of placating the brother of sleep. My diary was but one example of their abilities. There are many others, to which I owe them a great deal."

"Forgive me, but you didn't answer my question," I said, striving to keep any petulance from my voice, fearing her wrath would end my existence as quickly as it had the others.

"There are some secrets you are not ready for, little supplicant. Suffice it to say that I told them all what they most desperately wanted to hear and allowed their own fears and insecurities to take care of everything else. One of them, the Ventrue dog, I took for myself. His knowledge is now my own. His blood and soul belong to me. I can still hear his voice inside my mind, sniveling and whining."

"And what of me?" I asked timidly. "Will I be with you, or will I join my brothers and sisters in Final Death?"

She cocked her head, as if hearing a voice from within, and began to giggle like a school child. Her mouth twisted ever-so-slightly into a mild grin and she turned her perfect body to face me. Without warning, her smile faded, like a light switch dimming to utter darkness. For a brief moment, it looked as if her eyes had darkened as well, becoming a rich brown, but the moment quickly vanished, and with it, any evidence of humanity inside her. She stared at me with her emerald eyes, suddenly icy, and a great fear enveloped me. I stood on trembling legs. I almost ran.

She laid her hands on my shoulders and pinned me in place. "We have a mission to accomplish, you and I," she said, her tone cold and matter-of-fact. She turned away then, as if looking at someone else standing beside her, and cocked her head to the side. "Yes, we certainly do. I see it now, as clear as the Egyptian sky. Will you join me?" she asked, still looking away, perhaps at a shadow on the far wall.

"My place is at your side," I said. "I am, and always have been, your loving servant, Rabakti."

"Indeed," she responded, turning back to face me.

Her eyes once again connected with mine. I began swimming in her world, in her glory. I would do anything for her and she knew it.

"We must find the others," she said.

"Others?"

"The Usiri. The Anubi. The followers of Isis, Horus, Thoth and Bast. Together, we will arise and reform the Great Covenant. We shall take back what was stolen by the invaders. We shall once again rule over Kindred and kine and remove the craven Ventrue from their perch."

"How will we accomplish this mission?"

"We shall do as the Bak-Ra have always done. We shall take what we need from those unwilling to provide and gratefully accept that which is freely given. We shall bring others into our faith and we shall find our allies once again."

She took a step closer to me and it was all I could do to keep from tearing a gash in my neck and giving myself to her completely.

"Are you with me?" she asked, staring deeply into my soul.

"With all that I am. I have seen Ra's magnificence through your eyes, my beloved. There can be no turning back from that, or from you."

She kissed me deeply, her cold lips and mine locked together in an unholy embrace. When she pulled back from me, I could see the madness swirling in her eyes and I chose to ignore it. Such madness must be placated rather than angered.

"You are truly a chosen of Ra," she whispered, caressing my still-mending chin with one hand and stroking my hair with the other. "Together, we shall relearn His gifts, so that we may bring more servants into the fold. You, my beloved, shall be my King and I, your Queen."

"Ra's will be done," I replied, the memory of my brief glimpse of the sun holding sway over my emotions.

"In this place, in this time, it is my will that shall be followed, beloved, and mine alone."

"As you say, Rabakti. To your glory and the glory of Ra, ruler of all He surveys!" I shouted proudly.

Rabakti smiled at me. Her eyes gleamed, as if the light of Ra burned within them. I allowed those eyes to once again draw me in, to take me places I had never seen, to propel me back to a time I had never lived and, for a brief moment, I allowed myself to dream of ages past, of a time when the Sun was not our enemy, but our eternal salvation.



ANCIENT

*Bloodlines*

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# NIGHT HORRORS Wicked Dead



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# ANCIENT *Bloodlines*

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# INTRODUCTION

One by one, they were all becoming shades. Better pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion, than fade and wither dismally with age.

— James Joyce, “The Dead”

History leaves its mark. More than that, it leaves a scar, indelible and swollen on the skin of our memory. It’s a place where hair will never grow, a swath of land where the earth is salted and life fails to take root, a wall marked with garish graffiti from people who have long been dead.

We all have them in our own lives. Some moments are big: the time Kennedy or Lennon died, the day men landed on the moon or the Challenger shuttle exploded, the morning when two planes struck the towers. Some moments are smaller and more personal: a wedding night, a parent’s death, a car crash, a sexual indiscretion. Such events are carved into the mind, revisited as nightmare or through unsummoned remembrances. Even as we age, as our minds fail, those moments may continue to rise up through — a mountain peak pushing through an inscrutable fog.

That’s us. That’s humans. All things considered, we have short lives — 30, 50, 80 years, and then we’re done. One day, we all dance off this mortal coil, and with us go our memories.

Vampires do not operate under such impermanence. In fact, barring outside interference, he continues on with his wretched existence for hundreds of years, if not millennia. The vampire does not grow old. It is an apex predator, subject largely to the hungers of its own kind. Some might say that time is kind to the Kindred, whereas others among the Damned are quite certain that time is a never-ending parade of curses, failings and terrors. Immortality is only a positive thing if one believes that existence is beautiful — or, if one fears the finality of death more than the eternal nights of torment and shame.

Of course, while vampires do not age physically (nor, some would say, do they age emotionally), they *do* age mentally. The mind can only hold so much. Like a glass, it eventually fills to the brim and spills over the side. And so, as the Damned age, they experience another element to their Requiems that can be both curse and blessing: the Fog of Eternity. Details muddle. Events blur or are lost, submerged beneath newer, fresher memories. Faces and names fade or grow tangled. Entire years might be erased from all recollection.

And yet, history still leaves its mark. Out of so much that is lost, some events never go away. A vampire may forget the decade that precedes it, but he remembers the night his coterie betrayed him and left him for dead in the deep dark of a Cypriot copper mine. Another has lost his many names, but will never forget the moniker of his superior in the Legion of the Dead when the Camarilla was yet ascendant back in Ancient Rome. A third vampire has fallen to torpor too many times, and her recollections have suffered moth-eaten holes now filled with the detritus of nightmares, but even still some memories persevere... and now she goes out in search of those who had a hand in her glories and her failures.

For humans, history’s mark is remembered in books or carried from generation to generation in stories told around campfires and livingrooms. Vampires don’t just remember the big events, however, they carry their recollections with them, acting as living markers of what has come before. History leaves scars, indeed, but amongst the nocturnal society of the Damned, the vampires *are* those scars. For the Kindred, history is not passive. It’s dynamic. It walks and talks, a mad waltz within the Danse Macabre.

## *History’s Laughing Ghosts*

That is what this book is about: events have transpired throughout vampire society, and those events left many deep scratches and enduring stains. Moreover, they have spawned what might be considered the “children” of history, vampires who are so connected to these historical flashpoints that it changes them, it transforms the Blood in such a way that these Kindred become the unliving carriers of what has transpired. History’s children leave their own marks on the world, acting as the manifestations of an often-bloody ripple effect.

What you’ll find in this book is 20 different bloodlines spawned from key points throughout Kindred history. In addition, you’ll also find other elements bound to these events and to these bloodlines: mysterious places, strange Disciplines, immortal enemies and blood-stained artifacts.

The themes of this book are *discovering the past* and that *history is all-too-relevant*. With the Damned, the past

is not something to be taken lightly. Even a small thing can have a major impact one hundred years hence. Discovering that, mining through the mysteries and details, is key to this book. A character may look deep into the living (and unliving) histories of the Kindred and find that long-gone events may have deep repercussions for her that she may not have considered. Was her sire involved? Was *she* involved? The ghosts of the past are not easily silenced, as evidenced by the bloodlines and artifacts contained within.

## *The Blood Carries History: Using Flashbacks*

So, we've established a core truth: history matters to the Damned. It has to. Ignoring it doesn't help because the past isn't just the past — what happened 200 years ago may still be going on tonight, a terrible event or pogrom carried out by a bloodline spawned from the initial horror. History is dynamic. It has a face. It's a returning specter.

That means you as Storyteller or player should be prepared to use the past in your game, right? Since history helps make a vampire what she is (whether it happened during her Requiem or her sire's Requiem or her grand-sire's Requiem...), it's critical that you know how to bring history to bear upon the current story. How do you make it come alive without just establishing precedent and going on from there? How can you take the past and, as a troupe, bring it to the table in a *show, don't tell* manner?

By using flashbacks, that's how. Now, admittedly, one option is simply to create characters from a certain time period and then run them through an initial story set in that historical setting. Then, the Storyteller doles out experience points and you spend those points to help bring your characters up and into the present.

That's not a flashback, though. That's a prelude or a prologue or simply "Chapter One" to your coterie's story.

A flashback is something that happens *within* the story itself. The narrative progresses to a point, and at that point a flashback is used. But to what purpose? Well, you might choose to use a flashback in game for one or several of the following reasons:

- For thematic, motif- or mood-based resonance. In a game about treacheries and betrayals, you might choose to flashback to a time the characters were betrayed or did some betraying of their own. Alternately, you might go the opposite direction and choose an event when someone stayed loyal — using an opposite "foil" in such a manner can provide contrast and highlight the point you're hoping to drive home.

- To provide some further detail. The coterie is battling an old nemesis, and in the midst of the combat, you choose to move to flashback. Why? So the group can recall an earlier meeting or battle with the same enemy. When the narrative returns to the present, the characters can call-back moments from that flashback, or even help to conceive of their opponent's strengths and weaknesses. In this manner, you're providing context from past to present.
- To answer questions. The characters confront something in-game that, up until now, they haven't encountered before. The players don't know what they're seeing when the coterie finds an ashen vampire body painted across a warehouse floor to form some kind of forbidden sigil. A flashback here shows that the characters *have* seen this symbol before, and the flashback might comprise an entire game session story on what happened "back then" to lead to the symbol's discovery and explication. This isn't about little details, but about bringing whole new plot elements from history for use in the modern story.
- For dramatic irony. Vampires lose memories to the fog, and going to flashback highlights what's known as "dramatic irony," which is when the audience (in this case, the players) comes to realize something that the characters themselves do not know. Just as the coterie's about to accept a Vinculum to a seemingly beneficent elder, the Storyteller moves to flashback, showcasing a scene where that elder clearly backstabbed one or all of the characters. Flashing forward again, the players may be allowed a roll to see how much of that they remember (or maybe, no roll allowed). Those who don't remember go ahead and commit to the Vinculum — the players know it's a bad idea, but the characters don't. Dramatic irony in a nutshell.

### *Two Flavors of Flashback*

For purposes of this introduction essay, we're going to frame out two types of flashbacks you might use during your **Vampire: The Requiem** story. These are certainly not the only ways to handle flashbacks, but this dichotomy should give you an idea as to how to use them and, more importantly, *what they mean* in the context of the narrative.

Note that it's important Storytellers and players be on the same page as to what style of flashback is being used in the game.

#### *Reflective*

The "reflective" flashback assumes that what happens while playing the flashback does not greatly impact the

present. The flashback is meant to be largely informational, used to provide context to events in the present day.

For example: in the present, the vampires meet the aforementioned nemesis on a rooftop, and they're about to do battle – swords and knives are drawn, the rain is pouring down. The session ends, and the Storyteller and players decide that the next session will begin in flashback. In particular, the narrative remembers when the characters were still alive and were meeting their nemesis when he was living, too. The flashback takes place on a sunny day – a contrast to the rainy rooftop scenario from last chapter – and has the characters as loose allies with the individual they will later be battling (another contrast).

Because this is a reflective flashback (meaning it reflects the present events and is a “reflective” look back), the characters know they can't change the course of history dramatically. They cannot, as humans, suddenly act on secret information and assassinate their enemy early on. We know the adversary survives and becomes Kindred, as will the characters – the flashback isn't going to change any of that.

Certainly the flashback can have some repercussions in the present: when the game switches back to the rain-slick rooftop, the nemesis might call to attention words spoken or actions taken during the flashback (“Do you still think me a – what was it you called me? A ‘coward’s cur?’”) But the characters can't have killed him, or given him a scar that wasn't there before, or anything like that. They can change things that haven't been pre-established, but not dramatically so.

One way to ensure this is to eschew dice-rolling during the flashback encounter and simply rule on what is allowed to occur... though dice can still help to provide flavor to some encounters.

It's still important, of course, for the characters to be able to succeed or fail in the scene. What are the stakes? What *can* the players change? Social and mental challenges should abound. They might be able to humiliate the enemy (giving them a success, but also giving the nemesis further reason to become a thorn in their sides).

### *Adaptive*

An adaptive flashback assumes that players help to set the course of the present through their actions in the flashback. They're free to act as they wish during the flashback (though players should always take care to separate out what facts the characters know between past and present), and can have dramatic impact on the present tale.

It's important that the Storyteller know how to frame events so as not to get caught up in a situation where he has to drastically rewrite the tale. The flashback isn't

time travel, the characters aren't going back in time to kill Hitler and change the course of the world, but the players should feel free to act *within* context.

So, using the above example of the nemesis, it'd probably be important to have the human flashback first. The characters establish whatever happens during that scene – they betray the nemesis, he betrays them, they kill him, they scar him, whatever – and *then* the Storyteller pushes the story to the present where the consequences of that flashback are seen in full-effect. If the nemesis is dead, perhaps they're atop the rain-slicked rooftop with his brother. If they cut a mean scar across his face, it's still there. And now, maybe he's continued carving his face over and over into a roadmap of pain that's meant to frighten them.

In adaptive flashback, the events of the past are meant to really be as important as the events of the present. They're not just reflective. They don't simply provide small details. They set major events into play, and the players are helping to orchestrate a tale at both ends of the narrative.

This mode has its pitfalls, and everybody needs to be comfortable with them. If the players do something that contradicts present precedent, the Storyteller has to be prepared to rewrite history a bit. It's important not to “railroad” players (something that happens more in a reflective flashback by necessity). *But*, the players also have to be prepared to accept the consequences of their actions. If killing the nemesis creates negative conditions, so be it. They also have to be willing to commit to a little suspension of disbelief when it comes to rewriting the narrative a bit.

Nothing wrong with rewriting the narrative, of course. It simply assumes a more organic, consequential flow. It may feel jarring, but given the context of **Vampire: The Requiem**, you have a great excuse to make it work: by explaining that the story is actually one told in the *memories* of the coterie characters, you have an easy justification in having the story switch around... because a vampire's memory is terribly fallible. Memories adapt and rewrite themselves within the Kindred brain, and so when the narrative does that very thing, it makes sense in the framework of the game.

### *Challenges*

Using any kind of flashback presents some unique challenges. Below, we help identify these possible potholes and give some solutions on avoiding them (or, at least, lessening the impact of driving over them).

#### *Avoiding Railroad*

We covered it already, but it bears repeating: with a reflective flashback, the players should already understand that

railroading must occur to some small degree. They may try to kill that nemesis, but shouldn't be at all surprised when he escapes death.

Alternately, railroading should be wholly avoided during an adaptive flashback, and everybody should be comfortable with the fact that the answer to "Can my character do [X action]?" is generally yes (obviously, some limitations exist – if the characters try to kill one another, that defeats the story's progress into the present). The narrative may shift and change, but that's okay as long as everyone's happy with the freedom it allows.

### RAILROADING: THE DEFINITION

We've all been railroaded — pushed into a certain social situation, made to commit to a bad or unwanted deal, or forced at a job onto an unplanned task.

It can happen in games, too. The Storyteller sets up his story and refuses to swerve from it. The story evolves in a linear progression, and events exist outside the characters' ability to change (and, by proxy, this means the players can't really do squat).

In a more literal sense, it's like being on a tram car. You can't get off the ride. You just have to buckle up and watch the Storyteller's scenery pass by, unaffected.

It's a fine way to read a book or watch a movie. But gaming is interactive fiction, and we game to affect outcome, to tell *our* stories and to be surprised by possibility. Railroading defeats that. Railroading defeats the *fun*.

### Triggering Flashbacks

Deciding how and when to trigger flashbacks is something the Storyteller must best decide. Intuition must serve as a guideline. Sometimes, it's a terrible idea to interrupt a really strong flow of events to cram in a flashback — and yet, other times you can keep the players breathless with suspense if you pause the action just as something dramatic is about to occur.

One option is to include the players on whether or not to dive into a flashback. If the majority of players thinks it's a good time to glance backward, so be it. They should even be encouraged to suggest when a flashback might be appropriate: "I've finally reclaimed my sire's diaries, so it seems a good time to flip through and revisit one or two old memories."

Another question is *how* to transition. Generally, it's as easy as saying that it's time for a flashback and starting in with the scene. But, look at a TV show like *Lost*, which uses dramatic moments and narrative trickery to present

its flashbacks. Does some telltale sign of flashback reveal itself before they occur (the Storyteller points out the color red, for instance), or can the Storyteller succeed in tricking the players (making the players think that it's the present when, really, it's a flashback)?

### Variance in Skill

If you're involving some measure of dice-rolling in the flashbacks (which you should be, especially in adaptive flashbacks), you have to address the deviation between the character's stats in the present and the past. But how?

If you have enough time to prepare, and know that you're going to spend a significant portion of the story in flashback around a certain time, have the players create "lesser" versions of their characters for that portion of the game. Or, if you know your plans from the very beginning of the story, have them create the "flashback" characters *first*, then have them spend experience points to get those characters up to speed in the present.

Alternately, if you're doing an unexpected flashback, you've got to find a good measure of how to reduce the character's stats appropriately. A few options include:

- Take a representative portion (an approximate percentage) of their dots away. If the characters are 200 years old and you're going 100 years back, then remove half of their dots — not from individual traits, but on the whole. Certainly some Skills might remain high (if the character was always spectacular at building complex machines, his Crafts score might have been at four dots then, and still be four dots now).
- Discuss with the players when a situation comes up. If a player must roll Manipulation + Subterfuge, discuss with the player a suitable penalty to the roll. It might be -1 if little has changed, or -5 if the character has significantly shifted his Social "approach" over the decades.
- Revert to pre-game stats. Basically, just don't count any dots the player might've bought with experience points. Everything else can be assumed "status quo" before the story began.
- Do nothing at all. It may not make total sense, but particularly with reflective flashbacks, it may not need to. As long as good story development comes out of it, why waste the time on the work if what you're predominantly doing is establishing detail and context, not new plot points and events?

### Separation of Knowledge

It becomes pretty tough bouncing back and forth from flashback to present while keeping in mind exactly what the character knew *then* versus what the character knows *now*.

## Experience Points

For the most part, though, the problem is easy to combat. Everybody in the troupe should be encouraged to watch everybody else's back, not to be "narrative police," but simply to be willing to call out, "Hey, don't forget — we didn't know about [X piece of information] back in 1932." The Storyteller becomes the final arbiter of what slides and what doesn't.

If something does slip through, it can be easily explained. Again, in the context of the game, it's simple enough to suggest that the narrative itself is really just the memories of the vampire characters and sometimes memories are mistaken, especially considering the Fog of Eternity.

Alternately, consider that the Blood is a supernatural medium. One might say that it holds the memories of all the vampires who came before it, and some have further suggested that history is cyclical, a crass repetition of events. If such an error occurs, you can explain it that way, maybe even having the player spend a point of the character's Vitae to "confirm" that such time-transcendent knowledge comes out expressed through the Blood itself. It's a bit esoteric, but then again, so are vampires.

## Including Everybody

In a perfect world, every flashback would involve every character. That way, everybody gets to have a little fun. Unfortunately, it's just not always realistic, the same way that every scene in general doesn't necessarily include every player. So what can you do about it?

- Nothing. If the scene is entertaining, everybody wins. The other players watch and enjoy, or they maybe flip through the **Requiem** book, looking for some cool ideas on how to spend experience points.
- Don't use a flashback unless it contains each of the players' characters.
- Schedule flashbacks as whole game sessions. That way, those who aren't involved don't need to show up to the game table that day unless they want to. Or, by saying, "The first two hours of the chapter will be devoted to the 1849 flashback," those who aren't involved know to show up two hours later.
- Have players whose characters aren't in the flashback assume control of other "Storyteller characters." One's a bartender, one's the Prince's Seneschal, the third plays a mad ghoul, whatever. However, if a player is going to assume a significant role, especially one that is tied to another player's character (say, playing that character's sire), it's best to discuss it with everybody first.

It may seem strange to award experience points for something that's already happened, but it's only happened in the story, not at the gaming table. A game session is a game session. Lessons learned are lessons learned. We recommend that you give out experience points the same way as usual, with little to no variance.

## DIFFERENT MASKS

Who says that the flashbacks absolutely, unequivocally must include the player's current characters? No one.

Just because those characters weren't present doesn't mean a flashback can't happen. The flashback may involve other characters who are connected to the story, or those involved can even be brought organically into the present (because, ultimately, that's the goal).

Consider: the coterie's knocked a potent elder into torpor with a mean slam from a sharpened chair-leg. They've got him buckled down in a boiler room somewhere when they remove the stake from his chest.

Now they can interrogate him, and the elder tells them a story about when *he* was "a little fish in a big pond," just like them. The story's about him and his coterie, but it'll help answer some of their questions.

Except... it'll be kind of boring to just have the Storyteller stand around and recite the story. Even if it's really evocative and interesting, you might have a better avenue: *flashback*.

Let the players take control of pre-made characters, or even characters they conceive of themselves. Put them into a flashback featuring these other characters, and it "becomes" the story that the elder tells to their present vampires. It all fits together, like a crazy, blood-soaked puzzle.

## What's In This Book

In **Ancient Bloodlines**, you'll find 20 new bloodlines. They correspond to 10 flash points in Kindred history — eras or events that had a lasting effect on the world of the undead that exists tonight. These flash points are discussed in detail in **Ancient Mysteries**, but you don't need that book to understand and use this one.

In addition, the sections in this book include "something else." It might be an antagonist like the Edimmu or the Yanussaren, it might a mysterious place like the Land of the Worms, or even a coterie of vampires. These "extras" are meant to add some interesting depth to **Vampire: The Requiem**, and highlight the possibilities (besides bloodlines) that can come from flash points in history.

## *The Sections*

**Bloodlines of the Great War:** This section includes the frigid, tunneling *Caporetti*, the poison-addicted *Jones* and the *Narodnaia Volia*, a shadow cult of vampire-hunters.

**Bloodlines of the Montrose Party:** The tragedy of the Montrose Party gave birth to the *Shepherds* bloodline, and introduced American Kindred to the *Sta-Au* when they blundered into the *Land of the Worms*.

**Bloodlines of the Age of Treachery:** The Kindred of India arrange their society along a caste system, which includes the *Amara Havana* and the *Canda Banu*. In examining their history we also see three of the most important Kindred to the *Southern Cities Alliance* tonight.

**Bloodlines of the Haitian Revolution:** In modern New Orleans, one might run afoul of one of the *Apollinaire* bloodline fulfilling his vow to the *loa* Ghede. One might also discover one of the highly principled bloodline called *Les Gens Libres*, fighting oppression in all forms. Either vampire might practice *Kindred Vodoun*.

**Bloodlines of the Lost Generation:** The Thirty Years War produced the *Geheim* line of blood alchemists, as well as the *Septemi*, a line of vampires devoted to shattering the Holy Lance. But it also introduced the world to legends of the *Yanussaren*, the *Wild Hunt*.

**Bloodlines of the Grémio de Corajoso:** Long-distance communication helped form the telepathic *Corajoso* bloodline. Long-distance travel introduced European Kindred to the *Adroanzi* and their remarkable skill in gardening. The legacy of the *Grémio* comes to the fore with *Boiling Over*, a discussion of a coterie one revealed secret away from self-destruction.

**Bloodlines of the First Kingdom of Thailand:** When the demon-king of Thailand's Kindred abandoned his wicked ways for meditation, the graceful but vicious *Kinnaree* bloodline kept true to their nature as monsters. The bloodline that the demon-king formed, however, the *Mayarap*, proceeds on to Nibbana unconcerned. The Kindred organization of the *Sakadagami* is the result.

**Bloodlines of the Crusades:** The *Camarilla* fell, and the *Lancea Sanctum* and the *Invictus* were the covenants that survived, but there were others for a time. Two bloodlines from the era – the *Mystikoi* and the *Order of Sir Martin* – remain to this night, as does the vampire-slaying *Ahl al-Jabal*.

**Bloodlines of the Black Streets of Babylon:** The nights of Babylon and the twelve-millennium reign of En Isiratuu might sound like myths to the ears of modern Kindred, but the *En* bloodline is still around, consuming the souls of their lessers (read: everyone) with abandon. The *Iltani* bloodline nurses its hatred carefully, poisoning the objects

of that hate just as Nanshe Iltani poisoned En Isiratuu so many years ago. Of course, the result of that ancient treachery, the *Edimmu*, still hunt Kindred to this night.

**Bloodlines of Ancient Egypt:** Finally, in the murky past of Egypt, we find the genesis of the sun-worshipping *Bak-Ra* and the memory-stealing *Usiri*. Both have lost their true history to time and the Fog of Eternity, and both have no choice but to cling to legend as though it were fact. The *Initiations of Dream and Flame* is a Requiem diary that holds the secret of blood magic – as well as the curse of an ancient Egyptian vampire.

## *Other Helpful Information*

### *Poisons*

Several of the bloodlines in this book make use of poison as part of a signature Discipline or a form of blood magic. The rules for poisons and toxins are found on p. 180 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, but since the first printing of the book, they have changed somewhat, as per the official errata document available at: [http://download.white-wolf.com/download/download.php?file\\_id=346](http://download.white-wolf.com/download/download.php?file_id=346).

The revised poison rules are as follows:

*Like resisting disease, resisting the effects of poisons and toxins is not a contested action.*

*Typically, only a single success is required on the Stamina + Resolve roll, and this roll is modified by the toxicity of the poison in question.*

*In some cases, resisting the effects of a drug might be an extended action, such as drug or alcohol abuse. In cases like these, the Storyteller still sets the benchmark for how many successes are necessary, and the subject's pool might still be penalized by the poison's toxicity.*

### *Spirits*

Some of the sections in **Ancient Bloodlines** also refer to spirits. The rules for ghosts appear on pp. 208-216 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, but spirits, though their game mechanics are similar, are different creatures. What follows is an extremely brief primer on spirits; players and Storytellers interested in perusing the full rules for these beings should consult **World of Darkness: Book of Spirits**.

Unlike ghosts, spirits were never human. They don't come from the world as we understand it, but arise from a bizarre, animistic mirror of our world, sometimes called the Shadow. While it is possible for human beings (and even vampires) to enter the Shadow, doing so is difficult, and fortunately so – the Shadow has its own ecology, and intruders are generally on the *bottom* of the food chain. It happens sometimes,

## Spirit Traits

however, that spirits from the Shadow slip across barriers into our world, sometimes to watch, sometimes to feed and sometimes to possess the inhabitants.

Spirits in a position to interact with vampires have found a way to enter Twilight. That is, they leave the Shadow and enter the physical realm, but are invisible to mortals (and most other creatures). They exist in the same state as ghosts. Entering Twilight from the Shadow requires crossing a metaphysical barrier called the Gauntlet. This barrier is stronger in some places than others. In locals where spiritual energy pools, spirits can slip across the Gauntlet almost effortlessly. Such places go by many names, but the Ordo Dracul refers to them as Wyrms' Nests.

Spirits are only slightly more self-aware than ghosts, and they have limited or no free will. That is, a spirit of murder isn't capable of choosing *not* to kill if it has the chance. A spirit of dogs can't choose to act in a manner other than that of a dog. Spirits are simplistic, though the rules by which they live can be arcane and obtuse (especially for powerful spirits).

Spirits use Power, Finesse and Resistance as their Attributes, just as ghosts do. They do not have Skills or Merits. Since they lack human understanding and the freedom to choose their own actions, for the most part, they do not have Morality ratings, nor do they have Virtues and Vices.

### Rank

Spirit rankings are the foundation for the rules governing them, but they don't map directly to titles in the Shadow. The descriptors are there for the purpose of distinguishing a minor death spirit versus a greater death spirit, for example. Each rank a spirit possesses offers it protection from being bound to the will or service of another – by subtracting its Rank from the die pool.

Spirits seem to be innately able to judge whether a spirit they are near is more powerful than themselves. Spirits may attempt to disguise their superiority or inferiority; if so, make a contested Finesse roll to successfully hide their innate power. A spirit who successfully disguises itself seems to another spirit to be roughly its peer.

Rank†	Descriptor	Trait Limits*	Attribute Dots	Maximum Essence	Numina
1	Weak	5 dots	5-8	10	1-3
2	Minor	7 dots	9-14	15	3-5
3	Major	9 dots	15-25	20	5-7
4	Greater	12 dots	26-35	25	7-9
5	Superior	15 dots	36-45	50	9-11
6-10	**				

† Each rank levies a -1 modifier on attempts to forcibly bind that spirit.

\* These represent permanent dots, not temporarily boosted traits.

\*\* Spirits above Rank 5 don't need traits. They are, to all intents and purposes, godlike beings.

### Corpus

Like a ghost, a spirit has Corpus dots that represent the resiliency of its ephemeral form. Corpus equals a spirit's Resistance + Size. Spirits regenerate Corpus in the same amount of time that mortals heal damage. If a spirit loses its entire Corpus, it is disincorporated, meaning that it disappears from Twilight until it can heal. If it loses all its Essence *and* Corpus, the spirit is destroyed.

### Essence

A spirit's maximum Essence depends on how old and powerful the spirit is. As a rule of thumb, a weak spirit has a maximum Essence of 10, while a moderately powerful spirit has a maximum Essence of 15 or 20. Truly godlike spirits might have as much as 50 or 100 Essence, but those spirits almost never emerge from the Shadow to bedevil the human world (and if they did, hopefully it wouldn't

be a group of comparable children who had to deal with it!). Any given spirit may have any amount of Essence up to its maximum. The lower a spirit's Essence is, the more desperate it grows for sustenance.

Spirits use Essence in the following ways:

- A spirit must spend a point of Essence per day to survive. This expenditure usually takes place at moonrise. If the spirit has no Essence to spend, it falls into slumber until it manages to gain Essence somehow, such as by being immersed in a new flow of Essence.
- Spirits can use Essence to temporarily boost their Attributes on a one-for-one basis. They cannot boost a single Attribute by more than three. Each such boost lasts for one scene. (Remember to update the spirit's Advantages.)

- A spirit that has fled into the physical world, including Twilight, must expend one point of Essence per hour as long as it remains ephemeral (which is to say, without possessing a host body or using the Numen: Fetter). It cannot regain this lost Essence until it either gains a fetter or crosses back into the Shadow. If a spirit loses all its Essence while in the physical world, it passes into slumber and is drawn back into the spirit world, losing a point of Corpus from the rough transition.
- As long as a spirit still has some Essence, it isn't destroyed when reduced to zero Corpus, but rather is disincorporated (see above).

Spirits regain Essence in the following ways:

- They gain one point per day by being in proximity of the thing they reflect.
- Once per day the spirit may try to draw Essence from an appropriate source in the physical world by rolling its Power + Finesse. (It can sense such a source automatically up to one mile away.) The number of successes indicates the number of points of Essence gained. The spirit must be in the physical world (which includes Twilight) in order to do so.
- The spirit may barter for additional Essence from beings that possess the trait or with other spirits.
- The spirit may attempt to steal Essence from another spirit by making a contested roll of its Power + Finesse against the target's Power + Resistance. If the attacker wins, the number of successes indicates the number of points of the target's Essence that are siphoned off by the attacker. If all of the target's Essence is stolen, the victim spirit falls into slumber. If the target wins, the attacker loses a number of points of Essence equal to the successes scored by the target.

#### Willpower

Spirits have a Willpower trait equal to their Power + Resistance. A spirit's very existence necessitates a certain tenacity to survive and grow. Spirits regain spent Willpower at the rate of one point per day.

#### Initiative

Initiative is equal to Finesse + Resistance.

#### Defense

A spirit's Defense is equal to its Power or Finesse, whichever is *higher*.

#### Speed

The Speed of a spirit is equal to its Power + Finesse + a "species factor." Spirits that take human or animal form have a species factor equal to their earthly counterpart.

Spirits of inanimate objects usually have a species factor equal to 0, while spirits of more abstract items (fear, grief, murder) generally have a species factor of 10. Vehicle spirits have Acceleration traits equal to their material cousins, rather than a Speed trait (p. 142 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). To find their Maximum Speed, add the spirit's Power + Finesse to their physical counterpart's Maximum Speed.

In Twilight, all spirits (even spirits without apparent appendages) are considered able to move in any direction. Even those without "wings" or association with the concept of flight (bird-spirits, air-spirits) can hover in any direction — though without a clear connection to the concept of flight, they must hover within their Speed (in yards) off the ground. For the most part, they are not bound by gravity, nor do they suffer its effects — you can't "push" a murder spirit in Twilight down an elevator shaft.

Materialized spirits, however, are quite solid. They are affected by gravity, for example. They can still move about as per their Speed trait, but unless they have "wings" or some such, they cannot fly.

#### Size

A spirit can generally be of any size, depending on what it represents and how powerful it is. Exceptionally strong spirits are often larger than their weaker kin. Spirits usually have a Size trait comparable to their material counterparts; the spirit of a dog, for instance, might have Size 4. Some spirits take on humanoid shapes (Size 5 for adults, 4 for children), while some appear as nebulous, ill-defined clouds (in which case the Size can range from 2 on up).

#### *Spirit Bans*

One important trait that ghosts do *not* possess, but spirits do, is a ban. A spirit's ban is something quite personal to it — one fear-spirit might be forced to flee the gaze of a man protecting his child, while another suffers one point of aggravated damage per turn of exposure to bright light. A ban is a way to repel, damage or defeat a spirit, and they should be highly personal, sometimes obscure, but when revealed make perfect sense. Just as discovering the identity of a ghost and the circumstances of its death are essential to defeating it, discovering a spirit's ban is crucial to exerting any power over it.

The more powerful the spirit, the more obscure and complicated its ban might be. Powerful spirits, though, tend to have bans with more pronounced effects. For example, a weak spirit might be forced to flee when its ban is enacted, but a powerful spirit might be outright destroyed should the characters manage to confront it with its ban.

# BLOODLINES OF THE GREAT WAR (CE 1914-18)

The bullet that murdered Franz Ferdinand killed the 19th century, too. The final turns of the so-called Great Game brought the imperial powers crashing to war, one by one, as the complicated equilibrium of treaties and agreements that maintained the status quo collapsed.

An entire generation of young men never came back from the trenches. Nations fell to pieces or came into birth. And when the war was over, the suffering really began: plague followed, and with it revolution and civil war. The 20th century, with all its horrors, was launched.

The dead, caught unawares by the violent pace of change, faced their own upheavals. Elders vanished or met the sunlight. And neonates discovered new opportunities. The old orders changed more quickly than any of them could have expected.

Things would never be the same again. But the Kindred would be ready.

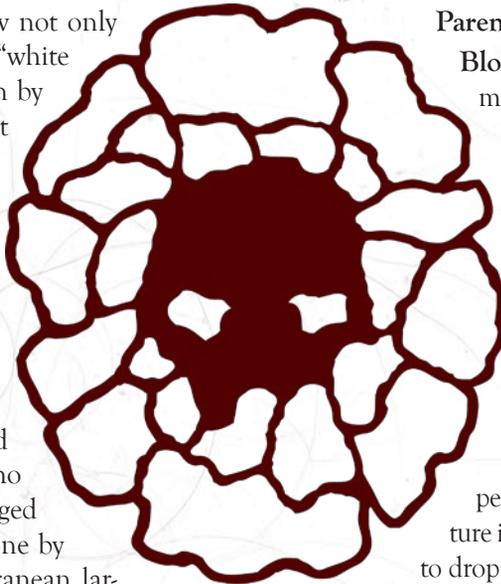
## CAPORETTI

Don't look down.

The 12 Battles of the Isonzo saw not only the horrors of the trenches, but the “white death” – avalanches brought down by the constant impact of shells against the sides of the mountains. Thousands upon thousands of men met their ends under the rolling slides of stone and snow. The lucky ones were crushed instantly. But others, trapped in their trenches, suffocated or slowly froze under the ice, with no hope of rescue. And some of those trapped under the collapsed mountainside faced the creatures who burrowed under the snow and dragged their victims away into the dark, one by one, storing them away in subterranean larders, keeping them alive for months or years if necessary as vessels for their thirsts.

When the Battle of Caporetto ended, the armies withdrew from the Isonzo, and gradually the monsters of Caporetto exhausted their hellish pantries and moved on.

Over the years, they found other burrows, other places to hide far away from that blood-soaked mountain range. But the frozen death of the Isonzo became part of that strange cold vampire tribe, and it travels with them wherever they go.



**Parent Clan:** Nosferatu

**Bloodline Disciplines:** Celerity, Nightmare, Obfuscate, Vigor

**Nickname:** Shivers

**Weakness:** The Caporetto have the usual Nosferatu weakness, expressed above all else as one specific, unusual effect – the room quite simply goes cold when a Caporetto walks in. People shiver and develop goosebumps around the Caporetto (see p. 111 of **Vampire: The Requiem**).

In addition, the Caporetto's aura of supernatural cold causes the actual temperature in about a ten-foot radius of the vampire to drop by five to ten degrees Celsius.

And on top of *that*, no matter how he might try, a Caporetto cannot counterfeit life by spending Vitae – the cold wells up from inside the vampire's dead flesh, as if it were some active force rather than a simple absence of heat. The aura of cold extends even beyond the vampire's other supernatural powers: a Caporetto suffers a -2 penalty to dice pools when attempting to use Obfuscate, specifically the second, third and fourth-dot powers, to hide his true nature (or just hide) from humans or vampires (this penalty only applies to Mask of Tranquility when the mask is challenged by another vampire using Auspex; see

p. 136 of **Vampire: The Requiem**). The Caporetti prefer to go literally underground, rather than attempt to hide in plain sight like many other vampires who are expert in the use of Obfuscate.

**History and Culture:** None of the Caporetti know for sure who founded their bloodline. All that has been established is that the Nosferatu of the Isonzo developed an aptitude for burrowing and an affinity with the cold. Of the three likely candidates for the founder of the bloodline, one had been a resident in the region of Caporetto for several hundred years, and had apparently always been that way; one was a neonate with a talent for killing; and one, allegedly, wasn't even really a vampire. If these monsters ever existed, they were gone by the end of the Great War, leaving their childer able to make their own way.

These original Caporetti were loners who kept frozen larders made of the hapless soldiers of the Isonzo. Most of them kept to themselves, and, if they had the urge to create childer, cut them loose soon after the Embrace. The result was that beyond their supernatural affinity with the cold and the urge to burrow, the Caporetti have little in common other than the name, a certain moleish look in the eyes and a way they hold their hands... which are almost invariably large and spadelike, and usually filthy.

They traveled. They Embraced. By the end of the 1920s, Caporetti had turned up in places as far afield as the Rockies and the Himalayas. In the Second World War, coterries of Caporetti thrived in the snows of the Eastern front, and fed well on the bleeding wounded of Stalin-grad, dragging them under the snow and earth as they stumbled on the killing fields of the Great Patriotic war. During the Vietnam war, a Caporetto somehow wound up in the tunnels under Saigon.

Mostly, however, their hunting tactics don't define them so much as the role they take in the night society of the Kindred. Some style themselves as enforcers, or hunters, or hounds. Some keep out of the way of living humans altogether, except when they have to feed. Some set themselves up with a fake mythology as the ghosts who haunt deserted mountainsides and well-worn suicide spots.

**Reputation:** Other Kindred are ambivalent about the Caporetti. On the one hand, a Caporetto is hugely valuable as an assassin – the first thing a victim knows about the presence of a Caporetto is a chill in the air, followed by the hand that erupts from the mud or the snow and drags the target underground.

Some princes, on the other hand, see the presence of a monster who makes the air cold just by being there as a breach of the Masquerade that cannot be tolerated. In the end, though, it depends on the Caporetto. A vampire

who attempts to make his lair under the middle of a busy park or common will attract far more attention – from vampires and humans alike – than one who keeps himself to himself and dwells up a mountain.

**Concepts:** Tunnel rat, morgue worker, meat packer, sewer maintenance man, professional spelunker, missing mountaineer, escaped prison inmate, mole-man, obsessive snowboarder, urban explorer

## *Devotions of the Caporetti*

### *Burrow*

(Celerity ••, Vigor ••, Caporetti)

The Caporetti became a bloodline in the first place when they learned to burrow under the snows of the Isonzo. Although at home in ice and snow, the Caporetti can burrow under earth and soil, too, when conditions are right.

The Caporetti use the power to create narrow tunnels and vast, labyrinthine burrows. More importantly, they use the power to surprise their prey, springing up from under the ground, dragging their victims into the depths before they have any clue.

**Cost:** None

**Dice Pool:** Strength + Athletics + Celerity. Note that Vigor, if activated in the same scene, also adds to Strength dice pools.

**Action:** Instant; the character may have to make the roll each turn, at the Storyteller's option.

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The character becomes stuck under the ground and remains there until he activates Vigor (if he hasn't already) and succeeds in a roll of Strength + Athletics.

**Failure:** The character makes no headway.

**Success:** The character can move underground at a rate equal to half his Speed (rounded up) or can excavate a volume of earth equivalent to 6' x 3' x 3' in the space of a turn.

**Exceptional Success:** As above, but the character can move underground at his usual Speed.

### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+1	Snow
+1	Soft mud or sand
-1	Packed-in or icy snow
-1	Topsoil
-2	Rocky soil
-4	turf or packed-down soil

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

### *Freeze Bones*

(Celerity ••, Nightmare ••••, Caporetti)

The Caporetti try not to let other vampires know about the power that some of them have to cause a victim's joints to seize up with convulsive cold — at least not until it's too late. But when the vampire's icy touch spreads over a body, it's impossible to ignore. Icicles form on skin turned blue and taut. The victim's blood literally runs cold. Any movement at all becomes impossible, at least for a time.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** Manipulation + Intimidate + Nightmare - target's Stamina

**Action:** Instant

The vampire must first touch the targeted character before he can attempt to use this power (as per the rules found in the *World of Darkness Rulebook*, p.157).

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The victim gains a brief psychic flash of exactly what the vampire was trying to do and exactly what he is, if the target hadn't known already. This can be a terrible threat to the Masquerade.

**Failure:** The victim shivers, briefly, but suffers no other ill-effects.

**Success:** The victim's muscles seize up. His skin turns blue and gains a covering of frost, and apart from a chattering of teeth and compulsive shivers, the victim cannot take any physical action at all. The duration of this effect depends on the number of successes the vampire's player rolls:

Successes	Duration
1 success	One turn
2 successes	Two turns
3 successes	Three turns
4 successes	Six turns
5+ successes	Until the end of the scene

**Exceptional Success:** As above, except that the victim also suffers a point of lethal damage from the cold.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

### *Shivers*

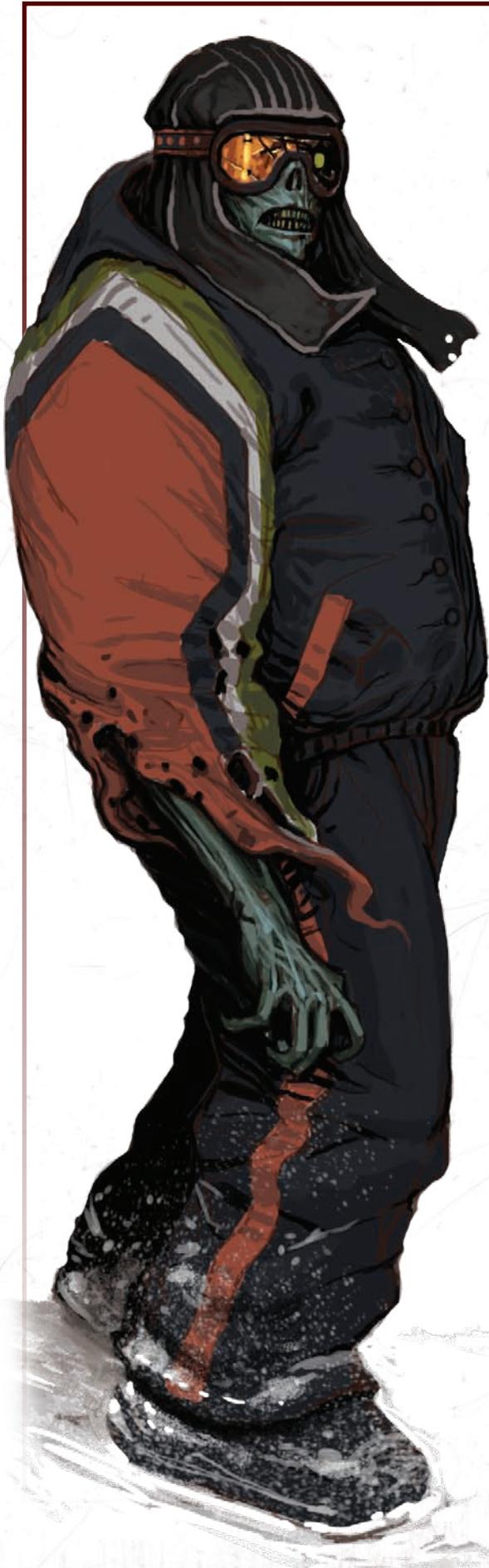
(Celerity •, Nightmare ••, Caporetti)

The cold that laces the Caporetti's body is not remotely natural, and the Caporetti can learn to use that cold to cause their victims to lose control of their bodies.

**Cost:** None

**Dice Pool:** Manipulation + Intimidate + Nightmare vs. target's Composure + Blood Potency





**Action:** Instant and contested

The vampire must first touch the targeted character before he can attempt to use this power (as per the rules found in the *World of Darkness Rulebook*, p.157).

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** The character's aura of cold falters; he cannot attempt to use this power again for the rest of the scene.

**Failure:** The character fails to make the target shudder, even slightly.

**Success:** The victim begins to experience a physical reaction to extreme cold – she shivers. Her teeth chatter. Her skin rises in goosebumps. Her fingers become numb. The target suffers a -1 penalty to all Physical dice pools and gains no benefit from the 10-again rule for the remainder of the scene.

**Exceptional Success:** As above, except that the penalty to Physical dice pools is -2.

This power costs 9 experience points to learn.

*Stone Cling*

(Celerity •, Vigor •)

Vampires have long been attributed with the ability to scale impossibly steep surfaces, and variations on this power exist. The Caporetti, who once inhabited the highest, steepest peaks of the Isonzo, find that it comes naturally, and many is the Alpine visitor who, just for a moment late at night, has seen a black figure crawling at an impossibly skewed angle over the frozen peaks.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae

The power requires no roll. After having spent the point of Vitae, the character is able to do the following for the rest of the scene:

- Add Celerity and Vigor dots to the number of *successes* the player achieves on climbing rolls;
- Move at his usual Speed on even the sheerest of surfaces on a successful climbing roll (see the *World of Darkness Rulebook*, p. 64).

This power costs six experience points to learn.



# BROTHERS OF YPRES

It isn't the cough that carries you off. It's the coffin they carry you off in.

We've spent the last century poisoning ourselves. A nuclear power plant melts down in the Ukraine. A chemical plant explodes in India. One of the largest cities of the world near-collapses under the weight of its polluted air. And in the first World War, we found ever more efficient ways to poison each other. Every side propelled countless shells, full of deadly gases — phosgene, chlorine, mustard gas — onto soldiers who could do nothing more than pray that their battered, sweaty masks would keep them alive.

And standing behind those in the trenches, the dead, who could not be poisoned, found ways to exploit these horrors. One dead man in particular, who bore the most mundane of names, learned how to internalize the poisons in the air, mud and water, and use them for his own ends.

The bearers of his legacy survive, a line of monsters who thrive on toxins, under whose pale skin lies the chemical pollutant that has done its part in the poisoning of a century.

**Parent Clan:** Mekhet

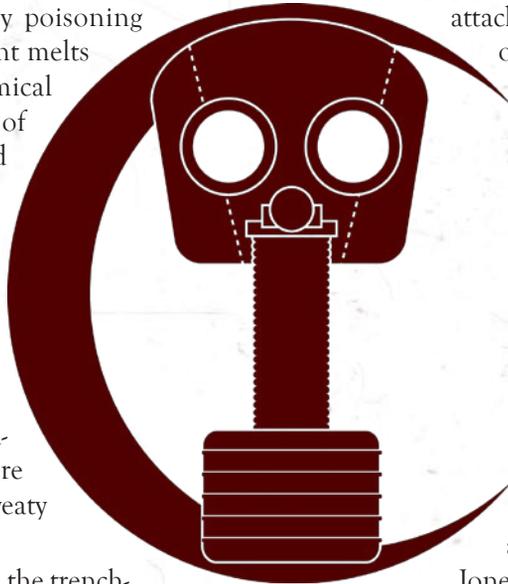
**Bloodline Disciplines:** Asphyx, Auspex, Celerity, Obfuscate

**Nickname:** Jones, Trenchers

**Weakness:** Along with the usual Mekhet clan weakness (see p. 109 of *Vampire: The Requiem*), the Brothers' poisoned blood limits them to drinking Vitae from those who suffer from some kind of poisoning. The Joneses' supernatural anatomy responds to poisoning on a conceptual level, meaning that any kind of poisoning works, whether it's bacterial (as in putrid food or befouled water), chemical, respiratory (poisoning from gas, smoke or from particles such as asbestos counts, as does emphysema) or from radiation.

Blood taken from a healthy subject tastes foul to a Jones, and has no benefit at all as Vitae.

**History and Culture:** A rolling cycle of death and boredom ruled the trenches, punctuated by the terror of gas



attacks. Pvt. Owen Thomas Jones, a 19-year-old soldier from Barry, was reported as one of the 90 men who died in the chlorine attack on Hill 60 at the Second Battle of Ypres. At least that's what he tells his childer: he says he was Embraced when he was already dead from the gas. Whether true or not — and very few vampires believe him — it's part of his personal mythology, something Jones had a talent for.

Jones may not have enjoyed being a private soldier, but he flourished as a vampire. Within a couple of months, Jones managed to maneuver his sire into the way of a five-nine and was on his way across

Western Europe, hiding among the troops by night and dwelling in the vast networks of trenches that the Entente powers developed across France and Belgium. He wasn't alone in the vampires' makeshift trench-society, and he soon became well-known in the mud-soaked Elysiums of the trenches. He was particularly good at taking advantage of the chaos and bloodshed of the various battles of the war. His enemies didn't fare so well, falling prey, according to Jones, to shells, machineguns, barbed wire and sunlight. If Jones's blood became potent particularly quickly, no one had the time to object. And if Jones's Mekhet childer noticed that his aura had turned partly black, what were they going to do about it?

Jones thrived in other ways as well. Gas attacks didn't bother the undead in the trenches. They didn't need to breathe. Dead eyes couldn't be blinded. Dead skin had no living cells to mutate and burn. Jones found the gas attacks to be an excellent cover for assaults on men who were going to die soon anyway. Jones began to develop a taste for the gas, for the blood of choking, poisoned men. He found, one night, that he had internalized the gas without even realizing he had done so. He found his taste for poisoned blood had become a need, but that he could use the poison for his own ends.

It suited most of his childer to benefit, with his help, from the same transformation of the blood. It was easy enough in the chaos for them to move on. Jones was

always a loner himself, and when the war ended, he cut the members of his new bloodline loose.

Jones had Embraced men just like him: chancers and dealers, and they in turn had taken as childer people on both sides of the war. When the battles ended, they spread quickly with a speed that reflected the dizzying change that overtook the 20th century. By the beginning of the current century, they had become more numerous than any bloodline with less than a century of history has any business being.

They followed the British to Mesopotamia in the 1920s, and profited from the widespread use of chlorine on Arab and Kurd resistance fighters. Meanwhile, another branch of the bloodline gained influence on the battlefields of the Russian Civil War. They strode through the middle of gas clouds in Ethiopia and Morocco.

In the Second World War, one or two Brothers of Ypres fed well from some of the most callous evils ever perpetrated by mortals against their fellow human beings. And after the war, some even got as far as Japan, where the new kinds of poisoning visited upon the people by the bomb gave them more food than they had ever seen before.

And so it went. The notorious London smogs of the 1950s that claimed so many lives were attractive to the Brothers, as was the disaster at Bhopal and the nuclear event at Chernobyl (in fact, power stations in general have been a desired place for Joneses to hunt). Lesser events, such as the poisoning of Camelford, the English village whose entire population suffered from aluminum contamination in the water supply back in the late 1980s, always seem to bring a Brother or two to hunt as soon as the news gets out.

The Brothers of Ypres themselves don't seem cut out for working together. They cooperate happily with other vampires, but tend to see other members of the bloodline as competition for valuable food resources. It's only when a poisoning event is big enough to create a regular source of Vitae for more than a couple of Jones that they appear in numbers. When they Embrace, they do it for a purpose, and don't generally tend to tell their childer much about the bloodline. A lot of second- and third-generation Joneses (there are no fourth generation Joneses so far) seem to come into the bloodline spontaneously when their blood thickens enough, without being told anything about the limitations or benefits of their heritage. It has always been unusual, although not unheard of, for a Trencher to bring an outsider into the bloodline. The Brothers don't need the competition.

**Reputation:** The covenants and clans do not generally have a lot of time for the Joneses, and consider them more

of a nuisance than anything else, not least because their power is so useless against the undead. They make the food supply taste vile sometimes, but the miseries they inflict upon the kine are not communicable. Yes, they're not trustworthy — but who is?

The only thing that Owen Thomas Jones ever really passed down to his bloodline as a tradition is that the Joneses should only ever be seen to profit from toxins in their food — they shouldn't be the cause of it.

And it's important for the reputation of the line that no one knows that a high proportion of Joneses keep stocks of toxic substances, ranging from cans of rat poison right through to the vats of Iraqi nerve gas Owen Thomas Jones added to his personal collection only a few years ago.

**Concepts:** Over-zealous toxicologist, pest exterminator, Black Widow, war crimes suspect, experimental test subject, Gulf War Syndrome sufferer, fired UN weapons inspector, shell-shocked veteran, "unlawful combatant," urban cyclist

*Asphyx*

Right at the very moment of his Embrace, Owen Thomas Jones internalized the cocktail of poisonous gases — phosgene, chlorine, mustard gas — that may or may not have killed him. They infused his blood and body, and by exerting his will, he found that he could create the symptoms caused by the gas in the living, and eventually become the gas itself.

The powers of Asphyx are quite potent, but have one drawback: they have no direct effect on the Kindred. The only real difference that Asphyx makes to a vampire is that the blood of a human victim of Asphyx tastes absolutely vile (unless the consuming vampire is a Jones, in which case it tastes wonderful), even though it is no less nutritious.

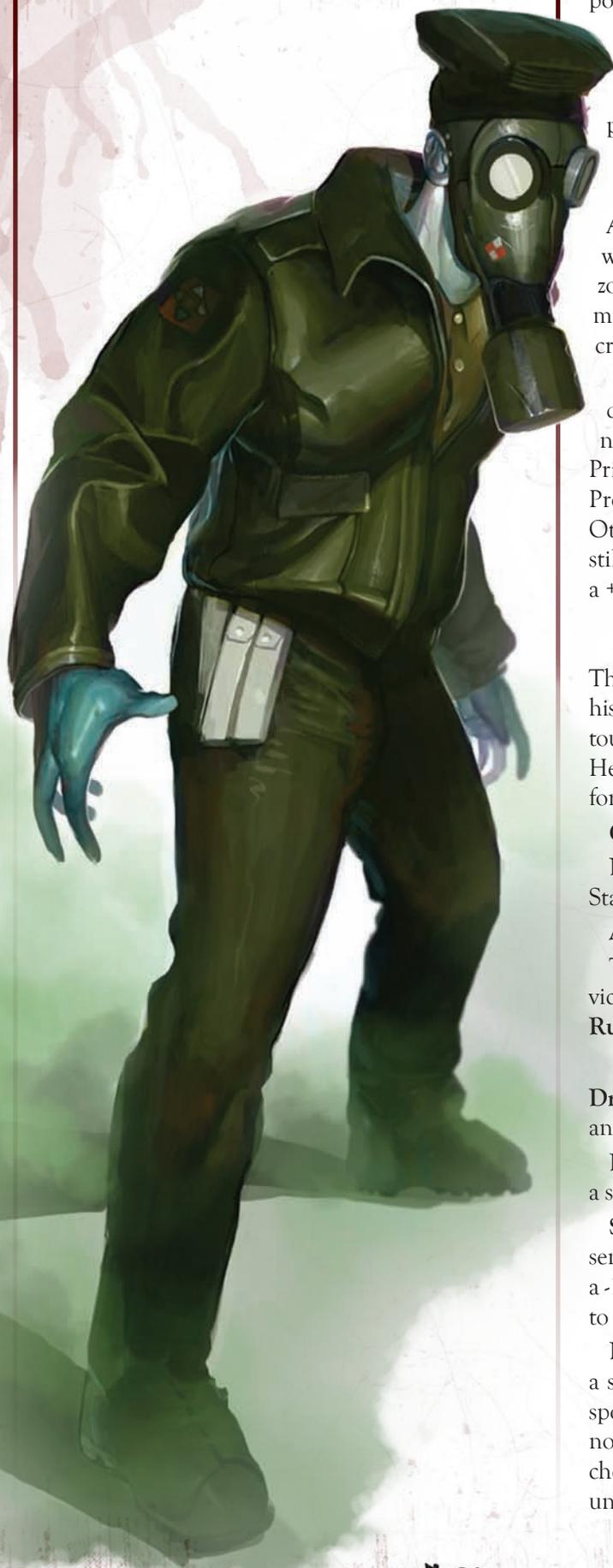
### The Asphyx Toxin

The effects of the second to fifth dot Asphyx powers depend on it being a supernatural poison (rules for poisons can be found on p. 180 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, but also see the addendum in the Introduction to this book). As a toxin, the Asphyx poison causes lethal damage and has a Toxicity of: **Dots in Asphyx + Blood Potency**.

Characters who come into contact with the poison can roll to escape its effects with a reflexive roll of Stamina + Resolve - Toxicity. If the victim's player rolls one or more successes, the victim suffers no damage.

If she fails, she suffers levels of lethal damage equal to the Toxicity of the vampire's poison.

The poison, like mustard gas, works on contact with skin: protective clothing offers victims a bonus to dice



pools of +1 (a simple breath mask of the kind worn by urban cyclists, a wet rag pressed to the mouth) to +5 (a full hazmat suit).

A Brother can gain Vitae from victims of Asphyx poison, whether it was his own efforts or someone else's that caused the poisoning.

#### Other Supernatural Beings

Asphyx works on all living flesh, which means that while it doesn't work on vampires (nor does it affect zombies or any other undead beings that a Jones might meet), it is quite effective on the *living* supernatural creatures that inhabit the World of Darkness.

It being a supernatural poison, however, other not-quite-human creatures get to add their unique supernatural traits when resisting Asphyx: werewolves add Primal-Urge to dice pools to resist, mages use Gnosis, Prometheans use Azoth and changelings use Wyrd. Other resistance to poison that a character might have still counts (for example, all Prometheans benefit from a +4 on dice pools to resist poison).

#### • *The Cough*

The vampire draws the poison in his body out through his fingertips — which let out the slightest of vapors — and touches his victim. Seconds later, the mortal's eyes water. He begins to choke slightly, and coughs uncontrollably for a few seconds, making it difficult to act.

**Cost:** None

**Dice Pool:** Dexterity + Medicine + Asphyx vs. victim's Stamina + Resolve

**Action:** Contested

To use this power, the vampire must first touch the victim (as per the rules found in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p.157).

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The victim suffers no ill effect at all, and carries on as if nothing had happened.

**Failure:** The poison wells on the vampire's fingertips for a split-second and then dissolves. Nothing else happens.

**Success:** The victim instantly feels an irritating, choking sensation in his throat and begins to cough. He suffers a -1 penalty to all dice pools for a number of turns equal to the number of the Jones's successes.

**Exceptional Success:** The victim's cough causes him a small amount of pain — he even hacks up a few tiny spots of blood. The penalty is the same, but the victim now counts as having been poisoned (and hence a valid choice of victim for a member of the Jones bloodline) until the end of the scene.

### •• *Taint*

One of the most dreadful effects of mustard gas is that it doesn't really dissipate – it taints objects and flesh. The Jones smears a layer of his Vitae over a hand-held object or a small area, about equal to a square foot of space. The blood vanishes into the substance of the object. The next time a mortal touches the contaminated object or space, he risks being poisoned, and must roll to resist the toxicity of the Jones's poison.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae for every object or square foot of space tainted

**Dice Pool:** No roll is required to activate this power. Once contact transmits the poison, the victim's player must roll to resist the poison as described above.

**Action:** Instant

The poison remains in place from the moment the vampire applies it until the next sunrise, or until someone touches it. It cannot be removed in any way before it is touched; but when the sun rises, it vanishes as if it were never there. Likewise, once the poison has infected someone, the affected area is no longer hazardous.

### ••• *Burning Touch*

The vampire can now directly poison his victims: the poison that exudes from his fingertips bubbles and burns, and when it contacts human flesh, it causes deep and wide blisters that itch and throb. The victim's eyes water, and she might suffer bleeding in the lungs, as if she had inhaled mustard gas.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** No roll is required to activate this power, but the character must touch the victim for it to have any chance of causing harm.

The poison has instant effect, although the victim may roll to avoid suffering damage as above.

**Action:** Instant

### •••• *Breath of Death*

The monster breathes out a cloud of acrid, deadly gas that settles over the immediate area. Any living creature in the area risks terrible pain and possibly death.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** Strength + Science + Asphyx

**Action:** Instant

The gas is of a volume sufficient to fill a room roughly 15' long, 15' wide and 10' high.

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The character fails completely to create the poison cloud – worse, he suffers some of the ill-effects



himself. His skin blisters and cracks and he coughs, once, vomiting a small amount of blood. He loses another Vitae and suffers two points of lethal damage.

**Failure:** The character breathes out the gas, but it dissipates almost immediately.

**Success:** The character exhales a cloud of greenish gas that smells a little of chlorine, a little of horseradish and a little of cut grass. Anyone who comes into contact with the affected area must roll to avoid damage, as described above.

The cloud of gas persists for a length of time that depends on the number of successes rolled:

Successes	Duration
1 success	One turn
2 successes	Two turns
3 successes	Four turns
4 successes	Until the end of the scene
5+ successes	Until sunrise

**Exceptional Success:** The gas fills twice the usual area.

#### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
-1	Attempting to create gas cloud outdoors
-1	Light rain
-2	Heavy rain
-2	Attempting to create cloud in air-conditioned area
-2	Light breeze
-3	Strong wind

These modifiers stack (so that, for example, a vampire attempting to create the cloud outdoors in a light wind and light rain would incur a total penalty of -4 to the dice pool).

#### ..... *Choking Cloud*

At the highest levels, the character develops the power to dissolve his body into the choking cloud of gas, becoming the poison, directing and controlling it.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae + 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** No roll is required to effect the transformation.

**Action:** Instant

In gaseous form, the character can move at her normal Speed, slip under doors and through cracks in window frames.

She can also force living victims to inhale her poison, curling smoky tentacles around her victim's throat, driving gas into the mouth and nose. The character must make a grapple attack (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook** p. 157) to do so. The vampire only needs to succeed in one grapple attack for the poison to take effect, at which point the victim's player must roll to avoid poison damage.

If the gaseous vampire is caught in high winds or heavy rain, the player must roll Stamina + Resolve. If the weather is particularly bad, the dice pool suffers a penalty of -1 to -3 at the Storyteller's discretion. If the roll fails, the gas disperses, and the character reforms at the next sunset in the same spot. A character can return to solid form at will with an instant action.



# NARODNAIA VOLIA (SHADOW CULT)

I know what is to be done.

Georgi Gregorivitch Herzen never met his Final Death. He dwells under St. Petersburg, still bearing scars gained in the burning of the Palace of Justice, back in 1917. During that night of fire, Herzen's eyeballs burst and dried out. He had to gnaw his right leg off to escape from blazing timbers that had fallen across him. His remaining leg is a blackened, footless stump, stick-thin and brittle. The few faithful vampires whom he chose to be his attendants claim that he decided not to heal the burns as a mark of his dedication to the great Proletarian Struggle: he earned those scars. He shall keep them. Each night, Herzen sits in a chair in a sewer-side room and in a seared rasp of a voice dictates the tracts and discourse of *Narodnaia Volia*, the People's Will, to blood-bound acolytes who absorb his every word.

A handful of century-old ghouls carry his missives across Russia, and from there across the world. And the followers of *Narodnaia Volia*, living men and women gathered in anarcho-socialist cells, hear the message: *capitalism extends beyond death*. Just as the capitalist sucks the life of the proletariat through the constant exploitation of the means of production, so too do the undead treat the living as a means of production, a food source. The people must rise, and the undead must be destroyed.

Of course, the general public — even many revolutionary brothers and sisters — cannot believe these truths, and so must never know until such time as they are ready to lead the people in revolution. And in the meantime, secretly, the true Champions of the Proletariat show the People's unknowing Will by wiping out the undead capitalist scourge. Straddling the line between radical politics and mystical religion, the followers of the People's Will cannot know that all the while they are slaves to the very thing they seek to wipe out. Blinded by blood, they destroy vampires at the behest of vampires.

**History:** During the beginnings of the Russian Civil War, a coterie of Carthians with Bolshevik sympathies led by Herzen co-opted the remains of *Narodnaia Volia*. The group had existed as anarchist-terrorists since about 1879, and had been responsible for the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881, a deed which had apparently led to the execution of its leaders and the dispersal of the group.



In fact, they went underground, and it was here, in the revolutionary underground, that Herzen met the paranoid second-generation inheritors of the People's Will. He masqueraded as a sympathizer, and began to manipulate the secretive, violent group towards discovering and combating his own ideological enemies.

By the time they found out the truth about him, he had either bound the members with Vinculi, given them the Embrace, or both. The group, hopelessly compromised,

## QUESTION: WHAT'S A SHADOW CULT?

**Answer:** It's a means of control. It's one of the best tools the Kindred have for extending their influence beyond the realm of the dead. Several exist and each has a goal and a praxis dedicated to realizing that goal. Human dupes gain benefits from initiation into the secret society, never realizing that what they think is the cult's goal is not the whole truth, or, necessarily, any of the truth. Vampires gain from initiation and from the aid of an organization outside of the obligations of the covenants. To join a Shadow Cult, a character must have one or more dots in the Initiation Merit tied to that cult.

**New Merit: Initiation (• to •••••)**

**Prerequisite:** Mortals can only take one dot in this Merit. Ghouls can take up to two dots. Only Kindred can take the Merit at three or more dots.

**Effect:** Your character has received initiation into one of the Shadow Cults. On the first occasion the character meets another member of the cult, he gains a bonus to Social rolls for the duration of the scene, equal to his dots in this Merit.

Other benefits come from Initiation into a Shadow Cult, depending on the cult and the number of dots the character has gained in his Initiation.

**Drawback:** Initiation into a Shadow Cult carries with it duties, and failure to perform those duties can cause dots in this Merit to fall, although benefits gained from initiations (such as access to the cult's proprietary Disciplines, once learned) don't go away once granted. A character with more than one dot of Initiation into any Shadow Cult can become initiated into others, but can never gain more than one dot in Initiation in any other cult.

reformed into what amounted to a vampire-hunting wing among the Bolsheviks, steered towards destroying the Kindred who opposed Herzen and his cronies.

Within a few years, the People's Will became as much a cult as an ideologically based militant group. They developed symbolic rituals dedicated to strengthening members' zeal and warping their perceptions. And this is the way the cult stayed. During the Stalinist era, the cult often waged its hidden war within Stalin's secret police. In the Cold War, it spread to Cuba, Vietnam, Korea and then to the West, reaching a peak in membership in the English-speaking world in the late 1960s. As the Cold War ended, the group declined somewhat, but in recent years, the hard left has met with a resurgence, particularly in a Russia where many have begun to pine for the Communist days. The living members of Narodnaia Volia still seek out and destroy the capitalist oppressors of the living worker, never really knowing that they only deal with *some* of the living dead.

**Praxis:** The cult's members are all active affiliates of the kind of left-wing groups that still exist, in some form or another, in most countries in the world. Operating in small cells of four or five, they work more or less in exactly the same way as grass-roots vampire hunters — only some of their members seem to be preternaturally good at finding targets and suggesting tactics for dealing with them.

The vampires who control the cult, meanwhile, take care to lead their members to the *right* vampires. The choice of target is almost always ideologically based — one important thing to realize is that while to an outsider the use of mortal vampire hunters as a tool used to destroy rival vampires is more than a little cynical, the vampires of Narodnaia Volia consider it a worthwhile expedient. The benefits of their ideology are for the undead, and not the living. The humans are simply tools for the purpose of completing the violent ideological changes necessary to affect a revolution among the Kindred. Pawns are a necessary expedient in this: they are not the means of production, they are a source of food and a method of gaining power. The vampires of Narodnaia Volia are wholly sincere in this: they do what they do for the revolution.

Cells of the People's Will don't tend to last very long. The human vampire hunters all too often make mistakes and gain the attention of the vampires or their agents, and on more than one occasion, Narodnaia Volia cells have been mown down in shoot-outs with armed response units or government groups who have been tipped off by the vampire leader's enemies. But they always seem to crop up again, months or years later.

**Covenants and Clans:** While the vampires of Narodnaia Volia consider many Carthians not to be true revolutionaries — just like living socialists, radical Carthians split into rival factions like crazy — most of the vampires in the cult who are not unbound prefer to be part of the Carthian movement. The Circle of the Crone and the Ordo Dracul are not wholly apolitical, as such, but since politics are not strictly their concern, Kindred of Narodnaia Volia can and do join them, at least at the lower levels.

As an extremist movement opposed to the establishment, members of Narodnaia Volia find it hard to imagine joining the Invictus and the Sanctified — at least genuinely. One or two have joined the two great ruling covenants while hiding their allegiance to the People's Will, the better to destabilize them from within.

Although, like most Shadow Cults, Narodnaia Volia was initially a Mekhet cult, the group early on allowed several members of Clan Daeva to join. Demagoguery comes easily to the Daeva, and during the time of the Russian Civil War, when the dead had their own revolutions, many of the most strident revolutionaries were Daeva.

**Ceremonies:** Cells of Narodnaia Volia meet irregularly. Human cultists can go about their lives without being called on for months or years at a time. When they do come together, it's usually because one of the vampires in the cell has found a target.

In a typical meeting, a cell reads one of the increasingly radical circular missives sent around by Georgi Gregorivitch Herzen (always signed "GGH") and takes part in a very simple, silent ceremony where each member cuts his wrist and lets some drops fall in a mundane cup — an ordinary coffee mug or glass is enough. Everyone takes a drink. It's supposed to be a sign of unity. It's also a means of guaranteeing that living members of the cult fall very quickly into Vinculi.

After business is over, the cult goes out hunting.

### *Initiations*

Narodnaia Volia's leaders describe their most junior members as the Champions of the Proletariat. These Champions, all of whom are active members of other revolutionary socialist, Marxist-Leninist, anarcho-socialist or communist groups, are always on the look out for potential new recruits into the True Proletarian Struggle, against the oppression of the dead. Champions of the Proletariat don't know that any other degree of initiation exists. As far as they know, all the members of Narodnaia Volia are human, and all of them are Champions of the Proletariat, just like them.

The vampires in the group maintain what they call a Temporary Council. Technically, when their Revolution arrives, the Council will disperse, because it will be, they maintain, obsolete. No one in the Temporary Council is under any illusions about that stance being anything other than a fiction, however. The Temporary Council's Representatives are aware that they must control the human Champions. Right from the beginning, then, a character initiated into Narodnaia Volia takes part in the cult's same blood-sharing ritual. To join the cult is to drink the cult's blood – and to become, within three nights, a slave of those who told their followers they cannot be slaves.

Technically, no higher levels of Narodnaia Volia exist beyond the Temporary Council. Narodnaia Volia is a true anarcho-socialist vampire social construct. But vampires depend on the need to control and master one another. In practice, this means that the eldest and most respected of the cult's Representatives form circles of *Secret* Representatives. Recognizing that Narodnaia Volia's cells are often short-lived, they justify the way they ensure their own safety above that of the Champions of the Proletariat as necessary for the survival of the cult's doctrine. *Someone must endure for the sake of the Proletariat, they think – and it is better for all, if it is we who escape.*

- The cult has members who belong to dozens of far-left splinter groups, and all Champions of the Proletariat, human, ghoul and vampire alike, benefit from the knowledge that this brings to the table. With the first dot in Initiation (Narodnaia Volia), the character gains a free specialty in Politics (Hard Left), and two free dots in Contacts, each of which is connected to a revolutionary group. The down side of this is that any mortal character who joins Narodnaia Volia has shared in the blood of the Kindred on many occasions. The character is two steps towards being unknowingly bound by a Vinculum to three different

Representatives of the Temporary Council, any of whom can make her take that third drink at any time. Kindred who join the cult do not have to suffer this indignity.

- A vampire who learns the truth about the Temporary Council becomes a Representative. He benefits from the socialist/democratic sharing of knowledge, both arcane and political. A member of Narodnaia Volia who joins the Temporary Council can learn either Auspex or Majesty as an in-clan Discipline, meaning that acquiring new powers costs new dots x5 experience points, rather than new dots x7. A Mekhet vampire can learn Majesty, and a Daeva can learn Auspex. The rare vampire of another clan, who might somehow be permitted to join, can choose to learn one or the other, but not both.

- The Secret Representatives have access to hidden bunkers and hideaways they keep in common, the better to withdraw when the forces of oppressive power close in – as they invariably seem to. The character either has the equivalent of a four-dot Haven (with dots assigned between Location, Security, and Size any way the player wishes) or four dots in a shared Haven belonging to the other Secret Representatives in the region.

### USING NARODNAIA VOLIA WITH HUNTER: THE VIGIL

Storytellers who use **Hunter: The Vigil** may, if they wish, allow player-controlled human Narodnaia Volia members to gain Practical Experience, and to benefit from Tactics and risked Willpower.

Although Narodnaia Volia has some of the characteristics of a tier two hunter compact, members of the cult should really be considered first-tier hunters – the cult doesn't offer benefits on the same scale as a compact.

# BLOODLINES OF THE MONTROSE PARTY (CE 1839-1869)

In the mid-1800s, the expansion of America to its largely uncharted western reaches was getting underway. Man cast his gaze toward the setting sun and saw a place of limitless land with the promise of gold. Some young Kindred, though, saw something else: blood, and the freedom to cultivate it.

A group of Kindred helped guide a party of humans lead by a man named Esau Montrose, thinking that they would run the herd through dangerous territory the way a mortal being might shepherd cattle or sheep.

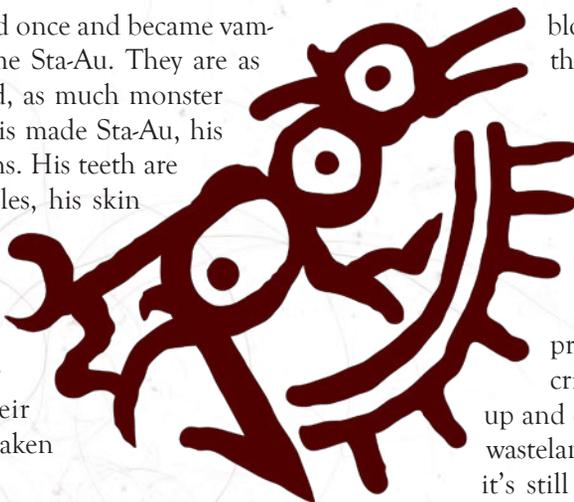
The attempt met with tragedy. The group encountered a mysterious land, bleak and blasted, a place lorded over by an enigmatic bloodline known as the Cruel and Wicked Ones. But emerging from that tragedy came an ethos suggesting that sometimes, the “food” supply needs protecting. Another bloodline came out of that – the vigilant Shepherds.

## STA-AU: THE CRUEL AND WICKED ONES

If you come with us, you come with us forever  
— into the Land of the Worms, and to the Sand Hills beyond.

They are twice-dead. They died once and became vampire, and died twice and became Sta-Au. They are as much ghost as they are Kindred, as much monster as they are human. When one is made Sta-Au, his soul is cut like cloth into ribbons. His teeth are made into a mouthful of needles, his skin bears the stains of death and the marks of his wickedness. To enter the lands of the Sta-Au, the Land of the Worms, is to leave tranquility and to enter tribulation. They measure their wealth in the skulls they have taken from their victims.

At least, that's what the Sta-Au would have others believe. Not all of it is off the mark, but it's certainly an embellishment. The vampires of the Sta-Au are not truly twice-dead – no, this is a symbol, a warning that to meet the Wicked Ones is to die one way or another, and those who are allowed to continue existing within the bloodline are not considered *spared*, but reborn. They are not ghosts, not at all, but they can *sense* ghosts, as if they have been urged closer to the cusp of this mortal coil (close enough to see over the edge and to perceive the limitless dead that waits below). Their teeth do not transform into terrible, needled fangs upon becoming Sta-Au. They file them down to those wretched points, expending the



blood and the will to keep them at their sharpest.

It's true about their territory, though. The Sta-Au claim the places of North America that are dead zones, places that are forever marked as *badlands* by both truth and legend. Certainly this continent has become profoundly developed. Highways criss-cross the nations, cities spring up and cast a sprawling net of suburban wasteland, tiny towns dot the map. But it's still home to distant places, places

where mankind hasn't gone, and perhaps won't ever go. Places that man thinks he cannot survive: blasted canyons, bleak tundra, wide-open spaces said to be marked by terrible winters or awful pollution or searing heat. That being said, some Sta-Au carve out small territories in the midst of the cities, too. Even a large metropolis can be home to places humanity avoids. Places like a trash-heap, or a small island in the river (a “potter's field”) where the nameless are buried, or an industrial park long left to rust and ruin.

Just what *are* the Sta-Au, then? What is it they want with these desolate places? The Sta-Au seek to become more than what they are. They seek to alter the limita-

tions placed on them as humans and vampires. They think themselves both punished for their wickedness and rewarded for being allowed a way to move past this corporeal state. They are, in essence, a misguided Golconda cult, believing that the path to becoming truly one of the gracious and wicked dead (as opposed to the “half-dead” that they are, now) is by exiling themselves in haunted dead-lands, letting their Humanity die off like fruit on a diseased vine.

### THE SAND HILLS

The “Sand Hills” is the Blackfoot Indian notion of Heaven, kind of a “Happy Hunting Ground” reached for the true warriors of the tribe.

For the Sta-Au, this idea remains, but has been perverted somewhat by their perspective as monsters. The Sand Hills are their interpretation of Golconda. Once they push past their awkward “half-existence,” straddling the worlds of life and death, they’ll be allowed to roam free in a blessed hunting grounds — the Sand Hills. They actually expect that their extant territories (the Land of the Worms) will change from the bleak and desolate places they are now into the sacred “hunting ground for glorious monsters” they desire.

**Parent Clan:** Unknown, though likely Mekhet or Gangrel; some within the bloodline believe that it has two founders, one from the Tunaxa people, one from the Tunaha. That being said, once one joins the bloodline, that individual eschews clan as an identifier (and vampires of any clan may become part of this lineage).

**Bloodline Disciplines:** Auspex, Obfuscate, Protean, Resilience (see sidebar, “Disciplines of the Twice-Dead”)

**Nickname:** Shades, the Twice-Dead

**Weakness:** The vampire keeps her current clan weakness, but in addition suffers a debilitating moral and mental frailty: the vampires of the Sta-Au may not regain lost Humanity. It is believed that by joining with the Wicked Ones, a vampire no longer needs his connection to the mortal, moral world, and so his Beast (or, if one believes the legends, one’s own shadow) prevents reclaiming Humanity lost to degeneration. Derangements gained from degeneration cannot be overcome.

**History and Culture:** The story the Wicked Ones tell to their own is this: the origin of the Twice-Dead began with two men who were exiled by their societies. They came from different peoples (some within the bloodline suggest that one man came from the Tunaxa or K’Tunaxa, while the other came from the Tunaha/Tunahe) but were both criminals cast out for their wickedness. The story

is quite clear on the point that neither of these men was dead at the time, and both were human and unfazed by the rising of the morning sun.

Some stories have these men forging a deep friendship in the blasted hills and badlands where they met in exile, while other branches of the tale have them falling in love. Either way, their relationship was not long for this world as they were both dying: they had no food and little water, and the days were hot and the nights cold. And so, the legend says, they lay there, poised on the edge of this world and nearly ready to tumble into the next. All the while it was clear to them that they would not receive a reward in the afterlife. They would not be allowed to hunt the Sand Hills, for they were wicked.

This revelation spared them, the Sta-Au claim. Ghosts — wicked shades, dark shadows — emerged, claiming the two men as their own. The spirits consumed what was left of the two men’s human souls, leaving them as almost ghosts themselves. The ghosts said that others would join them one day, and that they would not be alone as Wicked Ones. Someday, they might be able to complete the transformation into something greater than what they already are, and then they will be allowed to hunt the Sand Hills. In the meantime, they are meant to stay in the dark places, the distant reaches, forever exiled from the world of man. These places — the Land of the Worms — are themselves “exiles” of a sort, pushed to the margins of this physical world, touching the very edge of the realm of the dead. (More information on the Land of the Worms can be found on p. 40.)

And so it goes that the Wicked Ones are a curious (and to some, contemptible) breed of vampires that recognizes its own iniquity as a failing, yet also exalts such wickedness as being a path to not just enlightenment, but to a full-scale transformation of their condition. They are not a part of the world. The world is home to temptation in the form of *life* and *humanity*, and they seek to secede from such temptations.

Joining them is not a passive affair. One is not slowly drawn into the web of the Wicked One, seduced for so long that one evening a character wakes up and finds that his blood is that of those around him. Joining is far more active. A vampire either seeks out the Sta-Au, or they “claim” a potential member by abducting certain Kindred who brazenly wander into their territory. Even then, they ensure that the abducted has a choice to join. Those who refuse are considered sad, and deserving of pity for being unprepared to transform (note: not transcend) one’s nature. A swift death is the mercy that is given to them.

So why seek them out? A vampire might track down the Sta-Au for a number of reasons, some true, some based on deception. If the character thinks them a group truly closing in on Golconda, and Golconda is his greatest desire, it makes sense to walk among them. Another vampire may have grown weary of hiding among humans. In recognizing one's own base desires and sins, it isn't unusual to want to leave the world of temptation and find a place and a people who are willing to help you realize your full, awful potential. (For some, that's even a noble quest — "I don't want to hurt these people anymore, but I cannot make myself better." For others, it's selfish — "I am a monster, and I want a place where I am allowed and encouraged to be that very thing.")

Those who join them are considered truly dead, so much so that they are given a version of a Blackfoot funeral where the prospective member is "left for dead" in a tree, covered from the sun only by a heavy swaddling of dark blankets, and put to the mercy of hungry carrion birds. Those who survive the process are allowed to become full-fledged "shades" within the bloodline, considered twice-dead and as much ghost as vampire or human.

Times have changed the Sta-Au, somewhat. Once, they were monsters kept to the furthest-flung fringes, and all they needed to do was hunt. More fiend than common beast, they stalked the lands they called their own, the Land of the Worms — and any animal, human or vampire that would dare to wander into their domain was quick to become prey. They'd consume the blood and use the rest for leather, or build weapons from the bones, drums from the skulls, or blankets from the hair. Should other Kindred enter the Land of the Worms, they'd first measure them at a distance. They'd warn them away, making it very clear that to continue on was to take a step into a very bad land. Believing that they were not monsters for the sake of monstrosity, they'd even attempt to give potential prey three chances to turn away, to save themselves from a vile fate. Those who dared to ignore the warnings





(frankly, most everyone) were treated to the greatest of cruelties. Why shouldn't they be? They were forewarned.

Now, these incursions by outsiders happen all too often. The continent may still be home to some truly out-of-the-way places (think Saskatchewan forests, tracts of land high up in the Rockies, or long stretches of dead Mexican desert), but it's not like it was 200 years ago. People stumble into the Land of the Worms with far greater frequency: lost vacationers, explorers, scientists, drug-runners, isolationists and so forth. This isn't a bad thing, necessarily. It allows the Sta-Au to hunt within their territories far more frequently without sending out hunting parties (which they're known to do — they aren't bound to their territories), but it does ensure that they cannot be as exiled and isolated as they once were.

Physically, those of the bloodline have eschewed any native garb, though some elders still walk the world naked or dressed in very minimal deer leathers. Most mark themselves as monstrous in some way: filing teeth to points, scarification, branding, dizzying tattoos and so forth. Skulls are a common motif. Animal skulls are used as masks, or painted skulls like those found during the Mexican Day of the Dead are worn. (Skulls are also used as warnings, marking the edges of Wicked One territory.)

**Reputation:** Few know of them, so it's difficult to garner a widespread reputation. The Ordo Dracul is aware of the Sta-Au, and actually has a *very* loose alliance with those of the bloodline. They are given a pass to walk amongst the Wicked Ones so that the two groups may share secrets about the transformation of the vampiric condition (a few Sta-Au have even joined the covenant, but have done so against the wishes of the other Twice-Dead). Secretly, the

### DISCIPLINES OF THE TWICE-DEAD

The Discipline spread of this bloodline is unique, and given that a vampire of any clan can join the ranks of the Sta-Au, it raises some questions as to what should be done with the vampire's existing Disciplines.

The answer is simply that the vampire keeps all the dots in Disciplines already possessed, but once she joins the bloodline, only the four listed here are considered affinity for purposes of lowered experience costs. Raising other Disciplines — even those that were previously considered part of the original clan's set — now costs the full amount of experience as an "out-of-clan" purchase.

Wicked Ones accept that the Ordo Dracul will never truly transcend or transform the Kindred condition because to do so necessitates a refinement of the Blood, not membership in a club. It's true, of course, that the Coils *work*; the Dragons are theoretically on the right track. The Sta-Au, however, maintain that while the Dragons might be on to something, there's more to finding the Sand Hills than dodging the Curse.

Outside of what the Order of Dragons knows, the reputation that precedes the Sta-Au is one of mystery and urban legend. They represent one more grave warning whispered from sire to childe about the dangers of "going nomad." Wandering away from the city lights puts one in the center ring of a circus of monsters, and the Sta-Au are just one more bogeyman out there in the dark.

**Concepts:** Death-obsessed freak, exile from the Ordo Dracul, grief-struck loner, lost soul, Kindred nomad, unrepentant monster, vampiric embodiment of the Wendigo, scholar of atrocity, ghostly hitchhiker, hunter-turned-hunted

### *Devotions of the Sta-Au*

#### *Ghost Walk*

(Obfuscate ••, Protean •••••)

With this Devotion, the vampire can literally walk as a ghost, manifesting as a physically visible specter. The flesh fades, and becomes the corpus of the diaphanous dead.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** No roll is necessary.

**Action:** Takes one turn to complete transformation.

The vampire becomes a ghost in nearly every way, and the duration of this transformation is exactly one hour (no more, no less). The vampire's traits become those of a ghost's. The character's Power score equals the dots found in her highest Power Attribute (Intelligence, Strength, Presence), her Finesse is equal to the highest Finesse Attribute (Wits, Dexterity, Manipulation), and her Resistance is equal to the highest Resistance Attribute (Resolve, Stamina, Composure).

All other traits are determined from those scores (see Ghost Traits, **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 208). The character may hold up to 10 Essence, and begins with a number equal to her Willpower dots when using Ghost Walk. The character begins with no Numina, but may buy them using experience points at a cost of 6 points per Numen (Numina can be found on pp. 210-212, **World of Darkness Rulebook**). Any Numina purchased in this way can *only* be used during Ghost Walk, but are available every time the character uses the Devotion.

If the character takes enough damage to her Corpus to "destroy" her, she ceases to be a ghost, reassumes her corporeal state and enters torpor immediately after (but has no physical damage to her body). The torpor's duration is determined by Humanity and Blood Potency.

While a ghost, the character exists in Twilight, appearing only with a successful Manifestation (p. 210, **World of Darkness Rulebook**). During Ghost Walk, the character sees other ghosts and may communicate with them.

This Devotion costs 21 experience points to learn.

#### *Specter Sight*

(Auspex ••, Obfuscate ••)

The Sta-Au are not all keenly interested in the goings-on of the spectral dead, but many are. Vampires may be dead, but they have not seen "the other side." Ghosts, on the other hand, have crossed a critical boundary between the worlds of life and death and are not forced to exist in either. The Sta-Au don't necessarily revere ghosts, but they do respect them and their condition. This Devotion helps them interact with the ephemeral and restless dead.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae per scene

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Occult + Auspex

**Action:** Instant

With this Devotion active, for one scene the Wicked One may see all ghosts and entities lurking in a state of Twilight. In addition, she can communicate with them using no special roll, and also gains an automatic "aura perception" regarding all ghosts. This also doesn't require any additional roll. All ghosts are seen to manifest an aura representing that entity's feelings or "state of mind." (Use the "Aura Signifiers" sidebar on p. 120 of **Vampire: The Requiem**.)

This Devotion costs 12 experience points to learn.

#### *Whisper of War*

(Protean •••, Resilience ••)

An attack happens in a painfully short moment of time: in half-a-second, the hatchet falls and scrapes away the scalp or a tumbling shotgun slug punches a hole in an enemy's breastbone. The Sta-Au have a way of casting their flesh into Twilight for the moment in which an attack would normally come crashing against them — leaving the hatchet or the bullet to pass harmlessly through.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** No roll is necessary.

**Action:** Reflexive

The vampire must perform this Devotion at the beginning of a turn of combat before any others have acted (it's

reflexive, and as such does not need to happen in order of Initiative). If the character uses it in the middle of a combat turn and not at the beginning, it applies to the next turn of combat.

After activating this Devotion, the vampire's flesh becomes inconsistent for the one-to-three seconds that comprise a combat turn. She may appear to flicker or blur at the edges. Any attacks that fall to her this turn simply

pass through her body — an arrow whistles through air and finds no purchase, a fist strikes nothing, a spray of buckshot peppers the wall behind her. Obviously, a character who uses this Devotion to avoid an attack cannot take one of her own, as her body is insubstantial. She can, however, use her action to move, speak or do anything else that doesn't require physically interacting with the world around her.

This Devotion costs 15 experience points to learn.

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### PLAYING THE STA-AU

It may seem that these guys would make great antagonists, and they would. But that's not the mode of play we're advertising. We want you to use the Sta-Au as characters. They're morally complex, recognizing their monstrous natures without glorifying or exalting the monstrousness.

The Sta-Au represent an option for characters who have perhaps gone too far down the moral dark hole, or have grown weary of the damage done to their loved ones. The bloodline offers a "controlled slide" downward — yes, they fail to regain lost Humanity, but in isolation it's impossible to degrade swiftly. The Wicked Ones meditate on their awfulness. They offer warning, and thus chances for escape, to those who might suffer from their monstrousness. What follows are a handful of story hooks you might want to use as the basis for a Sta-Au character or coterie:

- Hunting has been difficult. The Sta-Au number too many, and they're pushing themselves inevitably to a dangerous and hungry edge. One coterie must go out and travel to a populated area (the closest big city, say) and hunt. But it can never be so simple, can it? The coterie, returning to the "human world" after a long exile, now must confront other Kindred (who claim the city as their domain) and humanity as a whole. The goal is to bring back a herd of humans who can serve the Sta-Au for a time, but moving a dozen or more people (read: abduction) isn't easy, and is probably considered poaching. What other complexities await the characters back in the big city?
  - One among the Sta-Au has achieved what the bloodline aims to do: he has become something different, a true monster, a hybrid of ghost and vampire with the Humanity burned out of him. He is frightening and powerful. Do the characters so detest what he has become that they must escape the Sta-Au and warn others? Do they want to learn his powers before destroying him? Or will they worship at his feet, learning from him as good disciples?
  - The Land of the Worms (p. 40) is filled with ghosts, and in the blasted lands the dead are far easier to see and interact with — right there a wealth of stories exist. The restless dead need resolution. The Sta-Au, to learn more about death and what lies beyond the pale, often seek to aid ghosts in return for knowledge. They help usher the spirits to the next world or instead assist them in exercising their most fundamental urges (revenge, contact with a loved one, achieving physical sensation).
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# SHEPHERDS

Remember: I'm watching you. Don't get greedy.

Think of the way a shepherd tends to his flock. The herder watches over the sheep. He stays nearby, he directs them, he keeps them safe from wolves and starvation and disease. And then, when the time is right, he exploits the animals for their milk, wool and meat.

That's what the Shepherds do. These Savages stand guard over the food supply – that food being the human herd from which vampires feed. Admittedly, it's not *just* about food, given that humans are powerful resources in ways beyond being just walking, talking bags of blood, but that still speaks to a core need to keep the herd relatively safe. Either way, whatever a human offers, he can't be utilized if he's dead or on the run. The herd is best when kept docile and ignorant.

The Shepherds call this idea the “Fourth Tradition,” or the “Tradition of the Herd.” They claim that it's just as important as the other three Traditions supposedly put forth by the Camarilla so many centuries ago, and that the Kindred have grown gluttonous and indulgent with the food supply. Any sense of moderation has gone out the window, and now the vampires let their Beasts have a taste whenever they see fit – often leaving a trail of bloodless bodies as a result.

That doesn't help anyone. The herd gets spooked, and then it withdraws. At night, they lock doors and windows. They don't go out to the clubs as much, and the hookers all carry razors and Tasers and even pistols, none of which will stop a hungry vampire, but can all cause more than a degree of trouble. They call the police. Someone investigates the bodies, the blood spatter, the flakes of dead flesh left behind. They grow aware. Vampire hunters arise. The herd knows it's being hunted. The Masquerade shudders and fractures.

The Shepherds seek to stop this wanton disregard for the herd. And so they do what seems anathema to many Kindred: they protect the humans from vampiric excess.

**Parent Clan:** Gangrel

**Bloodline Disciplines:** Animalism, Obfuscate, Protean, Resilience

**Nickname:** Watchers, Herders



**Weakness:** In addition to having to endure the normal Gangrel weakness (p. 107, **Vampire: The Requiem**), the Shepherds also suffer from being too “human.” This doesn't actually bring them any *closer* to humanity, but instead casts them further from their own people and nature. As a result, Blood Potency is particularly difficult to gain. The vampire only receives one dot of Blood Potency per 100 years and the experience cost to purchase new dots in Blood Potency is now new dots x 10. In addition, a Shepard who tries to commit diablerie must accumulate *double* the usual number of successes (see p. 158 of **Vampire: The Requiem**).

**History and Culture:** It began during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century with the Montrose Party – a group of humans heading Westward toward Oregon.

They were not alone. With them came a number of young Kindred, moving the “flock” of humans through the wilderness the way a cattleman might move his herd dozens of miles so the beasts could have grass to graze on. It was a curious experiment – neither man nor vampire had ever easily crossed such a wild expanse before. It was also a *failed* experiment: the Montrose Party was beset by a wild tribe of horrific vampires, seemingly not Kindred at all (the Sta-Au). Few survived, most perishing at the hands of the monsters, others claimed by them.

One of those who did survive *and* escape was Greta Devenpeck, a Gangrel who had a powerful way of blending in with the human herd, hiding in plain sight. Despite what was ostensibly a coldly pragmatic solution (usher the food supply to a place where the vampire herders could act as kings), she had formed a certain connection to the people of the Montrose Party – in much the same way as a keeper feels about a dumb hound or a stubborn herd of goats. Greta had come to know these people intimately. She'd discerned their quirks, watched their relationships unfold, and of course tasted their blood from time to time. And then, like that, they were all gone. Dead, because she and the others couldn't protect them (couldn't even protect themselves, truth told).

It was traumatic, and it changed her. Back in towns and cities, she found she could stand in a crowd of humans

## WHITE HATS

The reality is, the Shepherds aren't the "good guys" just because they keep humans safe. They're basically just pragmatic predators, tending to the flock the way a cautious drug dealer keeps his customers from killing themselves so that they can continue to indulge their addictions. A parasite does best when it keeps the host alive, right?

Still, pop culture is home to a number of anti-hero protagonists, and **Vampire: The Requiem** falls in line with that idea from time to time. The Shepherds in particular can play — if you and your Storyteller agree — as something a bit more high-minded and heroic, if need be. They still *play* at being pragmatic predators, but in this more optimistic version, they're actually unwittingly or willfully keeping the herd safe because they strive against the Beast within and the evils of Kindred society. They're the bulwark against cruel predation, and thus you have a mode in which your vampire Shepherd can be more of a "good guy" than you'd perhaps find in a standard mode of play.

and they'd barely even notice her. The sheep did not see the wolf that stood among them in full sight. Years later, while on the East Coast, Greta came to notice things about people: sometimes, the herd would grow spooked. If too many fell victim to monstrous predations, they'd start to circle the wagons (so to speak), standing vigil over one another, shuttering the windows at night. Even a mote of awareness blooming in ignorance became dangerous, and when the vampires had trouble feeding, the competition over resources became all the fiercer. Fat and happy, the Kindred had an easier road to peace. Lean and hungry, they tore at each other like starving dogs.

Greta and her coterie took it unto themselves to police the overindulgences of their kind. If they caught a Kindred slaking his thirst like a mad dog, leaving a trail of bodies, they came to that animal and did what anybody would do with a rabid beast: they gave it swift mercy with stake and axe. From Devenpeck and her coterie of Savages grew the transformed blood of the Shepherds. It's why they're more than just a small covenant of vampires. The Blood shifted within them. They are wolves who walk in shadow, they are hunters in darkness. But above all else, they are Shepherds.

Joining is as easy or as difficult as making a mark on one of the local Shepherds. One must of course be judged worthy. If a Gangrel has given herself over to hungry excesses too many times, the Shepherds will cast her to the curb (or destroy her outright). But if she can prove her devotion to

moderation, to the safety of the herd and not to her own raw desires, then they'll give her a proper look.

The Shepherds don't dress in any notable way, and in fact are purposefully *non-notable*. They wear non-descript clothes for the most part, and keep their hair and any makeup to acceptable but not extreme levels (unless, of course, the general fashions of an area suggest such a thing — the goal is to blend, not to be a dullard in a room full of fashion mavens, or a golf caddy walking amidst a gaggle of homeless).

**Reputation:** Their reputation is, at best, mixed. Some value their presence. They can be a bit self-righteous and icy, and it's downright spooky the way they often just *appear* (sometimes with two or three of them in tow), but for the most part they're actually fulfilling a useful function for the good of Kindred society. Some Princes keep them on retainer, and make them a valuable part of "the organization." Many Shepherds have even ended up as sheriffs and seneschals.

The problem is, most of the Damned aren't interested in "the good of Kindred society." They want to eat. They want to party. They want to fuck and kill and run and laugh. What the Shepherds warn against is something most don't ever see — while a snowball effect does indeed occur when a vampire indulges in gross feeding excesses, most are too blind to really notice it. And, even if they *do* notice it, who cares? Blood's the same two blocks over, so the vampire simply moves his hunting ground.

And that attitude makes the Shepherds seem like sanctimonious conservationists of the most annoying order... which further makes them enemies to any Prince or Archbishop or pack of snarling nomads. It's a bit of a vicious circle. The Shepherds end up hunted, but they themselves are capable hunters. Factions clash, and in the interim, the human herd suffers anyway. It's a struggle the Shepherds must endure; truthfully, those of the bloodline have yet to safely navigate such troubled waters in most cities.

**Concepts:** Embattled Prince, helpful sire, Kindred pragmatist, reserved glutton, self-righteous castigator, seneschal, survivalist, wary sheriff, trend-setter, penitent avenger

### *Devotions of the Shepherds*

#### *Circle the Wagons*

(Animalism •, Protean •••, Resilience •••)

Humans are weak. It's a sad fact, but that's how the Shepherds see it. The herd is dumb and fallible and frail, and must sometimes be actively protected. This Devotion helps a Watcher do that very thing, affording the herd some measure of genuine physical protection.



**Cost:** 1 Vitae per scene

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Survival + Resilience

**Action:** Reflexive

Success on the roll causes the Shepherd to give off an aura of safety. This aura extends in a radius around the character equal to that character's Resilience score in yards. Any within that area of effect (humans and Kindred alike) gain a bonus to Defense equal to the Shepherd's own Defense, and are also able to downgrade all damage done to them while within that radius (aggravated becomes lethal, lethal becomes bashing, bashing remains bashing). The downside is, while this applies to those the Shepherd hopes to protect, it also applies to *any* close combatant within that area of effect, even an enemy. Worse, it does nothing to protect the character himself, though certainly the Shepherd is free to use his own Resilience as protection.

This Devotion costs 21 experience points to learn.

### *The Herd's Measure*

(Auspex •, Animalism ••, Obfuscate ••)

It's easy enough to test if a well of water has gone bad, but for vampires, it's much more difficult to determine if their food supply has been "poisoned," so to speak. This Devotion, grown out of the Shepherds' nightly activities, helps them gauge the tenor and mood of a crowd, and react accordingly.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Empathy + Animalism

**Action:** Extended (target number based on size of crowd – for every 10 people present, an additional success is required; each roll is equal to two turns' worth of observation).

The Shepherd walks among the people, silently observing, occasionally touching a passerby. Over time, she starts to gauge the dominant mood of the crowd – panicked, happy, content, ignorant, angry, etc. It doesn't allow her to pick out the anomalies from the group, however. If one person is frightened among a herd of otherwise happy mortals, this Devotion does not identify that individual as being separate from the herd.

In addition to gauging mood, this Devotion also provides two ancillary effects. The first is that the vampire blends into the crowd more easily, gaining +1 to Stealth rolls. The second effect is that, by knowing the mood of the crowd, she can more easily exploit the prevailing feelings of the herd to her advantage. She can add her dots in Empathy to any Social rolls she makes with those members of the crowd given over to the dominant emo-

tion. Alternately, Empathy rolls gain a dice bonus equal to the character's Animalism score.

This Devotion works on animals, too. The Empathy bonus goes toward Animal Ken rolls in such an instance.

This Devotion costs 15 experience points to learn.

### ANIMALISM IS FOR PEOPLE TOO?

The two Devotions featured with the Shepherds both use Animalism in a way that affects humans, which is a bit odd given the Discipline's name. Here, Animalism is meant to represent the herd — both animals and humans give off certain "herd signals," such as when danger is around or when hungry, and so the Discipline can be applied in these Devotions. (In addition, make note that despite its name, Animalism is as much about the Beast within as it is about *actual* animals. It's about forging a sympathetic connection between bestial intentions, not specifically about talking to or commanding animals.)



# MYSTERIOUS PLACE: THE LAND OF THE WORMS

Some places are truly dead: arid deserts, desolate canyons, rotten forests and so forth. These places comprise the Land of the Worms. The Land of the Worms is not a single location, despite its name. However, certainly some vampires believe that all territories given over to this bleak and blasted condition are somehow connected spiritually, and perhaps even physically.

Life may grow there, but it isn't healthy. Leaves are curled and spotted, branches gnarled, and the wildlife limps about or suffers from strange tumors and other uncategorized diseases. (Vermin are a notable exception to this: rats and gnats, worms and germs, all do quite well in the Land of the Worms.)

The sky is typically gray. The sun rarely shines. It rains often enough — a greasy, sometimes sulfurous-smelling downpour.

It needn't be out in the wilderness, though most of these accursed places are. Some linger in cities. Someone tries to build, to “develop,” on the Land of the Worms. It works, insofar as a structure goes up successfully. But it soon becomes a ruined place as the dead and desolate aura gathers its strength anew and reclaims the land. A fire runs through a factory, leaving it a charred and gutted husk, or a massive landfill becomes so hazardous that it must be locked away and left to the cancerous ravens that call it home.

The Sta-Au call the Land of the Worms their territory, but it seems clear that they do not make these places what they are. They simply gather there, finding a kind of sympathetic connection with such a ruined locale. In fact, the Wicked Ones accept that these places (jointly called the Land of the Worms) have always been here and will always be here: dead places favorable to dead things. Ghosts and vampires belong there. It is their monstrous land.

## *Grim Territory*

The Land of the Worms is always marked. The Sta-Au set out obvious symbols, usually skulls and other bones painted with black ink or blood. And yet, the Sta-Au are not present everywhere. The bloodline is generally only found in North America, and the Land of the Worms bleeds its dead energies into parts of the world where the Wicked Ones have never visited. Those who know how to look for the proper signs may find that the Land of the Worms is marked in other, subtler ways.

## WASTELANDS OF ONE KIND OR ANOTHER

If you have access to **Promethean: The Created**, the Land of the Worms might look somewhat familiar. The Wastelands that Prometheans create don't spring from the same source as the Land of the Worms (necessarily, though you're free to draw a connection if it works for your chronicle), but the effects are similar. Therefore, when any of the Created enter such a place, they do not contribute to the Wasteland. These places are immune to the effect. Prometheans may very well find a kind of strange solace in such locals, and these may be some of the places where they end up when they “go to the Wastes.”

Success on a Wits + Composure roll or a focused Wits + Occult roll may alert a character to a number of odd designators that seem to mark a territory's edge. Some examples include: a line of sun-bleached salt, a row of ants that won't cross into the dead land, bits of shattered quartz, dead birds (non-carrion birds usually, such as doves or mockingbirds) lying about every 50 feet or so, a thin trail of foul-smelling slime (like that left behind by a slug or snail), or a creeping vine of dark and withered ivy. Certainly a Storyteller is encouraged to come up with his own mix of strange markings.

If the vampire has powers that allow her to see ghosts or spirits, merely possessing those powers grants a +3 to the Perception rolls noted above.

## *Elements and Effects*

When one crosses over into the Land of the Worms, the following elements and effects should be considered in play:

- Ghosts are more spiritually “in tune” with the strange land. As a result, any ghost within the Land of the Worms gains +3 to rolls made to manifest or to use Numina.
- This so-called “dead zone” exudes an enervating presence. A living creature (vampires are excluded, as they are not alive) can not heal any lethal or aggravated damage while within the Land of the Worms. Bashing damage heals, but it instead takes one *day* to heal a single point of bashing damage.

- The enervation has another, more sinister effect: those living creatures that lurk too long in the Land of the Worms begin to suffer from some manner of disease, whether born from an infected wound or manifested out of nowhere. Diseases are rarely deadly, but wasting: walking pneumonia, cancerous growths, rheumatoid arthritis. Generally, a creature must spend at least a full week in the Land of the Worms (of uninterrupted duration) before such malaise and sickness set in.
- Any human who perishes within the Land of the Worms becomes a ghost that is bound to the place. All such ghosts have these dead zones as their anchors.
- Food turns to ash in one's mouth, and sleep is impossible to achieve — one only tosses and turns, unable to find restfulness. However, one doesn't *need* to eat or sleep while within the Land of the Worms. A human certainly grows hungry and weary, but does not suffer penalties from hunger, thirst or fatigue. This rule doesn't apply to vampires: vampires must slumber during the day, and must also feed on blood.
- The sun, however, is not nearly as potent in the Land of the Worms. It always seems bleary and washed-out, always concealed behind layers of haze and murk. Vampires suffer lethal damage, rather than aggravated, from sunlight.

### *Theories*

So just what is the Land of the Worms? Physically and spiritually, such places exist, but exactly how and why they exist is by no means clear. The following theories are meant to help give some potential context to those characters seeking to study the mystery of these bleak and blasted lands.

- The journals of the Nosferatu, Victor Blackcloud, may provide some elucidation. Blackcloud, when human, had some Blackfoot blood in him (though he largely eschewed any connection to his native peoples). Upon becoming a vampire, Victor used the change as an opportunity to search out some of his heritage — not for genealogical interests, but because Victor's sire was in the Circle of the Crone and he went in search of old Blackfoot magic. His research eventually led Victor into the Land of the Worms, a place the Wicked Ones had not claimed as their territory. Victor walked the lands in search of a mysterious vampire known only as Killed Many Times, but he never found the enigmatic figure. During his many weeks within the dead zone, however, Victor kept a small leather-bound journal illustrating

the nightmares he suffered during daysleep and the many hallucinations and ghostly experiences encountered at night. Victor Blackcloud never emerged from the Land of the Worms, and hasn't been seen since. His journal, however, made it out, and has been passed around as a "curious read." It's filled with odd puzzles, ciphers, and symbolic drawings. Some of the journal seems to detail a belief that Victor grew to possess — that the Land of the Worms is meant to serve as a "staging ground" for some "ancient parasite" known as the Helminth. More and more, Victor became convinced that his body was home to an infestation of worms, and he tied this belief to the land which, he claimed, would one day be "teeming with giant worms."

- Scholars of the Ordo Dracul have posited that these places are themselves ghosts. Once, such locals were home to something or someone: powerful monoliths, ancient villages, forgotten temples. Something destroyed them, perhaps some cosmic or biological event (deluge, comet, disease), and it left these places as scars on the spiritual surface of the Earth. They are, these Damned believe, the antithesis to Dragon's Nests.
- The Sta-Au (p. 30) claim that the Land of the Worms is meant to serve as a proving ground for them in particular. If they could one day move past this transitive state of existing as vampires, they would transform into something different, something greater and more pure than what they already are. Doing so would in turn transform these dead zones into glorious hunting grounds, the Blackfoot's mythical idea of Heaven, the Sand Hills.

### *Story Hooks*

The following are story hooks using the Land of the Worms, to better help you bring it into your **Vampire: The Requiem** game.

- The blood hunt has been called, but the target of that hunt has escaped — and he has fled into a place plainly marked as the Land of the Worms. It might be way out in the middle of nowhere, but it could also be in the midst of the city (a burned out housing project, for instance). The characters are selected to continue the hunt well beyond the expected territory because the Prince, or their sires, has a bloody-minded desire to punish this transgressor. They must track him into this dismal place, warding off the Sta-Au and attacks by vengeful ghosts. What happens when they find their prey? Do they discover he has already been destroyed? Or has he accepted this place in his dead, dark heart, perhaps even

becoming one with the Wicked Ones? Regardless, the Land of the Worms only serves to complicate their mission.

- Some nomads pass through the city, and the characters learn from these outsiders that there is a way to “travel between worlds.” It’s dangerous, but it’s fast — no more long journeys through hundreds of miles of empty space or Lupine territory. One merely needs to find these dead places (i.e. Land of the Worms), and in each can be found a door or a gateway marked with odd sigils. These doorways will take a vampire to *another* dead place, maybe dozens or even hundreds of miles away. In other words,

they’ve found the truth of the matter, that all the dead zones are connected into one big-yet-broken Land of the Worms. Of course, exploiting these mystical gateways is no easy task... but the nomads don’t really make that part clear.

- The news hits Elysium: next month will be an auction, and the journals of Victor Blackcloud (above, under “Theories”) will be put up for bid. The characters’ sire or patron makes it very clear — get those journals at any cost. Steal them, buy them, kill the auction winner, whatever. Their master is willing to shatter the Masquerade to get this journal and learn more about the Land of the Worms. But why?



**OBJECT ID:** 07.09.04ac

**CULTURAL AFFILIATION:** Blackfoot Indian

**DATE OF MANUFACTURE:** Unknown; organic

**PLACE OF MANUFACTURE:** Unknown; organic

**MANUFACTURING TECHNIQUE/MATERIALS:** Primary artifact consists of a human skull, the jawbone re-attached to the rest using braided rawhide (deer leather). Accompanying skull are rawhide cords, non-braided, that held skull in place (see Location Found). Symbols painted on skull analyzed; material found to be mixture of human and animal blood (animal uncertain — possibly coyote). Teeth whetted to points, marks on canines and molars suggest sandstone.

**SIZE:** From forehead to occiput, 21 cm. Width of head ~ 17 cm. Approximate circumference is 54 cm.

**LOCATION FOUND:** Ditch Creek, Black Hills, South Dakota. This skull and four others like it lined the far edge of the creek, wound around dead bur oaks, each approximately 25 meters from one another. Connected to trees w/rawhide cord (see image above). Skulls found no higher than three meters off ground, pointing outward, toward (currently dry) creek bed.

**PURPOSE:** Uncertain. Symbols (see below) may suggest warding off of evil, or marking of territory.

**DESIGNS/SYMBOLS:** Symbol (1) on crest of forehead: medicine wheel. Circle split by a cross, each quadrant further divided by thinner, more finely-painted lines. Symbol (2) on right cheekbone: an ‘X.’ Symbol (3) on left cheekbone, three dark lines (similar to those found on some Blackfoot tipis). Symbols (4) found on inside of jawbone: seven inverted horses. Interpretation uncertain. Horses indicate hunting and life (see Coates, Blackfoot Symbolology, page 178), “vigor of warrior.” Inversion may mean death or prey. Cheekbone symbols indicate warding off of (or containing) evil. Medicine wheel sacred among Blackfeet, the tradition picked up from earliest pre-Blackfoot inhabitants (Tunaxa/Tunaha). Wheel symbolizes all directions, but here may indicate something as straightforward as territory (Coates, page 192).

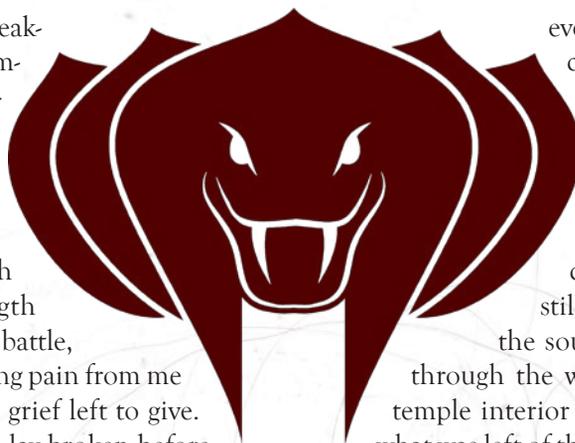
# BLOODLINES OF THE AGE OF TREACHERY (CE 1857)

In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Kindred of India first became known to the wider world during the rapid imperialistic expansion of the great European powers. Their strange, insular culture – unlike anything practiced by the European Kindred who came to the Indian subcontinent with the explorers, merchants, and diplomats of their homelands – at first acted as a barrier to successful social interaction with the newcomers. It then became a successful weapon against the native vampires, as internal pressures and external manipulations triggered a devastating internecine bloodwar among the Indian bloodlines in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. A century and a half later, the consequences of that treachery are about to come home for all.

## *Amara Havana*

Do you truly think yourself my equal, when the blood of warrior gods flows in my veins?

It was one of the most heartbreaking things I have ever seen: Amara's ruin smoking in the moonlight, the scent of gun-powder and rock-dust still hanging in the air, thick enough to taste, and beneath that blood and death-ashes. I was numb with exhaustion already, my strength drained to the dregs by nights of battle, and yet the sight struck me, wrung pain from me when I thought I had no more grief left to give. Amara, the heart of my people, lay broken before me, and I knew that the ash I tasted belonged to my sire, and my sire's sire, and all of my kin, broken along with it. They would not have abandoned the ancient temple-sanctuary to be defaced and despoiled by foreigners, living or dead. They would not have abandoned our king to be slaughtered by assassins unless they themselves could fight no more. A wrathful madness seized me, and for a searing moment all I wanted was to kill – had anything or anyone been unfortunate enough to come upon me, then, it would have ended the night in bloody shreds. As I came closer, across the fields torn by horses' hooves and artillery caissons, the furious madness ebbed away and an even more terrible anguish took its place. It was



even worse than I had feared, than could be seen at a distance, the whole of the temple's outer face was simply gone, pummeled to rubble and buried in the landslide caused by the wholesale collapse of the hill's crown. Beneath my feet, the earth still trembled from time to time and the sound of falling stone echoed out through the wreckage, as the collapse of the temple interior had not yet finished. I knelt in what was left of the outermost court and could not even find in myself the desire to move as the sky slowly paled with oncoming dawn. I wept, and whispered quiet pleas for the souls of my dead, and would have stayed to join them, had not Narayan found me there and forced me to my feet, his hoarse voice insisting that all was not yet lost. It was true, though I did not believe him at that moment. The temple was not wholly destroyed. The deepest chambers survived, and were re-excavated and reinforced in slow and careful stages over many years. We return there now by hidden ways, to take counsel among one another, and to whisper our questions to the ghosts of the warriors who came before us, and to fear for the future of our people. Or, at least, I do.

Thus it is written in the puranas of the Amara Havana:

The asura Mahishasura, blessed for the purity of his piety, the many austerities of his existence, and his unflinching adherence to the dharma of his kind, could be neither conquered nor slain by the hand of any god or man. The terror of the three worlds, he conquered Heaven and drove forth all the gods, whose weapons were powerless against him, and sowed chaos and destruction upon the helpless Earth. In secret, the mightiest of the gods came together upon the banks of the holiest of waters and offered to the universe their prayer: that the Great Goddess should send forth a savior in her own form, a warrior goddess mightier than any man or god, whose strength could save Heaven and Earth from ruin at the hands of the demon none of them could slay. Their prayer was heard, and from the waters she came with ten arms to bear the weapons that were powerful in her hands, and three eyes to see all that had befallen the realms of Heaven and Earth and the Underworld, and a tongue that wished to taste the blood of demons.

The battle between the mighty warrior goddess and the pious demon shook the Heavens and the Earth, and raged from the sea to the sky, from the mountains to the plains, and across the length and breadth of the three worlds. For nine days and nine nights they fought with one another, neither able to claim victory, and the blood of the goddess and the demon rained down upon the Earth and the creatures that dwelt upon it, transfiguring all that it touched in the demon-haunted world. The men and women upon whom the goddess's blood fell suffered from its touch, first with a terrible heat that burnt away their mortal lives. Then a terrible cold gripped their souls, and when they rose from where they were stricken, they were neither human, nor god, nor demon, but some part of all. A fierce hunger was upon them, a desire to sup upon the blood of the asuras who, following Mahishasura, had risen from the dark places of the world to slake their lusts upon the people of the Earth while the gods could do naught to aid or comfort those who cried out to them for succor. And so, since the gods were helpless, the new-born warriors, in whose veins ran the blood of both gods and demons, took up their arms for the first time to slay the despoilers of their world.

Thus it is written:

On the tenth day, the goddess was victorious. Her blade parted the hideous head of Mahishasura from his shoulders and the asura armies that the fiend had drawn into his service fell back in horror and dismay, to be pursued and driven back into the darkness from whence they had come. Shining with the gentle light of the newest of crescent moons, the goddess descended into the broken, ravaged world and surveyed it with sorrow in her heart. As the last light of the day died, the warriors who wore her blood as their mantle came forth from the darkness in which they had fought and suffered and knelt in supplication at the goddess's feet, to beg her mercy and her blessing. To them, she extended her hand and, laying it upon their brows, she found that she could not take back the change that had transfigured them — but she could acknowledge the value of what they had become, and charge them to keep and carry out the dharma of kings and warriors so long as they continued to exist. These first warriors accepted that blessing, that responsibility, and the name that the goddess gave to them: Amara Havana, the Deathless Sacrifice, who had offered their flesh and souls to the struggle against asuras and adharma and whose faith could no more perish than they.

Thus it was written, and thus it remains.

**Parent Clan:** Daeva

**Bloodline Disciplines:** Celerity, Majesty, Sakti Pata, Vigor

**Nickname:** Guardians

**Weakness:** As with their parent clan, the Amara Havana have difficulty resisting the darker passions of their natures (see p. 105 of *Vampire: The Requiem*).

Additionally, accepting membership into the Amara Havana forever stains the vampires with blood. All Guardians leave bloody handprints on whatever they touch. This blood is illusory; it does not feel wet, and does not transfer to other surfaces. The player can expend Willpower to cancel this effect for a scene, just as he can to make the vampire's reflection appear normal (see p. 170 of *Vampire: The Requiem*).

**History and Culture:** The Amara Havana hold themselves to be the literal descendants of gods (or, rather, a goddess) and of demons, the offspring of a war that raged thousands of years before humanity even possessed the means to record its history. During this dark time, the world was overrun with both *asuras* (immensely powerful

spiritual beings who were neither gods nor demons, and which could be malicious or benevolent and were often both) and demons hostile to both humankind and the gods. These entities were released, from the prisons and vows binding them, by the demon king Ravana, through his own rebellion against the gods and the strictures of the universe's ordered adherence to *dharma*. It was a time of great terror and strife in Heaven, Earth and the Underworld, the horror fueled by the fact that many of the mightiest demons were pious enough to have achieved divinely which protected them from death except by specific circumstances. Such was the case of the shapeshifter buffalo-demon Mahishasura, whose piety and prayers to Brahma had been rewarded with a body that could not be slain by any man or god and who achieved the conquest of Heaven as a result. In order to defeat and destroy him, the three greatest gods — Vishnu, Shiva, and Brahma — offered their prayers to the holy river Ganges to bring forth a champion for the gods, and thus was born the goddess Durga, the warrior aspect of the great goddess Mahadevi. The mightiest of the gods gave her their most powerful weapons, the mountains

gifted her with a white tiger to ride into battle, and she went forth to destroy the demon that could not be slain by any but a woman warrior.

Unlike several other Indian bloodlines, the Amara Havana do not believe that their patron deity actually incarnated as one of their own in order to found their lineage. Rather, when the blood of the goddess Durga and the *asura* Mahishasura rained down from their battle in heaven, those who were bathed in that blood were forever transformed by the touch of mingled divine and demonic essence. When the battle between the goddess and the demon ended in her victory, she descended to the ravaged Earth to set in motion its healing. When the first vampires of this bloodline knelt to her in supplication and prayed for her blessing, she answered those prayers with a boon of great power. Mighty and compassionate though she was, even the goddess could not purify them of the demon-taint to their blood, nor could she make them truly immortal. Instead she set forth conditions by which death could claim them, rendering them immune to age or disease, and vulnerable only to fire and the weapons of other warriors. She also decreed that the tainted blood that had so changed them would be the strongest of their weapons, anointing them as her chosen warriors, the rulers and guardians of their people by night as the mortal *kshatriya* were the rulers and guardians of the day. Thus, the Amara Havana consider themselves, and all other vampires, to be a form of *asura*, neither god nor man nor demon, but an admixture of all three, who have chosen a way of righteousness and self-sacrifice for the sake of *dharma* and the life of the universe itself.

This history is recorded in the *puranas* sacred to the bloodline as a whole and, in general, they do not credit the attitudes of western Kindred concerning the unlikelihood of their origin. If the westerners choose to believe that there are none in the world older than a thousand years, their delusions are of no concern to those who know better. The eldest vampires of the Amara Havana remember Harappa at the height of its power. The eldest of their lineage hand down artifacts, bearing the tongue of the ancient Indus, to the younger generations. They keep faith with the *dharma* laid out for them in the *puranas* and *vedas* and, as far as they are concerned, this is all that truly matters. Some Kindred of this bloodline even go so far as to believe that the western Daeva clan descends from them and not the other way around – with these westerners being the offspring of those too weak to adhere to the demands of *rajadharma*, who fled the cradle of the blood to hide their cowardice. This attitude naturally does not much endear them to their western cousins. Among the

Kindred bloodlines of India, the Amara Havana generally consider only one other bloodline to be their peer in terms of ancient pedigree – the Nosferatu Rakshasa bloodline, with whom they have enjoyed a relationship that has ranged from semi-amicable rivalry to open, bloody warfare – and only one to be their superior, the *kshatriya* bloodline of the Mekhet, called the Ananta Naga.

In strict truth, no one knows precisely how old the Amara Havana really are, though they, like the Rakshasa, claim a history that stretches back thousands of years beyond the accepted limits of early human history. Certainly, there were vampires present and active within the Indus culture back then, though whether any of the current Indian Kindred bloodlines are direct descendants of those vampires is debatable. In practice, the Kindred of India make those claims and very few in the world could possibly gainsay them – they accept that history as true and teach it to their neonates as fact, admitting very little debate on the issue. In essence, the Amara Havana have retained their own startlingly resilient and contiguous internal culture by virtue of a fundamentalist attitude about their own history, which has admitted no editorial or adjustment by outside social forces. While the Rakshasa were falling under the “civilizing” sway of the *brahmins* for the first time, the Amara Havana were refining their own understanding of *rajadharma* to a razor’s edge without the need of such interference in their internal affairs. While the *brahmin* Kindred would have their own kind and the westerners believe that all the foremost advances of vampire society can be credited to their account, the *kshatriya* bloodlines in general, and the Amara Havana in particular, know otherwise.

The nocturnal battles, that secured the safety of the *brahmin* Kindred to practice their sorceries and develop their philosophies, were fought by the *kshatriya*. The blood that watered the mountains and plains and forests of India flowed from the veins of her warriors, living and dead. The burden of rulership was laid by the decree of the gods on the shoulders of those most fit to bear it, and those shoulders did not reside in the *brahmin* bloodlines. It became, over a period of some five centuries, a matter of not inconsiderable grievance that the princes of the Amara Havana would take counsel with the *brahmin* Kindred, would listen to the religious teachings of the *brahmin* Kindred, and would willingly do the fighting for the *brahmin* Kindred, but would not permit themselves or their dominions to be governed by a sorcerer-priest from behind their own thrones. Where the Amara Havana held sway, they *were* the rulers.

Matters stood thus at the dawn of the 19th century, when the great European powers began exerting their

## THE WARRIOR OF WARRIORS

The office of the *Chhatrapati* is as old as the *kshatriya* Kindred themselves, steeped in the martial traditions of the warrior vampires that cut across bloodline, loyalty and antagonism alike. The *Chhatrapati* is, in essence, the ruler of the entire warrior caste, the vampire who has, through dint of martial skill, political acumen, religious piety and personal magnetism, managed to claim the title in trial by combat or through the acclaim of the majority of the *kshatriya* elders. In times of danger, this individual becomes the *strategos* of the warrior caste, the general whose plans direct the actions of the *kshatriya* elders and their subordinates to meet their *dharmic* responsibility to protect the great mandala of Kindred society. In times of peace, the holder of the office wields considerable political influence within the counsels of the *kshatriya* bloodlines and does much to shape the balance of power between them and the *brahmin* bloodlines — with whom they are sometimes peaceful partners and sometimes vicious rivals.

Even when the need is acute, the office of the *Chhatrapati* is not always filled. In fact, it is currently vacant. The last to hold the title was assassinated by Invictus agents in the 19th century and none of the surviving elders of the *kshatriya* bloodlines have yet proven themselves to possess the requisite social heft to claim the throne and keep it. The Ananta Naga, the pre-eminent *kshatriya* bloodline of the Mekhet, and the Amara Havana essentially traded claims to the title for the best part of a thousand years, the majority of all *Chhatrapati* coming from these two bloodlines, though the last to hold it was a Rakshasa. At the moment, there are three potential claimants, all of whom possess a valid case for their assertion. Ravindra of the Amara Havana holds claim as being the sole survivor of his lineage, which has produced no less than six *Chhatrapati* over the last thousand years and which was nearly annihilated fighting in defense of the previous holder of the title. Kalapriya of the Ananta Naga contests the claim on the grounds of the incompetence of both the Amara Havana and the Rakshasa in recent decades and the need for care and delicacy in the execution of current plans. Narayan of the Rakshasa holds claim as being the grandchild of the last *Chhatrapati* and the foremost warrior of his remaining lineage. Contested claims of this type are usually resolved in trials by combat. No one has yet issued such a challenge, but many within the *kshatriya* caste believe it is only a matter of time.

colonial influence on the Indian subcontinent. The influx of mortal conquerors brought vampire conquerors in their wake like carrion birds and, in the eyes of many with the *kshatriya* caste, conflict was inevitable. Unfortunately, malign providence worked against the native Kindred, including the Amara Havana: a number

of powerful elders retired their positions, leaving untried successors to navigate the perilous social waters of newly colonial India, and the results were almost uniformly disastrous. The *Chhatrapati* resisted the siren call of sleep for as long as he could but, in the end, even he needed to lay down his sword. His retirement, and the subsequent internecine quarrel among the *kshatriya* over who should replace him, led to open bloodshed between all the major bloodlines and most of the minor ones, as well. The Amara Havana and the Ananta Naga joined forces to lesson the Rakshasa, whom they perceived as the lapdogs and puppets of self-serving *brahmin* manipulators, and then turned upon each other to settle the question of dominance between themselves once and for all. Before either could claim victory, however, the war was joined from another quarter: European vampires beholden to the Invictus and the Lancea Sanctum, as well as native pawns and traitors, attacked the embattled *kshatriya* bloodlines. Already weakened by the struggle with their traditional rivals, the Amara Havana were hit particularly hard by the European onslaught: whole lineages were wiped out root and branch, and many dozens more were driven into torpor and exile before the conflict finally ended with much of southern India under the rulership of conquering European princes.

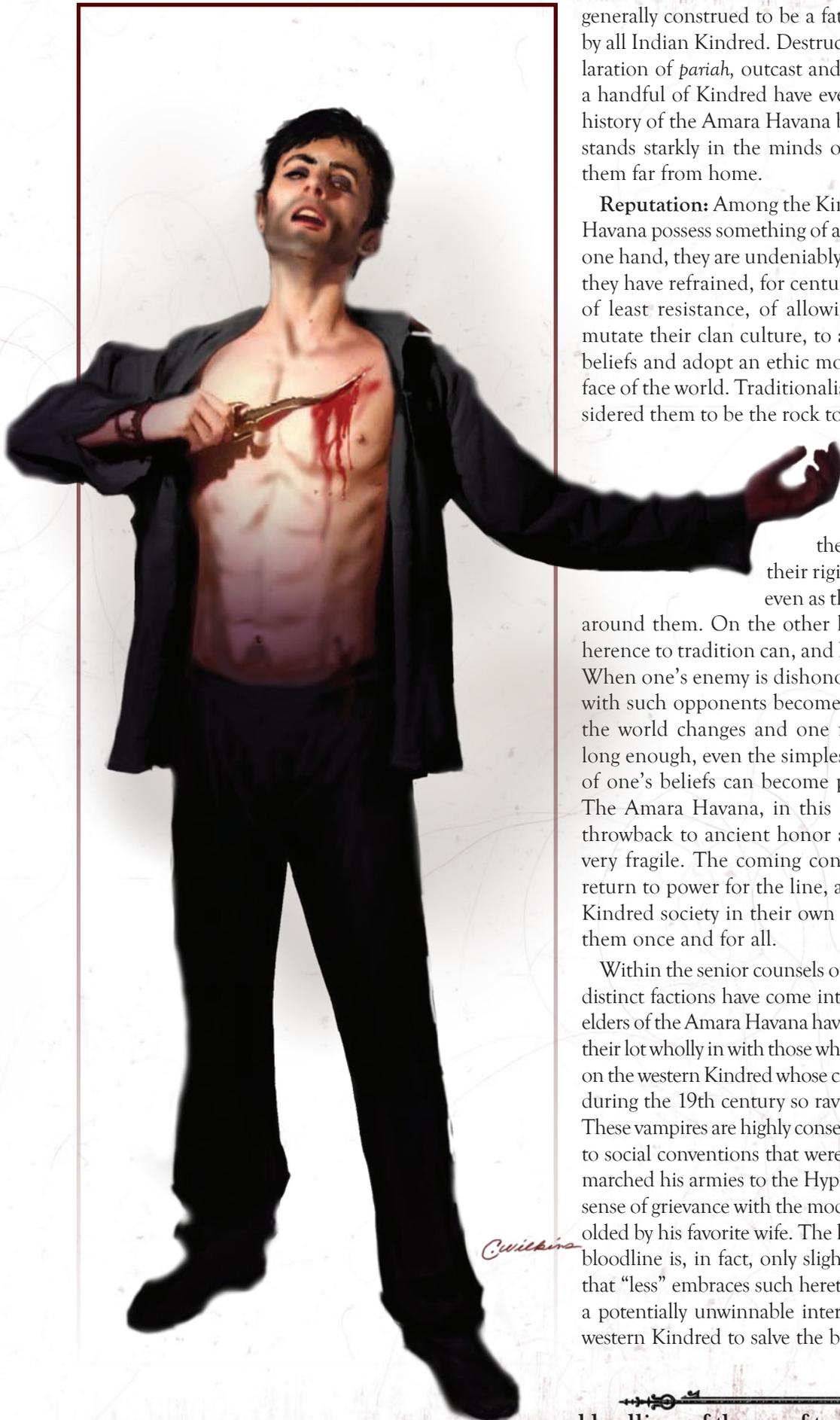
Licking their wounds in exile, the Amara Havana realized the folly of their own actions and moved to correct them. Over the next century and a half they formally sued for peace with the Ananta Naga, who accepted without conditions, and then made similar overtures to the Rakshasa, who were even more broken and embittered than they. As it happened, the Rakshasa were more than willing to make common cause and, together, they made a project of isolating and destroying the Invictus Kindred who laid claim to their former dominions — slowly but surely reclaiming and rebuilding the foundations of their power. Now, the Amara Havana and their allies are planning to extend their vengeance beyond the borders of India.

Working closely with Rakshasa infiltration specialists, agents of the Amara Havana have assumed an assortment of guises and have begun slowly introducing themselves into western courts in both the Americas and Europe. Frequently, an Amara Havana will travel in a Rakshasa merchant-envoy's retinue as a bodyguard or other high-ranking servant whose position would allow for reasonably unfettered access to a western court. More level-headed members of this bloodline are assigned to merchant-envoy missions themselves. Once ensconced in the cities of their unwitting hosts, these infiltration teams gather intelligence, recruit reliable local sources of informa-

tion, engage in the fundamentals of Kindred intercultural commerce, and report their findings back to their superiors. When and if a target is selected for elimination, these teams will often be the means by which an assassin or group of assassins enters and leaves a specific domain; these infiltrators also arrange the particulars of travel and accommodations for missions, as well as providing a readily available source of assistance should greater force be required to complete a given assignment. Lamentably, the Amara Havana themselves are not the best of assassins, being prone to the sort of honorable behavior that would lead them to challenge an enemy instead of simply staking him and leaving him posted somewhere facing eastward five minutes before dawn. When, however, a coterie of *kshatriya* are assigned a task that involves a high degree of violence to an enemy's servants — particularly his body-servants or other retainers of a martial nature — the Amara Havana are generally the ones best equipped to dispense it. True elders of this lineage consider vastly uneven odds to be an interesting tactical complication, not an insurmountable disadvantage.

Some members of this lineage, however, have been known to go west, with or without companions, and simply never return. The world outside the rigid social hierarchy of the Indian Kindred is intensely seductive to many young, and no few old, vampires — particularly those whose ability to govern the passions left to them is somewhat chancy. Hot blood and occasionally poor judgment is considered somewhat excusable in youngsters of this lineage and should such an individual choose to abandon his duty to his kin and his *dharma* to wallow in the heathen fleshpots for a time...well, that can be understood, so long as he eventually returns, makes penance, and has some sort of advantageous connections or bits of information to offer in compensation for his earlier moral failings. This sort of behavior coming from anyone more than 50 years undead, however, is considered significantly worse than a transitory failure of ethics and such individuals can, at the very least, expect harsh penances in order to regain the purity of soul they have willfully defiled. Failure to return home and accept proper chastisement leads to only one outcome, though the Amara Havana are loath to use it. Expulsion from one's bloodline (the social aspect of it, anyway; obviously one can't literally have a bloodline removed) is





generally construed to be a fate worse than Final Death by all Indian Kindred. Destruction is preferable to a declaration of *pariah*, outcast and untouchable by all. Only a handful of Kindred have ever suffered this fate in the history of the Amara Havana bloodline, but their lesson stands starkly in the minds of all whose missions take them far from home.

**Reputation:** Among the Kindred of India, the Amara Havana possess something of a mixed reputation. On the one hand, they are undeniably *kshatriya* among *kshatriya*: they have refrained, for centuries, from taking the path of least resistance, of allowing foreign influences to mutate their clan culture, to abandon their traditional beliefs and adopt an ethic more suited to the changing face of the world. Traditionalist vampires have long considered them to be the rock to which other, less faithful lineages might cling and be sheltered by their willingness to bleed and kill for the sake of all their kind, keeping faith with their rigid and unchanging *dharma* even as the rest of the world erodes around them. On the other hand, that unyielding adherence to tradition can, and has, worked against them. When one's enemy is dishonorable, treating honorably with such opponents becomes a fatal weakness. When the world changes and one refuses to change with it long enough, even the simplest alterations in the shape of one's beliefs can become points of breaking strain. The Amara Havana, in this day and fallen age, are a throwback to ancient honor and glory – and are very, very fragile. The coming conflicts may either signal a return to power for the line, a remaking of unbalanced Kindred society in their own image, or finish breaking them once and for all.

Within the senior counsels of the bloodline, at least two distinct factions have come into being. The traditionalist elders of the Amara Havana have, for the most part, thrown their lot wholly in with those who wish to avenge themselves on the western Kindred whose conquest of southern Indian during the 19th century so ravaged the *kshatriya* lineages. These vampires are highly conservative in general, adhering to social conventions that were ancient before Alexander marched his armies to the Hyphases and nourishing their sense of grievance with the modern world like a man cuckolded by his favorite wife. The loyal opposition within the bloodline is, in fact, only slightly less conservative – but that “less” embraces such heretical notions as not picking a potentially unwinnable intergenerational war with the western Kindred to salve the bloodline's wounded pride,

not declaring those Indian Kindred who travel to the west for their own reasons *pariah*, and a general greater willingness to adopt such elements of the modern world that do not directly threaten the integrity of their clan culture. The unappeasable fury of the conservatives drives most of the bloodline's current activities with regard to its involvement in the Southern Cities Alliance; but the loyalists, somewhat greater in numbers, exert a certain amount of counterbalancing influence, forcing a consideration of tactics, objectives, and, most importantly, consequences that many of the more bloodthirsty elders would prefer to ignore. As matters currently stand, neither faction has the numbers nor the continuity of influence necessary to completely undermine the other's efforts. The only thing that could significantly alter this balance of power is, of course, the vacancy of the *Chhatrapati's* throne. Should Ravindra, one of the most potent loyalist elders, feel it necessary to issue a challenge, the traditionalists would move to neutralize him, and by extension those allied to him, with a challenger of their own. On the eve of war it remains to be seen, however, if anyone — Ravindra included — desires to unsettle the entire *kshatriya* caste in such a way.

**Concepts:** Genius chessmaster tactician, reluctant assassin, dumb but honorable muscle, individual of mass destruction, *dharma* rebel, hard-bitten veteran of the colonial wars, warrior poet, private military contractor with an agenda, Bollywood martial artist, ultraconservative culture cop

### *Sakti Pata*

The greatest gift of Durga to her chosen warriors, the Amara Havana possess a unique Discipline that makes use of the very blood that sustains their existence as both a weapon and a means of defense and rejuvenation. Its mastery transforms any individual vampire of this bloodline into a self-contained army and armory, possessed of an extraordinary capacity for lethal violence and an ability to survive all but the most certain of Final Deaths.

#### • *Halahala*

The first level of Sakti Pata invokes the toxic essence of the demon-taint that runs in the blood of the Amara Havana, transforming it into a deadly poison that, if consumed, can kill human beings outright or send vampire assailants into a pain-wracked torpor. This blood-poison may also be used to coat weapons, though such treatments gradually lose their potency over time. It is not possible to use this power to poison bullets (rather, the poison can be applied, but the heat and the speed of the shot removes the blood), though the vampire can poison arrows. Under normal circumstances, the vampire's toxic

blood does him no personal harm, and the invocation may be halted at will.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower + 1 or more Vitae (if poisoning a weapon)

**Dice Pool:** Stamina + Occult + Sakti Pata

**Action:** Instant.

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The power is successfully invoked but, rather than running harmlessly through the Amara Havana's body, it instead affects the flesh of the warrior who called upon it. Refer to the effects of success below, but apply the results to the Discipline's user.

**Failure:** The attempt to invoke this power fails.

**Success:** The invocation of the power succeeds and, depending on the nature of the attack, can have a variety of deleterious effects on its victim. If the toxic blood is consumed, either by a human or a vampire, the poison takes effect instantly. The Toxicity Rating of the venom is equal to the player's successes + the vampire's Blood Potency (see p. 15 for a discussion of poisons). If the victim's player fails the roll to resist the poison (Stamina + Resolve - Toxicity Rating), the character suffers lethal damage equal to the Toxicity Rating.

If the toxic blood is introduced via a poisoned weapon, the effect is the same, and in the event that the player fails the roll to resist the poison, the character suffers the poison damage in addition to any damage caused by the weapon. A poisoned weapon only inflicts its damage once before the poison fades. The Amara Havana must inflict at least one point of damage with a poisoned weapon for the toxin to have any effect. If the attack misses, the weapon retains its poison.

**Exceptional Success:** Extra successes result in a higher Toxicity Rating.

The vampire need expend no Vitae to make his blood poisonous for purposes of consumption, but poisoning a weapon requires the expenditure of one Vitae per point of the weapon's Size.

#### •• *Gift of Indra*

This gift, named for the warrior king of the gods, is a flexible one. Its invocation allows a vampire to draw forth his own blood in the form of a semi-solid weapon forged from Vitae. Traditionally, this weapon is one favored by the patron goddess of the bloodline: a knife, a sword, a spear or a trident. Alternately, this gift can be invoked in a defensive mode, bending to absorb the impact of others' weapons or fists, spreading out to form a small shield, or wrapping around an attacker's body or weapon to aid in grappling or disarming maneuvers.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae plus 1 point of lethal damage required to shed the necessary blood

**Dice Pool:** Stamina + Weaponry + Sakti Pata

**Action:** Instant

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The invocation of this power seems to succeed but does no damage when attacking an opponent or does not offer any protection from an assailant's attacks.

**Failure:** The invocation fails.

**Success:** The invocation summons a weapon with traits matching those of its physically ordinary counterpart (a trident has traits identical to a spear; see p. 170 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). When invoked in a defensive mode, it provides armor equal to the character's Blood Potency against bashing and lethal damage. This armor imposes a Defense penalty of -1, as it forces muscle to shift in order to maximize its effects.

**Exceptional Success:** The invocation summons the chosen weapon and its wielder ignores any and all Size/Strength penalties that would otherwise apply. When invoked for defense, it provides armor equal to Blood Potency against bashing and lethal damage with no Defense penalty.

This power may also be used multiple times, to create both an offensive weapon and a defensive form, either a shield or armor or both, but each use requires a separate expenditure of Vitae and an activation roll. However, the character need only suffer one point of lethal damage for all usages of this power in a scene. Changing the weapon's form, for example from a knife to a spear, or from an offensive to a defensive form, is an instant action.

Disarming an opponent with this power consists of a contested action using the vampire's Dexterity + Weaponry vs. the opponent's Strength + Weaponry. Success on the vampire's part results in immediate disarmament. Disarming an opponent in this manner is an instant action.

Note: this power cannot be used to create projectile weapons such as firearms or throwing weapons such as chakrams or throwing knives. It must be something that can be held in the (wounded) hand of the vampire whose Vitae creates it. Casting the weapon aside or otherwise dropping the item causes it to revert to ordinary Vitae. The weapon may also be reabsorbed (or drunk) in order to end the invocation, in which case the vampire gets the spent Vitae back.

#### ••• *Rucha's Blessing*

Also called the Blessing of the Blood's Fire, this ability allows the vampire to channel her Vitae to keep her

undead form free from injury – a rather necessary consideration within the martially aggressive culture of the *kshatriya* vampires.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** This power does not require a roll.

**Action:** Reflexive

Once activated, this power lasts for one scene. The vampire can expend one more Vitae than her Blood Potency would normally allow for healing purposes only.

#### •••• *Durga's Kiss*

The blessings of the Amara Havana's patron sometime literally fall from the sky. As these Kindred were created during a rain of demon blood (or so legend says), they can draw sustenance from the rain. Invocation of this ability allows the vampire to completely refill his blood pool when in the midst of a rainstorm or other natural phenomenon of weather, echoing the legend of the line's origin. Certain penalties pertain for phenomena that do not involve rain, but even a violent windstorm offers these vampires some benefit.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** This power does not require a roll.

**Action:** Instant

#### Blood Pool Penalties

-5	for a wind-storm lacking rain
-4	for a dust/sand storm
-3	for a mud storm (a dust/sand storm in which rain is also falling)
-2	for a light mist
-1	for a heavy mist

These modifiers apply to the maximum that a storm could provide to the user of this power, i.e., if the vampire's maximum blood pool is 10 and currently contains only five Vitae, he would obtain no benefit from a wind-storm.

#### ••••• *Yama's Benefice*

This is a gift of manifold applications. In its most basic form, it allows a Guardian to wholly extract herself from her body in the form of blood – independently mobile, sentient blood that can flow in any direction. This leaves behind the desiccated hulk of the original physical body. What can then be accomplished depends entirely on the amount of blood contained in the vampire's body when this power is invoked. A vampire with a healthy supply of blood can attack, escape and even establish a Vinculum with sleeping victims by dripping a tiny bit of blood between their lips. A vampire who is nearing

Final Death or torpor, though, can use this power to “Embrace” a nearby corpse, fooling the attacker into thinking he has won.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** This power does not require a roll.

**Action:** Instant

If the vampire’s blood pool is substantially diminished (no more than three Vitae remaining), this ability can be used as an option of last resort to avoid Final Death. The vampire needs to escape the scene without being captured or set on fire (but receives a +3 modifier to all Stealth rolls, as she exists as a small puddle of dark liquid). Once she does, she has until sunrise to find a human corpse. She can then slither into the body’s mouth, at which point the player expends a Willpower *dot*. From this moment on, the vampire claims the corpse as her own. Over the course of the next month, the vampire alters the corpse’s physical form, causing it to take on the vampire’s Attributes and Skills. The character’s features, when the process is complete, resemble an odd amalgam of the vampire’s original body and the pilfered corpse’s. If the vampire cannot find a suitable corpse before sunrise, the puddle of blood loses sentience and dries up (the vampire, of course, meets Final Death).

If the vampire’s blood pool is robust (more than three Vitae), this form can be used to invoke any and all of the other abilities of this Discipline, both offensive and defensive. In such cases, engaging in acts of espionage and combat are the favored activities. In this form, invocation of Gift of Indra becomes a reflexive action. The disembodied blood-being generally repossesses its own body rather than take a new host when this invocation is complete, though the vampire can claim a new body if she so desires. She can even use the blood-form to kill a mortal of her choosing, and then inhabit the resulting corpse.

## *Devotions of the Amara Havana*

### *Dance of Kali*

(Celerity •••, Sakti Pata •••••)

This Devotion is one of the most fearsome martial secrets of the Amara Havana bloodline. Its successful invocation transforms the vampire using it into a literal storm of bloody knives capable of tearing through multiple opponents in the blink of an eye. This produces a mass of whirling blood weapons that are virtually impossible to deflect or resist by ordinary means. The swiftly moving cutting surfaces simply flow through the cracks of mundane defenses and slice opponents to bits inside their own armor; the bloody attack is similarly difficult to retaliate against, as the liquid form may also flow to evade impact or disarm an attacker.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower + 1 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** This Devotion requires no roll to activate.

**Action:** Reflexive

In order to activate this Devotion, the vampire must be capable of using Yama’s Benefice to abandon her physical body in the form of independently mobile blood (minimum Vitae pool of five). The player then spends one Willpower and one Vitae, at which point the character explodes into a mass of blood projectiles hurtling toward her opponent. The player rolls Dexterity + Athletics + Celerity to attack, and the attack ignores mundane armor (though not supernatural armor-producing effects, such as the Gift of Indra). The victim’s Defense only applies if it would be effective against firearms (such as a vampire using Celerity).

The Amara Havana can choose to attack multiple opponents with this Devotion, just as if she were using a firearm with the autofire capability (see p. 160 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**).



# CANDA BHANU

Your arrogance ill becomes you, traveler. I am a teacher of the way — will you not sit and speak peacefully with me? I am certain that we have much to learn from one another.

**Parent Clan:** Ventrue

**Bloodline Disciplines:** Animalism, Auspex, Dominate, Resilience

**Nickname:** Purifiers

**Weakness:** As with their parent clan, the power enjoyed by the Canda Bhanu inevitably corrodes and corrupts their souls, degrading the moral balance they struggle to maintain (see p. 113 of *Vampire: The Requiem*).

In addition, the curse that plagues the Canda Bhanu makes them especially susceptible to the powers of other Kindred. They stole their position in society from a Mekhet bloodline, and in return, their blood is somewhat mutable. Any vampire who uses a Discipline against a Purifier receives the blood tie bonus, if it would normally be applicable with that Discipline (see p. 162 of *Vampire: The Requiem*).

**History and Culture:** The Canda Bhanu consider themselves but one among many: they are of the bloodlines of vampires who, in the aftermath of the terrible war between the gods, the demons, and their own demon-tainted people, were chosen by the gods to bring healing to the world. In this they are at least somewhat humble, though the *brahmin* vampires, as a whole, are not at all meek. While they are, in total, the least populous of the *varnas*, they wield political and social influence that far outstrips their numbers — thanks to their exalted station as teachers, scholars, priests, and, perhaps most significantly, blood-sorcerers. Even among the *brahmin*, the Canda Bhanu are a small but vastly influential bloodline, and this prominence extends not only within their own clan but to others as well, owing to their skills as diplomats and politicians more than to any particular esoteric skills for which the *brahmin* are generally known.

This is because the Canda Bhanu are not what they claim to be, though even they have forgotten the truth of what they are. They are, in fact, the descendants not of a native lineage of *brahmin* extraction but from that of a refugee seeking a safe exile in their land: a Ventrue adventurer who fled Rome in the waning days of the Empire, escaping the consequences of his own poor decisions, of treachery that would otherwise have been resolved only

with his Final Death. He escaped the Eternal City with the most loyal of his childer and servants, just ahead of his enemies, and took ship to the East. When he ran out of sea, he and his attendants fled by land across the desolation of the Hindu Kush, seeking a safe haven where no one knew his face or his name or his deeds. He found that haven in the great cities of India, teeming with mortal life among whom he could lose himself while he learned the lay of the land and the local Kindred society.

It required some time, and some effort on his part, but eventually he found his way into the counsels of the prince, who was a *kshatriya* of the Gangrel, and from there into a position as that prince's close advisor, in preference of the *brahmin* counselor whose guidance he found an onerous imposition on his desire to make war with his neighbors. An elegant solution to their mutual dilemma was devised: in return for the gods' blessings upon his endeavors, the Roman refugee would be permitted to dispose of the irritating *brahmin* as he wished.

Thus the Canda Bhanu were (re)born in an atrocious crime. The already tiny *brahmin* bloodline, their entire dominion residing within the grasp of a prince hostile to them, was systematically hunted down and devoured by the Roman, his kin, and his newly acquired native allies. None escaped to tell the tale, and, knowing the infamy of what he had done, the newly created *paterfamilias* took no chances in further hiding the evidence. Within a decade, he arranged for the deposition and assassination of the prince whose ambitions had enabled the massacre in the first place, along with his entire immediate brood and any allies to whom he might have confided. Eventually, time, torpor, and the helpful effects of native internecine struggles succeeded in obliterating any recollection of the original Canda Bhanu and what they had been, leaving only what they had become.

Eventually, even the Canda Bhanu themselves forgot that their lineage had originated in treachery and murder, though both continued to follow the bloodline's destiny like a bloodstain that refused to wash away. Bereft of the blood sorcery that had been the province of the name's previous owners, the Canda Bhanu nonetheless

Thus it is written:

The wars between the gods and the demons, and the armies of their chosen warriors, ravaged the Earth by both day and night. The suffering of all peoples was great. Famine stalked the fields, stole the food from the tables of kings and sages, warriors and farmers, and the starving multitudes cried out to Heaven for sustenance. Pestilence flowed through the cities and the towns, the great temples and the humble villages, carrying away first the very young and the very old, and then laying its baneful touch on all, that none lived to offer prayers for those who had fallen or aid to those who yet survived. Demons carried away the sons and daughters of men, to profane them with unholy lusts, and taught blasphemy from the defiled altars of the gods, to turn the people away from their dharma and bring the whole of the universe to unending darkness and chaos. This terrible war gave birth to the night-hunting warriors of the kshatriya and, in time, the cruel weight of its toil wore away at their minds and souls, until they were little more than demons themselves.

The gods saw how far their night-warriors had fallen and shed tears of grief and despair. As the tears of the gods fell upon the blighted Earth, some among the night-warriors came forth to bathe themselves in these divine waters, seeking to wash away the stain of hatred and violence that the war had left upon their souls. At the sight of this, the gods knew hope again, for if the demon-tainted could still seek out righteousness, all was not lost for the world. One of the highest of all the gods left his seat of contemplation and descended to the soul-hungry night-warriors, who fell upon their knees before him in awe and worship, offering him prayers for the healing of their pain. To assuage the hungers of their flesh, he laid open his own veins and permitted them to drink deeply of his divine blood. To assuage the hungers of their souls, he took them apart from the world to the holy mountain where he dwelt, that he might teach them more deeply of the ways of righteousness and the path to conquering the demon-madness that lay within them. There they abided for many long years, learning the way from the great divine sage, and, when the hour seemed darkest for those left behind, they emerged again to offer the fruits of their studies to all the asura-children of the great war.

Thus it is written:

The newly-born brahmin of the night peoples went forth into the world to bring the word of hope and righteousness to their fellows, to let them know that the war they fought was not the beginning and the ending of all things for them. Many at first refused to listen, for their anguish had blinded them to all but terrible despair, and many more had no desire to receive the teachings, for their hatred and their lusts were better served by base indulgence. But, for some, the gentle words of their brahmin kin were as a balm to the soul and in them they found healing and a path beyond war and suffering to a future unshackled from both. Slowly, the words that the sages spoke spread from the small circles of their first students, washing out like soothing water, making pure that which had been sullied, making whole that which had been sundered, bringing peace to that which had been at war.

Thus it is written and thus it remains.

maintained their *brahmin* social status, serving a succession of princes as political advisors, diplomats, religious advocates and social provocateurs, eventually branching out from their northern “roots” to take positions of great intellectual and religious prominence in the city-states of the south, as well. In the process, they became almost more *brahmin* than even other *brahmin*, cleaving to the native philosophies they co-opted for their own gain with something approaching a convert’s zeal and passing that zealotry down to their offspring, who perpetuated it down the line to the present. The social battles for dominance between the *kshatriya* vampires, who believed they possessed a divinely bestowed mandate to make war and rule according to the precepts revealed to them, and the *brahmin*, who believed they possessed the divinely bestowed right to overrule the dictates of even immortal rulers in order to promote the proper adherence to vampiric *dharma*, were the source of much of their influence. Few princes wished to rule without the imprimatur of the gods or the approval of the priestly caste, and the Canda Bhanu were among the most adept at ruling from behind the thrones of those who sought their counsel – and occasionally seizing those thrones for themselves. Their efforts, in particular, bore fruit in their extensive alliances with, and manipulations of, assorted Rakshasa *kshatriya* princes, many of which persisted deep into the 19th century and the coming of the European invaders to the Indian subcontinent.

#### KARMA’S RETRIBUTION

None still undead tonight, including the “new” Canda Bhanu themselves, remember the original Canda Bhanu, the tiny, insular, extremely devout and scholarly Mekhet bloodline destroyed and consumed by the Ventrue invaders who claimed their name. The blood in their veins, however, does not forget what it is...and neither does the vengeance levied against that blood. When it became obvious that their doom was upon them and would not be denied, the eldest and most powerful blood sorcerer of the original Canda Bhanu lineage spent the last of herself in a terrible curse: that the treachery and murder that their killers brought to their doors would revisit itself upon them and bring them low, *karma* twisting upon itself to avenge the fall of the blameless and righteous. The act of diablerie that ended her unlife sealed that magic into the blood of her murderer and all his descendants. The Canda Bhanu are doomed to end as they began. Whether they will destroy only themselves or if they will take others down with them remains to be seen.

The European invasions created both conflict and opportunity. Pre-existing social pressures, within the rigidly stratified culture of the Indian Kindred, were coming to a boil as the perpetually fractious *kshatriya* caste prepared to enter into one of its cyclical changes of rulership, the pretenders to the office of the *Chhatrapati* lining up



to assert their dominance over the others. Meanwhile, assorted factions within the *brahmin* caste were also contemplating changes in the society of their kind. It was the thinking of many *brahmin* – the majority of the Canda Bhanu bloodline among them – that for too long the stability of their society had depended on the violent whims of the *kshatriya*, who were becoming less and less biddable with every passing year, less inclined to accept the wisdom of their spiritual superiors. Certain overtures were made to a selection of European Kindred, certain communications exchanged, certain agreements put into place. When the *kshatriya*, as they inevitably did, ceased their preliminary “negotiations” and drew their knives on each other, the situation was ripe. The Canda Bhanu and their co-conspirators in the *brahmin* and *vaisya* castes passed intelligence to their European allies, disclosing the safe resting-places of a dozen torpid *kshatriya* elders, the temple-havens of dozens more *kshatriya* princes and influential ancillae, and then stepped back to allow the western mercenaries and assassins to do their work. The *kshatriya* were decimated in a series of swift, savage attacks that left many of the southern courts in chaos, deprived of their princes and many of their governing elders. Unfortunately for the *brahmin*, what happened next did not precisely unspool as planned: the European Kindred proved more than willing to extend the already treacherous situation to their erstwhile allies, as well. The Canda Bhanu, as the bloodline who had interacted most closely with the Europeans as a go-between and intelligence conduit, suffered the most directly from this turnabout. Never as populous as some of the older *brahmin* bloodlines, they and their dominions were ravaged by the invaders and their numbers horribly reduced by outright murder. Only one Canda Bhanu who claimed personal rulership of her own domain survived the assault against them, and even she was wounded almost to Final Death. Only a handful of the bloodline’s most powerful and puissant members survived to flee back into the north, exiled, their power utterly broken. The only consolation – and it was extremely cold comfort – was that the betrayal of the European Kindred had effectively obscured the culpability of the *brahmin* in general and Canda Bhanu in specific in the slaughter of the *kshatriya* caste.

From their northern exile, the Canda Bhanu brooded on this reversal of their fortunes and considered their options, slowly nursing their wounds and nourishing their bitterness. Their Rakshasa allies, who had suffered heavy

losses in both the *kshatriya* blood-war and the subsequent attempt to annihilate their caste, slunk out of the south to bring word of the Europeans, their strengths and weaknesses. The surviving *kshatriya* bloodlines, bloody and broken but fundamentally unbowed, began to coalesce again in knots of fury and unexpectedly robust resistance to further European expansion, though no single leader emerged from their ranks. A slow but steady program of retaliation against the European invaders and European princes who had seized Indian thrones began. The Canda Bhanu were gratified when the proud, fierce Amara Havana finally swallowed that pride for the first time in centuries, making their peace with the Rakshasa and consenting to take counsel with the *brahmin*, creating an alliance between the three bloodlines that successfully targeted and executed a series of vicious, precision attacks against their particular nemesis: the Invictus princes of the south. Though it took the best part of a century, eventually the European invaders were forced into flight, abandoning their Indian holdings and childer to the tender mercies of the *kshatriya* they had displaced. Now, in the 21st century, the Canda Bhanu, still bitter at the failure of their own treachery, still furious at being betrayed themselves, are at the forefront of the movement within Indian Kindred society to continue retaliation against the European Kindred wherever they now lair. *The honor of the blood demands it, they say. The honor of those who were betrayed and who fell, the honor and rajadharma of the kshatriya which were despoiled and defiled by the invaders, cries out to be avenged upon the defilers. If not now, when?*

Politicians and manipulators with few peers, the Canda Bhanu were also one of the handful of Indian bloodlines to expend any effort at maintaining those few connections they possessed with non-hostile western Kindred. These relationships are being put to work now. Younger members of this lineage, more likely to possess the necessary cosmopolitan mind-sets and educational backgrounds, have been sent forth to renew old ties of diplomacy and scholarship, the better to use those bonds to secure intelligence on their western enemies — and work subtly against the schemes of their erstwhile allies. In truth, the Canda Bhanu thirst to humble, humiliate and tame the *kshatriya* even more than they desire to avenge themselves against the western Kindred. Certain factions within the bloodline have begun undermining the efforts of the *kshatriya* to locate and isolate the western elders who attempted the conquest of India a century and a half ago, while other factions work to advance those goals. Eventually, something is going to give.

**Reputation:** The Canda Bhanu have, among their own kind, a reputation for extreme piety. They exemplify



the moral code of the vampiric *brahmin*: control of their emotions and the resistance of the darker heart of their nature, pursuit of truth and purity, extensive study of and teaching from the sacred scriptures, the offering and acceptance of sacrifice, and the performance of ritual. In fact, many among their own kind perceive the Canda Bhanu as not only being exceptionally righteous, rigidly so, but also more than slightly *self-righteous* — the pride they take in their own unsullied purity, which they claim they maintained by preferring Final Death to submission to the European invaders, is particularly galling to the Amara Havana, whose elders suffered destruction in a considerably less ritually pure fashion.

In truth, the Canda Bhanu are treacherous, murderous, *extremely* self-righteous bastards, almost one and all, with a sufficient population of genuinely pious individuals to give their less tolerable kin a screen behind which to work. Furious at having been denied their opportunity to dispose of the intractable, ungovernable *kshatriya* — the primary stumbling-block to their own assumption of power — they are fully prepared now to finish the job they started a century and a half ago, manipulating their countrymen through the twin mechanisms of legitimate desire for vengeance and cultural guilt.

**Concepts:** Diabolical mastermind, self-serving spiritual guide, manipulative power behind the throne, ultraconservative cultural judge, sadistic teacher, tragically true believer, wise old master, waif goddess, karma's chew toy, rebellious scion

### *Devotions of the Canda Bhanu*

#### *Eye of Shiva*

(Auspex ••••, Dominate ••)

This ability allows the Canda Bhanu employing it to penetrate the mind of his victim in order to perceive that being's most deeply held guilt, grief or sin — all the better to turn it against them. Twisting that knowledge like a knife, the *brahmin* manipulator inflicts the uncontrollable compulsion to relive that experience continuously, trapping the victim's mind in the worst of all nightmares.

**Cost:** None

**Dice Pool:** Manipulation + Subterfuge + Auspex - Composure

**Action:** Instant

Using this power requires that the vampire make eye contact with the intended victim. If the player's roll succeeds, the target is awash with guilt, regret and grief, forced to relive his greatest moral failing. The Devotion "freezes" the character's mind in a kind of loop, with the victim unable to think of anything but the moment in question. In game terms, the victim is incapable of taking any actions for a number of turns equal to the vampire's successes. If the Purifier's player rolls an exceptional success, the victim also develops a mild derangement that lasts for the remainder of the night.

This Devotion costs 18 experience points to learn.

### *Seek the Brahmin*

(Auspex ••, Dominate • OR Animalism •)

While they might not know it, the Canda Bhanu made their place in Indian Kindred society by usurping that of an existing bloodline. This Devotion, part of their culture even during that usurpation, helped make it possible. With a glance, the vampire becomes aware of the pecking order of a group of people or animals, determining who the wisest, strongest and most respected member of that group is. The vampire can then put that information to whatever use he wishes.

**Cost:** None

**Dice Pool:** Intelligence + Politics or Animal Ken + Auspex

**Action:** Instant

Once activated, this Devotion lasts for a scene. The information that the character gains is somewhat subjective (the official leader of a group might not be the wisest member), but the character can usually learn who the most capable individual is within the group's *raison d'être*. For instance, in a coterie of *kshatriya* vampires, the character learns who the best warrior is, while in a group of scholars, he discovers who is most learned. Successful use of this Devotion allows the character to utilize his Auspex as a bonus to Politics, Socialize and Subterfuge rolls within that group.

When directed at animals, the Devotion simply identifies the "alpha" of the group, and obviously is only useful with social animals such as wolves.

This Devotion costs nine experience points to learn. If the character has the Discipline prerequisites for both versions, he can use both (but only pays the experience point cost once).

# THE SOUTHERN CITIES ALLIANCE

In the 19th century, the Southern Cities Alliance was a benign, and somewhat naïve, force in the politics of the fractious and rapidly changing Kindred society of the Indian subcontinent. Founded by a combination of European Kindred scholars seeking the origins of vampire-kind among the ancient cultures of the East, and Indian scholar-priests and warrior-princes willing to aid in that endeavor, it was a clearinghouse of ideas and experiments in cooperation between wildly disparate groups of Kindred, all of whom stood to gain something from its success – or, in some cases, its failure. The Alliance fell before it could achieve its full potential, assailed from without by the colonial ambitions of the Invictus and the religious manias of the Lancea Sanctum, betrayed from within by the venal lust for power of less-than-righteous *brahmin* and the inability of the *kshatriya* to govern their most volatile passions. Few, native or European, who survived its col-

lapse escaped without scars, and for those who genuinely believed in its mission the loss was particularly cruel.

In the 21st century the reformed Southern Cities Alliance is something else entirely. Consisting primarily of the embittered Indian Kindred survivors of the original Alliance, assorted new native supporters, and a handful of sympathetic European Kindred, its goals are considerably less benign than the maintenance of Kindred history and the free exchange of cultures. Rather, at this point, the only culture the Alliance wishes to share with its ancient enemies involves knives, blood sorcery, and protracted, terrible vengeance to cleanse the stain of their previous defeat and defilement from the *dharma* of their castes, to lay to rest with honor the souls of their beloved dead. Given that this goal suits the purposes of many western Kindred with similar scores to settle against hereditary enemies, it is not entirely surprising that the Alliance

## THE VARNAS OF THE I KINDRED

The society of the Kindred of India is rigidly structured around the four Vedic castes, or *varnas*, and the functions and responsibilities those castes impose upon the vampires belonging to them. Often, Indian Kindred feel they owe greater loyalty to, and derive more of their identity from, adherence to their *varna* and its particular *dharma* than they do to the clan to which they belong, though both are densely entwined in their particular vampiric culture. Every clan is divided into bloodlines and every bloodline belongs to a *varna* — most clans, in fact, have more than one bloodline in a particular *varna*.

The *brahmin* bloodlines are:

**Amrita Bhaga (Daeva):** Sensuous and elegant, this almost entirely female bloodline serves the gods of love and pleasure, often choosing to present themselves as avatars of the beneficent goddesses of art and music.

**Abhi Jina (Gangrel):** The most warlike of the *brahmin* bloodlines, they possess the greatest portion of the *kshatriya* bloodlines' respect and have been known to take the part of the warrior caste in matters of intercaste conflict.

**Hiranya Naga (Mekhet):** The Golden Serpents of Sumeru are the mightiest blood sorcerers of the *brahmin*, and are widely held to be the most subtle and wise, as well.

**Nri-chaksha (Nosferatu):** Cruel and brilliant, this bloodline considers itself the true descendants of the demon-king Ravana, contending with the Hiranya Naga for the honor of greatest sorcerers.

**Canda Bhanu (Ventruue):** Both righteous and treacherous, this bloodline exerts political and diplomatic influence both at home and abroad that far outstrips their relatively small numbers.

The *kshatriya* bloodlines are:

**Amara Havana (Daeva):** Proud, unyielding and fierce, the Amara Havana are one of the oldest and longest-surviving of the entire warrior caste, though many forces are attempting to end them once and for all.

**Abhi Dhvana (Gangrel):** A youthful offshoot of their clan's *brahmin* lineage, this bloodline is only a few centuries old, having come into existence after the destruction of the clan's elder *kshatriya*.

**Ananta Naga (Mekhet):** The most cunning of the *kshatriya*, this bloodline melds martial skill with sorcerous power unseen in others of their caste.

**Rakshasa (Nosferatu):** Widely viewed as the tamed attack dogs of the *brahmin* caste, this bloodline is no less fierce and deadly for the slurs against their honor.

**Aja Dhrsta (Ventruue):** Ancient and greatly diminished, this bloodline contains the tattered remnants of a once-great lineage ravaged by war and relentless internal struggles.

Bloodlines of the *vaishya* and *shudra* castes exist, though they are, by far, fewer in numbers and less socially significant among the Kindred than they are among mortals.

has attracted their assistance. At present, the Alliance is in the process of gathering intelligence. The locations of their most hated enemies must be ascertained, the resources those enemies possess that might allow evasion must be itemized, and their children and retainers must be identified. The Rakshasa, experts in appearing to be what they are not, have inserted themselves into European and American courts to ferret out what the Alliance most desires to know, claiming to be refugees from a terrible conflict in their native land that almost destroyed them. The best lies do, after all, contain a certain element of truth – the Rakshasa were, after all, almost destroyed in just such a conflict. The blood sorcerers of the *brahmin* Mekhet and their warrior counterparts within the *kshatriya* caste have begun preparing the magics to be used in the Alliance's planned first strikes. The Canda Bhanu fiercely evangelize to maintain the sense of outrage that drives the Alliance and its members, reminding the group of the horrors that befell them all – as though any could truly forget – speaking condemnation with the voices of the gods and demanding vengeance for those who will never speak again.

Meanwhile, within the Alliance, there are those who wish to use the situation to their own benefit. The *ksha-*

*triya* will inevitably bear the responsibility for executing the will of the Alliance – and also likely bear the brunt of any retaliation directed toward the Indian Kindred as a result. If the situation is manipulated properly, a clever vampire could stand to profit handsomely. The warrior Kindred of the East have never entirely recovered from the blows struck against them in the 19th century, either in terms of raw numbers or in the strength of the elders they lost to assassins' fangs, a fact that has not escaped the attention of certain elements within the *brahmin* caste. These elements, desirous of bringing the *kshatriya* to heel then, continue to harbor that desire now, and are preparing a sacrifice: should the results of the Alliance's activities threaten to overwhelm it, they are entirely ready to offer restitution from the blood of their *kshatriya* and seize the reins of power that fall from their ashen fingers. At that point they could sue for peace with the Europeans, and move forward into the future unencumbered by an increasingly insupportable warrior aristocracy. Naturally, they have refrained from discussing this contingency with the *kshatriya* themselves.

The Alliance possesses no one leader who guides all of their actions. Among the *brahmin* Kindred, several voices are strong within the Alliance's counsels.

### *Dhanavati, the Great Queen of Megapatnam*

The hour has come for us to take back what was torn away from us,  
that which is more precious than our thrones, our honor and our virtue.

**Background:** For all her apparent youth, she is an elder of the Canda Bhanu, only recently risen from a torpor caused by her near-assassination at the hands of the Invictus. Returned to a world that she barely recognizes, bereft of the blood-kin murdered by European treachery, she is driven by her fury and her desire for vengeance – both of which run hotter than any emotion she has ever before felt. She is one of the most vigorous proponents of the Alliance's most aggressive possible courses of action, a fact not lost on those who would bleed for the restitution her anger demands. Should she ever learn that she was betrayed almost to her destruction by her own bloodline, who sought to make her a martyr for the purposes of their own political ends, her wrath would likely drive her to self-destruction. She might well take her small bloodline with her.

**Description:** The *maharani* was a beautiful girl at the time of her Embrace, her hips slender and her breasts barely budded. This deceptive appearance has worked



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

**Storytelling Hints:** Dhanavati does not exude the aura of one driven by equal parts fury, bitterness and desire for vengeance. She is nonetheless, though she hides it well from all but the most furious, vengeful and bitter of her clan and caste-mates. When interacting with others, she affects a serenely confident, silken-smooth surface, elegant, wise, and disinclined to hasty or violent action, seemingly preferring a path of peaceful diplomacy whenever possible. She learned well from those weapons being used against her. Among the fire-eaters of the *brahmin* and *kshatriya* castes she wears a different face, that of the cruel and bloody-handed goddess whose sense of *raja dharma* and purity have been viciously violated. Her long torpor completely erased some of her memories of the

time immediately preceding it and crystallized others into permanent sources of outrage against western Kindred, the British, and any of her fellow clan and caste-mates whom she feels have betrayed her or the traditional ways of their people.

In a chronicle set in the East, particularly in modern-day India or Bangladesh, Dhanavati would make an excellent elder mentor/patron figure for any younger native Kindred, though she would particularly favor those whose clans or castes continue to nurture hereditary bitterness against western Kindred. Otherwise, she is the sort of intractable, clever and vicious antagonist whose capacity for vengeance would give even other elder vampires pause.

Note: Dhanavati is described with full traits in **Ancient Mysteries**.

#### Abilities:

**Create Art (dice pool 7):** Dhanavati was schooled from a very early age to be a skilled painter.

**Dance (dice pool 8):** The power of undeath has only added to Dhanavati's inhuman grace.

**Oratory (dice pool 7):** Although she has lost much of her knowledge from her time in torpor, Dhanavati retains the ability to twist words until listeners agree with her despite themselves.

## Nagarajan Asokavardhana

The time is riper now than it has ever been to achieve the greatest of all our goals.  
We need only have the courage to pursue them.

**Background:** A true and ancient elder of the Hiranya Naga, Nagarajan is in all ways the precise opposite of Dhanavati. Positively serpentine in his cold-blooded political calculation, he has assessed the Alliance's chances of achieving its objectives as being thin at best, but considers the possible rewards for enabling its attempts, and manipulating its failures, worth the risks. Few things, after all, have been achieved by those who refused to dare and what Asokavardhana desires is nothing more or less than the unification of the *brahmin* caste beneath his own enlightened rulership and the severe diminution, if not outright elimination, of the *kshatriya* as an independent political force. If he can get the Europeans he despises, and the irresponsible idiots he cannot control, to destroy each other, so much the better.

**Description:** Tall, slender and elegant, Nagarajan has a manner about him that mesmerizes the unwary, like a cobra entrancing a bird. He effects a smoothly polished demeanor at all times, favoring traditional clothing in modern colors and styles, wearing his hair cut short and close to his head.



As with many of his bloodline, his eyes have turned a vivid golden hue as a side-effect of the sorceries he practices.

**Storytelling Hints:** Nagarajan Asokavardhana does not have a single idealistic bone left in his lithe body, and centuries of survival within the proving ground of vicious *brahmin* politics has long ago flayed away any trace of human compassion. He is rarely deliberately cruel, he is never actively kind, and the advice he gives comes from a calculus that prioritizes his own objectives over the spiritual well-being of whomever it is that he is counseling. Nonetheless, his counsel is invariably in high demand, for none can deny his wisdom, self-serving though it might be.

#### Abilities:

**Cutting a Deal (dice pool 9):** Anyone can bargain, but it takes a true master to enter into an agreement that requires losing nothing. Nagarajan is such a master.

**Research (dice pool 7):** Nagarajan takes his role as a *brahmin* teacher very seriously, and that means he needs to know the answers to his students' questions (preferably off the top of his head).

**Solving Enigmas (dice pool 8):** Negotiation and the acquisition of knowledge meet in Nagarajan's ability to think laterally, reasoning his way out of any situation and solving puzzles that stump other, less flexible Kindred.

### Durai Ravindra

The past is gone, and those who fell in those terrible years will not be restored to us by pointless violence. We cannot wash away the stains of their blood with more blood.

**Background:** A relatively young elder of the Amara Havana, Ravindra is a rare voice of reason within the hot-blooded *kshatriya*. The descendant of six *Chhatrapati* and a brilliant tactician in his own right, he is also unquestioningly a powerful warrior. He has serious doubts about the entire enterprise of revenge, however, questioning the necessity of reopening a conflict that has lain cold for nearly half a century, the wisdom of doing so, and, very quietly, the motives of those intent on pouring fresh blood on top of old. His membership in the Alliance is a product less of his own personal desires than that of his bloodline, who wish to cleanse themselves of the dishonor of failing to protect the unlife of the last *Chhatrapati*, who met his Final Death while under their guardianship. Ravindra can appreciate this impulse while simultaneously realizing that it is likely to lead to his own destruction and many more pointless, unnecessary deaths. He subtly works against the more extreme plans of the comrades and is searching, discreetly, for European survivors of the original Alliance whom he might be able to contact and beg for assistance.

**Description:** Ravindra cuts an imposing figure, tall, muscular, and looking every inch the ancient hero of the *puranas*, particularly when he dresses in the traditional clothing of his caste, openly carrying his weapons. Dark of hair and eyes, he wears that hair long, tied back in a tight plait, and his beard and mustache close-trimmed and orderly. When appearing in public, he wears modern clothing of fine, expensive make in subdued colors and, even then, is never entirely unarmed.



#### Abilities:

**Interrogation (7 dice):** While Ravindra is more than capable of beating information out of an uncooperative subject, he finds that a splash of fresh blood at just the right moment is less strenuous.

**Shadowing (7 dice):** Ravindra has seen the results of open warfare, and decided that he prefers stalking his prey to leaping into battle.

**Throwing (8 dice):** Similarly, a poisoned chakram or knife allows him to weaken an opponent before closing in for the kill.

# BLOODLINES OF THE HAITIAN REVOLUTION (CE 1791)

During the 18th century, the French-controlled Saint Domingue (modern-day Haiti), was host to an intricate Kindred social system, primarily based upon the practices of Vodoun. The first Kindred settlers from Europe (known as the first wave) took positions of power on the island, often as plantation owners, and built their broods from the massive slave population, integrating the belief system into their own. It was a golden age in Kindred history, spawning a number of influential Vodoun-centered bloodlines, including the Apollinaire.

Near the end of the 18th century, a second wave of Kindred settlers arrived from Europe – representing the combined force of the traditional Lancea Sanctum and the Invictus. This second wave was in response to news from Kindred of the first wave who remained faithful to the European tradition. In a country already ripe for a revolution, it was easy to stoke the fires of unrest among the slave population. Also fueling the fire were a number of slaves-turned-Kindred (known today as Les Gens Libres), burning with unforgettably hatred remaining from their mortal lives held in bondage. These Kindred, all the more fervent for their residual human beliefs and memories of emotion, were more than willing to turn on their sires.

Over the following weeks, the Haitian slaves burned every plantation and executed every oppressor they could find. Many of the Kindred who survived fled to the relative safety of New Orleans, or other nearby seacoast towns. Those who remained in Haiti after the revolution were systematically destroyed by Kindred of the second wave.

## APOLLINAIRE

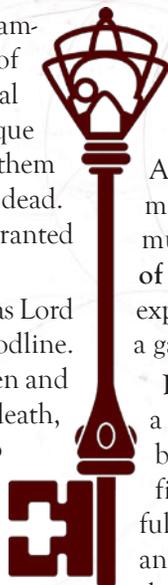
I have witnessed things that would drive most to the brink of madness.  
Here, let me show you.

Members of the Apollinaire bloodline are champions of death. They are the favored children of Ghede, the loa of death and keeper of the eternal crossroads. Members of the bloodline have unique abilities bestowed upon them by Ghede, allowing them to open and close the gateways to the land of the dead. They are loyal servants of the Baron and are granted dominion over the dead by the loa.

For one night a year, Ghede gives up his charge as Lord of the Dead to members of the Apollinaire bloodline. On that night, the Gatekeepers take up his burden and patrol the shadowy borders between life and death, fighting back the dead who attempt to cross into the world of the living while their lord is absent. In exchange, for the remainder of the year, members of the Apollinaire bloodline enjoy the abilities granted to them by the Ghede.

**Parent Clan:** Ventrue

**Bloodline Disciplines:** Animalism, Dominate, Resilience, Carrefour



**Nickname:** Gatekeepers of Ghede

**Weakness:** Like their parent clan, the Apollinaire are susceptible to paranoia and other derangements (see p. 113 of *Vampire: The Requiem*). Additionally, Ghede claims the left eye of every member of the bloodline. Gatekeepers, therefore, must all take the flaw One Eye (p. 219 of the *World of Darkness Rulebook*). The character does not gain experiences point when hindered by the Flaw during a game session, however.

**History and Culture:** Before the Haitian revolution, a vampire known only as Bokor Apollinaire grew to become one of the most influential Kindred of the first wave in St. Domingue. Apollinaire was a powerful houngan; it is said that he was favored by Ghede and that the vampire and loa came to an agreement that could benefit them both.

To hear the Apollinaire speak of it, Ghede was the first man who ever died. Since the dawn of Humanity, he has ruled over the dead and has controlled the gateways be-

tween the world of the living and the dead. As centuries passed, Ghede grew exhausted from constantly maintaining the barriers between worlds. One night, he appeared before one of his most devoted and loyal servants, Bokor Apollinaire, with an offer.

“I grow weary of my charge,” the loa said. “You have shown your loyalty to me, and are among the most powerful of my houn gan. If you agree to carry my burden for one night out of a year, I shall bestow upon you and those of your blood great power.”

Bokor Apollinaire was honored to have been chosen by Ghede, and accepted the proposal. Ghede plucked out Apollinaire’s left eye, and planted magic in the empty socket, granting him the ability to see the dead. Then, Ghede bestowed upon his loyal servant the power to rule over the dead and maintain the gateways of this world and the next. For one night a year, Ghede relinquishes his charge and duties as Lord of the Dead to the Apollinaire bloodline. Ghede then walks the streets in the guise of a human, drinking, feasting, dancing and reveling flamboyantly in mortal pleasures. While Ghede is absent, the Apollinaire bloodline patrols the borders between life and death, fighting back the ghosts who attempt to cross into the world of the living while their master is absent.

The night of Ghede’s absence is not fixed. He may choose to leave at any time, delegating his duties to the Apollinaire bloodline. As such, Gatekeepers must constantly be prepared for his signal. To alert the Gatekeepers, Ghede causes a glowing vevé to emerge with a slight prickling upon the forehead of those who carry Apollinaire’s blood. The mark signifies the authority granted to the bloodline by Ghede, and is visible only to those of Apollinaire’s bloodline and to ghosts. Vampires who fail to answer the call of Ghede are punished by the loa by being thrown into Twilight and left to fend for themselves, often leading to the Final Death of the Gatekeeper.

Some believe that Bokor Apollinaire met his Final Death during the Haitian Revolution, though members of his bloodline believe Apollinaire could never have died, having been the favorite of the loa of death.

A Ventrue is recognized as a member of the Apollinaire bloodline once he has sworn to honor the agreement between the founder of the bloodline and the loa. A ritual is performed, during which the initiate’s left eye is removed and Ghede possesses the body of the vampire. The character gains the ability Eye of Ghede (see below), making him a true Gatekeeper.

Although the Apollinaire are sworn to uphold the agreement between Bokor Apollinaire and Ghede,

they are not required to take Ghede as their patron loa (see Kindred Vodoun on p. 73.), or, indeed, to become practitioners of Vodoun at all. While many choose to practice Vodoun, and the Apollinaire encourage new members to take Ghede as a patron, it is not mandatory. Once a Gatekeeper is acknowledged by Ghede as an Apollinaire, and he has sworn to take up the burden of Ghede for one night per year, he is free to lead his unlife as he pleases.

**Reputation:** Because of the Gatekeeper’s connection to Vodoun (despite the fact that members of the bloodline may or may not actually practice Vodoun), the bloodline has a negative stigma for vampires who adhere to traditional European values. As such, the bloodline is often looked upon with disdain, or even tense apprehension, by the Invictus and Lancea Sanctum.

The Ordo Dracul is particularly interested in the Apollinaire, as the bloodline’s connection to Ghede has clearly shown that Vodoun can be an effective means of altering the vampiric condition. Gatekeepers do not appreciate being looked upon as the result of some demonic experiment meant to be studied, however, and do not typically offer assistance to the Ordo Dracul without good reason.

**Concepts:** Vodoun priestess, prison guard, wealthy traveler, vigilant guardian, eccentric magician, homeless vagrant, clairvoyant medium consultant, contraband runner, reclusive occultist, escape artist

### *Eye of Ghede*

Ghede is often portrayed wearing dark sunglasses with one eye out, to symbolize his power in the worlds of the seen and the unseen. During the initiation to become a member of the bloodline, the initiate’s eye is removed from the socket, and the empty hole is filled with the magic of Ghede during possession. The Eye of Ghede looks like a constantly swirling, white mist contained within the Gatekeeper’s eye-socket. Once the “eye” is in place, the new Gatekeeper is able to see, hear and speak with ghosts (but not spirits). Additionally, the Apollinaire can detect their unseen presence, even if they are hiding or have chosen not to reveal themselves. Finding an unseen ghost is a contested action, pitting the vampire’s Wits + Composure against the ghost’s Finesse + Resistance.

### *Carrefour*

Passed down throughout generations of Gatekeepers, the Discipline of Carrefour grants Kindred the powers of Ghede, the loa of the dead and master of gateways. As part of the bloodline’s bargain with the loa, Apol-

linaire are granted the ability to converse with the dead, and create and manipulate doorways between life and death, or the fabric of space itself. The Carrefour Discipline represents the magic of Ghede, worked through the Beast of Kindred. Most Gatekeepers practice the Discipline subtly, covering their tracks as they work. All are encouraged to follow the philosophy, "If you open a door, close it behind you, because you never know who or what will come through next."

On the night of Ghede's absence, all Carrefour rolls receive a +3 bonus modifier.

• *Govi Trap*

According to Vodoun tradition, a govi is a small, earthen bottle used to trap a ghost. In modern nights, any container with a lid may be used (an empty peanut butter jar, medicine bottle, or plastic Tupperware container may serve as a govi). A Gatekeeper can compel a ghost to enter and remain within a govi until such time as it is released.

**Cost:** —

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Persuasion + Carrefour versus Finesse + Resistance

**Action:** Instant and contested

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** The attempt fails. Further uses of Govi Trap incur a -1 penalty for the remainder of the scene.

**Failure:** The attempt fails.

**Success:** The character succeeds in compelling a specific ghost within range of sight to enter the govi (which may be any small container with a lid), trapping it within. The govi will hold the ghost for a number of hours equal to the Gatekeeper's dots in Carrefour. If the lid is removed, or the container is broken, the ghost may flee.

**Exceptional Success:** The attempt succeeds, and the ghost is so intimidated by the Gatekeeper's power that it agrees to answer one question absolutely honestly, to the best of its knowledge.

**Suggested Modifiers**

Modifier	Situation
+2	Discipline is activated in a cemetery or other location related to death.
+1	The character practices Vodoun, and his patron loa is Ghede.

•• *Skeleton Key*

Gatekeepers of Ghede are able to open any door, despite locks, security systems or barricades. Conversely, they may use the same Discipline power to shut a door, locking it

with magic so powerful that nothing short of destroying the door (or using Skeleton Key upon the door again) will open it.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Larceny + Carrefour

**Action:** Instant

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** The attempt fails. Further uses of Skeleton Key incur a -1 penalty for the remainder of the scene.

**Failure:** The attempt fails.

**Success:** The character can open or shut one door. If, while using Skeleton Key, the character opens a door protected by an alarm, the alarm does not sound, nor is any equipment connected to the door damaged. If the door is barricaded in any other way, the obstructions immediately fall to the side, allowing complete access to the vampire. If a character chooses to close a door, the door cannot be opened again unless the door itself is destroyed, or Skeleton Key is used upon it again. If the character wishes, he may spend an additional point of Vitae so that no other Gatekeeper but himself may open the door again using Skeleton Key.

**Exceptional Success:** The Apollinaire may name one person who can or *cannot* use the door, leaving it locked or unlocked to everyone else. This does not prevent the door being opened by Skeleton Key, however, it just allows the vampire to grant more specific access.

**Suggested Modifiers**

Modifier	Situation
+1	The character practices Vodoun, and his patron loa is Ghede.

••• *Vivé Passageway*

Using white chalk, a Gatekeeper can draw the image of a door upon a wall, and instantly create a passageway through any barrier to the nearest room or empty space beyond it.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Craft + Carrefour

**Action:** Instant

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** The door opens, but closes in a few seconds, rather than at the end of the scene. If the vampire is crossing through when this happens, the player rolls Dexterity + Athletics reflexively. If this roll fails, the character suffers seven points of lethal damage as the wall solidifies around her. The character can attempt to use Skeleton Key to get out (short of destroying the wall, this is in fact her only hope), but the attempt suffers a -3 modifier.

**Failure:** The attempt fails, and the chalk drawing remains upon the wall.

**Success:** The chalk door becomes a real door that opens to the nearest room or empty space (up to a distance of one mile in the direction directly behind the symbolic drawing). If there is no open space behind the drawn door, a real door still materializes, but it opens to the wall behind it, and goes nowhere (unless Shift Threshold is subsequently performed upon it). The door may be opened and closed once, after which the door vanishes. Otherwise, it remains for a number of hours equal to the successes rolled, after which it dissolves. Shift Threshold may be used upon a Vève Passageway, but the door always disappears after it is closed or its duration has expired, and may therefore not become a part of the Eternal Crossroads.

**Exceptional Success:** Other than the extra time gained, extra successes have no effect.

#### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+1	The character practices Vodoun, and his patron loa is Ghede.

#### ◆◆◆◆ *Open Bayé*

Members of Apollinaire's bloodline can create a gateway, known as a bayé, to and from the world of the dead, allowing traffic in either direction. Anyone who steps through a bayé is transplanted into Twilight. While in Twilight, they can touch ghosts, pick up ghostly objects or read tomes hidden there. They can also engage in physical or magical combat with ghosts, damaging their Corpus. Conversely, wrathful shades might physically lash out at visitors, causing them harm.

**Cost:** —

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Occult + Carrefour

**Action:** Instant

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The gateway opens, but it doesn't lead to Twilight. The player rolls the vampire's Wits + Composure as a reflexive action. If the roll succeeds, the vampire realizes what has happened and stops before entering the gate (which leads to *somewhere else* — the Underworld, perhaps, or even to Hell). The gateway remains open until dawn, however, and if the vampire doesn't watch it carefully, something could escape. Ghede would certainly be displeased if this were to happen.

**Failure:** The attempt fails.

**Success:** The attempt succeeds, and the character opens a gateway to Twilight. One vampire of Size 5 or less can





pass through the bayé per turn (larger Kindred can spend two turns squeezing through). Each success allows the Gatekeeper to widen the gate so that one additional vampire can pass through per turn. Only vampires may pass through a bayé opened by an Apollinaire, and the gateway cannot be moved. It is impossible to open a Gateway from within Twilight using Open Bayé, making it difficult to return to the material world should a vampire linger too long in Twilight. While there, vampires are only able to feed upon each other, and sunlight is just as dangerous within Twilight as it is in the material world.

**Exceptional Success:** Extra successes allow for larger gates, but confer no other benefit.

#### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	Discipline is activated in a cemetery or other location related to death.
+1	The character practices Vodoun, and his patron loa is Ghede.

#### ●●●● *Shift Threshold*

The Apollinaire bloodline has the ability to open any door to any other, linking the two doors together through space, no matter where they both reside. A Gatekeeper may, for example, link a closet door in New York to the door of a flat in London. When the vampire passes through the door in New York, he ends up in the London flat. Gatekeepers have scattered hundreds of these doors across the globe, forming an intricate, secret network across the fabric of space known as the Eternal Crossroads.

The Eternal Crossroads are available for any vampire to use, provided she knows where to look and has been taught the proper way to open the door. A small number of Gatekeepers have taken up the duty of maintaining the Eternal Crossroads, mapping its intricate and ever-shifting passageways, and locking doors (often using Skeleton Key to prevent those outside the bloodline from gaining access) that have been left ajar to prevent the unaware from stumbling through. Maps of the Eternal Crossroads are available for purchase, at a high price, although they are rarely accurate for long, as old passageways are destroyed and new ones are constantly added.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** Manipulation + Occult + Carrefour

**Action:** Instant

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The Gatekeeper creates a connection to a random door, rather than to the intended door.

**Failure:** The attempt fails.

**Success:** The Gatekeeper links two doors together creating a passageway in space from one to the other. The vampire may only create a connection to a door that he has seen and can clearly visualize, and may not link a door to another that is already a part of the Eternal Crossroads. The link exists for a number of hours equal to the successes rolled, unless the player spends an extra Vitae for the character to mark the door with his blood. If an Apollinaire marks the door, the passageway becomes a part of the Eternal Crossroads, and the link lasts until one (or both) of the doors is physically destroyed. While any vampire can cross through a passageway formed using Shift Threshold, only an Apollinaire can see the mark upon a door designating it as a gateway of the Eternal Crossroads.

When a Gatekeeper creates a door to the Eternal Crossroads, he also invents a “key,” a special way of accessing the door to cause it to open to the linked destination,

rather than to wherever it would usually lead. This “key” is usually a simple ritual: a special knock, a symbol to be drawn on the door or a quick phrase. An Apollinaire who forgets which key goes to which door might be in for embarrassment (at least), but nothing stops the character from using the same key for multiple doors. Then all he has to do is remember where each of the doors goes.

**Exceptional Success:** The vampire can make the door part of the Eternal Crossroads without further expenditure. All Carrefour rolls for the next hour gain a +1, as Ghede looks upon the intricacy of the Crossroads with pleasure.

#### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	The vampire is attempting to connect to a door in his haven, or another location with which he is intimately familiar.
+1	The character practices Vodoun, and his patron loa is Ghede.



# LES GENS LIBRES

I would rather die than be a slave once more.

Those of Les Gens Libres bloodline believe in freedom above all else. Members of the bloodline are Embraced from those who were subject to a cruel or unjust exercise of authority or power. Among their ranks might be a former slave, an ex-criminal, a prisoner of war, a man who has suffered a life of poverty in the hands of a corrupt government, or a battered woman trapped in an abusive relationship. In death, those chosen to become a part of Les Gens Libres finally find freedom. The Gens Libres are a rebellious lot, and they revel in their vampiric powers, seeing their abilities as tools that can be utilized to turn the tables on their oppressors and liberate those who are still oppressed.

Members of the Gens Libres bloodline typically belong to no covenant, finding the very notion of an organized hierarchy oppressive. They operate independently of established systems, sometimes alone, but more often in groups, to further their cause. Les Gens Libres are vigilante freedom fighters – self-proclaimed defenders of those who are oppressed by authority. To Les Gens Libres, the world quivers in anticipation each night, waiting for revolution.

**Parent Clan:** Gangrel

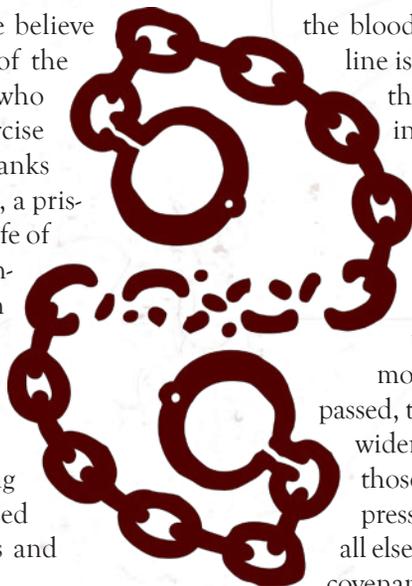
**Bloodline Disciplines:** Obfuscate, Animalism, Resilience, Celerity

**Nickname:** Freedmen

**Weakness:** Members of the Gens Libres bloodline possess the weakness of their parent clan (see p. 107 of **Vampire: The Requiem**).

Additionally, Les Gens Libres are incapable of forming a blood bond, and vampires who drink the blood of a Freedman are never subject to the Vinculum. This suits members of the bloodline perfectly well, however, as the majority of Freedmen view the Vinculum as simply another unjust form of slavery. Members of the bloodline believe that this weakness is not a detriment at all; rather, it is a proudly-worn badge of their continued commitment to the proliferation of Freedom.

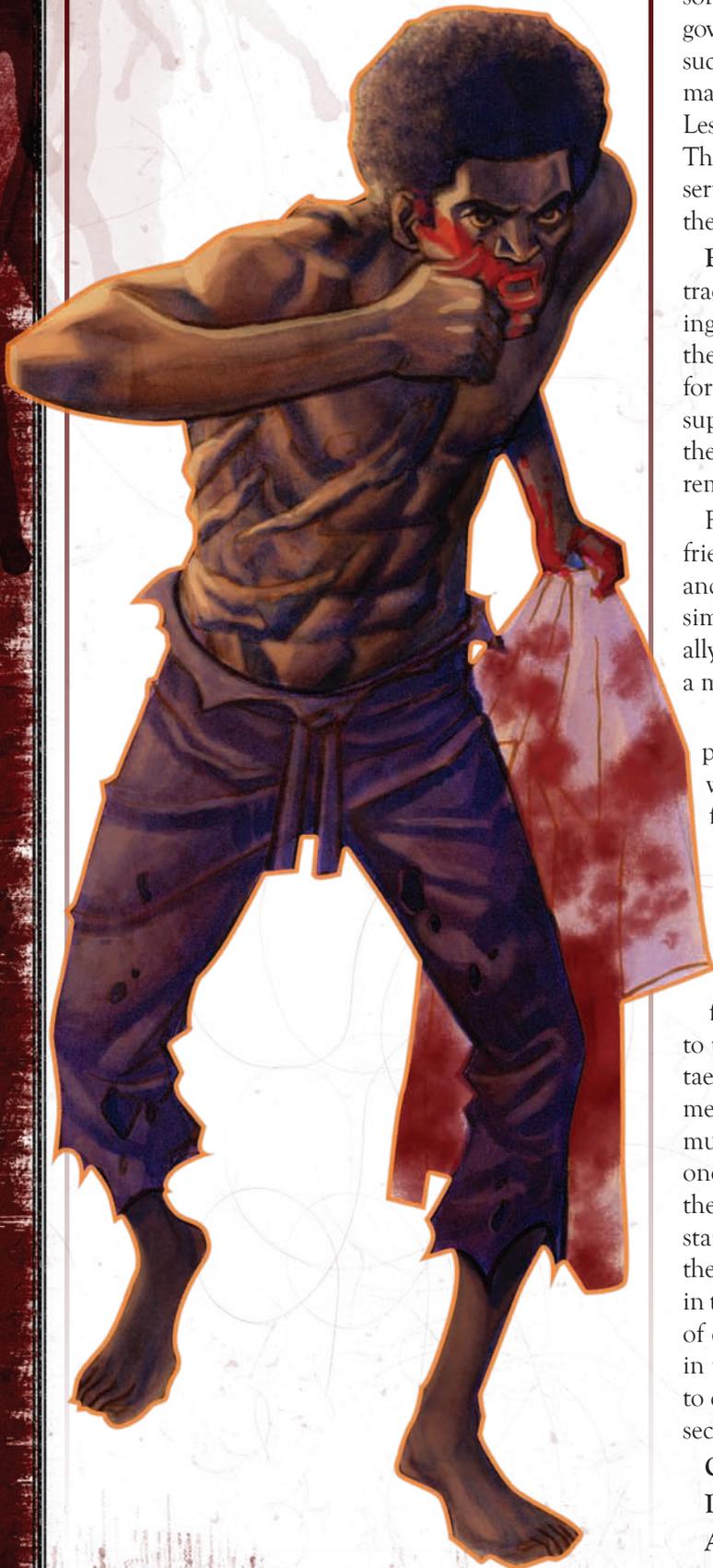
**History and Culture:** Bloodline historians have never been able to pinpoint who exactly was the founder of



the bloodline, but it is widely believed that the line is relatively recent in the grand scheme of things. The bloodline clearly originated in Saint Domingue (modern-day Haiti), sometime shortly before or during the Haitian Revolution at the end of the 18th century. Originally, members of the bloodline were Kindred turned from Haitian slaves, still burning with unforgotten hatred remaining from their mortal lives held in bondage. As the years passed, the bloodline grew to encompass a much wider range of cultural backgrounds – any of those among the masses who have been oppressed, and who believe in freedom above all else. Freedmen often choose to belong to no covenant, wishing instead to devote themselves utterly to their cause.

With the European tradition no longer threatened by the blasphemous practices of the Kindred of the first wave, there was very little left to do in Saint Domingue but systematically destroy those who remained. According to most records, that is precisely what happened.

But the truth is far more sinister where Les Gens Libres are concerned. Rather than kill the remaining Kindred slaves, the elders of the second wave corralled those who remained and developed a means of tracking their blood and the blood of any childe they sired. They bred out the Gangrel's troublesome tendency to grow horrific claws, and instead they purposefully developed in the line an affinity for staying hidden – at least, from anyone who didn't *know* how to find them. After the bloodline cemented itself, the founders of Les Gens Libres bloodline were set loose in the world to multiply. The elders of the second wave did this so that a new, relatively weak bloodline could serve as a food source for vampires who had grown too powerful to sustain themselves on human blood. Even tonight, certain vampires know how to use the tracking method devised by the Kindred of the second wave. The information on how to find Kindred of the Gens Libres bloodline can be bought for a high price by those influential enough to acquire it. The unpleasant truth of the Freedmen's origins has, thus far, not come to light – or at least, no Freedmen still extant seem to know this truth.



Kindred who are initiated into Les Gens Libres must show their dedication to the cause by freeing a mortal (or, in some cases, a vampire) from some oppressor. An oppressor in this sense may or may not be a person. It may be a government, an unhealthy situation, or physical bindings, such as shackles or a prison cell. The fact that some people may not *want* to be free is, in most cases, a concept that Les Gens Libres cannot (or do not wish to) understand. They look upon those who willingly subject themselves to servitude as utterly deluded, and sometimes choose to end their lives rather than let them continue to suffer slavery.

**Reputation:** In small numbers, Kindred with more traditional ideals generally see Les Gens Libres as nothing more than a loud and annoying nuisance. When their numbers swell, however, their strength becomes formidable, and not many are more adept at garnering support for their cause than are the Freedmen. As such, the bloodline tends to be closely monitored to ensure they remain contained and easily controlled.

For the most part, Les Gens Libres are on relatively friendly terms with the Carthians. Though their motives and methods may differ, the two groups both share a similar progressive attitude. The groups may occasionally find common ground and work together to achieve a mutual goal.

**Concepts:** Vigilante, jaded ex-military officer, fervent patriot, rebellious teenager, disgruntled blue-collar worker, misguided rabble-rouser, guerilla warrior, falsely-accused ex-convict, zealous visionary, charismatic politician

### *Artifact: Blood Compass*

A blood compass looks like nothing more than a square of white fabric spotted with blood. They were first made by Kindred of the second wave as a means to track members of the Gens Libres bloodline. The Vitae spilled upon the cloth belongs to one of the earliest members of the bloodline. To use the artifact, a vampire must concentrate upon the blood-stain; the player spends one Willpower point. Traces of the Beast that remain in the dried Vitae respond to his command, and the blood stains upon the cloth shift, gathering in the direction of the nearest member of the bloodline. The blood will point in the direction of the nearest Freedman for the duration of one scene. Only a few dozen such bloody cloths exist in the world tonight. Few vampires currently know how to create a Blood Compass, and those who do guard the secret carefully.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** Resolve + Persuasion + Blood Potency

**Action:** Extended

## Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The ritual fails spectacularly. The artifact activates, but points in a false direction, leading the user on a wild goose chase for the duration of a scene.

**Failure:** The artifact fails entirely, but not dangerously. The character loses the Willpower point, but the artifact does not activate.

**Success:** The Blood Compass points in the direction of the nearest member of the Gens Libres bloodline. The character must accumulate a number of successes appropriate to the distance between the tracker and the quarry. A target in the next building might require only three successes, while one a hundred miles away might require as many as twenty. In any case, the Blood Compass always points the vampire in the right direction (provided the tracker continues to accumulate successes). Once the Compass is activated, it remains so for an entire night. The search for a member of the bloodline can therefore take place over a number of nights, with the tracker reactivating the Compass at each sundown.

If a vampire owns a Blood Compass and knows one of the Freedmen personally *and* can use the Summoning power of the Majesty Discipline, the Summoning attempt receives a +3 modifier.

**Exceptional Success:** The player makes considerable progress toward the goal.

### *Devotions of Les Gens Libres*

#### *Break Vinculum*

(Resilience •••, Auspex•)

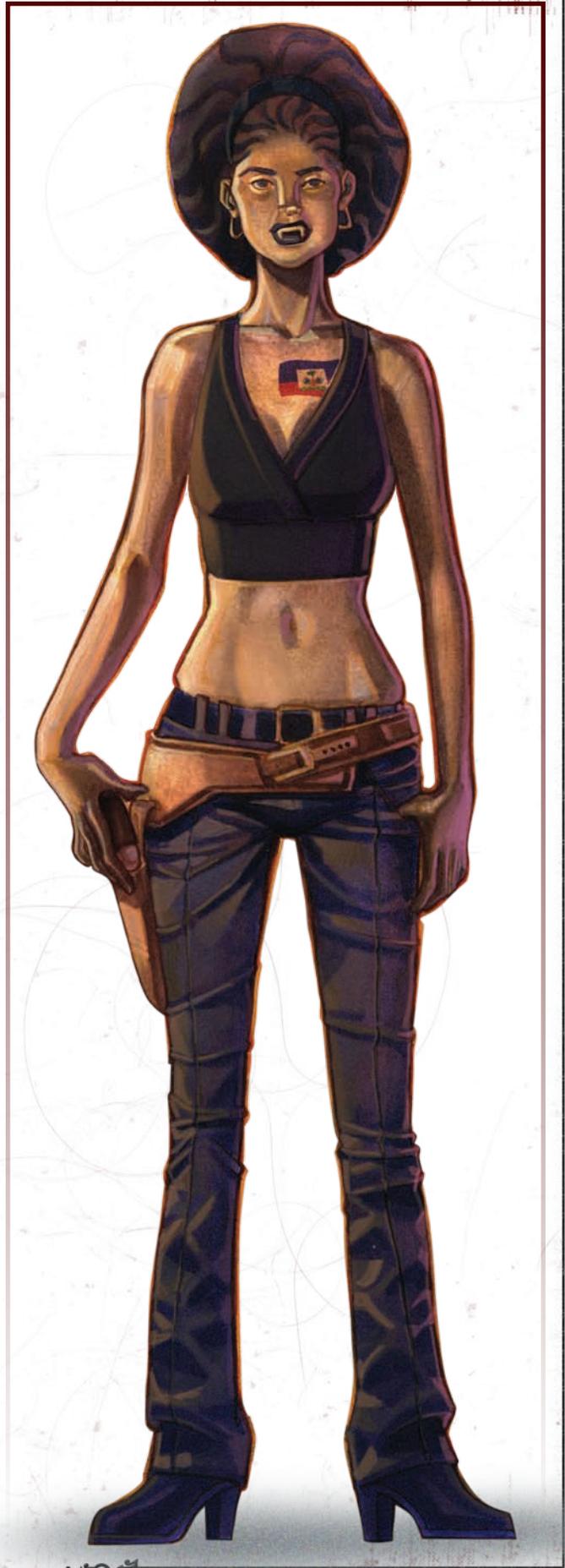
The Gens Libres believe the blood bond is nothing more than another form of slavery. Sadly, the Vinculum is widely used among Kindred to force others into submission. By laying their hands upon a thrall, a Freedman is able to temporarily break him free of his bond. For reasons beyond the comprehension of Les Gens Libres, some vampires actually want to remain in thrall to their regnant. If a Freedman attempts Break Vinculum on one of these unwilling and clearly deluded Kindred, the action is contested.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** Resolve + Persuasion + Resilience versus Resolve + Blood Potency (if the subject is unwilling)

**Action:** Instant

The character must touch the subject (see “Touching an Opponent” in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 157). Once contact is established, a contested roll is made if the subject is resistant. If the player gets the most successes, the blood bond is broken for a number of hours



equal to the number of successes rolled. When the bond is broken, the regnant automatically rolls Wits + Blood Potency. If the regnant rolls a higher number of successes than the devotion's activation roll, he senses that the bond has been broken.

This power costs 15 experience points to learn.

### *Liberated Mind*

(Auspex •, Obfuscate •••)

Over the years, Les Gens Libres developed a technique that, when utilized, makes them less susceptible to being dominated by others. Liberated Mind creates a false mind that shields the true psyche of the Freedman from domination, and makes his would-be controller falsely believe the attempt at control was successful.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** Resolve + Subterfuge + Obfuscate

**Action:** Instant

Success on the roll activates Liberated Mind upon the character for one night. The character enjoys a bonus to all resistance rolls to the Dominate Discipline equal to the player's successes. In addition, if the Dominate power isn't resisted actively, but involves subtracting a trait from the attacker's dice pool, the successes on the Liberated Mind roll add to this trait.

**Example:** Michel uses *Liberated Mind* every night before venturing into the morass of slavery that is the local vampire court. Tonight, his player rolls three successes. If a Ventrue pig uses *Command* on him, his player rolls *Resolve + Blood Potency + 3* to resist. If, however, the Ventrue tries to remove a memory using *The Forgetful Mind*, the Ventrue's player subtracts Michel's *Resolve + 3*, rather than just his *Resolve*, from the Discipline's dice pool.

One of the other useful facets of this Devotion is that the attacker believes that the Dominate attempt has been successful, provided that he isn't expecting an immediate result. If the vampire uses *Command* to force the Freedman to "Sit," the vampire might ignore the order, which obviously tips the attacker off to the fact that the Dominate attempt didn't work. However, if the vampire used *Mesmerize* to issue a more complex command, the

Gens Libres vampire is free to pretend to be under the vampire's spell – and the attacker is none the wiser.

This power costs 15 experience points to learn.

### *Telepathic Network*

(Auspex ••••, Obfuscate ••••)

Experienced Freedmen are capable of creating a mental network of telepathic communication between groups of Kindred. Once the network has been opened, any Kindred affected by Telepathic Network can send out a silent, mental message to the entire group such as, "I am being attacked, come help me!" or, "I'm currently breaking into the back of the building. Where are the rest of you?" This Devotion cannot be used on an unwilling or unaware subject.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** Intelligence + Stealth + Auspex

**Action:** Instant

Upon activation, Telepathic Network creates a temporary telepathic bond between multiple willing Kindred. The number of vampires that can be included within the network is equal to the number of successes obtained during the activation roll. Kindred within the network may send out a mental message to the entire group, but may not send out a private message to a specific individual. The network is unaffected by distance once activated (although all vampires who wish to be a part of the network must be present for activation). Telepathic Network lasts for the duration of a scene, unless the character responsible for activating the Devotion chooses to end it earlier.

Additionally, Telepathic Network masks the Beasts of those within the network from the Predator's Taint. While those within the network still instinctively know other vampires by sight, vampires outside of the group will not recognize those within for the monsters they are. A vampire connected through Telepathic Network appears mortal to other Kindred, unless the outsider picks up on other tells (such as a murky reflection in a mirror), or the linked Kindred chooses to reveal his true nature.

This power costs 21 experience points to learn.



# KINDRED VODOUN

The Haitian revolution was a turning point in Kindred history. As the fires of rebellion burned, Kindred fled from St. Domingue and scattered throughout the world, taking the religion of Vodoun with them.

Any vampire can practice Vodoun. The religion is inclusive and not limited to any specific clan. While certain covenants (the Lancea Sanctum in particular) may find its practice disdainful or even threatening, the religion is still open to all – despite efforts by more traditional Kindred to contain its spread. Granted, there is a much larger concentration of devotees in New Orleans, the Caribbean and eastern coastal cities of the United States, but vampires find reasons to move to new cities, so isolated individual practitioners and small coterie of devotees can crop up nearly anywhere.

## VODOUN LEXICON

Below are some important Vodoun-related terms that may be presented within this section, or may be used to add authentic detail to a campaign.

**Bat guerre** — an initiation ceremony that a vodouisant must go through in order to become a houngan or mambo. During bat guerre, the candidate is possessed by a particular loa who offers patronage to the devotee.

**Bayé** — An entranceway or gateway, particularly between the material world and the world of the dead.

**Cheval** — A devotee who is possessed or “ridden” by a loa. Translated literally, cheval means “horse.”

**Houngan** — A fully initiated priest of Vodoun, under the patronage of a specific loa. A houngan’s female counterpart is a mambo.

**Loa** — Powerful spirits who may be called upon through ritual to grant certain favors or abilities to those who serve them loyally.

**Mambo** — A fully initiated priestess of Vodoun, under the patronage of a specific loa. A mambo’s male counterpart is a houngan.

**Ridden** — To be possessed by a loa.

**Vévé** — Elaborate, ritualistic symbols of power, usually drawn in flour or blood.

**Vodouisant** — A low-ranking devotee of Vodoun who has not yet gained the patronage of a specific loa.

Vodoun, as a religion, puts a great deal of emphasis on dealing with spirits called loa. The loa are spirits of divine origin who serve as intermediaries between *Bondye*, the

Creator (who is both distant from and disinterested in the lowly affairs of creatures that crawl upon the earth), and practitioners of Vodoun.

In Kindred Vodoun rituals, the ritualist summons loa to receive offerings and grant requests. Each loa demands a different type of offering or gift from the ritualist. If the loa finds the vampire’s offering sufficient, it possesses her body and grants her unique abilities in the process.

A devotee progresses in Vodoun by developing personal relationships and rapport with the loa. As such, a character’s rating in Rapport determines which rituals he may learn. For example, a character with two dots of Rapport can know an unlimited number of level one and level two rituals (provided the experience points are paid to learn each), but he may not study any level-three Vodoun rituals until his Rapport level is increased to 3. Each time a character acquires a dot of Rapport (including at character creation), he gains a ritual of that level at no additional cost. New rituals can be bought at the cost of two experience points multiplied by the level of the ritual. Kindred with a Rapport level of •• or lower are called vodouisants, and are able to call upon any loa.

While any vampire can practice Vodoun, and may call upon any number of loa, the end goal of most practitioners is to gain the patronage of a specific loa. Developing a personal relationship with a loa takes a great deal of time and energy, but once a loa offers its patronage, the houngan has access to much more specialized and formidable powers than those available to vodouisants. When a player buys a third dot of Rapport, his character has become skilled enough to attract the attention of a specific loa, and must perform the ceremony of *bat guerre* (the battle for the spirits). Through physical exertion and mental concentration, against the hypnotic backbeat of drums, chanting and the clashing of ceremonial machetes, the initiate is possessed by a particular loa who offers its patronage. A character cannot ascend to a Rapport level of ••• without going through *bat guerre*.

If the vodouisant accepts the loa’s offer during the ceremony, he or she becomes a houngan (priest) or mambo (priestess) devoted to that specific loa, and may proceed to learn the higher level rituals (levels ••• and above) associated with that loa. Once a houngan completes *bat guerre* and gains the patronage of a loa, he can still call upon any of the other loa for lower level rituals (levels •• and below), but he can only perform higher level rituals

(levels ••• and above) associated with his patron loa. A houngan may only accept the patronage of one loa, so he must consider his path carefully.

### *The Ritual*

In Kindred Vodoun rituals, a devotee invites a loa into his body. Each loa demands a different offering or gift from the ritualist. If the loa finds the vampire's offering sufficient, it will enter his body and grant him unique abilities. The devotee retains control of his own body and senses while the loa rides his body and may choose to end the possession at any time, except in the case of dramatic failure (see below). How the possession affects the ritualist varies from loa to loa. Kindred may take on physical or personality traits associated with the loa: an unusually haughty attitude, a slight limp, or grotesque, festering sores. The characteristics of the loa affect the vampire for a number of hours equal to the level of the ritual.

**Cost:** The use of Vodoun always costs the character one point of Vitae. Additionally, each loa requires an offering. Upon invocation of the ritual, the loa consumes what has been offered, leaving behind nothing – regardless of whether or not the ritual results in a successful possession.

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Persuasion + Rapport

**Action:** Extended. The number of successes required to activate a ritual is equal to the level of the ritual (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 incurred in a turn is a penalty to the next casting roll made for the character, in addition to any wound penalties suffered.

If a character fails to complete the ritual in time (such as by being sent into torpor before accumulating enough successes) or decides to cancel the ritual before garnering enough successes to activate it, the effect simply fails. Any Vitae expenditures made are not recovered, and the offering is consumed.

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The devotee relinquishes control of her body, becoming entirely possessed by the loa for the remainder of the scene (which may or may not be detrimental to the vampire depending on the loa, and the vampire's relationship with it). The loa's consciousness takes the place of the ritualist's, and the loa controls all actions made by the vampire during that time. When the vampire regains control of her body, she recalls nothing of what happened during the possession and is temporarily disoriented, taking a -3 penalty to any action performed in the subsequent round.

**Failure:** No successes are added to the total. If the character is forced to stop before the ritual is complete, the ritual fails. Vitae and offerings are consumed as normal, but possession does not occur.

**Success:** Successes are added to the total. If the character reaches the target number of successes, the ritual takes place as described, and the possession is successful.

**Exceptional Success:** The ritual takes place as described. In many cases, extra successes are their own reward, causing additional damage or conferring extra duration or capacity.

### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	The ritual is performed in a place sympathetic to the nature of the loa.
+1	The loa is the patron of the Kindred performing the ritual.
-2	The ritual is performed with inappropriate offerings.
-2	The ritualist demands cooperation rather than asking for it or treats the loa with disdain or arrogance.
-3	The ritual is performed lacking any offering.

# THE LOA

Each loa is a distinct being with its own drastically varying personal likes and dislikes, sacred rhythms, songs, dances, *vévés* (ritual symbols) and related rituals. Loa expect to be served and respected, and any arrogance or disrespect will not be tolerated.

Devotees who serve the loa loyally are granted potent abilities. It should be noted, however, that Kindred are inhuman monsters, forever at war with the Beast within. Of the thousands of loa that exist, only those with a certain affinity for darkness will suffer to ride a vampire.

## WHAT ARE THE LOA?

In the context of the World of Darkness, what *are* the beings that empower Kindred Vodoun? One might as well ask what empowers *Crúac* or *Theban Sorcery*. Something obviously makes it work, and the adherents to the faiths that practice these sorceries claim that because the magic works, this proves the supremacy — and existence — of the deities they worship.

Except, of course, that the fact that *Theban Sorcery* gets results doesn't stop *Crúac* or Kindred Vodoun from working as well. So the question remains: What are the loa? They might be spirits (see the Introduction), and the vampires who practice this blood magic are playing into bans set in place hundreds of years ago (perhaps in Haiti before the Revolution, perhaps in Africa before the slavers came). Kindred Vodoun might be a set of powers inherent to the Kindred, just like *Disciplines* or the ability to augment *Physical Attributes with Vitae*, and the ritual that vampires attach to it is artificial.

And, of course, there's always the possibility that the loa *do* exist just as described, and that they are keeping an eye on the world for *Bondye*. That begs the question of what He'll think of His custodians mucking about with vampires....

## *Ghede*

*Ghede* is the lord of death and the keeper of graveyards. He controls the eternal crossroads that mark the paths between life and death. His followers are said to have the ability to converse with the dead, and were rumored to create zombies from mortal corpses to attend as undead, speechless servants entirely without free will.

**Loa characteristics:** A vampire who calls upon *Ghede* takes on a visible death mask. His cheeks become hollow

and sunken, dark circles appear beneath his eyes, and his skin stretches taught across his face — giving him a skeletal appearance.

**Ritual Offering:** Rum, cigars and food (*Ghede* is a glutton and a well-prepared feast is a sure way to gain his favor).

## *Death Echo*

(Level-One Vodoun ritual)

A devotee can call upon *Ghede* to grant him the ability to perceive the moments of another vampire's Final Death as though he were experiencing the Final Death himself. The Kindred perceives the death as it was occurring from the point of view of the deceased vampire. The character sees what the vampire saw, smells what he smelled, feels how he felt, etc. Kindred are able to maintain *Death Echo* for a minute per Rapport level, and must know the name of the dead vampire in order to use this ritual.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+1	The ritualist has a physical object connected to the deceased (e.g. hair, clothing, a photograph).
+2	The ritualist is well acquainted with the deceased, or the deceased is connected to the ritualist through a blood tie.

## *Ghede's Touch*

(Level-Two Vodoun ritual)

A devotee can call upon *Ghede* to cause any material object to corrode, rust or become rotten. This ritual lowers the object's Durability by a number of points equal to the vampire's Blood Potency, but it does not affect the object's Structure.

## *Create Zombi*

(Level-Three Vodoun ritual, only available to patrons of *Ghede*)

A houngan under the patronage of *Ghede* can call upon him to reanimate a lifeless corpse and create a zombi. A zombi created through Vodoun ritual is completely under the control of the houngan. It can be recognized by its listless gait, and empty, soulless eyes. It can hear and obey simple commands, and is said to be entirely without memory of its mortal life — until its tongue touches salt.

According to folklore, the taste of salt will bring the zombi back to its senses, and it will hurry back to the cemetery to return to its grave. More likely, however, salt is simply a supernatural weakness. Either way, houngan often sew the corpse's lips together before calling upon Ghede to animate the body. Zombies are unfailing, devoted slaves. What they lack in intelligence and motivation, they more than make up for in dogged determination and sheer, tireless pursuit of the tasks to which they are set.

Generally speaking, such zombies possess a level of reasoning just above that of a rather intelligent dog, and lack even that dog's ability to predict the future or make independent decisions. They understand certain visual cues (such as the opening of the door they are meant to guard) and auditory commands ("Defend me!"), but cannot perform feats requiring abstract intellect. They have a limited memory, but cannot make even basic correlations or inferences. (While they can, for example, dimly recall that their master has changed their clothes once a day, they cannot determine that he is likely to do so again tomorrow.)

They have no individual initiative. These corpse-slaves are not really any stronger than they were in life, but they are tireless and completely without the ability to sense or respond to pain. They need not eat or sleep, and will do whatever chore they are set to until told otherwise, even if it requires them to tear their own bodies apart in the attempt. They experience neither fear nor the desire for self-preservation and have no minds, per se, for others to control.

Each zombi created by this ritual has the following base traits:

**Attributes:** Power 1, Finesse 1, Resistance 2

**Size:** 5 (or less if the corpse is small)

**Speed:** 1\*

**Initiative:** 1\*

**Defense:** 1\*

\* These traits begin at 1, regardless of Attribute scores. The character can spend Vitae to make a zombie stronger, however. For each Vitae spent (in addition to the point required to activate the ritual), the player can raise any one trait by two, or any two traits by one. There is no limit to the amount of Vitae a vampire can use to empower a zombi (up to the limits of his blood pool, obviously), but once the character stops spending blood to do so, thus completing the ritual, he cannot further empower that zombi.

Zombies do not suffer wound penalties and cannot heal damage naturally. Bashing, lethal and aggravated wounds are marked normally, but zombies never suffer incapacita-

tion — they just keep going until their last Health point is lost to aggravated damage. When a zombie's final (rightmost) Health box is marked with bashing damage, no roll is required to remain conscious. When its final Health box is marked with lethal damage, it does not collapse and begin bleeding to death — it keeps going. Any damage suffered after that is upgraded to aggravated. Once this happens, the corpse loses body parts with each new upgraded wound until it is completely pulverized or disintegrated (the Storyteller decides which parts fall off with each wound).

A zombi continues to rot. It suffers one lethal point of damage with each passage of a number of nights equal to its Resistance. A zombi with a Resistance of 3 therefore suffers one lethal point of rotting damage every three nights.

In addition, zombies created by this ritual have a vulnerability to salt. If a zombi "tastes" salt, it is destroyed instantly. Otherwise, zombies can only be destroyed when their final Health box is marked with aggravated damage.

### *Return to Dust*

(Level-Four Vodoun ritual,  
only available to patrons of Ghede)

Kindred can call upon Ghede to pull the soul of a slain vampire back into the dust of his remains for a limited time. An impression of the face of the dead vampire appears in the dust, answering the houngan's questions in a soft, dry whisper. The ritualist can ask one question of the ghost per level in Vodoun. After it has answered, it departs. (The houngan cannot delay for more than five turns between questions, or else the ghost disappears prematurely.) The ghost's answers are not necessarily truthful or straightforward, as the ritual in no way forces the ghost to be honest. This ritual cannot be used to call up the soul of a diablerized vampire.

#### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	The ritualist is well acquainted with the deceased.
+2	The deceased is connected to the ritualist through a blood tie.
-2	The deceased disliked the ritualist.

### *Cheat Death*

(Level-Five Vodoun ritual,  
only available to patrons of Ghede)

Ghede is Lord of the Dead and keeper of the eternal gateways between life and death, and as such, he has final say over who dies and who lives. A houngan of Ghede

may call upon his patron loa to shield him from Final Death. A houngan who performs the ritual Cheat Death is protected by Ghede from Final Death for one hour after the ritual is performed. No matter how hard his foe may try, the houngan simply will not die when under the protection of his patron loa.

Cheat Death may only be performed once a night. After the initial ritual is completed, a houngan can activate the effects of Cheat Death as an instant action at any time within the course of a night. When the effects of Cheat Death have been successfully activated, the vampire is under the protection of the ritual for one hour.

The rightmost Health box cannot be filled with any kind of damage while a character is protected by Cheat Death. If the vampire enters frenzy, however, the ritual is dissolved, and the character may be killed. Wound penalties apply normally to a character protected by this ritual.

### *Papa Legba*

In Haitian Vodoun, Papa Legba is the intermediary between the spirit world and humanity. He is guardian of the gateways to and from the spirit world and gives (or denies) permission to speak with the spirits. Papa Legba is believed to speak all human languages, and is said to facilitate communication, speech and understanding. According to the Vodoun tradition, Papa Legba is depicted as an old man on a crutch or with a cane, wearing a broad brimmed straw hat and smoking a pipe.

**Loa characteristics:** A vampire who summons Papa Legba walks with a noticeable limp, as though a leg bone is broken.

**Ritual Offering:** Black coffee, tobacco, and roasted corn or peanuts

### *Spiritual Intermediary*

**(Level-One Vodoun ritual)**

Papa Legba can be called upon to grant the ritualist the ability to see, hear and speak with spirits. Kindred granted this ability can also detect their unseen presence if they are hiding or have chosen to not reveal themselves. Unless the vampire has some means of peering across the Gauntlet or affecting the Shadow, he can converse only with Twilight spirits. The effects of the ritual last for one hour per dot of Rapport.

### *Universal Translator*

**(Level-Two Vodoun ritual)**

A vodouisant may call upon Papa Legba to translate any language, verbal or written, allowing communication and understanding across cultural and knowledge barriers.

When Universal Translator is in effect, the vampire understands all languages and can speak or write any language that he chooses to focus upon. Fundamentally, Universal Translator is based upon pattern recognition. Therefore, it may also be used on computer and programming languages, allowing the vampire to understand and write the language of code. Universal Translator remains in effect for one scene.

### *Legba's Curse*

**(Level-Four Vodoun ritual,  
only available to patrons of Papa Legba)**

In linguistics, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis states that there is a systematic relationship between language and how a person both understands the world and behaves in it. It is language that defines the world. Without language, a person cannot think or communicate, he can only perceive.

A houngan of Legba may temporarily remove a person, place or thing from the mind of a victim, rendering the subject incapable of talking about, understanding, or even thinking about the removed noun. The victim may still perceive the object if confronted with it outright, and he may even understand its fundamental properties individually, but he cannot group those properties together to fully grasp or describe what the object is. For example, a victim is made to forget the word "apple." If he is subsequently confronted with an apple, he sees that it is round. Then he sees that it is red, but he cannot recall or see that it is also round. Then he feels that it is smooth, but he cannot recall or see that it is also round and red, and so on.

The victim need not be present for the ritual, but the houngan must know his name, or possess an object connected to the victim (hair, an article of clothing, etc.). If the ritual is successful, the devotee chooses any single noun (including proper nouns), which is then removed from the victim's mind for a number of days equal to the houngan's level of Rapport.

### *Leech Understanding*

**(Level-Four Vodoun ritual,  
only available to patrons of Papa Legba)**

A houngan of Legba may perform the ritual Leech Understanding upon a restrained or incapacitated vampire. The ritualist lays his hands upon the vampire, and knowledge pours into him from the mind of the victim. A character who performs Leech Understanding permanently gains an additional dot in a random Skill that the victim possesses at a higher level than the houngan, and the victim permanently loses a dot in that Skill. If the victim does not possess any Skills at a higher level than the houngan,

the ritual has no effect. The Skill dot gained need not be paid for with experience points. Leech Understanding may not be used on mortals.

Using this ritual causes a degeneration check for vampires with Humanity 4 (roll three dice).

### *Create Gris-Gris*

(Level-Five Vodoun ritual,  
only available to patrons of Papa Legba)

Kindred under the patronage of Papa Legba can call upon him to trap a spirit within a gris-gris, a talisman that houses a spirit and grants the wearer certain abilities or protection. Gris-gris are typically small, cloth bags containing herbs, oils, stones, small bones, hair and nails, pieces of cloth soaked with Vitae, or other small items that calm the trapped spirit and connect it with the owner of the talisman.

Before the houngan calls upon Papa Legba, he must first make the amulet that will house the spirit. Creating a gris-gris requires an extended Dexterity + Crafts roll with a target number of 10. Each roll is equal to five minutes.

Once the talisman has been created, the houngan performs the ritual to call upon Papa Legba. If the ritual is successful, Papa Legba will trap a spirit within the talisman. The type of spirit and Rank of the spirit trapped is determined by what the houngan wants the gris-gris to do. A gris-gris that can be used to provide light might require a fire-spirit of low (1-2) Rank, while a talisman that can grant the user the ability to cause foes to burst into flame requires trapping a fire-spirit of high Rank (3 or more).

The ritual that traps a spirit within a gris-gris is contested, pitting the ritualist's Presence + Persuasion + Rapport against the spirit's Rank + Resistance.

Vampires creating gris-gris are wise to tread carefully. Spirits do not usually wish to remain trapped within a gris-gris, forced to serve a houngan. Many attempt to break free, and if they are able, may turn upon the houngan who imprisoned and enslaved them. For this reason, it is very difficult, and dangerous, to trap a powerful spirit within a gris-gris. While potent spirits offer greater abilities to the houngan, they are also extremely difficult to contain and are dangerous (and sometimes deadly) when emancipated.

If the gris-gris is destroyed, the trapped spirit is freed and the devotee no longer enjoys the benefits the talisman provided.

The spirit releases its Numina only upon the talisman's activation. The user must request or command the spirit to act whenever he seeks its power. This is done non-verbally with an instant action Wits + Persuasion + Rap-

port roll. Success allows the vampire to use the talisman for the following scene.

Each time the talisman is activated, the trapped spirit has a chance to escape. The spirit contests the houngan's Wits + Persuasion + Rapport roll with its Resistance. If the spirit breaks free of its prison, the gris-gris becomes useless. Lesser spirits return to Twilight or the Shadow, while more powerful spirits may choose to attack the houngan.

### *Kalfou*

According to Vodoun tradition, Kalfou is the loa of bad luck, evil charms, black magic and misfortune. He represents the malevolent side of chaos and destiny. As such, he is able to lend his dark influence over fate to Kindred who serve him loyally. Like the loa, Kalfou's followers tend to be fascinated with destiny; they may be fortune tellers, soothsayers or dark prophets. A mambo devoted to Kalfou can inflict devastating curses upon her foes.

**Loa characteristics:** Kalfou is said to be the origin of darkness. The eyes of a vampire who summons Kalfou turn flat black and weep shadow.

**Ritual Offering:** Incense, sugar and raw meat

### *Kalfou's Misfortune*

(Level-One Vodoun ritual)

Kalfou may be called upon to inflict a curse intended to bring about immediate ill-fortune upon another. The target of the curse need not be present to be affected by Kalfou's Misfortune, but the devotee must have met the target. Success causes a number of dice to be removed from the subject's dice pool. One die is subtracted per Rapport dot the ritualist possesses (an additional die is subtracted if Kalfou is the patron loa of the ritualist). Kalfou's Misfortune lasts an hour per dot of Rapport the ritualist possesses.

This ritual involves a contested action, pitting the ritualist's Presence + Persuasion + Rapport against the subject's Resolve + Blood Potency. Resisting Kalfou's Misfortune is a reflexive action. Kalfou's Misfortune can be used a number of times per night equal to the ritualist's Rapport.

#### **Suggested Modifiers**

<b>Modifier</b>	<b>Situation</b>
+1	The ritualist has a physical object connected to the target of the curse (e.g. hair, clothing, a photograph).
+2	The ritualist is well acquainted with the subject.
+2	The subject is connected to the ritualist through a blood tie.

### *Kalfou's Oath*

#### **(Level-Two Vodoun ritual)**

A devotee can swear a binding oath under the eye of Kalfou, and even more importantly, the oath may take place between any number of Kindred. Only one of the vampires involved needs to be able to cast the ritual. Each vampire making an oath under Kalfou signifies her promise with a drop of her own blood upon a swatch of white linen.

A promise sworn beneath the watchful gaze of Kalfou can only be broken at a great price. If a vampire knowingly and willingly acts in any way contrary to an oath sworn beneath Kalfou, the loa curses him with bad luck, and the oath-breaker receives a -5 penalty to all actions until his promise has been fulfilled, he dies, or the oath is lifted.

The oath is only lifted if the binding cloth on which the oath-takers' blood was shared is destroyed.

### *Ill Omen*

#### **(Level-Three Vodoun ritual, only available to patrons of Kalfou)**

A mambo of Kalfou may call upon the loa to inflict a horrifying nightmare upon a foe. The focal point of the nightmare may be a person, place or object. Whatever the subject of the nightmare is, the victim wakes with an intense phobia of it. The Kindred attempts to avoid that person, place or object as though their very existence depended upon it. If the victim is somehow confronted with the object of his nightmare, he will react with utter horror. Each turn the victim remains within 10 feet of the object, the player rolls Resolve + Composure - the mambo's Blood Potency. If the roll fails, the victim immediately flees from the object in terror. If escape is not possible, he enters Röttschreck. If the victim is mortal and is unable to escape, he immediately faints, and remains unconscious for an hour or until forcibly roused, whichever comes first.

It should be noted that although the victim wholly and irrationally believes that the object of his fear will harm him, it is, in fact, no more dangerous than it would be under normal circumstances.

Ill Omen remains in effect for a number of nights equal to the mambo's Rapport.

### *Curse Object*

#### **(Level-Four Vodoun ritual, only available to patrons of Kalfou)**

Kindred under the patronage of Kalfou may perform a ritual to tie bad fortune to existing lifeless objects (jewelry, clothing, a weapon, etc.).

If the ritual is successful, the targeted object is cursed. A character who comes into physical contact with the object must remove a number of dice from her dice pool for any action subsequently performed. One die is subtracted per Rapport dot the ritualist possessed at the time of the item's creation.

The subject need not remain in contact with the item to be affected by its curse. Simply brushing against the cursed object brings bad luck upon the individual. The curse is automatically contested by the victim upon touch, pitting the ritualist's Presence + Persuasion + Rapport against the subject's Resolve + Blood Potency. If the victim fails the roll, he is cursed for a number of hours equal to the houngan's dots in Rapport.

### *Vodoun Doll*

#### **(Level-Five Vodoun ritual, only available to patrons of Kalfou)**

Made popular through horror films and tales whispered around the fire, the Vodoun Doll is probably one of the most iconic items associated with the practice of Vodoun. As it relates to Vodoun practiced by Kindred, a Vodoun Doll (or poppet) is a potent magical tool used by the most beloved houngan of Kalfou. A vampire may stick a wooden nail into a fabricated doll, and in doing so, manipulate his enemies from afar or inflict any number of dark and powerful curses upon them.

Vodoun dolls can be constructed from almost any material: cloth, wrapped twine, clay, wax or corn husks. Creating a voodoo doll requires an extended Dexterity + Crafts roll with a target number of 10. Each roll is equal to five minutes. The houngan must have a piece of the target or something very important to him - a drop of blood, a lock of hair, or an item of great personal worth such as a wedding ring or a piece of a favorite garment. Alternately, the ritual can be performed using a simple photograph or an object that the target has touched within the last week, but either of these imposes a -2 modifier on the ritual's activation roll.

Once the doll has been created, the houngan performs the ritual to call upon Kalfou. If the ritual is successful, Kalfou creates a sympathetic connection to the intended target. The doll retains the link to the living individual for five hours. If the Vodoun doll is destroyed, all the sympathetic control is broken and the target is freed from all effects.

Once the doll is connected to its target, the houngan can puncture it with a single wooden nail. Only one nail may be used at a time (multiple pins may not be used to simultaneously affect different areas), but the nail may be removed and the doll punctured again in

another location to achieve a different effect as often as the houngan likes.

Placement of the nail, pushed into the Vodoun doll, affects the target in a variety of ways:

**Pin Placement: Heart**

The target is “staked,” a nail in the heart of the Vodoun doll renders the foe paralyzed until the nail is removed. Used against a mortal, a nail in the heart reduces the target’s Stamina to 0 for purposes of determining Health and all dice pools involving endurance or fatigue.

**Pin Placement: Eye**

The target is rendered blind until the nail is removed.

**Pin Placement: Ear**

The target is rendered deaf until the nail is removed.

**Pin Placement: Mouth**

The target is rendered mute until the nail is removed.

**Pin Placement: Forehead**

The target is cursed with bad luck while the wooden nail remains in the Vodoun doll’s forehead. When the target attempts to perform a task that requires significant thought (any action that makes use of a Mental Skill or Attribute), the target’s player loses one die per dot of the houngan’s Blood Potency.

**Pin Placement: Stomach**

The target feels ill, and becomes violently sick if he attempts to consume blood while the nail remains in the poppet’s stomach. He does not vomit the Vitae currently in his system, but cannot feed to gain additional Vitae until the pin is removed. If the Subject is mortal, he may not eat or drink until the nail is removed.

**Pin Placement: Extremities**

The target is cursed with bad luck while the wooden nail remains in the Vodoun doll’s hand or foot. When the target attempts to perform a task that requires significant physical prowess (any action that makes use of a Physical Skill or Attribute), the target’s player loses one die per dot of the houngan’s Blood Potency.



**KINDRED OF NEW ORLEANS AND VODOUN**  
It might seem that the vampires of New Orleans, especially Baron Cimitiere (p. 287 of **Vampire: The Requiem**), would be perfect candidates for Kindred Vodoun. This is true. If you choose to use Kindred Vodoun in your story, he and other such vampires of the Big Easy can be granted dots in Rapport and Vodoun rituals as your Storyteller sees fit.



# BLOODLINES OF THE LOST GENERATION (CE 1618-1648)

Few German Kindred active tonight can truthfully claim to have seen four centuries pass before them. The eldest Kindred of Central Europe possess confused memories of a nightmare war between ravenous packs of infuriated neonates throwing themselves against everything that represented the traditional Kindred society. Before the anarchs' revolution, the European Kindred existed as a single society – complete with the ruling class, a clerical order and the commoner masses. Afterwards the covenants would forever exist as discreet entities, biting at one another and keeping an eye on neophytes who showed too great a surfeit of ambition.

While the causes of the strife among the Kindred remains shrouded in mystery, the results echo into the modern nights throughout Europe and beyond. Young Kindred claim the psychic disturbances and hoary ghosts that haunt Europe are largely the result of the World Wars, but older Kindred know better. Long before the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, starving packs of neonates clashed against one another in the torch-lit streets of Bremen and Hamburg, while the elders of Prague and Vienna bolted their chambers against the madness in the wilderness beyond and, between blood-drenched soirees and salons, planned raids against the youth.

The crucible of a Central Europe at war with itself destroyed much within its borders. Two bloodlines rose from the ashes, however, succeeding where others fell and surviving into the modern nights. The Geheim began as a lineage of Austrian nobles obsessed with alchemy as a route toward self-perfection and power, and grew into one of the most infamous bloodlines in Europe. The Septemi, on the other hand, brought righteous judgment to the Lancea Sanctum from France. Despite repeated attempts by the Sanctified to wipe the Maidens out, they persist to the modern nights, leading furtive unives and working to protect the living from the depredations of the dead. European Sanctified claim that only a period of such debased chaos could generate a line that matches its infamy with degeneracy and another as loathed as it is heretical.

## GEHEIM

There can be no sublimation without putrefaction.  
How can you expect me to know sanctity without experiencing depravity?

Risen from the twisted households of the Austrian aristocracy, the Geheim seem to outsiders equal parts depraved extended family, bizarre esoteric society and cunning aristocrats. Never particularly trusted or popular, the Geheim suffered a public relations fiasco in the 20th century when it (its detractors claim) became involved in the Nazi Party. Tonight the family retains positions of prominence throughout Central Europe, spreading beyond the borders of former Habsburg holdings and bringing their syncretic combination of hedonism and alchemy to the rest of the world.



**Parent Clan:** Ventrue

**Bloodline Disciplines:** Animalism, Blut Alchemie, Dominate, Resilience

**Nickname:** Dilettantes

**Weakness:** The Geheim share the Ventrue clan's tendency to fall into madness (see p. 113 of **Vampire: The Requiem**).

Furthermore, the Dilettantes are obsessed with the applications and implications of Vitae. Their constant work with and exposure to various quantities and qualities of blood twist their perceptions and desires. Members of the Geheim bloodline are always at a -1 penalty when

rolling for Vitae addiction (in addition to any other penalties or bonuses).

Additionally, the Geheim refuse to deny their hunger and believe that no others should deny it either. A member of the line does not regain Willpower during her daysleep if she failed to feed the night prior. For the following night she is irritable, suffering a -2 to all frenzy rolls made as the result of anger. The penalty fades when the Geheim consumes at least one Vitae.

**History and Culture:** Scattered throughout the ruling class of the Holy Roman Empire, the rise and fall of the lineage's fortunes have largely mirrored those of the Habsburg family. Dilettantes claim that the founder of their bloodline, a Kindred known to his contemporaries as Count Geheim of Graz, was Embraced from among the sprawling Habsburg family. While the assertion has proven difficult for members of the line to substantiate, there's little doubt that Geheim of Graz moved in the same social circles as the Habsburgs, as early as 1480. Personal correspondences among the Habsburgs across the centuries often mention a shadowy teacher or similar figure who matches the accepted description of Geheim. (The fact that these letters and diaries occasionally fawn over Geheim has been interpreted as evidence that he kept some of the writers under the bonds of Vinculum.)

In a ceremony documented by Invictus, Sanctified and Ordo Dracul records of 1577, Geheim and two children, Cecilia and Volker, formally announced the formation of their bloodline, making a number of claims of entitlement regarding domains within Vienna and Switzerland — claims which they were apparently able to back up, despite the difficulty of travel during the period. Modern detractors point out that several of the locations claimed by the lineage boasted fewer than 1,000 mortals, making them poor possessions for any vampire.

Geheim and his children had already garnered a reputation for hedonism and excess, having hosted lavish parties for even the most lowly of visiting functionaries. While reports of baths of blood and bodies hanged from rafters are probably exaggerations, few scholars doubt the tales of woozy, blood-drained nobles stumbling to their waiting carriages after a night of debauched intemperance. The bloodline's status as esoteric dabblers only began to grow after their official declaration in 1577. After acquiring territory in Vienna and Prague, they began hosting salons for the discussion of unusual and esoteric texts. These gatherings, which *usually* lacked the depraved self-indulgence of their parties, were not limited to attendance by Kindred, and numerous mortals of learning came to be regulars at Geheim soirees. Some Kindred even suspect that a few of the bloodline's consorts were mages or creatures stranger

yet. The lineage prospered, even through the anarchs' war, somehow gaining new members and territories even as the rest of Kindred society collapsed about them. They became early and energetic advocates of the studies of the Ordo Dracul, assisting that covenant in its mission to find recruits from among the erudite and open-minded members of the Invictus and Lancea Sanctum.

After the Thirty Years' War however, the Habsburg House entered a centuries-long decline. The Geheim, once one of the most expansive Kindred families in Central Europe, with close ties to a royal line that held much of Europe at its height, found itself deteriorating in influence. The line continued to grow, but the power it had to share among its membership decayed. The esoteric work of the Geheim, once lauded as ground-breaking, became old hat, and while the ability to turn blood into gold kept the bloodline's coffers fat, their tricks provided them little other help in the Danse Macabre. The group attempted to cope by infiltrating and creating numerous secret societies (a fact that furthered its reputation for witchcraft and infernalism among the Sanctified), utilizing their bloodline Discipline to gain high standing among the mortal adherents to the esoteric.

The most infamous of these organizations was called the Thule Society, created by a group of Germans in the early twentieth century. The group's focus, the mythological pure race called the Aryans, drew the attention of the Geheim, who felt that exploration into the lost civilization of Thule might provide new sources of mystical strength. The Geheim had little chance to influence the Society before two of its members formed the political group that would grow to become the Nazi Party. While the Nazis renounced and disbanded the Thule Society, rumors of the connection between the Geheim and the Nazis quickly spread through Kindred society. The bloodline found itself less trusted and more loathed than ever before.

Tonight the bloodline still reels from its greatest political blunder, which occurred only recently as some European Kindred reckon history. Its three founding figures have all entered torpor, (though members of the line seem to be preparing to ease the return of Count Geheim himself in the near future) leaving the lineage to flounder listlessly without direction. While many of the eldest cleave to the ideals of the bloodline's past, continuing studies into the unknown and infiltrating and manipulating the highest strata of mortal society, the youth of the line indulge themselves with an almost apocalyptic fervor. The fall of the traditional aristocracy has resulted in the bloodline becoming more closely associated with organized crime and corporate culture, and some of the line's newest recruits have been garnered from the ranks of those groups.

**Reputation:** As their sobriquet suggests, the Geheim have garnered a reputation for failing to fully devote their unlives to any cause. The lineage contains its fair share of spoiled, wealthy Ventrue, many of whom take the bloodline's philosophy as an excuse to wallow in whatever excesses can hold their attention. The lineage's deep connections to the aristocracy of Europe garner them only slight esteem and no small amount of derision; the Carthians object to such outdated social structures on principle (plus there's the whole Nazi thing), while many Invictus feel that the Geheim simply don't take full advantage of the benefits they are handed. Their love affair with organized crime infuriates the Sanctified (not to mention their study of alchemy, which the Lancea Sanctum generally labels as witchcraft).

Even the Ordo Dracul, the bloodline's chosen patrons, keep the lineage at arm's length, viewing their discoveries with no small amount of skepticism. Thus far no one outside of the bloodline has been able to precisely reproduce the Geheim's results. Most Dragons consider that evidence that the Geheim's procedures reflect some strange quirk of their blood rather than verifiable scientific or occult principles.

The Geheim tend to join the Ordo Dracul with greater frequency than any other covenant. Not only do the Dragons value the bloodline's abilities, but their position in the covenant's history grants them a bit of freedom from the derision they almost universally face from other Kindred. Those who aren't cut out for the Order's psychological exercises and bizarre rites often end up with the Invictus, turning the covenant's resources towards the end of feathering their own nest. Invictus Dilettantes typically make an effort to hide the greatest of their excesses and experimentations. Those who can't even manage that occasionally fall in with the Circle of the Crone, which allows greater leeway for a vampire hoping to explore the full range of the Kindred experience.

**Concepts:** Bloodline apologist, debauched celebrant, destitute aristocrat, hidden diablerist, lustful philanthropist, mad chemist, overbearing society matron, silent international business partner, vampire Mafioso, Vitae connoisseur

### *Blut Alchemie*

In an uncharacteristically pragmatic display, the Geheim named their unique take on Kindred occultism Blut Alchemie (literally "Blood Alchemy"). They consider their processes to possess components both scientific and spiritual, and that through learning to refine and manipulate the blood in the laboratory, a Kindred can do the same to the Vitae within the crucible of the vampire

form. Geheim tend to develop a faint obsession with the blood, acclaiming it as the seat of the Kindred soul. By purifying the Vitae, they claim, one can purify the soul. The goal of this work is the sanguine stone, a Kindred equivalent to the philosopher's stone. Cecilia von Geheim coined this term, but whether she was referring to an actual physical substance or a spiritual state has been lost during her centuries asleep.

Questions of whether or not the effects listed below are a Discipline or an esoteric science inevitably rise in most discussions of the practice. Those who claim the former assert that those outside of the lineage cannot replicate the effects achieved through the procedures practiced by the bloodline. Those on the other side of the fence point to certain experiments by the Ordo Dracul that have produced similar (though never identical) results. Individual members of the Geheim family tend to fall in either camp, but most ultimately dismiss the question as irrelevant.

Each of the abilities below requires access to a laboratory to perform, usually needing either the Merit Haven (Size •+) or Covenant Status (Ordo Dracul •+). Because the procedures of Blut Alchemie require one or more hours to perform, the Discipline is ill suited for tasks requiring immediate results. Additionally, Blut Alchemie only affects blood or Vitae that has been spilled or harvested since the most recent sunset. After that, the blood loses some vital spark and becomes too degraded to be effectively transmuted or examined.

#### • *Sanguine Analysis*

Before Vitae can be utilized, it must be broken down and understood. The first procedure a newly inducted member of the Geheim family learns allows her to do just that. Through Sanguine Analysis, a Kindred garners a great deal of information about a blood sample.

This power renders the blood useless for anything other than further uses of Blut Alchemie.

**Cost:** —

**Dice Pool:** Intelligence + Investigation + Blut Alchemie

**Action:** Extended. Each roll represents one hour of laboratory study.

#### **Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** The character not only fails to garner information, she also ruins the sample — rendering it useless to further Blut Alchemie procedures.

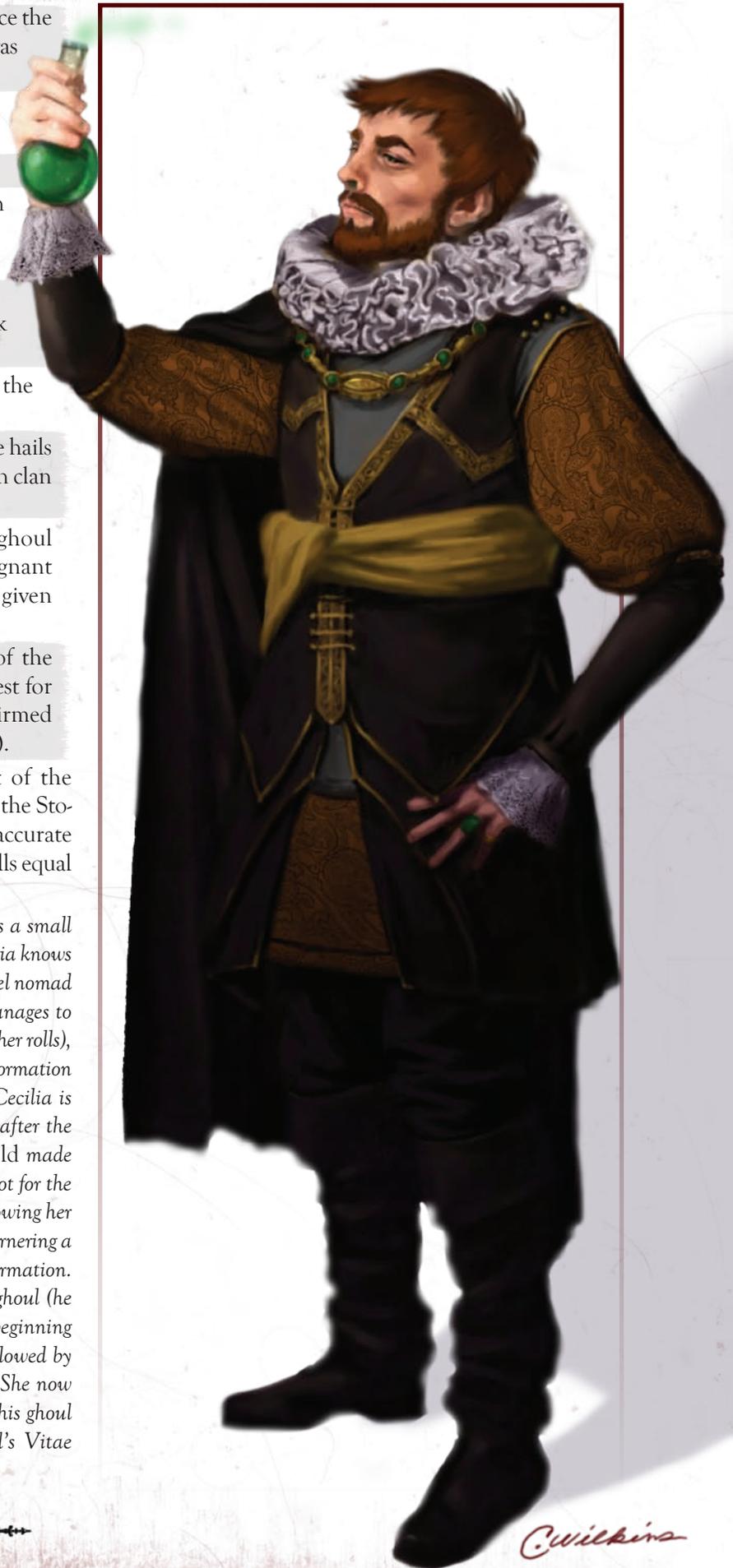
**Failure:** The character gains no insight into the sample.

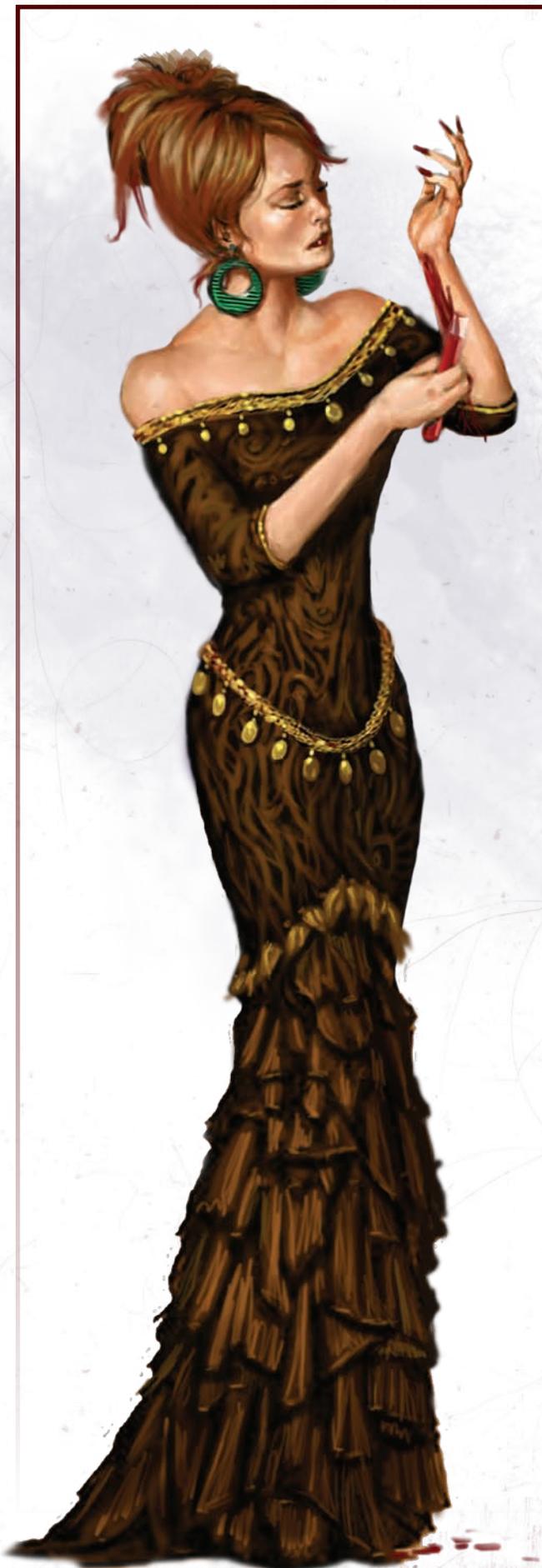
**Success:** The character garners one piece of the following information regarding the sample:

- The age of the character (if mortal) or time since the character's Embrace or last torpor, whichever was most recent (if Kindred).
- Whether the character suffers from or carries any diseases (one disease per success).
- The general health of the character (if mortal).
- The amount of blood that was in a human or Kindred's system at the time the sample was taken.
- The presence of animal, human or lupine blood in the sample (the presence or lack thereof of each is garnered per success).
- The presence of another Kindred's Vitae in the sample.
- The clan the Kindred who provided the sample hails from (whether or not he originates from a given clan per success).
- Whether or not the sample came from a ghoul (one success) and the clan of the ghoul's regnant (whether or not the regnant is a member of a given clan per success).
- Whether or not the Kindred is a member of the Geheim family (the Geheim may be able to test for members of other bloodlines if he has confirmed samples available from a member of said line).

Each success is considered a successful test of the sample, allowing the player of the Geheim to ask the Storyteller one of the above questions and gain an accurate answer. The character is limited to a number of rolls equal to her Blut Alchemie.

**Example:** Cecilia von Geheim surreptitiously takes a small sample of blood from the scene of a ghoul's murder. Cecilia knows that the ghoul served a stranger to the domain, a Gangrel nomad who calls himself Aaron. The amount of blood she manages to take is small, she knows (and will inflict a -3 penalty on her rolls), and the fact that he is a ghoul will make determining information about the blood more difficult (another -1). Luckily, Cecilia is an elder and her dice pool for Sanguine Analysis is 8 after the penalties. She retires to her laboratory, where she could make five rolls (based on her Blut Alchemie rating), were it not for the fact that the dawn will interrupt her in three hours (allowing her only three rolls). Her player rolls eight dice three times, garnering a total of seven successes, allowing her seven pieces of information. First she makes sure that the servant was actually a ghoul (he was). She then attempts to discern the regnant's clan, beginning with Gangrel (which, despite his claims, he is not), followed by Ventrue (also false), and Mekhet (this rings positive). She now knows that either Aaron is actually a Mekhet or that his ghoul was a double agent. She checks for another Kindred's Vitae





in the ghoul's system and finds none. She has spent five of her seven successes. Suspecting that "Aaron" may be a member of the Morbus bloodline, she checks to see if the ghoul was diseased and uses her last two successes to find that he carried both syphilis and cholera. If she had more successes, she could check for more diseases (and if she had a sample of Morbus blood, she could confirm her suspicions), but for now she has enough information to begin a more thorough investigation... assuming that Aaron hasn't left town by the time she finishes in the lab.

**Exceptional Success:** No benefit, save that additional successes will accumulate.

#### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+1	Each aspect, of the sample listed above, that the character already knows about the subject prior to beginning work.
-1	The provider of the sample is a ghoul or otherwise has consumed Kindred Vitae in the last month.
-2	The provider of the sample has committed diablerie within the last year.
-3	The character possesses only a small sample of the blood (less than one Vitae).
-5	The provider of the sample has committed diablerie within the month.

#### •• *Vitae Distillation*

Once a Dilettante has carefully examined a sample of Vitae through Sanguine Analysis above (requiring only a single success), she may transmute it into another liquid substance.

**Cost:** Varies. The character must utilize a number of pints of blood equal to twice the Resources value of a pint of the liquid being produced. Kindred Vitae counts for twice the value of human blood, and hence an amount of Vitae equal to the Resources value (whereas the amount of gasoline produced by this power would be Resources 1, a fantastically rare wine might be Resources 5) of the produced liquid must be used. The character need not pay this cost herself. Finally, the character can distill three pints of blood into a single pint of neutral Kindred Vitae (meaning that it carries no threat of Vinculum).

**Dice Pool:** Intelligence + Science + Blut Alchemie

**Action:** Extended. Each roll represents an hour of laboratory work. The character must garner a number of successes equal to the Resources value of the liquid being produced. See p. 116 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook** for more information on how dots in Resources convert to cost.

### THE METAPHYSICAL WEIGHT OF EXPENSE

The complexity and rarity of a material does not necessarily correlate with its monetary value. Yet, the Geheim have discovered that gold, silver, diamonds and other precious materials seem far more difficult to manufacture than rarer but cheaper substances. The Geheim postulate that the import placed on these precious materials by society somehow imbues them with a mystical weight that impedes the process by which they are created.

Similarly, some blood alchemists claim, the incredible difficulty of achieving enlightenment results from the import that humanity and Kindred society alike put on such a state. By degrading themselves and the search for enlightenment, they attest, they can devalue both, making the goal of transcendence more attainable. Such theories have yet to bear fruit.

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The character not only fails to transmute the blood, she also ruins the sample, rendering it useless to further Blut Alchemie procedures. If the character was attempting to create an unstable or combustible substance, it explodes or ignites, damaging the laboratory and likely any characters present.

**Failure:** No successes are added to the total.

**Success:** Successes are added to the total. When the player reaches the target number of successes, the character produces a single pint of a substance whose natural state at room temperature is liquid (or the character can produce a single pint of Kindred Vitae for every three pints of blood distilled). The blood used in the procedure is destroyed.

The character can create highly unstable liquids (such as nitroglycerin) through this power, though doing so requires the roll of a single die after each hour of work. On a 1, the substance explodes or combusts, with appropriate results to the surrounding environment and characters.

**Exceptional Success:** Considerable successes are added to the total. If the player reaches the target with five extra successes, the character's work is particularly fruitful; she produces two pints of the substance rather than one.

#### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+3	The character attempts to create purified water.
+1	The character utilizes Kindred Vitae in the work. Some Geheim claim that the blood of other supernatural creatures

grants a similar (or greater) benefit, and it may indeed do so at the Storyteller's discretion (the blood of creatures full of living energy such as werewolves, mages and changelings are more likely to provide a higher bonus, while that of undead creatures such as zombies may inflict a penalty on the roll).

- The character attempts to create a substance with a Resources value of 1.
- 1 The character attempts to create a substance with a Resources value of 2.
- 2 The character attempts to create a substance with a Resources value of 3.
- 3 The character attempts to create a substance with a Resources value of 4.
- 4 The character attempts to create a substance with a Resources value of 5.

#### ••• *Internal Athamor*

Once a Dilettante has carefully examined a sample of her own Vitae through Sanguine Analysis above (requiring the expenditure of at least one Vitae and a single success on the roll), she may unlock the potential of her own blood. Through meditation, a series of carefully ritualized movements and a small expenditure of Vitae, she stokes the internal furnace of her soul, empowering herself by effectively increasing her own Blood Potency.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** Resolve + Occult + Blut Alchemie

**Action:** Instant. The character must have utilized Sanguine Analysis on a sample of her own blood since the most recent sunset, however, necessitating a bare minimum of an hour to fully complete this procedure.

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The character stokes the inner furnace of her damned soul, but the flame rages out of control. She loses half of her current Vitae pool (round down) and immediately rolls to resist frenzy (three successes required); the frenzy roll may be penalized due to loss of Vitae.

**Failure:** The character fails to achieve the desired effect. She may attempt the roll again without needing to further utilize Sanguine Analysis.

**Success:** The character increases her effective Blood Potency by one for the night. Additional successes add to the raised Blood Potency (one per success) or duration (one extra night per success), chosen by the character when the power is used. Once chosen, these cannot be changed. The character can only benefit from one use of this power at any time, and an attempt to activate it again

while benefiting from a previous use causes the duration of the previous procedure to immediately end.

The effectively raised Blood Potency determines how much Vitae a Kindred can possess at one time, how much Vitae she can expend per turn and what type of blood the Kindred must consume to garner the benefits of feeding. The increased Blood Potency is used when determining the effects of the Predator's Taint, and it does add to (or subtract from) appropriate dice pools. It does not have any other effect (including length of torpor).

**Exceptional Success:** Extra successes are their own reward.

#### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+1	Per success garnered through the use of Sanguine Analysis prior to activating Internal Athanor.
-1	Each dot of Blood Potency the character possesses above 1.
-2	Character has rolled to resist frenzy (from any source save the Predator's Taint) during the chapter in which she uses this power. Not cumulative with the penalty below.
-5	Character has succumbed to frenzy (of any sort, including the Predator's Taint) during the chapter in which she uses this power.

#### •••• Vitae Transmutation

Having examined a sample of Kindred Vitae through the Sanguine Analysis procedure above, she may transmute it into a solid substance.

**Cost:** Varies. The character must use a number of Vitae equal to the Resources value of the produced substance. The character need not pay this cost herself, but it must be Kindred Vitae that is utilized.

**Dice Pool:** Intelligence + Science + Blut Alchemie

**Action:** Extended. Each roll represents an hour of laboratory work. The character must garner a number of successes equal to the Resources value of the substance being produced.

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The character not only fails to transmute the Vitae, she also ruins the sample, rendering it useless to further Blut Alchemie procedures. If the character was attempting to create an unstable or combustible substance, it explodes or ignites, damaging to the laboratory and likely any characters present.

**Failure:** No successes are added to the total.

**Success:** The character produces a single pound of a substance whose natural state at room temperature is solid. The blood used in the procedure is destroyed.

The character can create highly unstable or reactive solids (such as phosphorus or sodium) through this power, though doing so requires the roll of a single die after each hour of work. On a 1, the substance explodes or combusts, with appropriate results to the surrounding environment and characters.

**Exceptional Success:** The character's work is particularly fruitful; she produces one and one half pounds of the substance rather than one.

#### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
—	The character attempts to create a substance with a Resources value of 1.
-1	The character attempts to create a substance with a Resources value of 2.
-2	The character attempts to create a substance with a Resources value of 3.
-3	The character attempts to create a substance with a Resources value of 4.
-4	The character attempts to create a substance with a Resources value of 5.
-5	The character attempts to create a substance with unusual properties such as radioactivity.

#### ••••• Bloody Bezoar

While the sanguine stone remains outside of the Geheim's reach, she can learn to create a small, translucent blood-red stone with powerful properties. When swallowed by the Geheim who created it, the stone protects her against the predation of other Kindred and even the most virulent poisons of the world. When swallowed by another Kindred, the bezoar sets off a chain reaction that destroys much of his Vitae.

The process of creating the bezoar is somewhat complicated. First the Kindred must break down and analyze five points of her own Vitae via the Sanguine Analysis power above. She feeds the resultant mixture to a mammal (which can range in size from a large rat to a goat); the animal rarely wishes to consume the mixture, so Animalism is often necessary to force the matter. The animal dies during the course of the following day, and the Geheim can harvest the stone from its intestines when she awakes at sunset.

A Geheim can possess a number of bezoars equal to her Blood Potency at any given time. Attempts to create

further stones fail for reasons unknown. Bezoars last until consumed.

**Cost:** 5 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** No roll is required.

**Action:** Special

So long as the character follows the appropriate steps, she successfully creates the bezoar. Of course, the steps may involve their own difficulties (such as convincing an animal to drink the putrid Vitae mixture). Once the bezoar has been made, it can be used in one of the four following manners (any of which destroys the stone):

- The bezoar acts as a lesser philosopher's stone. Utilizing it in any of the other procedures of Blut Alchemie grants a one-time bonus of +5. This applies to a single roll, even if the action is extended.
- The bezoar protects the Kindred who created it from the fangs of other Kindred. By swallowing the bezoar, she temporarily transmutes her blood into a vile poison. Kindred who feed from the Geheim suffer one point of aggravated damage per Vitae taken. This generally induces the drinker to stop, but a Kindred in frenzy may destroy herself in an attempt

to drain the Dilettante. The poisoned blood has no unusual effect on non-Kindred. Since Kindred blood quickly loses its potency after being removed from the Kindred, this cannot be used to create poisoned weapons. This protection lasts for a single scene.

- The bezoar acts as an immediate remedy to the few poisons that can normally affect a vampire. If the Kindred consumes the bezoar during the same turn in which she is poisoned (doing so is an instant action, so long as the bezoar is on her person and she can reach it), she completely ignores the effect of the poison or venom. If consumed in a later turn, the bezoar instantly negates any further effect from the substance.
- The bezoar interacts violently with the Vitae of other Kindred. If another Kindred consumes the bezoar, he immediately suffers a loss of Vitae equal to the Dilettante's Blood Potency (at the time the stone was created). Each Vitae lost immediately inflicts one point of aggravated damage as it burns violently within the vampire's body. Resilience *can* reduce this damage as usual.



# Septemi

The scales have fallen from my eyes. What is beautiful is not good. What is hideous is not evil. The Lance has lied to me, and I shall shatter it so that all may know the truth.

While the Sanctified have long claimed to be the most faithful and godly possible vampires, the Septemi exist as a relatively modern phenomenon set to challenge the covenant's presumptions. Where the Sanctified attest that the Kindred were personally Damned by God to act as his lash against the back of a sinful mortal populace (thus driving them towards divinity), the Septemi spare the rod, declaring that vampires have no exalted place in the Lord's creation. They work from the shadows to counter the influence of the Sanctified, driven by their higher soul to undo the work of evil men and lead humanity to salvation through charity and education. Such altruism dooms a Kindred to a difficult Requiem (often made more difficult yet by the fact that the Septemi's altruism does not necessarily extend to their fellow vampires).

**Parent Clan:** Daeva

**Bloodline Disciplines:** Abjurism, Celerity, Majesty, Vigor

**Nickname:** Passionate (among themselves), Maidens or Roaches (among the Sanctified – both derogatory terms)

**Weakness:** Members of the Septemi bloodline suffer the curse of the Daeva (see p. 105 of **Vampire: The Requiem**).

Unlike the majority of their brethren, however, the Septemi find that their higher soul pulls on them with the same strength, addicting them to works of grace. Maidens must spend two Willpower points to avoid engaging in their Virtue when granted the opportunity. The opportunity must be one in which the character would regain all of her Willpower for acting in accord with her Virtue, and thus usually poses some danger to the character. If the character indulges her Virtue, she regains her full Willpower pool.

While a character can only regain her full Willpower once per chapter, by indulging in her Virtue, Septemi may be tempted to perform their Virtue multiple times in a single session. After the first time a vampire fulfills her Virtue during a session, thus refilling Willpower, subsequently indulging in her Virtue only spares the Maiden the two Willpower points she would have lost for not doing so – and confers no other benefits.



**History and Culture:** The genesis of the Septemi is a matter of some confusion. The ostensible founder of the lineage, Robert le Tuteur, served as a soldier in the army of none other than Jeanne d'Arc (known to English speakers as Joan of Arc) during the Hundred Years' War (and in fact, some claim, received the Embrace on the third night after her martyrdom). He has since claimed that his introduction to the Requiem came at the hands of a Daeva elder who gave only the name Septima and that she told him of her legacy, a long line of Kindred who served God's true will in the face of great perfidy. She set him on the path he would follow before vanishing into the night, intimating that she was the last surviving member of a bloodline that had existed since before the rise of Rome. No record of such a lineage can be found prior to Robert, however, and the fact that no record remains of any Kindred in France by Septima's name or description at the time of Robert's Embrace further muddies the waters (though, as many scholars point out, were Septima a Sanctified heretic she may have given a false name for her own protection).

Most Passionate accept Robert's story, but also claim that whether Robert inherited an older legacy or created the lineage remains immaterial to its overarching goals and beliefs. There can be no doubt that Robert serves as the single most important figure in the bloodline's modern history, acting as a catalyst for the growth of a small movement of Christian Daeva unwilling to accept the teachings of the Lancea Sanctum. Robert taught his followers that Christianity applied to the Kindred as it did to mortals, and that their fallen state gave vampires no inherent dominion over the living. He rejected the terms Canaille and Kine, refusing to see the mortals as mere feeding stock, and ruffled feathers by denying many of "the pretty euphemisms" (as he put it) of the Damned. He drew to him numerous young vampires, many of whom he initiated into his own bloodline, though he purportedly sired no childer of his own. These schismatic Kindred drew negative attention from the Lancea Sanctum, but the covenant was too distracted by the mortal inquisition during the bloodline's initial growth to effectively move

against it. Misguided vampire heretics seemed a lesser problem than torch-wielding priests. Instead, they largely dismissed the heretics, branding them with the sobriquet “Maidens” due to the founder’s supposed association with Joan of Arc, the Maiden of Orleans.

### *Children of the Revolution*

The lineage truly came into its own during the waning years of the anarchs’ revolution. Among the mortals, the Catholic French backed the Protestant revolutionaries, initially through grants of wealth and eventually with martial assistance. The elders of the French Lancea Sanctum, eager to see the Holy Roman Empire fall into decline, followed suit, providing aide from their own coffers and stables of blood-bound servants. Yet their plan made slow progress. The Septemi had already entered the Empire, making every attempt to stop infighting among the Austrian and German Kindred and descending on destroyed mortal villages to assist in the rebuilding efforts. While the Sanctified would normally have dismissed the Septemi as minor thorns at worst, the Septemi began openly employing the signature mutation of their blood, a mystical ability that interferes with the supernatural, including the sacred dark miracles of Theban Sorcery.

The French Lancea Sanctum immediately became incensed, naming the entire line anathema and destroying all members of the group who surfaced within their parishes. Though some German Sanctified followed suit, the Septemi remained in Central Europe, working to undo the horrors of the civil wars both among vampires and the living. Yet, for all their work, the blood-borne self-righteousness of the Septemi garnered the line few allies, and members quickly migrated. The line grew, spreading into Eastern Europe, Russia and Great Britain.

### *The Septemi Tonight*

In the centuries since their abortive crusade against the French Sanctified, the Septemi have made enemies almost everywhere they travel. Far from being heroes, their blood addicts them to the rush of martyrdom, the pleasure inherent in giving of themselves for an apparent greater good. The fact that many use less than noble tactics in their quests has done nothing for the lineage, and those Kindred familiar with the line label them hypocrites (and, more recently, terrorists).

During the late 18th century, nomadic Sanctified began spreading a message within each domain they traveled to: the Septemi, they claimed, were an infernal threat that must be cleansed from the world. What followed were numerous bloody witch-hunts as suspected Kindred were dragged from their havens and rendered torpid. On occa-

sion, the accused even stood trial before being left for the sun. The onus of proof, however, rested with the accused, and proving that one’s lineage does *not* include the taint of an obscure bloodline can be incredibly difficult.

The hunts were not terribly effective, however, and in most cases, trials simply served as an excuse for one elder to strike against a Daeva rival. Later Sanctified would call the Septemi “Roaches” for their ability to survive everything the covenant threw at them; the reality, however, is that the Sanctified largely undercut their own initiatives.

Tonight the Septemi still exist, often hiding in the folds of the Carthian Movement and keeping the truth of their lineage hidden. Few among the Sanctified still remember that they exist, though within those parishes perennially plagued by the Passionate, especially in Central Europe, the feud continues to simmer to this night. On those rare occasions that the Septemi openly display their presence in a city with any Sanctified influence, the church attempts to have them banished, destroyed or tried for treason against Kindred society. The wise Passionate never grants them that chance.

### *The Three Roads*

The Septemi lineage splits into three rough divisions, each corresponding to a member’s approach to the bloodline’s mission. The most active and aggressive division, the Justiciars, works to remove the tools that the Lancea Sanctum uses to keep humanity frightened and submissive. They observe local Sanctified, destroying connections with mortals through physical abuse and scare tactics (a gangster once loyal to a Lancea Sanctum bishop may be considerably less so after a visit from one of the Septemi) and directly physically assaulting the Sanctified only if all else fails. They usually veil their genuine objectives behind typical covenant and Kindred politics, so as to avoid giving away their true identities.

The second division, the Pacifists, strives to undo the horrors that the Sanctified inflict on the living by helping those who such vampires harm. If a Sanctified places a Vinculum on a mortal, a Pacifist attempts to break it. When a Sanctified priest keeps a city block under his rotting thumb, the Pacifist disseminates literature of hope and faith. Kindred of the bloodline consider the Pacifists the oldest philosophy within the line, and Robert le Tuteur, the founder of the lineage, has expressed personal beliefs in line with this faction on the rare occasions he has made his presence known to his descendents.

Unlike the other two divisions, the Custodians often content themselves with minimizing their own impact on the living rather than acting to undo that of other

Kindred. They hope to lead by example, demonstrating that the Kindred can survive without causing undue harm to the mortal herd. These Kindred can easily fall into an ascetic style of existence, but they tend to be the Passionate most likely to rise to positions of prominence within Kindred society (mostly by dint of stepping on fewer toes than the Justiciars and Pacifists). From there they guide their chosen covenant in a way consistent with the bloodline's philosophy.

A member's sire has nothing to do with which of the three groups she falls into. Instead, her curse draws her to one group at the exclusion of the others. In game terms, a character's Virtue determines which of the three philosophies she is most inclined towards. Characters with Justice and Fortitude usually join the Justiciars, allowing nothing (sometimes including their Humanity) to stand between them and their quest to end the evils of the Lancea Sanctum. Characters who uphold Charity and Hope typically join the Pacifists, believing that they cannot heal the world through harm. Temperate or Prudent characters, on the other hand, often join the Custodians, striving to curb their own excesses. Finally, the Faithful among the Passionate find themselves drawn to all three divisions, always choosing a path based on the nature of their faith but often acting as intermediaries between the groups. Exceptions do occur, of course, and a Maiden might pursue Justice through public works and government manipulation while another might Prudently plot out every aspect of her plan to destroy the local archbishop.

Yet the Septemi have little in the way of bloodline organization. The three paths are less factions of the line than they are personal decisions made by the Kindred in question. Most Septemi teach their childer a series of closely guarded pass phrases designed to help Septemi differentiate one another from the rest of Kindred society. These phrases usually resemble riddles, biblical passages, koans or sutras, but cannot be traced back to a written source.

Sires choose childer they feel will strive to improve the lot of mortals and vampires alike, but remain vigilant against Embracing those who lack the reserves of willpower necessary to survive the Requiem. As a result, Septemi come from many different walks of life, but tend to be those who possessed some interest in philanthropy or vigilantism in life (sometimes both, and the line boasts more than one self-styled modern-night Robin Hood). Thus a Passionate may be a former night-shift emergency room nurse, a disgruntled police officer or a gangster trying to clean up his neighborhood.

Septemi never inform a newly Embraced childe of her lineage. Instead they do what they can to raise the member in a manner consistent with the bloodline's beliefs. These

teachings tend to begin privately, but are of a largely secular philosophical nature. If the neophyte shows acceptance and interest in the bloodline's principles, the instruction sessions slowly transform, becoming steeped in religion and baroque mysticism. If (and only if) the childe seems willing to take on the lineage's mission at the risk of her unlife will the sire adopt her into the line (a similar initiation awaits outsiders who the line deems promising). After all, a failed indoctrination could doom the sire.

**Reputation:** The Kindred consider the Septemi misguided and naïve at best and dangerous and maladjusted at worst. Neither the Invictus nor the Sanctified would knowingly shelter or admit a member of the bloodline except under the most unusual of circumstances. While the Invictus stops short of branding the entire lineage a heresy to be wiped out, the bloodline's beliefs and tactics tend to directly counter those of the First Estate more often than not. The Sanctified, on the other hand, would see the Septemi wiped from creation. Their actions, sins in the eyes of Longinus, disrupt Kindred society and endanger all vampires, they claim. Some go so far as to declare that the abilities of the Septemi display an almost certain link to infernal practices, but few other Kindred take such accusations seriously.

While the Circle of the Crone would be unlikely to admit a Passionate into its ranks (and the Passionate even less likely to apply for admission), the faith as a whole appreciates the Septemi. The lineage's tendency to draw heat away from the Acolytes is welcome, though the Circle frowns upon the line's adherence to mortal religion. Worse yet, in domains where the Sanctified don't pose a problem to the mortal populace, the Septemi tend to turn their attention towards the blood witches, a group hardly known for its altruistic attitude towards humanity.

The Ordo Dracul rarely crosses paths with the Septemi. Each group has quite a bit to offer the other, however, and alliances do occasionally form. The Septemi, for their part, dearly covet the advantages the Coils grant (especially those that minimize impact on the mortal populace, such as the Coil of Blood); they do not, however, appreciate the grisly studies that many Dragons embark on in order to unearth their eldritch powers. The Dragons, on the other hand, find the Abjurism Discipline and its capacity for overcoming the various threats in the World of Darkness fascinating. As a result, short-term relationships between single Dragons and Passionate occasionally occur, but usually collapse when each finds the other's approach reprehensible.

The Septemi assisted the anarchs during the troubles of the 17th century and aided the nascent Carthian Movement when it began to spread across Europe. While



the line hardly has a position of importance within the covenant as a whole, its philosophies mesh with those of the Carthians more often than they do other groups. As a result, the Movement attracts more Septemi than any other covenant. While the average Carthian finds the Passionate's dedication to Christianity unusual, few actively work against members of the lineage so long as they pull their weight. Given the bloodline's weakness, members often rise above the call of duty.

The Septemi do possess one major claim to fame (and to the efficacy of their philosophies): The lineage's founder, Robert le Tuteur, remains active to this night and is rumored to have achieved the much-debated state of Golconda. He leads a nomadic unlife, typically hiding his true nature (and masquerading as a neonate) unless forces conspire to inspire him to intercede in a situation. While detractors point to his supposed achievement of enlightenment as an obvious lie and bit of propaganda spread by the line to further its heresy, those who have met Robert report that there's *something* about his pale blue eyes, long sandy hair and beardless face forever frozen at two decades of age that inspires belief. Others point out that a Succubus of his age certainly possesses a stunning mastery of Majesty. Whether tales of Robert's spiritual puissance will be authenticated or disproved as a hoax remains to be seen.

**Concepts:** Ascetic martial artist, Carthian investigator, ghetto Robin Hood, law in a lawless neighborhood, mob instigator, monstrous monster hunter, political activist, protest singer, suicide hotline operator, wealthy charity chairperson

### *Aljurism*

Though the Passionate have an undeniable tendency to embrace religion and despite the fact that their Discipline adopts aspects of Catholic ritualism, the proprietary Discipline of the Septemi does not necessitate faith on the part of the user. Indeed, the bloodline founder learned to focus the esoteric forces of his own blood to protect himself and others against the depredations of his vampire kin. The fact that his abilities proved equally effective against the other monsters of the World of Darkness came as a surprise to him.

Most Kindred know that elders seem to garner a resistance to powers of the blood that goes beyond their resolute wills. Some vampires have even discovered that such power grants a defense against the attacks of witches and Lupines, and that those entities prove similarly unaffected by vampire Disciplines as their faculties grow. Though few Passionate truly

understand it, their founder learned to focus that power, using it as a defense against his enemies.

In game terms, most supernatural characters possess an Advantage (such as Blood Potency for vampires) that defends them against the supernatural powers of other characters. The Septemi use that facet of their being in a manner more efficient and focused than most. As a result, their Discipline only functions against supernatural powers. It cannot aid them in contested rolls that only utilize mundane Skills, even if those are aided by a supernatural power (such as a punch enhanced by Vigor).

- *Buttress the Soul*

With a word of prayer and a quick ritual of protection (usually the Passionate crosses herself), the Septemi can focus her supernatural defense against outside forces, heightening it for a brief moment.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** This power involves no roll. Upon activating Buttress the Soul, the character gains a bonus to her defense equal to her rating in the Abjuration Discipline (whether rolled by the Septemi or subtracted from her attacker's pool) against any powers that target her for a single turn. This power is reflexive and needs to be activated only once in a given turn to defend against all powers used against the character during that turn. The bonus remains until the end of the turn during which it was activated, though it can be activated as a defensive action (like going prone or Dodging, the character can use the power prior to her own point in the initiative roster). This power can be activated after an enemy declares that he will use a power against the Septemi but before the roll is resolved.

Buttress the Soul involves some small ritual that can always be seen by onlookers but involves no blatantly supernatural display. Use of this power almost never constitutes a Masquerade violation, and only enemies with a strong knowledge of the Septemi will identify this power for what it is.

**Action:** Reflexive

- *The Light of Truth*

The Passionate performs a ritual, usually with religious significance (Septemi often pray over a rosary, sprinkle holy water or swing a censer in lazy arcs, wafting smoke across the target of the power), banishing the lies of the Adversary from the truth of God's Creation. The Septemi destroys illusions created by other supernatural beings (though the Passionate has no dominion over natural optical illusions).

**Cost:** 1 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** Resolve + Investigation + Abjuration



**Action:** Extended. The number of successes required to dispel an illusion is equal to the number of successes garnered by the crafter of the illusion. Each roll represents a turn spent in ritual.

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The character fails utterly, convincing himself of the reality of the illusion. He may not attempt to dispel the illusion again until the next sunset.

**Failure:** The attempt fails.

**Success:** The character accumulates successes towards his goal.

**Exceptional Success:** The character makes substantial progress towards the target number of successes. Exceeding the target number by more than five, results in the immediate destruction of any other illusions present within a number of yards equal to the character's Abjurism + Blood Potency.

Once the target number is reached, the illusion is banished and utterly destroyed. No character present is affected by it thereafter. In the case of multiple illusions, the weakest is banished first (when the character reaches the appropriate number of successes for the illusion with the least successes, it dispels); once an illusion has been dispelled, a character must expend another Vitae and begin the extended roll again to banish further illusions.

An "illusion" includes any effect intended to disorient or mislead a character's senses. The effect must be established (the power does not prevent effects from coming into play, it only dispels extant effects) and independent (it must be focused on a space, item, or area, not an individual – false walls, illusory flames, and one dollar bills magically masquerading as one hundred dollar bills, for example). Powers that directly affect a character's mind fall under Buttress the Soul, above, or Cleanse the Mind, below). Due to these restrictions, this power *cannot* reverse the effects of any level of the Obfuscate Discipline.

The Light of Truth grants no ability to see an illusion for what it is, but does not require a character to be cognizant of the presence of an illusion to function. A character who suspects a nearby illusion can utilize the power in an attempt to overcome it (the range of the power is equal to the character's Abjurism + Blood Potency in yards).

### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+3	The character is certain that an illusion is present and has identified it.
+2	The character suspects the presence of an illusion and its general nature.

+1	The character knows the identity of the entity who created the illusion.
-1	The character lacks an appropriate item of religious significance (such as a rosary, censer, thurible, holy water or incense).
-3	The character suspects the presence of an illusion but not its nature or location.

### ●●● *Cleanse the Mind*

The Passionate speaks a quiet prayer before kissing a companion upon the forehead (or, in some cases, placing a prayer strip on his brow). Through the power of her blood, she banishes the dark taint of the unnatural from the target.

The character must touch the target's forehead to use this power.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** Intelligence + Empathy + Abjurism

**Action:** Instant

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The attempt fails, instead inflicting a mild derangement on the target that remains until the end of the scene. The target cannot benefit from further uses of this power by any Septemi until after the following sunset.

**Failure:** The attempt fails.

**Success:** The character removes a single supernatural effect from the target. The effect must be something that directly affects the mind. Examples include Dominate commands, all Majesty powers and the powers of Obfuscate. (Cleansing a character of the effects of Obfuscate allows her to see an otherwise hidden character, even if her companions cannot. Attempts by the cleansed character to point out the Obfuscated individual fail, but if she interacts with the creature, by attacking him, for example, she can draw their attention to him.)

Cleanse the Mind only cancels ongoing effects; powers that have a permanent effect after they have been completed (such as The Forgetful Mind and Conditioning powers of Dominate) are not affected. Septemi may not use this power on themselves.

**Exceptional Success:** The character removes two supernatural effects from the target, if two simultaneously exist.

### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	The character knows precisely what effect she is trying to undo and who inflicted it on the target.

- +1 For each dot of Blood Potency the character possesses over that of the character who established the supernatural effect. Count the supernatural tolerance trait (Primal Urge, Gnosis, etc.) of other supernatural entities and the Resistance of spirits and ghosts as Blood Potency for the purposes of this power.
- The character knows either what effects she is trying to undo or who inflicted it on the target, but not both.
- 1 For each dot of Blood Potency the character possesses less than that of the character who established the supernatural effect.
- 2 The character knows neither the specific effect she is trying to undo nor the individual who inflicted it on the target.
- 3 The character attempts to cleanse her target of an Obfuscate effect. This penalty adds to any applicable penalties above.

◆◆◆ *Banish the Summoned Servitor*

The denizens of the World of Darkness often traffic with ghosts and demons, binding them to their will and using them as tools against the living. Others create entities out of thin air or call to themselves animals to guard them, twisting nature to their foul whim. The Septemi reject such abuses of both the material and spiritual realms.

The Passionate ritualizes loudly, vocally commanding an entity from beyond this world to leave the inhabitants of God's creation be. If successful, she can choose to drive a possessing spirit or ghost from a body (whether living, dead or undead) or banish it from the Passionate's presence. Similarly, she can command an animal either created through a supernatural power or under a supernatural compulsion to flee the area.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Occult + Abjurism vs. Power + Resistance (if a spirit or ghost) or Resolve (if an animal)

**Action:** Extended and contested. Each roll represents one turn of ritual. The character attempts to garner successes equal to the target's Willpower. The target's goal is equal to the character's Abjurism + Blood Potency.

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** The attempt fails and the target being becomes immediately hostile towards the Septemi, ignoring other characters in order to harass or assault the Passionate for the remainder of the scene. Even worse, the Septemi's

powers of Abjurism no longer affect the entity (or any effect the entity establishes) until after the following sunset.

**Failure:** The character garners no successes towards his goal. If the target achieves the goal first, it remains unaffected by the power.

**Success:** The character garners successes towards his goal. If he overcomes the being's Willpower before it overcomes his Abjurism + Blood Potency, he either drives it from a body it is possessing (immediately ending any applicable Numina) or banishes it. A banished spirit returns to the spirit realm and a banished ghost is locked within one of its anchors. This effect lasts for one night per success the Passionate achieves on the roll (though destroying a ghost's anchor while the ghost is locked within frees it, assuming that the ghost possessed another anchor, otherwise, it vanishes). If the target is an animal, it flees the scene, even if other magic (including a Vinculum or uses of Animalism) affects it. A swarm of small creatures (such as insects, rats or fish) is considered a single animal for the purpose of this power.

**Exceptional Success:** As above, save the entity remains banished for one week per success on the character's roll, or, if an animal, it turns against its former master.

**Suggested Modifiers**

Modifier	Situation
+2	The character knows the target's true name.
+1	The character utilizes tools appropriate for an exorcism and knows how to perform one (see p. 214, <i>The World of Darkness Rulebook</i> ).
+1	Per success on a Feral Whispers roll targeting the creature (if it is an animal) in the turn directly preceding the use of Banish the Summoned.
-1	The character does not know the nature of the possessing entity (for example, whether it is a ghost or spirit).
-2	The character believes that the entity is of a type that it is not (for example, he assumes a possessing spirit is a ghost).
-3	The target (if it is an animal) is under the Vinculum of an individual present in the scene.

◆◆◆ *Break the Weave*

The most potent of the powers of the Septemi, Break the Weave immediately ends a single supernatural effect. Characters whose effects are broken in this manner do not regain any expended Willpower, Vitae or other supernatural traits. The Septemi shouts a simple prayer

(no more than three words), unleashing a powerful wave of energy that disrupts other supernatural powers.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** Resolve + Occult + Abjurism vs. target's Composure + Blood Potency

**Action:** Instant and contested. Alternately, the target may choose not to resist this power. The target is always considered the character afflicted with or benefiting from a power (which is not necessarily the one that established the effect). If the Septemi uses Break the Weave to destroy an effect on an inanimate object or locale, the roll is not contested.



### MAGIC ITEMS AND THE BROKEN WEAVE

Permanently magical items (such as blessed items, a werewolf's fetish or a mage's Artifact, or permanently imbued or enhanced items) cannot be divested of their magic through the use of this power any more than a vampire can be made incapable of spending Vitae. Effects created through the use of the item, on the other hand, are fair game (meaning that while a Passionate cannot render an Artifact non-magical through this power, he can undo spells cast through it).

If the item is only temporarily enhanced, on the other hand, this power takes effect as usual, contested by the Composure + Blood Potency of whoever currently has the item in her possession.



### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The Septemi fails, resulting in a massive backlash of energy through her own form. She immediately loses any supernatural effects that she was benefiting from and cannot use Abjurism again for the duration of the scene.

**Failure:** The character fails to undo whatever unnatural power she attempted to overcome.

**Success:** The targeted supernatural effect immediately ends.

**Exceptional Success:** As above, save all supernatural effects on the targeted character, item or locale immediately end.

This power can target all Kindred Disciplines and their remaining effects as well as the powers of other supernatural entities. Furthermore, it can break the Vinculum and even cure Vitae Addiction (these are considered two different effects, necessitating two separate applications of the power), though breaking a Vinculum costs a permanent *dot* of Willpower on the part of both the Septemi and the target (the targeted character must truly wish to overcome her dependence on her regnant). It cannot undo healing of any kind, though it can reverse changes made to the body for any other purpose. The presence of ghosts or spirits is not considered a supernatural power (unless summoned into the scene, in which case the specific effects of the power used to summon the entity is undone, possibly including the entity's ability to be present), though Numina that allow an entity to manifest in the physical world are. This power cannot remove a template from a character (meaning that it cannot undo the Embrace, First Change, Awakening, etc.) or destroy a character's Advantage pool (Vitae, Essence, etc.). This power cannot revert a ghoul to human state.

### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	The targeted effect is Kindred in origin.
+2	Character spends a turn chanting and ritualizing prior to the activation of the power. The character can do nothing else during that turn (though does retain her Defense).
—	The targeted effect is non-Kindred in origin.
-1	The character targets a character, place or thing rather than a specific effect. The Storyteller chooses which effect is ended by the power.



# THE YANUSSAREN

The Wild Hunt has long haunted the forests and mountains of Central Europe. Some claim that the myth of a company of spectral men on horseback, riding forth with weapons and hounds to hunt the living, served as a primitive explanation for thunderstorms. Among the Kindred of Central Europe, however, the Wild Hunt is nothing to be dismissed so easily. Whether or not the phantom steeds race across the clouds, the Kindred know that the echoing peal of thunder seems to resonate with the restless dead, calling them forth.

Thunderstorms in Germany and Austria seem always to bring with them an increase in ghostly incidents. Poltergeists hound homeowners taking refuge against the downpour, while specters plague the winding streets and back alleys of ancient cities. Some Kindred whisper that the thunder brings forth or agitates the ghosts of soldiers, awakening their memories of heavy artillery falling across the battlefield. Others claim that the apparent ghosts are nothing but psychic scars, wounds left in the metaphysical world as a result of the deaths of so many during the numerous wars of Europe; the sound of thunder activates them, and the spiritual realms experience again the turbulence of battle in a kind of waking nightmare.

One thing is certain: Kindred tell their ghouls never to go out of doors during a noontime thunderstorm. Such is a sure way to draw the wrath of the Yanussaren, some of the most vicious members of the Hunt.

## *The Fiery Dead*

The rumors Kindred spread of the Yanussaren vary wildly from domain to domain. The name itself came from stories told after the Thirty Years War, tales of the ghosts of dead Ottoman soldiers (Janissaries) returned to take vengeance on those who would serve the living dead. Another common legend painted the Yanussaren as the shades of Christian dead who died fighting one another at the behest of the Kindred, while the Ottoman Empire lurked at Austria's borders. Others claim that the Yanussaren are the female handmaidens of God, come to earth to smite those impudent Kindred who use thralls to spread their influence into the realms of the day.

According to Kindred folklore, any ghoul who braves a thunderstorm during the height of the day draws the attention of one of the Yanussaren, who, according to most traditions, ride with the Wild Hunt. These monsters, visible only to the hunted ghoul as a fiery specter, hound

their quarry to a secluded location before falling upon him, tearing their victim limb from limb and crushing his bones before finally releasing him to death. Only by avoiding midday thunderstorms, the Kindred claim, can a ghoul escape such a fate. Those rare thralls who survive a visitation by the Yanussaren live on borrowed time; the next thunderstorm, so it is said, will be their last.

Worse yet, it is believed that when a ghoul dies at the hands of a Yanussare, the creature sucks from the victim's marrow, learning the whereabouts of its master's haven. A vampire whose servant has suffered such a fate is sure to experience the same, unless he takes care to secure his haven against noontime intrusions by creatures made of light given form.

## *Yanussaren*

*Keep running... I have eternity.*

Her fair features radiate a pale golden light that feels like ice as it falls across one's skin. She is tall, statuesque and regal, her angular features home to full lips and a pair of eyes that forever seek her quarry. Her diaphanous gown falls lightly across her form, like thin, high clouds across the sun, and her hair shifts between the burning auburn of the dawn and the bright golden of the sun at its zenith. She walks towards her marked target, and the crowd, faceless men and women with umbrellas or newspapers held overhead against the rain, parts for her. Only then does her prey recognize that he's the only one who can see her.

The Yanussaren are hunters, first and foremost. They seem to take a perverse joy in destroying the servants of vampires – an almost sadistic attitude that belies the stories that paint them as angels or benevolent spirits. They appear seemingly from nowhere, ensure that their prey sees them, then commence the hunt, running the ghoul down until he is exhausted and on the brink of madness. Only then does the creature strike, breaking the poor soul's bones and strewing his organs across the street in a frenzied orgy of violence. As she sucks the marrow from the pathetic slave's bones, her eyes turn in the direction of his slumbering master's haven.

**Attributes:** Power 4, Finesse 5, Resistance 5

**Willpower:** 9

**Essence:** 15

**Initiative:** 10

Defense: 5

Speed: 14

Size: 5

Corpus: 10

**Weapons/Attacks:**

Type	Damage	Range	Dice Pool	Special
Brutal Strike	0(B)	—	9	+3 with Vigorous Strength
Vice-like Grip	—	—	10	+3 with Vigorous Strength

**Supernatural Powers**

**Dread:** As the Nightmare Discipline of the same name, save that the Yanussare spends 1 Essence and rolls Power + Finesse against a single target (usually her ghoul quarry).

**Drinking the Marrow:** By sucking the marrow from the bones of one of his ghouls, the Yanussare can expend 6 Essence to determine the location of a slumbering vampire. Because this power is so draining, most Yanussare prefer to keep that information for later, waiting to regain their reserves before going on the offensive... and possibly giving the vampire the time needed to escape her brutal judgment.

**Fiery Aura:** At the cost of 2 Essence, a Yanussare may engulf itself in radiant flames for a scene. She gains Armor of 2/2 and inflicts lethal damage with unarmed attacks (aggravated against vampires). Any character who comes into contact with her automatically suffers 1 point of lethal (or aggravated) damage.

**Finding the Slave:** The Yanussare can spend one Essence to automatically determine whether or not anyone within her line of sight is a ghoul. If she senses a ghoul, she may roll Power + Finesse to determine which specific individual carries the taint of vampire blood. If there are multiple ghouls in the area, she spies the one with the lowest Willpower. If two have the same Willpower, she notices the one whose regnant has the highest Blood Potency. If two or more ghouls are identical in both respects, she recognizes each of them for what he is.

**Otherworldly Beauty:** The Yanussaren may be terrible, but they are terrible beauties. By expending 1 Essence, a Yanussare can gain the benefits of Striking Looks 4.

**Terrify:** As the Numen of the same name (p. 212, the *World of Darkness Rulebook*).

**Vigorous Strength:** The Yanussaren can spend one Essence to gain a bonus of 3 dice to a single physical action.

# BLOODLINES OF THE GRÊMIO DE CORAJOSO (CE 1415-1580)

The beginning of the 15th century marked the explosion of European exploration of the world. Western civilization was taken across the seas and into lands that were not yet ready for the changes it brought. Mortals were not the only ones interested in what the new trade routes and, later, colonial expansion offered. Kindred, too, made concerted efforts to take advantage of the larger world around them. In addition to the vast resources being accumulated by men, strange vampires and their secrets were being discovered.

The first and most successful collaboration of Kindred who took part in this age of discovery and exploration was the *Grêmio de Corajoso*. Organized by a brood of Portuguese elders, they dominated all Kindred efforts across the oceans and in the colonies around the world. In modern nights, the major covenants deny the success of such a minor guild, insisting that it was but a faction of the Invictus. Fortunately, vampires from that age passed the truth through the generations and into tonight's Elysiums.

Memories fade and journals are lost, but actual lineage and the traditions of Kindred spawned from a particular period of history – and the historical events themselves – preserve that knowledge. The Corajoso bloodline formed from within the *Grêmio*, during the height of the guild's power. Even in modern nights, its members continue the guild's pursuit of lost Kindred secrets. One of the most significant "discoveries" the *Grêmio* is responsible for is the Adroanzi. Self-proclaimed gods (indeed, some Kindred scholars think the first Nosferatu originated in central Africa), they ruled entire tribes and lorded over their mortal subjects. Forced into the world outside of Africa, the Adroanzi nearly disintegrated in the resulting clash of cultures. Fortunately, their affinity for creating precious lacrima allowed the lost gods to be reborn. Both bloodlines bear a significant grudge towards those who attempted to rewrite history and exterminate them in the process.

## CORAJOSO

You should be careful about spilling your blood. It told me so much about you.

Family unity is a strange concept in the minds of most Kindred. Between the passage of time and the Machiavellian schemes of rivals, mortal relations become a liability, merely a torturous reminder of a vampire's breathing days, if he is lucky. Some Kindred, however, find comfort of sorts in the limited trust and familiarity that close relatives in blood are more apt to demonstrate than other Kindred – who simply share the same general characteristics determined by clan. Sires usually have a driving purpose behind a vampire's Embrace, and childer can provide a backdoor to an enemy, should the childe become neglected or antagonized. The Corajoso not only found value in the relationships within any given vampire's lineage, but they capitalized upon it.

As the post-Crusades European nations sought to expand their capacity for trade with the Orient and ex-



plore the new lands they discovered in the process, the Kindred who existed among them risked their unives for the prestige of discovering or founding vampire domains across the world. The Corajoso bloodline discovered that one of the primary difficulties in traveling the vast distances across the seas, whether the destination was to an established civilization or into the frightening unknown world, was the lack of communication and the substantial delay in the exchange of information. In many cases, even the most basic bit of knowledge sent to the correct individual could prevent future catastrophe or spur immediate aid... if only it could get there in time. With the relative unity of the Kindred of the Corajoso, their network stretched across the globe, allowing members of this bloodline to coordinate their actions through the mystical ties of blood and their unique expertise in

the arts of the *Linagem*. Being a brood of Lords, however, ensured that there was certainly madness to this method. The bloodline was, after all, formed in order to ensure a legacy for the line's progenitor.

**Parent Clan:** Ventrue

**Bloodline Disciplines:** Animalism, Dominate, *Linagem*, Resilience

**Nickname:** Telepaths

**Weakness:** The Corajoso suffer the same weakness as the rest of the Ventrue (see p. 113 of **Vampire: The Requiem**).

In addition, the Telepaths are constantly barraged by the psychic turbulence inadvertently caused by Kindred around them. Regardless of whether or not a member of this bloodline has learned the *Linagem* discipline, every one of them is distracted by the constant flux of other vampires' connections through Blood Sympathy. Whenever a Corajoso is in the presence of two or more Kindred who are not of the Corajoso bloodline, he suffers from distracting voices, intermittent random hallucinations and rushes of emotion. Under such conditions, the Telepath does not receive the 10 again quality on Resolve or Composure rolls (though this penalty does not apply to rolls made to activate Disciplines, it *does* apply to Perception rolls), and Resolve is always considered one less when used as a defense trait subtracted from an attacker's roll (as with The Forgetful Mind power).

**History and Culture:** Throughout the 12th and 13th centuries, Portugal struggled to find stability in its own independence and identity. So, too, did a brood of Kindred spread throughout the regions of Portugal and Galicia (now part of Spain) to the north. The chaos of the tumultuous transitions in Kindred power across Europe combined with the constant bloody conflict with the Moors throughout the southern Iberian Peninsula. A Ventrue named Afanso had solidified a domain that, when combined with the domains of his two childer, encompassed much of northern Portugal and southern Galicia. As the Crusades came to a close, Kindred of Castille and Aragon organized themselves and pressured Afanso to fall in line with their iron-fisted rule. The elders knew his weakness; Afanso held a particularly strong affinity for the tiny nation and its peoples. When he refused to offer tribute, a strategically placed village would suddenly be missing most of its young men, or a fire would strike the home of an important noble. Before long, urged by his childer, Afanso submitted to the myriad of rules, tributes, and other demands placed upon his "sovereignty."

### *Brave Origins*

Late in the 13th century, Afanso vanished. His childer set adrift without his guidance and his lands open to

any Kindred insurgent, he simply disappeared without warning or reason. Many of his superiors and adversaries throughout Castille and Aragon (then beginning to solidify into Spain) assumed that he had been driven into torpor by one of their own. Afanso's childer tried to lash out at the powerful network of vampires descending upon Portugal, but had no long-term success. Alfonso's fate was not what everyone assumed, however. During his decade of absence, Afanso had struck deals with mystics among the Moorish Kindred still resisting expulsion to Africa. In return for a future of relative safety in his domain, the strange Kindred among the Moors taught him secrets necessary to put his plans into motion.

After Afanso returned to Portugal, his childer and their handful of childer quickly followed his lead. They did not attempt to regain their lost domains. They found a new purpose and plan for the future. Professing strength in unity, Afanso urged his brood into the arduous process of retaking their homeland — bypassing the traditional methods of influence and prestige. As fate would have it, the royalty of Portugal involved the nation in a series of naval expeditions that pushed Europe into an era of exploring unknown seas and discovering unknown lands. The new techniques of the *Vitae* Afanso had taught his childer suited this era perfectly. He considered himself blessed — divine, even.

Throughout the following few centuries, the Corajoso thrived. Stowed away in ships' cargo holds, masquerading as nobles and merchants, and taking on the role of intrepid explorers, the Telepaths spread across the world. They initially focused on the efforts of the Portuguese Empire, but they quickly latched on to the successes and results of other European nations as well. A disproportionate number of this bloodline worked among the Kindred who established new domains. Others sought out vampires of the newly discovered cultures, hoping to broker their secrets to the world (those secrets they did not hoard for themselves). The subtle arts of *Linagem* assisted them in ways that amazed other Kindred and roused deep suspicions, as well. Indeed, those secrets virtually ensured that the bloodline's progenitor would indeed receive his legacy... and the consequences of the debt he had failed to fulfill.

### *Hubris Takes Hold*

A bloodline of vampires capable of peering into others' minds is especially untrustworthy, particularly among Kindred. As the Corajoso elders grew in power, they were faced with the problems of cementing their individual legacies while at the same time keeping their childer (and themselves) from Final Death at the hands of other, understandably fearful, Kindred.

Greed, paranoia and fear motivated the eldest of the Corajoso. Each one of them harbored the terrifying awareness that their record of stealing the carefully hidden histories and secrets of other vampires would return to haunt them. The youngest continued to carry on with personal schemes and goals. However, those who had at one time held a closer connection to their founder turned towards the darker side of Linagem in order to protect themselves. Finding difficulty functioning in the ever-growing courts of Kindred society, they focused on the younger and more easily manipulated descendants of their own blood. With greater skill in the bloodline's unique talent came an even greater affinity for the Lords' ability to cloud and control the minds of their own childer, grandchilder, and occasionally those of even more distant blood relations.

At least as vicious and controlling as any other group of elder vampires, Corajoso ancients carefully arranged their pawns and more valuable pieces across the world and nudged them into roles suitable for the various elders' plans and defenses. The ancillae and neonates geographically closest to their elders (whether those younger Kindred were aware of the fact or not) suffered the most diabolical acts of the bloodline. The masters of Linagem had resorted to using various methods of mind-control upon their younger descendants, forcing them to succumb to the Vinculum. On many occasions, the thralls continued such an existence without any memory of taking the Blood Oath.

### *Irony Divides*

Were it not for the eventual necessity of torpor, this bloodline may have completely devolved into an incestuous breeding stock of withdrawn, paranoid monsters. Over time, however, various elders have been lost to the Fog of Eternity or to other more tangible foes. Some of the younger members of the line found freedom from their invisible chains and once again ventured out on their own voyages of discovery. As part of their intricate systems of control and continued shackling of the younger generations, many of the Corajoso kept a variety of Requiem Diaries, scattered clues, and hidden methods of communicating with other elders in their "secret dynasty." Irony certainly finds a home in the domains of Kindred. The younger and newly liberated Telepaths now make use of those elders' relics.

The Corajoso have become a bloodline of two widely varied philosophies. Most of the ancient Kindred of the line hold on to the older values; they use complex schemes of control and manipulation to hide from and defend against the enemies who they have accumulated over the

ages. In turn, many of the younger Corajoso have taken the more offensive road. They endeavor to free those who have fallen under the control of their ancestors and scour the world for clues to their own history and their predecessors' host of enemies.

The Corajoso have found homes in every covenant. Most of the older members of the bloodline hide within and function from positions of power inside the Invictus and, to a lesser extent, the Lancea Sanctum. Tradition, ritual and the relative monotony of those covenants suit the elders' need to be vigilantly aware of their peers. On the other hand, most of the younger Corajoso turn to the Carthian Movement and occasionally to the Ordo Dracul. Aware of the value of the status quo the elders seemingly require, Telepaths among the Carthians take part in some of the most chaotic factions of the covenant. Modern concepts and tonight's fluid society tend to be the greatest weapons in freeing others from the elder Corajoso shackles. The rare younger Telepath who does not feel a particular calling or obligation to "fix" the sins of their fathers tends to dive into the mystery of where their unique nature comes from and just why it has evolved into such a potent weapon. The Dragons are commonly the only vehicle suitable for exploring such questions.

Regardless of age or place in Kindred society, the Telepaths' talents and curses force them into certain roles. Most tend to be loners. Those who insist on taking part in a more crowded floor of the Danse Macabre tend to lead other Kindred through force and intimidation. Typically, individuals are Embraced into the bloodline because of their fearlessness, because they are visionaries of sorts, or due to their specific skills and experience in uncovering the hidden. Survivalists, private investigators and scientific explorers could easily find themselves brought into the ranks by younger Telepaths. Older Corajoso, by contrast, typically came from the strata of the wealthy nobles, influential clergy, and from the ranks of knowledgeable members of specifically useful cultures encountered during initial explorations of the "new" world.

**Reputation:** Publicly, the Telepaths are widely distrusted. In addition to snippets of real knowledge that some Kindred might know about them, a number of rumors fly about as well. In domains where Corajoso vampires are known to dwell, one might hear tales of mass mind-reading, gained knowledge through diablerie, and insidious bloody rites of divination. Most Kindred in positions of power expel the suspect from the city immediately, but some call for more drastic measures. Telepaths have been tortured and coerced into sharing accumulated knowledge. Others have suffered destruction

at the hands of princes demanding information that these Kindred are not omniscient enough to obtain. Especially paranoid princes order any Corajoso vampires within their domains slaughtered.

Individuals, however, are far more curious about the Corajoso. Handfuls of brave Kindred seek out members of this bloodline. Some of these vampires offer a variety of payments in exchange for information the Corajoso might possess or be able to discover about their rivals. Most of the time, the Telepaths tend to shy away from such contracts; digging up a vampire's secrets usually attracts more trouble than simple payments or favors are worth. On other occasions, Kindred employ one of the Corajoso for finding lost sires or missing members of their coterie. Even this can be dangerous; Kindred do not take kindly to being found if they don't have the desire to deal with old contacts.

**Concepts:** Kindred genealogist, charlatan psychic, explorer of the urban jungle, sinister psychologist, dilettante, vampiric profiler, surreptitious blood-bonder, Age of Exploration apologist, stalking horse, werewolf photographer

### *Linagem*

Linagem is a potent set of techniques designed by the Corajoso to heighten their awareness of Blood Sympathy, expand their command over Blood Ties, and take devious advantage of the Vinculum (**Vampire: The Requiem**, pp. 161-164). As each member of the bloodline develops this Discipline, he also gains the unsettling knowledge that he just might be the victim of this power at any given time.

Ghouls cannot develop this Discipline. They simply do not have potent enough blood to be able to open their senses to Kindred Vitae.

#### • *Affinity for Blood*

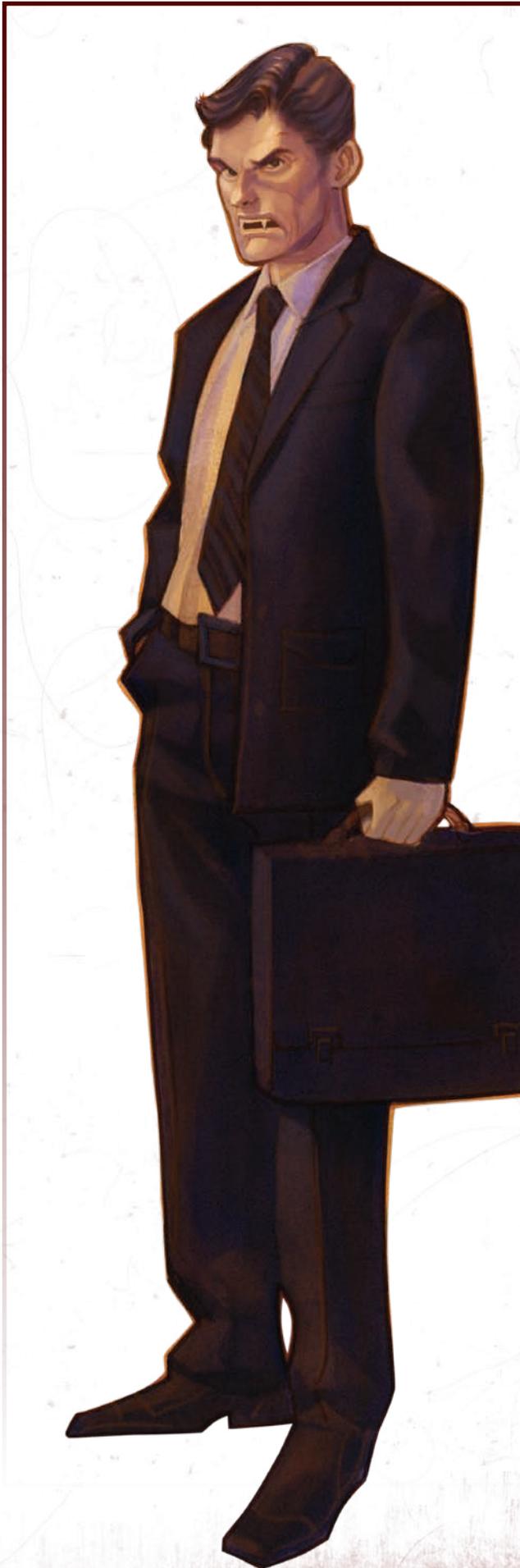
The most basic power of this Discipline allows the Telepath to slowly increase his overall ability to enforce and recognize blood ties. With this power, even younger Kindred have a chance to forge a Vinculum and enthrall Kindred decades or centuries older than themselves.

**Cost:** —

**Dice Pool:** This power involves no roll. It provides bonuses to other rolls; it is considered to be “always on,” and does not need to be activated.

Add the character's dots in Linagem to rolls for the taste of family or blood sympathy. Additionally, characters find resisting any stage of a Vinculum to the Telepath more difficult. The rolls made to resist the Vinculum, at any level, suffer a penalty equal to the vampire's Linagem rating.





### •• *Sanguine Secrets*

Normally, a vampire is able to discern the presence of close relations by tasting the blood of another Kindred (or mortal, in the case of his own mortal lineage). With an amount of skill, he may even be able to identify the blood of another clan. However, this power expands the sensitivity of his palate and allows him to reach for the secrets bound in the Vitae. Corajoso using this power might be able to discover the identities of Kindred connected to the donor, as well as complete Vinculums the donor is involved with (as regnant or thrall). The vampire using this power must still taste the blood (as per the rules for the taste of family), but he cannot derive information of the traditional sort at the same time he uses this power.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** Intelligence + Occult + Linagem - subject's Blood Potency

**Action:** Instant

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** The vampire is overwhelmed by the taste of the Vitae. He may not use this power for the rest of the scene.

**Failure:** The vampire gains no information from the tasted Vitae.

**Success:** The vampire learns part of the identity of others who are connected to the blood's donor. The Telepath receives a brief mental image of a face and learns how that person is related to the donor (sire, grandsire, childe, grandchilde, thrall or regnant). The vampire discovers one such person or vampire per dot of Linagem.

**Exceptional Success:** In addition to the information above, the vampire also learns the primary name, nickname or title of a given connected vampire or mortal. If the donor does not personally know enough about the connected individual to know a name or identity, no additional information is provided.

### ••• *Binding Ties*

As the Corajoso studies the effects of blood ties, he is able to strengthen the connection to those with whom he shares a direct lineage. He can also extend a lesser connection to "siblings" in blood (Kindred who were Embraced by the same sire).

**Cost:** —

**Dice Pool:** This power involves no roll. It provides bonuses to other rolls; it is considered to be "always on," and does not need to be activated.

When using any Discipline or other power that benefits from being turned on a vampire with whom the user has

a blood tie, the bonus is equal to the character's dots in Linagem, rather than the usual +2.

**Example:** *Joseph possesses Linagem •••• and attempts to Dominate his childe. Normally, Joseph's player would add two dice to the pool rolled for Dominate. However, because of Vidal's Linagem Discipline, the player adds four dice instead of the two dice from blood ties.*

Additionally, the normal effects of blood ties now extend to this vampire's siblings. Any power that allows a bonus due to blood ties provides a +2 bonus when turned on any vampire that was Embraced by the same sire as the Telepath.

### •••• *Blood Lies*

The bloodline's weakness is due to the constant connections Kindred share with others linked to them through blood ties. While most such psychic transmissions are too faint for the average vampire to perceive, the Corajoso are cursed with the confusion of sensing *all* of the feelings and communications received by all other Kindred nearby. There is a benefit, however. At this level of mastery, a Telepath can force his own false messages into a target's perceptions. Corajoso use this power to lure enemies into traps, incite riots and impersonate powerful elders.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Empathy + Linagem vs. Resolve + Blood Potency

**Action:** Contested; resistance is reflexive

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** The vampire sends a message, but the recipient immediately recognizes it as a forgery — as does any vampire within a 10 mile radius who *could* have sent the message (the target's sire, for instance).

**Failure:** The vampire is unable to simulate blood ties.

**Success:** The Corajoso can send a false impression of blood sympathy to any vampire within line of sight. This blood sympathy is a burst of emotion or a feeling of danger, much like a normal expression of blood sympathy would be, and requires a successful Wits + Occult roll from the target to feel it (see p. 163 of *Vampire: The Requiem*). The recipient's player receives a +2 modifier on this roll, however, since the "blood sympathy" is expressly intended for him. The Corajoso can specify how the blood sympathy feels in terms of time, distance and direction.

**Exceptional Success:** The target does not need to roll to experience the sympathy. He automatically feels the equivalent of an exceptional success, perceiving exactly what is happening to the distant Kindred — or rather, exactly what the Corajoso wants him to perceive.

### •••• *Distant Mastery*

Distant Mastery is the ultimate in a Telepath's focus on Vinculi and blood sympathies. The Vinculum ensures a great deal of influence over any mortal or vampire a regnant has enthralled. Total mastery of Linagem allows a Telepath to refine that influence into a conduit for commanding his thralls. This power is unique in the sense that it does not provide functionality on its own. Knowledge of Animalism and/or Dominate is required to fully utilize this power's benefits. Normally, a regnant may turn the powers of the Dominate discipline on his thrall without the need for eye contact. Distant Mastery allows the Telepath to issue such commands, as well as similar uses of the Animalism discipline, through Vinculum-forged spiritual connections similar to those of blood sympathy.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** This power involves no roll. It allows the Telepath to follow up with an application of Animalism • or •• or Dominate • or ••.

**Action:** Reflexive. The Willpower point is spent in the same turn that the Corajoso uses either Animalism or Dominate. All rules, rolls and modifiers apply to the use of the follow-up power, as normal. Because Willpower is spent to activate Distant Mastery in the same turn as Animalism or Dominate, Willpower may not be spent to increase dice pools during that turn.

This power allows the Corajoso to use Animalism or Dominate on any animal, mortal or vampire that is fully blood bound to him. This can be accomplished at a range similar to the limits of blood sympathy's link (within the same city or roughly 50 miles outside urban areas), but the range can be greatly extended. A Corajoso can use bound targets as "relay points," measuring the distance from them rather than from himself.

For example, a Telepath has a ghoul living roughly 50 miles away, and another living 100 miles away. The vampire can send a message to the more distant target using the blood of the intermediary as a relay. This inflicts a point of bashing damage upon all intermediary targets, and costs the vampire one Vitae for each intermediary he uses. Even so, it's entirely possible for Kindred to communicate their wishes around the world — which, of course, was the original use of the power.

### *Devotion of the Corajoso*

#### *Blood Beacon*

(Auspex •••, Linagem •••••)

This Devotion expands the capability of a Corajoso to use blood as a marking device. The vampire can smear any

object with a small amount of Vitae, and then ever after, even if the blood is washed away, he can view the area surrounding that object. He can also use such “marked” objects as relay points for the Distant Mastery power (see above), just as if they were blood bound individuals.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae + 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** No roll is required for this Devotion.

**Action:** Instant

Once the mark is in place, the effect is permanent. The character can view the area surrounding the marker when within 50 miles of it, or more, subject to the rules for Distant Mastery. To view a marker’s area, the player rolls Wits + Occult + Linagem.

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The blood on the object boils to the surface and then evaporates. The effect is broken, and the character cannot use that object as a Blood Beacon without marking it again.

**Failure:** The character cannot see the Beacon’s surroundings.

**Success:** The character can see the Beacon’s surroundings. This sight lasts for one turn per success, and the character can change his “angle” from the object as he sees fit.

**Exceptional Success:** The character can see from the Beacon for the remainder of the scene.

This power costs 24 experience points to learn.



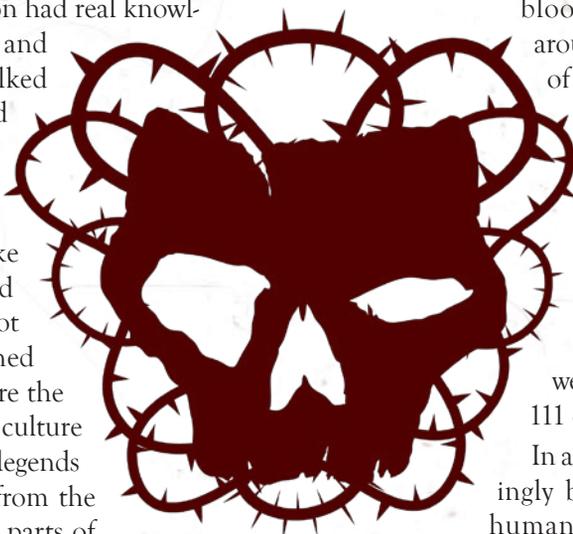
# ADROANZI

Many gods have been lost to the ravages of time. But some of us are still listening.

Long before western civilization had real knowledge of the African continent and the mysteries within, gods walked the earth. Sometimes alien and bizarre, these gods interjected themselves into the lives of the mortals throughout the area. They were known to take on widely different forms, and most of their appearances did not resemble the typical dark-skinned native African. Just as varied were the stories of creation each tribe or culture attributed to their patrons; some legends claimed that humanity sprang from the earth or grew from unorthodox parts of their god's anatomy.

The Lugbara were, at one time, a culture spread throughout areas including modern day Uganda and the Republic of Congo. They worshipped a god named Adroa, a being of two aspects, good and evil, his body split in half. Half of his form — one arm, one leg, one eye, and half of his torso — resided in their world. The other half existed in the heavens. He was tall and white, always looking like he was near death. His offspring were the Adroanzi. Also said to appear like they had only half of a body, they were visible when viewed from one side and vanished when turned to view the other.

The Adroanzi had more contact with the tribes of the Lugbara than their deific parent ever conducted. They would protect the people from wildlife and malevolent bandits, they would keep watch over their chosen, and they would ensure benevolent harvests for the most worthy tribes. They were not, however, wholly benign patrons. Stories told by the Lugbara warned against trying to look at the god-children. A mere glance would infuriate the Adroanzi, prompting them to kill and devour the offender immediately. Even more mysterious tales were told of the homes of the Adroanzi. From time to time, the tribesmen would find groves of demented trees, full of perverted plants that could not be found anywhere else in their lands. Those who ventured into these groves returned with horrifying stories of venomous flowers, carnivorous trees and crawling roots. All of these plants dripped with



blood, and were growing from or around disturbed graves and bodies of those claimed by the gods.

**Parent Clan:** Nosferatu

**Bloodline Disciplines:** Nburu, Nightmare, Obfuscate, Vigor

**Nickname:** Gardeners, Lacrimists

**Weakness:** All Adroanzi share the weakness of the Nosferatu clan (see p. 111 of **Vampire: The Requiem**).

In addition, the Lacrimists are exceedingly bitter about their place among humanity and their apparent denial from the residence of the gods. This twist of fate infuriated the first of the Adroanzi so much that none of the subsequent generations would be allowed to forget their loss of divinity, nor would they be allowed to forgive humanity for it. Any time an Adroanzi feeds, he lashes out and abuses his prey. Whether he gnaws and chews while he drinks, pummels over and over again, or physically disfigures the victim, the end result is the same. For each point of Vitae taken, an Adroanzi inflicts an *additional* point of lethal damage. This means that it is more difficult to feed while trying to be discreet, and probably also interrupts the mortal's experience of the Kiss. It is possible to avoid exacting this revenge, but the player must spend a Willpower point. This allows the vampire to feed from a single victim for a single scene without inflicting this additional damage.

**History and Culture:** Long before Europeans made their way into the interior of Africa and interfered in the affairs of the indigenous cultures, a number of vampires took the roles of gods. While many required their human subjects to perform various rituals or provide different tributes, most of them appeared to be often benevolent. Almost universally, this benevolence was simply given to keep the mortal tribes from fleeing or fighting back. Thus it was that the Adroanzi "cared for" the Lugbara tribes.

A number of these supposed gods had a culture and a form of society of their own. Throughout central Africa, most of these vampires conducted games and competi-

tions through their devoted tribes. Tribes would wage war upon each other, challenge each other for land and resources, and demand rights of breeding from the other tribes. In most cases, these tribes were simply going about their own business. However, the Adroanzi never left their subjects unmolested for long. They would command their chieftains, sour the local wildlife (forcing the tribe to migrate), or subtly instigate aggressions. With the intrusion of European outsiders, the tribes' cultures began to change. Some were decimated by the invaders, some incorporated the teachings of others. Christianity, however, was the benevolent poison to the Adroanzi's carefully cultivated Lugbara.

The Adroanzi did not take well or adjust easily to the shifting cultures, introductions of new religions, and emergence into a larger world. A significant number of them perished in battles against the outsiders and a sizeable portion fell into torpor, hoping to be swept up to the heavens with the rest of the gods once revered by the people of Africa. Only a minuscule minority of these vampires made any serious attempt to integrate themselves with the Europeans or Asians, and with the world around them in general. The youngest and most impressionable, who did make the effort, quickly discovered a niche they could fill.

Through the decades and centuries of ruling the mortals from the position of gods of nature, they had accumulated a great deal of skill in manipulating plants. These manipulations certainly bore the mark of the vampiric condition, and there was one beneficial side effect to this practice. The Adroanzi became known as Lacrimists because their horticultural experiments produced *mandragora* plants more reliably than any other known practice. From these *mandragora*, the Adroanzi were able to extract quantities of *lacrima*. A rare delicacy among Kindred, Adroanzi were able to barter great favors and vast resources for their *lacrima*. It took very little time for a few entrepreneurial Lacrimists to make the transition into the societies outside of Africa.

Initially, these vampires traveled with and settled near the Kindred who had first discovered them among the African tribes. Thus, they were most prevalent near colonies controlled by the *Grémio de Corajoso*. Where the Gardeners went, the *Grémio* forged mutually beneficial relationships. The guild protected the Adroanzi while they capitalized on their association with the peddlers of Kindred vice. Few knew of the Gardeners' origins, and those with such knowledge rarely cared after their first sip of *lacrima*. A few of the fallen gods attempted to return to their old ways, especially those rare elder Adroanzi who had ventured out into the world. On the heels of mortal explorers, these vampires sought out cultures and

### MANDRAGORA AND LACRIMA

Mandragora (sometimes called "mandrakes") are plants that have been infused with Kindred Vitae. They are not ghouls and do not have any sentience of their own, but they do have intrinsic value to many Kindred. These warped and perverted plants produce small amounts of a bloody sap known as Lacrima (also referred to as "mandrake tears"). Lacrima is a unique substance that Kindred may consume. In fact, due to its compelling taste and properties that allow it to be blended with human blood, the rust-colored sap is sought out as a rare delicacy. Creating mandragora is an exceedingly difficult process that takes months and requires specific conditions for the plant to transform into this aberrant *thing*.

Mandragora and lacrima are discussed in more detail in *Ghouls*, but in brief: A plant can become a mandragora if a vampire feeds it blood for a long period of time. Not every plant becomes one (most die, in fact), and there is no set formula for how much Vitae is required to make the change. Larger plants require more blood, yes, but it's possible that a smaller patch of greenery becomes voracious and sucks up whatever the vampire gives it, while an oak grows sickly and dies after only a few nights of the treatment. Mandrakes sometimes gain a bit of mobility, and slowly grow toward sources of blood, much like normal plants turn toward sunlight.

civilizations that had not suffered the same dilution theirs had. Attempting to enslave new villages, manipulate other Kindred, and reestablish their divine place over mortals rarely met with success.

This time, in the relative public eye of Kindred society, the acts of a number of Adroanzi elders cast a shadow over the bloodline. They developed a reputation as maniacal monsters who threatened the Masquerade. When they did occasionally find success and enthrall a remote village, explorers and invaders swiftly put an end to the oppression. Most of the bloodline was hunted down. The temptations of *lacrima* became tainted with suspicion. The majority of Kindred who learned of the substance through dealings with the Gardeners suspected foul play. Most wondered how many vampires had become unsuspectingly blood bound to the African elders. Even the most reputable Gardeners ended up running from Kindred domains, fearing destruction. Memories clouded by torpor, information inaccurately passed from one generation to the next, and the passage of time eventually allowed them to return from hiding.

Modern Adroanzi differ very little from the members of the bloodline who existed centuries ago. They are consistently reminded of their divine origins and take



great pride in the fact that they still possess their mastery over nature and the flora around them. Between the uneasiness they cause in social situations and their utter contempt for humanity's decision to abandon them for Christianity, the Gardeners tend to isolate themselves with personal pursuits. These activities commonly involve the exploration of various types of *mandragora* and the varieties of *lacrima* they can produce, but they can also bury themselves in the past. Feeling such a connection to the divine spurs a number of these vampires to delve into their own history, searching for how and why they fell from the grace of the other gods.

If the Adroanzi are more prevalent in any single covenant, it is in the Circle of the Crone. Lost rites, connections to ancient gods, and bloody tradition certainly appeal to many of them. The rest of the covenants generally attract only small numbers of the Gardeners. These also tend to be younger members of the bloodline. Searching any path that might offer answers to their past and longing for stability in a group separated from Man, they spread across the other covenants. Kindred aware of

the bloodline's history are always surprised to hear about one of the Adroanzi joining the Lancea Sanctum. However, the Sanctified are, after all, certainly not like the devout Christians of the breathing world. Indeed, younger Gardeners are far more open to exploring the darker side of the Sanctified.

**Reputation:** Most Kindred find the Adroanzi to be eccentric and deviant peddlers of their liquid sin. Some elder Kindred may remember the years of ambitious and egotistical Adroanzi insisting that they were the direct offspring of a god, but very few would have had (or currently remember) direct confrontations with the "lost gods" trying to reclaim their glory. That being said, they tend to be viewed as novelties; worth attention only when the tiny bottles of *lacrima* are being passed around. Kindred who choose to roam the wilderness might have the most need to raise a conflict with Adroanzi in their own territory. Wherever the Gardeners conduct their experiments with plants, the property or landscape is littered with failed attempts — dead vegetation that take years to

decompose, pools of bloody, pulpy, putrid and liquefied plants, and aggressive, bloated insects that scour the area of any other, more normal, insects. These disposal sites and groves for experimentation certainly cause a taint on the land around them, scaring away wildlife and placing a strain on anyone who depends on that land.

On the other hand, movers and shakers within the Kindred community feel very fortunate when they can contact and maintain a relationship with one of the Gardeners. Simply possessing *lacrima* can elevate a vampire's reputation; having a regular method to distribute tiny vials of the substance to favored allies can place a vampire's admirers in awe.

**Concepts:** Vintner to the elders, poisoner, herbalist, inner city pharmacist, drug dealer, graveyard gardener, god of the dead forest, monster of the woods, wood stake weaponsmith, African refugee protector

### *Nburu*

The Adroanzi have always seen themselves as gods of nature. While ancient history holds the secrets of how and why the bloodline came into being, their defining power has survived throughout time. Nburu is the discipline that allows their control over nature. This discipline not only has a specific set of powers, but a Gardener's understanding of it also improves his chances of successfully cultivating *mandragora*.

#### • *Silent Passage*

Adroanzi, being self-proclaimed masters of nature, reinforce their mystery by use of this power. They can move through the wilderness without fear of being heard or discovered. Even animals have trouble finding evidence of a Gardener's presence.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** This power involves no roll.

**Action:** Instant

When activated, Silent Passage provides the character with a number of benefits related to moving about in a natural setting. He must be walking through grass, on soil, through water, or across a naturally occurring surface. The power does not function if the character is walking across concrete, wading in a constructed fiberglass-bottom pool, or traveling on or over any sort of similarly worked or artificial surface. The power lasts for the duration of the scene.

First, he is virtually silent when walking or even running. Observers using Heightened Senses have the



potential to hear the character, but this requires a successful Clash of Wills (see **Vampire: The Requiem**, p. 119). The Adroanzi's player rolls Resolve + Survival + Nburu during this contested action. Users of this power also mask evidence in regards to scents. This, too, can be subject to a Clash of Wills. Finally, Silent Passage also hides evidence of the vampire's passing. He does not leave tracks in the sand, break the grass as he walks through, or disturb the surface of water as he is walking or swimming. In the case of traveling through water, the character may move no faster than his normal walking speed. Moving any faster will disrupt this power and cause it to fail. Tracks and other evidence are not completely hidden, but any roll made to track or investigate the area receives a -5 modifier.

### •• *Defiled Presence*

Centuries ago, when the Adroanzi were lording over the tribes of the Lugbara, they used a number of tactics to keep their mortal followers obedient. From time to time, the chieftains and their people needed to be punished. The most despicable of Adroanzi' punishments struck the people indirectly. Without the land and all that grew from it, the people likely starved and were deprived of materials for building their homes. With this power, the Adroanzi could destroy swaths of smaller plants, kill trees and insects, or even render tools useless.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** Strength + Survival + Nburu

**Action:** Instant

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** The entropic energies meant for the plant life around him backfire, inflicting one point of lethal damage on the user.

**Failure:** The Vitae is spent, but the character is unable to summon the energies needed to destroy the intended object or plants.

**Success:** If the character was attempting to destroy larger amounts of insects and/or smaller plants such as grasses, weeds, flowers, small shrubs, and the like, he kills all of the plant life and insects in a radius of one yard per success. Larger plants, such as trees, that are within the affected area are not harmed (though they may show signs of disease or rot). If the character was attempting to destroy a single larger object, the object loses one point of Structure per success rolled. This bypasses the object's Durability.

**Exceptional Success:** No additional damage is inflicted, but anything destroyed is utterly gone. The plants or object becomes little more than ashes, as if it was completely burned or decomposed.

In order to destroy a plant, group of insects, or object, the vampire must touch the item or the ground where the living things are located. Simply standing on the ground where the plants or insects are located qualifies. Objects that may be affected by this power must be wholly organic. This power can destroy a cotton shirt, leaving behind only the polyester collar tag and the plastic buttons. However, a shirt made of a synthetic polyester and cotton blend could not be affected. Leather jackets, baseball bats and simple doors are all candidates for defiling. More complex items may require Storyteller adjudication. A couch or sofa, for example, might be susceptible to this power, depending on a number of factors – is the fabric natural or not, does it have a steel frame for the hideaway bed inside?

### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
-1	Per point of an object's Size that exceeds the user's Nburu rating.
-2	The target object has been worked into its form (baseball bat, door).
-2	The character is unable to directly touch the object (wearing shoes or gloves).
-4	The target object has been manufactured (cotton shirt, leather jacket).

### ••• *Synthesis*

Another tool for stalking prey, watching their mortal charges, and hiding from superior enemies, the Adroanzi developed the ability to meld with the largest of plants. Typically, trees or larger cacti were the most appropriate candidates for applications of this power, which bears some resemblance to the Protean power Meld with the Earth.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae (or more)

**Dice Pool:** This power involves no roll.

With this power, a vampire is able to meld into a plant that is at least the same size as he is. The plant may be either dead or alive, but it cannot be worked into any other form. While he is melded with the plant, the character's senses are extended from the plant, providing a full 360 degree range of sight, hearing, touch, etc. These senses extend throughout the entire plant. For example, if he melds with a tree that is taller than a nearby wall, he would be able to see over the wall from the vantage point of the tree's taller branches. As his sense of touch extends throughout the tree, he could feel people climbing or damaging it.

When the character "leaves" the plant and ends the Synthesis, he exits the vegetation exactly where he en-

tered it. However, at the cost of 1 Vitae per turn, the melded character can move throughout the plant. He “moves” at half of his Speed within the plant. At the end of the scene, the character is immediately expelled from the plant at the original point of entry (or from where he has “moved” to within the plant). He may end the power at any time, exiting the plant as an instant action. Alternately, he may quickly exit the plant as an element of surprise or to be able to quickly escape. Exiting from the plant in this fashion is a reflexive action and costs one additional Vitae.

### •••• Hungry Swarms

One of the most terrifying abilities of the Adroanzi, they can summon nearby insects and imbue them with a thirst for blood capable of killing small animals as well as placing human sized creatures in grave danger. With the first taste of the vampire’s blood, swarms of ants, spiders, mosquitoes, or anything capable of hunting for prey swarms their commanded target, eager to consume it whole.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae per turn

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Survival + Nburu - target’s Defense

**Action:** Instant

**Dramatic Failure:** The summoned insects attack the vampire using this power. For a single turn, they swarm him and drain one point of Vitae. This power may not be used again for the remainder of the scene.

**Failure:** While some insects are brought forth, they do not swarm and are not under the vampire’s command. The effect ends and may not be initiated again for the rest of the scene. If this was a roll made to continue the use of the power, the insects simply fail to gain enough access to the victim to have any effect. The power still ends, as the frenzied momentum of the attack has been broken.

**Success:** The insects follow the user’s command and swarm the victim. See below for details.

**Exceptional Success:** As with a success, but the insects use the blood from the victim to continue the power on their own. No Vitae is spent for this use of Hungry Swarms.

The Adroanzi initiates this power by shedding his own blood (usually through cutting his hand) and flinging it on the ground or in the air around him. This immediately summons any available insects to him, where they can then be directed by the user of this power. Once focused

onto a specific target, they cannot be redirected (though the vampire can use the power again on another target). They simply continue to swarm the victim until the effect is ended. The intended target must be within 30 feet of the vampire. Should the target flee and leave this range, the power’s effect ends.

Once Hungry Swarms is activated, the target takes one point of lethal damage (if living) or loses one Vitae (in the case of a vampire) each turn. Additionally, the swarms obscure the victim’s senses enough to reduce his effectiveness in anything he attempts. All of the victim’s dice pools are reduced by two as long as the power is in effect.

The player must spend one point of Vitae per turn for the effect to continue. If the Adroanzi has Hungry Swarms activated on multiple targets, he must spend Vitae for all of them (unless the player rolls an exceptional success; see above).

### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
-3	Character uses the power in an urban setting.
-5	Character uses this power inside a maintained building.

### •••• Dark Spirit of the Forest

The Adroanzi terrified the tribes they commanded, as well as their enemies, by forming a reputation for springing seemingly from nowhere. No matter where their targets would hide and no matter how fast they could travel, they were vulnerable to these dark gods of the land. Without any warning, the Adroanzi could step out from behind a tree next to a terrified victim, convincing even the most seasoned chieftain that there simply was no escape from these lords of the night.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** This power involves no roll.

**Action:** Instant

The vampire must be using the Synthesis power in order to utilize Dark Spirit of the Forest. He may instantly transport himself from the plant he is inside of to any other plant within visual range that would be a suitable candidate for the Synthesis power. This visual range must be true line of sight (not through mirrors, television monitors, etc) and the vampire must be able to clearly see the plant to which he is traveling. He cannot see a forest on a nearby mountain and simply guess that there is a suitable tree where he is looking.

# BOILING OVER

Two Kindred and a ghoul servant have become a trio of individuals that are destined to erupt into violence, requiring only a little outside force or unlucky circumstance to act as the catalyst. One vampire is hundreds of years old; he has been a vicious monster, even by Kindred standards. He cannot, however, remember actually *being* that monster.

The second vampire is still just a neonate. He's taken his meager skill and experience as one of the Damned and has embarked on a quest to make his sire's murderer answer for the crime. He doesn't even know what the outcome of his quest will be. Justice? Revenge? Or will he join his sire in oblivion?

Finally, a mere ghoul holds the key. Nearly completely insane, he is forced to tread the line between protecting his master from becoming a despicable creature again

without directly undermining the only other vampire his regnant has found worthy to trust and assist.

What none of them realize is that their fates are all tightly intertwined by blood and hunger. The elder vampire murdered the neonate's sire, but lost that memory along with many others. The neonate feels that the elder could help him discover the truth, since he knows that the elder was once knowledgeable about such matters. The ghoul, the only one who knows the whole story, is trying desperately to keep the pair of Kindred in the dark. It's a futile task — sooner or later, the truth will come out.

These three vampires carry within them not only the muddying influence of time and the Fog of Eternity, but the legacy of the *Grémio de Corajoso* and the “discovery” of the Adroanzi. The meetings between these two factions were vicious when they originally occurred, and history is about to repeat itself.

*John Stevenson*

**Background:** John Stevenson (a name he chose recently, as he does not remember his own) has precious little recollection of his past. In fact, he remembers absolutely nothing of the nights prior to July 15, 1988. That was the evening he rose from his latest bout of torpor. On that night, he also killed a person for the last time.

On the first night he remembers, he woke up in an abandoned basement, attended by a loyal ghoul he'd never known and still does not recognize. The poor soul was ravaged and killed, leaving behind only a tattered journal that was being kept safe for the vampire master upon his return. Bloody and torn to shreds, the remains of that journal are all that John now has as a lead to find his past and identity.

For the last two decades, John has explored what he can of his past. He gradually rediscovered his knowledge of the Spanish and Portuguese languages, and had the good fortune to find a ghoul already well-versed in Kindred society. With this ghoul's help, John explored the new world, searching for clues as to his past existence. He learned that the *Grémio's* markers around the world are still mostly intact. He doesn't remember placing them, and yet their locations always seem familiar. He felt he was growing close to a breakthrough.

And then, after meeting Bennett, he backed off from his search. Bennett had a much more pressing need — a



need to find his sire's murderer and put him to the sword, or at least learn *why* he'd been killed. Stevenson put his own quest on hold, and his mental state has benefited for it. No longer obsessive about the past, he is free to truly experience his unlife.

**Description:** He is a short and dark-skinned man. Most likely from a tropical environment, he has not

lost the hardiness or agility that certainly benefited him during his mortal days. Tonight, he is a simple man, preferring blue jeans, sturdy shirts and a worn pair of boots. Function rules over form, not only in his choice of clothing, but in his choice of vehicles, residence and unlife as well.

**Storytelling Hints:** John is likely to be the calmest and most rational vampire any Kindred will meet. There is an inner peace that none can match. "Ignorance is bliss," some of his naysayers whisper from a distance. Certainly suspicious and extremely cautious about what may haunt him from his past, a curiosity drives him. The hidden treasures of his past don't hold the secrets to completing a partial vampire; they hold the remainder of lessons needed to finish his journey. However, should John fall into a frenzy, a monster will truly be unleashed. Pent up rage and subconscious frustration are within him with a ferocity that assures any witness that there is certainly more to John than a simple seeker of wisdom.

**Clan:** Ventrue

**Bloodline:** Corajoso

**Covenant:** Unaligned

**Embrace:** 1601

**Apparent Age:** mid 20s

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 4

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

**Social Attributes:** Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 5

**Mental Skills:** Crafts (Automotive Repair) 2, Investigation 2, Politics 1

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl (Bite) 3, Drive 1, Stealth 3, Survival (Hunting) 3, Weaponry 1

**Social Skills:** Animal Ken 3, Expression 2, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 1

**Merits:** Direction Sense, Fast Reflexes 1, Languages (Portuguese, Spanish), Retainer 4 (Brent), Vitae Connoisseur (wounded individuals)\*

**Willpower:** 9

**Humanity:** 6

**Virtue:** Faith

**Vice:** Pride

**Health:** 8

**Initiative:** 9 (with Fast Reflexes)

**Defense:** 3

**Speed:** 11

**Blood Potency:** 3

**Vitae/Per turn:** 12/1

**Disciplines:** Animalism 1, Auspex 3, Celerity 1, Dominate 2, Linagem 4, Resilience 3, Vigor 4

**Devotions:** Blood Beacon\*\*, Destructive Might\*, Lessons in the Steel

\*These traits appear in **Ancient Mysteries**. If you do not have access to this book, simply remove them from Stevenson's traits.

\*\*Although Stevenson no longer has the Linagem rating necessary to use this Devotion, this is due to his loss of memory from torpor. He could regain the fifth dot of the Discipline at any time (see Story Hooks) and therefore regain knowledge of this Devotion.

*J.R. Bennett*

**Background:** Bennett's future was once quite bright and hopeful. He was an amazing student throughout school and during his brief exposure to college. Still without a true direction before he was dragged into the nights of Kindred intrigue, Bennett showed the potential to forge a path wherever he wanted to go. Unfortunately that degree of ingenuity and brilliance attracted the ancient monster needing a gateway into the modern world.

He was Embraced by a man who thought himself to be a god. Bennett could hardly argue his sire's divinity for the first few years of his nightly existence. In time, this creature drew tremendous loyalty from Bennett. He thought of nothing but following his sire's instructions, learning the secrets of a world long lost to time. Bennett never quite figured out exactly why a relatively minor

man such as himself would be chosen by a god to carry the knowledge and to forge new traditions from those secrets. The elder fell to diablerie before his motivations for Embracing Bennett became clear.

In the aftermath of the battle in his sire's tomb, Bennett found a number of ancient relics. Most were simply valuable curiosities, but one broken statue changed his unlife instantly. Within the crushed statue were two books. One was a hand-bound journal written in a language that Bennett can only assume to be an African dialect further obscured by code. The other was a modern diary half-full of scrawled entries written in broken English. The diary, written by his sire over the previous decade, described a number of years leading up to his decision to leave his child to continue the heritage and sleep until

he was called back to the Earth. His sire traveled across the Americas, looking for others of his kind, as well as for a mysterious group named the *Grémio de Corajoso*. According to the diary, one member of this enigmatic group of vampires was hunting him in return. His sire was convinced that this nemesis lusted after his divine right of mastery over nature. After all, Bennett's sire posited, that was this particular vampire's history and dark passion: Diablerie. Bennett began a search for this vampire, and finally found someone who he believes could help him — John Stevenson.

While it did initially cross Bennett's mind that Stevenson might be his sire's murderer, he's abandoned that theory. His sire's Requiem diary never mentioned his enemy's clan and only gave a cursory description, but even so, Stevenson looks very different now than he did then (as a result of his increased Humanity). But since Stevenson *was* an associate of the *Grémio*, he's ideally suited to help Bennett find his sire's killer, and is more than happy to do it.

**Description:** Tall and just a little on the heavy side, Bennett is an initially imposing young man. Upon closer examination or simply extended association, his own lack of social graces infects those around him. Nobody can spend much time with him without feeling a bit awkward, consistently reminded of their own failings by the blank and lost look in his eyes. He constantly carries a faint odor of decay in his clothes, most likely from his extended periods of research in his favored rural spots.

**Storytelling Hints:** As Bennett reads and rereads his sire's diaries, he forms elaborate scenarios in his mind about how the finale must have gone. Did his sire fight back, calling up plants and insects to aid him? Did he injure his assailant? Did his soul drive the diablerist mad?

But as with so many people fixated on revenge, Bennett is in for disappointment. Not only did Stevenson diablerize Bennett's sire out of nothing more than ravenous, Beast-driven hunger that just got out of control, but he now has no memory of it. Even if confronted with incontrovertible proof, there will be no confession, no pleas for remorse, not even a disdainful snarl. Stevenson has lost that part of his mind, and Bennett, sooner or later, will have to accept that there can be no closure. Whether *his* mind can take this blow remains to be seen.

**Clan:** Nosferatu

**Bloodline:** Adroanzi

**Covenant:** Circle of the Crone



**Embrace:** 1976

**Apparent Age:** 18

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

**Social Attributes:** Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

**Mental Skills:** Academics (Research) 3, Computer 2, Crafts (Horticulture) 3, Occult 2

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 1, Drive 2, Firearms 1, Stealth 2, Survival (Finding Shelter) 2, Weaponry 1

**Social Skills:** Animal Ken 2, Empathy 1, Persuasion 1, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 2

**Merits:** Danger Sense, Encyclopedic Knowledge, Languages (French, Spanish), Resources 2

**Willpower:** 6

**Humanity:** 5 (fixation, 6)

**Virtue:** Prudence

**Vice:** Wrath

**Health:** 7

**Initiative:** 6

**Defense:** 3

**Speed:** 10

**Blood Potency:** 3

**Vitae/Per turn:** 12/1

**Disciplines:** Animalism 2, Obfuscate 2, Nburu 2, Nightmare 2

**Background:** Brent has been Stevenson's assistant, servant and ghoul for nearly 50 years. In fact, up until Stevenson returned from torpor in 1998, Brent's brother Spencer also served the vampire. Unfortunately, Spencer fell victim to the elder vampire's hunger when he unexpectedly woke up. Just as Stevenson took a new direction that night, so did Brent. Taking a week to stalk and watch his regnant, Brent realized that the vampire was different, not the violent savage he once was. No less devoted or loyal, Brent pretended to be a stranger and forged a new relationship with Stevenson.

Brent took a new road in serving and protecting his master. This "new person" that his regnant had become was so much better, more rational, and far less psychotic than he had been before the decade-long slumber overtook him. The ghoul vowed to protect his master by preventing the vampire from once again embracing the monster that seemed to still be dormant within him. Hiding evidence (including a journal written by an ancient vampire Stevenson had diablerized shortly before his slumber, as well as a few documents that shed light on his past and activities for the last half-century) and carefully building the façade of being a new servant to Stevenson, Brent has carried on with his tactic of keeping his master sane by denying him his past.

Fate and synchronicity certainly must exist for Kindred as they do for people, Brent has mused over the last few years. That, or there is something in Stevenson's subconscious driving him to similar goals. Several years ago, Stevenson and Bennett met and decided to pursue their quests together. Brent found tremendous wells of inner strength and creativity during the first few nights after the two Kindred met. A few well-placed diversions and small lies in those early conversations kept Bennett from suspecting anything was amiss. Brent, however, was able to sneak a look at Bennett's sire's diary. That confirmed to Brent that fate truly seemed to torture vampires; he now knows beyond any doubt that Stevenson diablerized Bennett's sire.

**Description:** Made a ghoul in the late 1940s, Brent had recently returned from post-World War II Europe. He's fairly tall at just over six feet, thin, lean and surprisingly strong for his build. Over the decades, he has aged a bit and changed his style a number of times. These days, he claims to have taken to the open roads, though it's mostly an affectation. Old jeans, tattered leather vests, oil-stained t-shirts, and a carefully faked Southern drawl completes his current identity as a long-haul truck driver.



**Storytelling Hints:** Completing this vicious triangle that will inevitably explode in rage, Brent has a singular goal. That objective is simply to ensure that his regnant does not rediscover his "old unlife." While he tends to play the part of a faithful servant (even though he feels far more like a caretaker), each waking moment is spent carefully crafting plans and contingencies just in case Thomas remembers anything; his name, his history, or his ancient connections to some lost sect of vampires. All of this time with a vampire has taken its toll on Brent's sanity. His mind finally broke when Stevenson rose and exsanguinated his brother. The strong bonds that continued to attract Brent to Stevenson endured and perverted any thoughts of revenge into a catatonic reaction. Anytime he sees vampires in any kind of physical conflict more serious than a simple punch, he completely loses his mind, flees, and attempts to lock himself away from the monsters. Once safely away he falls into a protective terror-induced comatose state.

**Apparent Age:** late 30's

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

**Social Attributes:** Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

**Mental Skills:** Computer 1, Crafts 2, Investigation 1, Medicine 1, Occult 1

**Physical Skills:** Brawl 2, Drive (18-wheelers) 2, Firearms 2, Larceny (Stealing Cars) 3, Stealth 2, Weaponry 1

**Social Skills:** Empathy 1, Intimidation 2, Socialize (Local Pubs) 1, Streetwise (Fencing) 3, Subterfuge 2

**Merits:** Barfly, Iron Stamina 1, Language (Spanish), Strong Back, Stunt Driver

**Willpower:** 5

**Morality:** 4 (fugue: 5, avoidance: 6)

**Virtue:** Justice

**Vice:** Lust

**Health:** 9

**Initiative:** 6

**Defense:** 3

**Speed:** 11

**Disciplines:** Auspex 1, Resilience 2

*Story Hooks: Boiling Over Into Your City*

This is a situation ready to explode and consume everything nearby. Stevenson was a monster before his reawakening. Bennett is a potential monster, on the brink of madness and perpetual grief. And Brent, despite his good intentions, is just piling one lie on top of another.

- A Ventrue character in deadly danger finds himself saved – Stevenson and Bennett appear from nowhere and dispatch the vampire’s assailants. When asked, Stevenson describes a feeling of terror and pain: blood sympathy. Apparently, the character is a distant (or not so distant) relation of Stevenson. This event sparks an increase in Stevenson’s Linagem Discipline, and he relearns his Blood Beacon Devotion. What

secrets has he left for himself to find? And might he insist that the character he saved accompany him, since their fates are clearly entwined?

- Stevenson and Bennett have a number of pieces to the puzzle, and are able to trace the movements of Bennett’s sire and the diablerist across the country. The wandering trio comes to the coterie’s home city, and in presenting itself to the local Prince, finds a lead on Bennett’s search. Brent, ever trying to be helpful, removes the information and destroys it – but it so happens that the information was contained in something of value to the players’ characters (a Requiem diary, perhaps, or maybe Brent murders a historian Contact or Ally). Brent by himself isn’t much of a threat, not after dark, anyway. Bennett and Stevenson, however, are, and they regard their ghoul with much more value than most Kindred.
- One or more characters in the coterie are descended from one of the bloodlines or lineages involved with the *Grémio de Corajoso*. Stevenson, known to be a loose cannon in years passed, was still considered to be an asset to the *Grémio*. His disappearance over the last few decades has alarmed some of his former allies. The players’ coterie is given the honor of being selected to make contact with the resurfaced Corajoso (obviously not known to the old allies as John Stevenson). Alternately, the characters themselves might be the elders once associated with the Telepath. How much can the ghoul prevent? How will either Kindred react to Stevenson’s past?

# BLOODLINES OF THE FIRST KINGDOM OF THAILAND (CE 1238-1368)

In the 13th century, the Thai people overthrew their Khmer rulers and the first historical Kingdom of Thailand was founded. It was a time for great change and cultural growth in their history. Ramkhamhaeng was the nearly mythical king who ruled during the golden age of this dynasty. He is often credited as the creator of the Thai alphabet, solidifying Theravada Buddhism as the national religion and promoting the arts and dance nationwide. The nation of the Thai people has since that time remained unconquered by foreign rule.

With a narrow understanding of the people of the time, it appeared the Sukhothai dynasty was a paradise, and stories attribute the mortal King with responsibility for good seasons, excess of crops and general economic boon. What of the Kindred of the era? At this time, regrettably, the largest Kindred court was backwards and empiric. The highest predator is still remembered as Asira the Naga King, a Yaksha of terrible power and influence.

Then came the Mae Ji, an enigmatic woman of questionable lineage who suggested that meditation and mindfulness were the true solutions to all problems inherent in the Kindred condition. In stories that border on mythical, the Mae Ji converted the Naga King – who then established an undead monastic order that quickly grew to overtake the whole of Thailand. The Mae Ji left Thailand for lands far west to spread her teachings to princes and slaves alike.

Of course, perfection is an illusion; the new way hardly sat well with the worshipers of Thailand's old gods, and from that time on, a sort of cold war has brewed.

Now, as more and more Thai people leave Thailand they bring more than their culture with them. They bring the ancestral history of their country, in a sense, in the form of the undead. With this history come truths about the Kindred condition that few modern Kindred are prepared for.

## *Kinnaree*

Your mentor is old and bloated on the blood brought to him in charity.  
Kill him and bring me his ashes and I'll free you, as you are meant to be free.

Driven into hiding hundreds of years ago, the Kinnaree believe themselves to be the secret keepers of Thailand and the protectors of its Dharma. This bloodline of social monsters uses a combination of perfected bodies, poise and insight to hide among the Kindred of Thailand, waiting for their chance to strike at their prey – namely any demon, monster or god who has outlived her purpose.

As protectors of these traditions in the Free Land of the Thai, they preserve the Hindu and older folk practices that predate Buddhism. Having an earthy and ancient form of Crúac, they tend to be Acolytes though their western cousins rarely accept them. In many European



Acolyte traditions, a Kindred is a “maiden” only up until the point where she kills for the first time. The Kinnaree consider themselves immortal virgins in the service of their Patron Demoness no matter how often they kill, and this sets them apart from Western Acolytes and often makes it difficult for them to find a place within their covens.

**Parent Clan:** Daeva

**Bloodline Disciplines:** Celerity, Majesty, Vigor, Auspex

**Nickname:** Fawn

**Weakness:** Like their parent clan, the Kinnaree are joyfully in touch with their darker natures (see p. 105 of *Vampire: The Requiem*).

The Kinnaree believe themselves to be Asura, or demons of Hindu tradition, and throw themselves headlong into that role. When faced with potential anger frenzy, the Kinnaree treat riding the wave as if it were an additional Vice. That is to say, when confronted with the provocation to anger frenzy, if the Kinnaree chooses not to ride the wave he loses two points of Willpower.

**History and Culture:** Scholars tell the story of Banna, a thousand armed demon and devotee of Shiva who earned the gift of invulnerability from his patron for his dedication and penance. The stories say that the All Mother created a virgin avatar to destroy this menacing Asura once and for all. A girl slew the greatest demon of the age because it was her Dharma to do so. The Ramakien tells the story of Ravan, with his thousand heads, who was also a devotee of Shiva, and also gained from him virtual invulnerability. The Ramakien goes on to say that his sister, an Asura with long terrible nails, caused a war between her brother and the greatest king the Thais ever knew that ultimately ended in Ravan's utter defeat.

History and mythology treats these as dissimilar myths with no root connection. The Kinnaree, secret defenders of Thailand, know the truth. There is no difference. The virgin avatar was able to destroy the Asura Banna because she knew his secret flaws. Shurpanakha, the long nailed demon, manipulated her brother into a war he could not win in an act of revenge for her husband's death earlier on. What's more, to the Kinnaree, this virgin slayer and the demoness were one and the same.

The secret cult of Acolyte-like witches in Thailand worships Shurpanakha as a local and powerful Asura. However, the Daeva of the Kinnaree see themselves as direct descendents of the Asura's blood and claim their history starts where she fades from legend. In the Kindred version of the story, Shurpanakha was a tragic victim whose Dharma largely involved the destruction of her own kind. A child, she was created from the soil by the All Mother and in child-like stumbling, fell in love and married. Still not quite a woman she was unknown to her husband's marital bed and when her brother murdered him, she was left heart broken and vengeful.

After her husband's murder, she went to the Himmapan woods and preformed great and bloody penance to Durga. Being so young, and with penance so horrible, Durga looked at the girl with pity and restored the parts of her face she had slashed away and mended the skin she had burned in sacrifice. Durga asked the girl why she would show such devotion, and the child simply





### FIGHTING STYLE: MUAY THAI

Muay Thai, as a Fighting Style Merit, uses the same systems for ••, ••• and •••• as the Boxing Fighting Style (p. 110 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). The • and ••••• maneuvers are described below.

**Cut Kick (•):** Your character knows how to deliver powerful round kicks to her opponent's legs. When you choose this option your character inflicts one less point of damage than usual, counted after rolling to see if the attack succeeds. (For example, an attack that scores one success would still be a successful cut kick, but inflicts no Health damage). However, each kick reduces the opponent's Speed by one, down to a minimum of one. If you roll as many successes as the opponent's Size, he falls prone because he's been swept by a kick or can't use his legs out of sheer pain. Opponents can get back up whenever they have the chance, but their Speed only recovers at the end of the combat scene.

**Thai Clinch (••••):** Your character grabs an enemy around the head and pulls him into a vicious elbow or knee strike. If you are establishing a grappling hold as the first part of using the Combination Blows maneuver to inflict damage as the second move, add your Dexterity to your dice pool to attack. **Drawback:** The usual -1 penalty for Combination Blows applies to the first grappling attempt, not to the following attack. This benefit does not apply if your character has already established a hold, or during future attempts to damage an opponent from the same hold, but she can always abandon her current hold and try a new grapple to use the Thai Clinch.

responded that she wanted to know what her fate was so that she could fulfill it with joy instead of sorrow. Durga was impressed and not only explained to the girl her duty, but granted her a gift to aid her in her quest.

For Shurpanakha, her Dharma was simple: all things must come to an end, even gods and demons. Because she was of the latter and gifted by one of the former, it was for her to know the Asura and the Devi – and when they grew bloated and stagnant with age, she was to destroy them. Her gift was the Embrace without a sire. The Kinnaree do not assume their patron and imagined founder was the first Daeva, just the most important one.

Kinnaree is a name taken from the Sukhothai half-bird women of the Himmaman forest. They were said to have protected and succored Shurpanakha after she received Durga's blessing. They hold to two ideals: that the traditions of Thailand must be maintained or the greatest and most evil of the Asura will return from Hell and destroy the world, and that lesser earthbound Asura who have

forgotten their place in the celestial order must be slain. All things must come to an end for the Wheel to turn and Kindred and other demons are no exception. This puts them into direct opposition with the Kindred monks of the Sakadagami order, though ancient agreements between the Kinnaree and the founder of the order prevent it from devolving into an all out war.

These Fawn, a Thai word for dance, have spent the last thousand years infiltrating and manipulating all levels of Thai culture, including the ritual dances so important to national holidays. In fact, the bloodline draws many children from the traditional dancers, since the Kinnaree believe that an expert dancer physically experiences the history of the people of the land. A special secret telling of the Ramakien presents Shurpanakha as the puppeteer and true hero of the story, and only the greatest of these dancers are invited to dance it.

In the 12th century, when the Kingdom of Sukhothai was first established, the kings started sporting events around a marital practice called Muay Boran. This would later evolve into the brutal fighting form called Muay Thai. Among themselves, the Kinnaree claim that it was due to their influence with the King and the monks of the time that so many of the maneuvers are named for events from the Hindu Thai epic, the Ramakien. The brutal and athletic nature of Muay Thai appealed to the dancers among the Fawn and many of them took on its study, though mostly in secret.

The Masquerade is only loosely observed in much of Thailand, and this has been the case as far back as any elder can remember. Most humans live with the knowledge that the Asura and Devi of legend might exist, though few can report actual interactions with them. Still, erring on the side of prudence is always wise, and the citizens practice many folk rituals to appease or keep the old monsters at bay. Most Thai boys wear phra phrim, a protective amulet made using special recipes and spells, from an early age. While older mortal Buddhist monks make most phra phrim, the Kinnaree's subversive hand is found in the fact that most recipes include the burnt ash of a temple's oldest scrolls. After all, all things must become ash. In more rural areas, farther from the organized temples of the Sakadagami, devotees of Shurpanakha interact with the farmers and villagers. Here, the Kinnaree might even openly lead, largely recognized as priests and revered demons. Gaining good Karma by "making merit" is an old Buddhist tradition in Thailand, and often families invite monks into their homes and feed them as a way of helping everyone along the path to peace. In a dark and bloody version of this tradition, some rural households open their doors at night in an elaborate ceremony where

## STORY HOOKS

- The Anand family has just moved to Miami in order to send their son to medical school. They bring with them traditional food, rituals, beliefs and great-grandmother in a box. Grandmother is over a hundred years old and has her own ideas about how to do things. First things first, though, and that's to create a new generation of devotees to Shurpanakha.
- Some rare pieces of Thai Hindu art are on display at the museum where court is held. The pieces on display, however, are stolen, and a coterie of Thai Kindred come to court to demand them back.
- A young cult of Shurpanakha, quickly disenchanting by the agreement between their elders and the elders of the Sakadagami, pack up and leave Thailand to come to the States — with the full intention of fulfilling their Dharma.

the demons are invited to drink their fill in exchange for blessings in the season to come. Due to the rarity of this belief, these nights of "making black merit" rarely end in death. That would be wasteful.

Contrary to belief outside of the Sakadagami, the acolytes and their Kinnaree leaders are not strictly female. In fact, the worshipers of the old Hindu gods and especially those of Shurpanakha welcome male Kindred as a necessary balance. Many seasonal celebrations need male participants and in fact many older drama-dances were once composed of all male dancers. While that is rarely true today, male Kinnaree are granted many boons, including first feeding rights. In some rural areas, people believe that being fed upon by a male Asura is a part of fertility superstitions that might predate Hinduism. Outsiders analyzing the beliefs of the Kinnaree might see a direct conflict in concepts like preserving the magic and culture of the distant past, and destroying old monsters to make room for new life. This paradox, however, is not one the Kinnaree consider.

**Reputation:** Because they are social chameleons like their parent clan, it is possible that more Kindred know a Kinnaree than know of the bloodline. This is as true in Thailand as it is in the rest of the world, thanks to the need for extra secrecy among the Sakadagami controlled court.

They are not openly known among the Invictus, as any Fawn among them would be there in secret in order to destroy wayward Asura. To the Carthian Movement in and around Southeast Asia and in American communities with a large Thai population, the Kinnaree are valuable al-

lies if not easy converts. To the small sect of Islamic Lancea Sanctum in the area, the concepts of being demonic are similar, but damnation and ignorance in the face of local religion have lead to active disputes with this bloodline and the Acolytes around them.

**Concepts:** Seasonal dancer, Maui Thai instructor, Carthian infiltrator, flagellant, elder hunter, monster hunter, long-nailed monster in the woods, overly curious historian, half Thai Army brat, second generation family defender

## *Rituals and Devotions of the Kinnaree*

### *Tapas, Rituals of Penance*

#### (Level-One Crúac Ritual)

Throughout the stories of the Thai people, devotees of the Devi would perform rituals of sacrifice in the hopes of receiving blessings from their patrons. Rather than one specific ritual, the Tapas are a suite of rituals used to grant the penitent bonuses to certain dice pools depending on which spirit receives the sacrifice. The bonus lasts for one scene, but each one must be purchased as a separate ritual to a different member of the pantheon; three examples are listed below.

*Tapas to Ma Durga:* Calling out to the destroyer of demons, a petitioner must make an offering of the precious blood from her own tongue without showing signs of pain or suffering. This does not cause any damage, but requires a Resolve + Composure roll to resist a display of pain (add any dots in the Iron Stamina Merit to this pool). On successful activation of the ritual, Ma Durga grants the penitent two dice to any Weaponry roll that pertains to swords, Durga's preferred weapon.

*Tapas to Brahma:* Like Shurpanakha's wicked brother, a petitioner calls out to Shiva and stands on one foot for a full turn. Upon successful activation of the ritual, the penitent is gifted with a bonus of two dice to Politics rolls, or three dice for Politics rolls involving conquest or political domination.

*Tapas to Hanuman:* The King of the Monkeys was a great friend of Lord Rama, and a master of beasts. A penitent seeking Hanuman's boon must symbolically break the neck of a hog or boar; this can be as simple as drawing a picture of the animal and tearing the paper in half. Upon successful activation of the ritual, the penitent receives a bonus of two dice to all Animal Ken rolls for a scene.

## *Gora Mukhi*

#### (Level-Two Crúac Ritual)

In the Ramakien, Shurpanakha used her demonic magic in order to transform herself into a beautiful maiden so that she might seduce Lord Rama. The Kinnaree say that the story is backwards. They claim that the lovely virgin with her long nails used blood magic to transform her child-like form into that of a potbellied, cross-eyed monster of a hag. Using this horrible visage, she terrified Lord Rama so he would be more apt to war against her brother Ravan. By smearing their lovely young skin with blood and the waste of animals, the Kinnaree becomes hideous and terrible. Modern Acolytes have found that they can perform the ritual without the excrement, but traditionalists scoff at the deviation.

Successfully enacting the ritual costs the ritualist her ability to use Socialize or Persuasion on mortals for the remainder of the night, but in exchange, she gains her level of Crúac as a bonus to Intimidation rolls. Any aggressors against the Kinnaree suffer an Initiative penalty equal to the caster's Crúac as well. The character can also, by spending an additional point of Vitae, extend her fingernails out into wicked-looking curved claws. These claws inflict 1L damage in combat, but on a dramatic failure they snap, causing a point of lethal damage to the Kinnaree.

### *Asura Yuu Thi Nay*

#### (Crúac •, Auspex ••, Kinnaree)

In their role as hunters who hide among their prey, Kinnaree use this Devotion to pinpoint a demon at the center of its network. With a taste of a mortal's blood, the Kinnaree are able to see if that mortal is under supernatural influence.

**Cost:** —

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Occult + Auspex

**Action:** Instant

With success, the player receives a simple "yes" or "no" to indicate blood addiction, Dominate, Majesty, possession, or even more exotic influences such as being ensorcelled or actively influenced by magic. With an exceptional success, the Kinnaree is able to get a small glimpse of the demon behind the influence, and enjoys a bonus of two dice to rolls relating to identification of that demon.

This Devotion costs nine experience points to learn.

# MAYARAP

Forget the words of your priests. Forget the love of your mother. Forget the feel of your sire. Even these things are an illusion. Now, stop crying and sweep up what's left of your leg.

The path to Nibbana, or Enlightenment, is paved with far more steps than meditation and denial. It is more complicated than putting on a robe and feeding less often than Kindred would like. It is largely about making merit, making right choices and leading the type of unlife a vampire's Dharma demands. No lineage of Kindred understands this better than the Mayarap, descendants of the Naga King forever bound to pay for his deeds, and indeed, the deeds of all Kindred.

**Parent Clan:** Nosferatu

**Bloodline Disciplines:** Bhumisparsa, Nightmare, Obfuscate, Resilience

**Nickname:** Coiled Snakes

**Weakness:** As with their parent clan, the Mayarap suffer from a quality of 'otherness' that is so palpable that they have great difficulty dealing with social situations (see p. 111 of **Vampire: The Requiem**).

However, unlike the Nosferatu, it is no simple nightmarish monstrosity that sets them apart. Perhaps it is the constant restraint, their detachment from desire, or payment for their predecessor's sins, but the Mayarap all come across as cold and heartless — even for one of the Kindred. While they are able to superficially empathize, they are not able to express any understanding in the feelings of others. At first blush they appear aloof, deeper interaction and they seem to be sociopaths.

Indeed, even their Beasts seem different. The Mayarap are incapable of feeling the deep anger common to Kindred; in fact, when anger frenzy is provoked the Mayarap instead enters fear frenzy with all the negative effects that follow. Suffice to say, the Mayarap cannot ride the wave of frenzy.

**History and Culture:** After Asira, the Naga King, took up robes and became the Naga Monk, he fell into a deep meditative state, only stirring to dictate thoughts from his internal study to his closest and most devoted childer. While much of Asira's Dharma was already determined by the time he converted, his childer Suna was not so

restricted and was able to hone his blood to what he considered highly spiritual ends.

Suna spent 20 years walking the woods of Thailand (then still called Sukhothai), contemplating his sire's words and the secondhand lessons he'd heard of the Mae Ji. He slept in the soil, always under fig trees, and battled with his Beast and many demons in the woods. At the end of his dangerous walking meditation, he saw a change in himself he could not fathom. Gone were the ravages of his demonic appearance and the mortals' wise fear of him. Gone too was the bubbling rage that had underlain most of his unlife. Once changed, he returned to the Wat Ning to share all that he had learned and all the growth that he had accomplished.

Asira, his sire, nodded almost sadly as he listened to what Suna had to say. It was then that Suna noticed that his sire's face was still the terrible visage it had been in his old unlife. He saw that for all his time in contemplation and skillful thought, Asira's Beast still sat close and nearly in control of his every action.

Horrified, Suna asked his sire, "I do not understand. I practiced the Eightfold Path that you have taught me. I have followed all the precepts as you perform them and I would not know meditation except that you showed it to me. Why is it then that I have changed so much and you remain the same?"

Asira thought on this at his childer's side for three nights before he spoke with a forked tongue. He answered: "I have a great debt to the world in my karma, my childer. The crimes I have committed are many and perverse over hundreds of years. It might be that one lifetime of following the right path and doing the right thing is not enough. Perhaps a thousand lifetimes would be required for me to reach Nibbana. Perhaps a thousand family members making merit in my name would be enough for me to reach Nibbana. I do not worry, though. This, too, is impermanent."



Suna marveled to see his sire content with his fate of suffering, and wondered at the paradox of peace found in affliction. He meditated on this paradox for a month before deciding that it was a koan, a problem without a logical answer. Knowing this, he meditated further, and his intuition finally answered the puzzle.

In order for the Naga Monk to continue on in his path he needed a great many others seeking Nibbana to share their merit with him. Sharing merit makes merit, and so by suffering, Asira was able to offer many others the chance to make more merit, which was itself a merit-making act.

With this flash of insight, Suna understood his Dharma and how it tied into Asira's. From that night on, Suna spent his unlife turning over rocks and seeking in gutters the lowest of the low – murderers, pimps and drug addicts, crooked politicians and actresses so vain that they believed their own lies. Suna, his childer, and his childer's childer sought the most despicable among the mortal world, the people so very lost in illusion and ego that they did not even realize they were suffering. People whose crimes were so great a hundred lives serving under the Mae Ji herself would not grant them peace.

Once found, Suna and his growing family would strip them of mortal ties, Embrace them, and set them back on the path to right thought and right deed.

Sometimes new Mayarap want neither enlightenment nor all the responsibility that comes with it. Sometimes, newcomers simply aren't cut out for the monastic unlife among the Sakadagami. Sometimes they resist, and sometimes their souls are just too dark to be able to change. At its most mild, resistance is met with the patience of the Bodhisattva. Time and kindness (a merit in itself) go a long way with most of the saddest dredges. In more extreme cases, older and more experienced members of the line are called in to inflict real and legitimate cruelty on the neonate, with acceptance of her role as the only out. (The Mayarap do not consider this a violation of free will because the neonate is still making a choice. The most important choices tend to be the hardest ones.)

At its worst, usually only a problem among converts to the line or late bloomers, those who are far too close to their final frenzy or utterly unrepentant monsters, the only solution is a tragic one. Not often, but when it is right to do so, the line will gather at a private temple deep in the woods, a Wat with no name built on the site where Suna first saw the change in himself. Once there, they take the irredeemable to a pit seven meters by seven meters by seven meters. He is asked once more if he would like to enter the stream and one night reach Nibbana. If he



once more refuses or proves false, he is dropped down into the pit, shackled and unable to escape. The pit is covered with a grating of iron locked to the floor. The Mayarap say prayers and blessings to the unfortunate and leave him to his fate.

The roof of the temple there has a hole in it just large enough to fill the pit with sunlight not long after dawn. One elder, far along in his understanding of the Treasure of Anicca, stays behind in the room for as long as he can in order to observe the unfortunate's Final Death. It is thought that at worst, the creature will reincarnate in Hell where he can fulfill his Dharma in another way.

In addition to the normal duties of all ordained, the Mayarap are expected to make as much merit as possible so that it may all be shared with their greatest ancestor, the Naga Monk. Great acts of charity, teaching Dharma, and providing blood for other Ordained is expected to such extremes that some find it impossible to satisfy the needs of others and maintain themselves and their own



contemplation and meditation. Without the rigors of meditation and training, they are more likely to slip up and fall to their Beasts. Falling to the Beast is failure, and all members of the line know exactly where failures end up.

**Reputation:** Those who choose to take refuge and join the temple find they are often held in high regard by the rest of the Sakadagami for their noble Embrace, but they are also tested the most vigorously in all aspects of their philosophy, duty and action. The stakes are higher for the Coiled Snakes and failure ends in a pit full of sunlight. Success, if such a thing is possible, ends in a pyre of flames, and so to an outsider, it may seem like a lose/lose situation. The faithful Mayarap rarely see it as such, and believe that the unfaithful rarely see anything for what it truly is.

In fact, since the Sakadagami and even the laity outside of the temples never truly see a Mayarap in a state of

gracelessness, they are largely attributed with a level of supernatural influence they simply do not have. In more rural temples, they are given saint-like status, and some few do take advantage and cultivate that reputation.

To those heathens and nonbelievers, the Acolytes, the Mayarap are often considered “the problem” as it was their ancestor’s dogma that drove them underground. Laity who have had their less-than-enlightened endeavors interrupted or stopped by these do-gooders tend to seek first to discredit them, then to destroy them. The pressures to the Mayarap are endless.

**Concepts:** Politically driven priest, sadistic teacher, hippy guru, former drug addict, farmer-cum-defender, ‘reformed’ Acolyte, doomed perfectionist, serial killer, ‘fair-minded’ blood merchant, guilt-ridden son

### *Bhumisparsa*

When the Buddha was tormented by all the demons of Evil that Mara had at his disposal, the Shinning One remained calm and in meditation. He performed the Bhumisparsa Mudra, and called the earth goddess to his aid. Because of his good life, she rose from the earth and wrung the water from her hair, which created a tide that drowned all the demons so that the Buddha was safe.

The Mayarap are not as blessed and not as good as the Great One, but they can still feel the earth’s protection through their blood. It is traditional for a Coiled Snake to point one hand at the ground or even touch it while she is under attack and seeking protection.

Bhumisparsa has an inherent limitation. During any night when the Mayarap has gained sustenance from an unwilling vessel, Bhumisparsa refuses to function.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae per scene

**Dice Pool:** Bhumisparsa is unlike many Disciplines in that it is not actively rolled. Each dot of Bhumisparsa subtracts one die from all incoming attacks directed at the character, so long as the character is aware of them. Against damage that does not stem from a direct attack (such as a car crash), the vampire enjoys the benefits of armor equal to his dots in Bhumisparsa. This Discipline does not protect against the legendary weaknesses of Kindred – fire or sunlight.

Once activated, the effects of the Discipline last for one scene.

**Action:** Reflexive

# SAKADAGAMI: CHILDREN OF THE NAGA

Not all Kindred relish the endless hunger and violence the Embrace leaves in its wake. Many seek loopholes in the undead condition, whether through divine intervention or infernal bargaining. Before the teachings of Dracula and the Ordo Dracul, no group of Kindred worked together to seek an end to their suffering from within, through thought and experience, or so Western undead culture would have it. In this belief, though, Western Kindred are wrong. Within the insular sect of Thai Kindred lays a somewhat older philosophical practice that, an aspirant would hope, is able to free them from the toils of Kindred desire. Deep in the sect's stories and practices may even be the deepest roots of the much younger Ordo Dracul.

## *Wisdom of a Dead Kingdom*

Thailand was not always free for the Kindred of the land. Before the Sakadagami, under the reign of the terrible Naga King, tyranny was the norm and a suffering of unending hell awaited any who displeased him.

In those nights, the Kindred observed a rigid caste system based on the status and standing of one's sire. Once Embraced low, there was no way to rise above your station. If Embraced high, no mistake could remove your standing and importance within society.

Then came the Naga King's conversion to Buddhism. Depending on the part of Thailand, the stories vary slightly in the details. Rarely, it is suggested that the Naga King was visited by the Buddha himself in a vision that cleared the Yaksha's eyes and relieved him of suffering. An even less common myth implies that Asira was a sort of self-enlightened devotee of Buddha, as there were no teachings that worked exactly for the Kindred condition. Most stories however, including the tales of monks who remember these times, say that true self-enlightenment came to a lowly temple servant called only the Mae Ji. It is said she came to the Naga's court in order to free a few mortal monks the King was set to eat. Showing him her ability to withstand the normal failings of the Kindred condition with grace and ease, the Naga King converted on the spot and encouraged the whole of his court to take up the mantle of this Kindred-specific Buddhist tradition.

While not all the undead of Sukhothai joined the growing monastic movement, many did. The young and disenfranchised found that the teachings of the Mae Ji and the Naga Monk liberated them from their previous shackles. So too did the lower castes find refuge in what would soon be called the Sakadagami Order. Those whose desires and interests were less philosophical and spiritual became laity and went on about their unives.

Shortly after his conversion, Asira founded the first temple to Buddha — specifically for Kindred worshippers — with an underground sanctuary for any in need of protection from the sun. He called it Wat Ning, or roughly, the Temple of Stillness. The Sukhothai dynasty at the time had a capitol of the same name, and the Naga believed a temple should be in that central city.

Of course, not all were so pleased to watch their empire crumble, nor their ancient religious practices be tossed aside in favor of this new Kindred movement. Within a hundred years of the conversion of the Naga Monk, the practitioners of the old faiths, Acolytes to the western view, waged a cold war against the Sakadagami. The blood shed over ceremonial dances and seasonal holidays grew increasingly abhorrent until the Naga Monk met in secret with the masked leader of the opposing force. They struck a deal at that time that has put the conflict to rest.

By 1782, several mortal kingdoms had come and gone. The Sakadagami remained much the same, though they had codified and formalized much of their structure. The Mae Ji was largely a memory by now and had withdrawn from Kindred existence in Thailand (then called Siam). The Naga Monk, 50 years in a torpor-like meditative state, woke to instruct the Sakadagami to transport the Wat Ning to Bangkok, the new capitol. Since then, as Thailand remained uncolonized by European empires, the Sakadagami were able to exist and practice in relative obscurity.

## *Sotapanna: Entering the Stream*

Like their mortal counterparts, the philosophers of the Sakadagami Order accept the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism... but what from there? Clearly, the practices and wisdoms of a mortal religion could not work for a stagnant, monstrous race. This is why the Mae Ji brought teachings to the Kindred of Thailand, say the Sakadagami. What follows are the lessons the monks and laity alike use in their death, in hopes of escaping their endless suffering.

Historically, the Mae Ji bent the Naga King and converted him by proving that she had freed herself of the three lower fetters and started on a path to Nibbana, or enlightenment. The first of these fetters is recognized as a false view of self. To the Order, this first step is to fully accept what you are and not to deny it. A vampire is dead, a vampire needs the blood of life to survive, a vampire is a territorial monster in an endless struggle between the need for like monsters and the need to be left alone to hunt. For the laity of Thailand, knowing this is enough and acts of respect to this truth are considered blessings or “making merit”

along the path to Nibbana. For the ordained monks and nuns, an additional step must be realized: that a vampire is not human, and while the Kindred may perform the most rudimentary charades in order to keep peace between themselves and mortals (wearing robes, speaking in Thai, following human social taboos when in public), any attempt to actually live as a human is to turn ones back completely from the path of peace.

Second, the Mae Ji demonstrated that she had freed herself of doubt. She did not question her beliefs when the Naga King used magic and trickery to disprove her understanding. To the Sakadagami, being free of doubt comes first from acknowledging the true self – the practitioner is the hungry dead – and that once she steps into the stream, Enlightenment is possible through dedication and perseverance. There is no room to question these truths, as there is walking, talking, blood-drinking evidence that the philosophy works. This is enough for the laity, but as with the first fetter, the ordained take this a step further. Doubt is a sneaking shadow even in the nights when the moon is most full and bright, and as such, the monks and nuns of the Order regularly test themselves and each other. It is not uncommon for elaborate and dramatic morality plays to be preformed on an unwitting novice to test his doubtlessness, without him realizing it is all only a test.

The third fetter the Mae Ji rid herself of is the need to cling to ritual and rites. Simply put, when a Kindred accepts her nature, and becomes doubtless of the fact that she can awaken past that state and into Nibbana, she must also accept that all of her old rituals and traditions were merely distractions from the true way to be free of suffering. For laity, seasonal and national celebrations are acceptable both because they build community and peace, and because they are such marvelous opportunities to feed. However, even laity should remember that the ritual practices within these holidays can

and do cause one to stumble along the way. The ordained are forbidden from taking part in any ceremony, outside of temple rituals, until they have proved that they have reached a certain level of understanding. This can take anywhere from a month from ordination to a hundred years, depending on the student. After that, if an ordained has proven he or she is past such road blocks, that individual is welcome to visit the festivities as is polite, but must not feed there or be heard laughing loudly.

In order to consider an ordained truly Sakadagami, two more hurdles must be overcome. Laity rarely reaches these levels of dedication because a quiet unlife of stillness and contemplation is required.

First is resistance to lust. Of course, acknowledging the truthful state of self, a Sakadagami knows that he must feed. What he must do in order to free himself of the suffering of hunger is to learn through rigorous meditation and self denial that blood brings no real satisfaction and there is no need to desire it. The Beast, of course, rails against these ideals, and as such is often the first obstacle to be overcome. Many elders of the order can feed off of animals or vessels of fresh blood just as easily as a fresh Embrace, regardless of how potent their blood might be.

Finally, the philosophy at its most advanced stage requires the practitioner to uproot hate from her thoughts, deeds and spirit. In part, this state is reached by suppression of the Beast, just as it is with freedom from lust. The true difficulty comes in resisting the very aspects of the predator that desire conquest and destruction of any other Kindred in one's way. Truth be told, it is a state that few if any are actually recognized to have reached. From there, the rare and precious Anagami is given a choice to continue on his unlife in order to teach the path, or take part in a ritual death by fire in order to reach Nibbana in dramatically appropriate fashion.

### *Sakadagam Saranam Gacchami: Taking Refuge*

*When I was some fifty years dead by my sire's reckoning, he said to me, "Son, you aren't cut out for the life of a merchant, and you barely have the teeth to make it as a hunter. I was mistaken in murdering you, and I know that now. Go to the temple and take up the robes so that I never again have to listen to you whine. Go to the temple and make merit for me since I can't. I think it's your Dharma." Maybe he was right, or maybe he was simply trying to rid himself of me. Either way, I had no choice in the matter. In the secular order of the Dead in Thailand, one is nothing without his sire. I would have more likely met the sunrise than to try to make it on my own.*

*So I went to the Wat Ming in Bangkok in order to beg to be taken in, what they call "taking refuge." After three protected nights of questions to test how serious I was, they accepted me and prepared me for Ordination. By the third night I was sure that I wanted to spend the entirety of my unlife in that temple. The monks and nuns were so peaceful and content. I barely felt the presence of any Beasts as I walked the underground halls of the Temple sanctuary in quiet conversation with the Abbot. He and others who were skilled teachers prepared me for monastic life. They wanted no surprises for me once I had taken my robes.*

*When the time was right - it had something to do with where the stars were in the sky - I was taken to the river and washed. Mortals and laity gathered around and shouted blessings at me. In return it was expected that some of the merit I gained in joining the temple would extend to them. After that I had my head and eyebrows shaved, then, looking more like a monk now, I was rubbed down with a paste made of turmeric and the blood of my elders. Dressed in red, I was prepared to enter the temple and become a novice.*

The exact traditions surrounding a seeker coming into the Ordained varies from temple to temple. Nearly universal and strangely significant is to shave the seeker's head. Due to the unique characteristics of the Embrace, however, this is the first small test of her dedication, as it requires

the Kindred to devote a small part of herself to keeping her hair shaved. That is, she must sacrifice a Willpower dot in order to prevent her hair from returning to its state at the time of Embrace (as described on p. 175 of *Vampire: The Requiem*).

*Much of the ceremony that followed was strange and confusing. I do not speak Pali, only Thai, and so I'm not sure what was being said. I was asked a series of questions before I was given my black robes to symbolize that stillness is the ultimate goal.*

The questions asked are to further assure that the seeker is of stable enough mind to join the temple. While the abbot asks the questions, a monk with great skill with Auspex observes and testifies to the seeker's honesty. In theory, this is to assure that only the willing and devoted can enter, but it is possible to manipulate this system somewhat, and rumors that some monks can be bought off persist. One of the most important questions is "are you human." In mortal traditions, this question is also asked and the expected answer is of course "yes." In the Sakadagami, the expected answer is "no" as part of the understanding of self. Announcing "no" in public to such a question can be a very dramatic moment for young Kindred.

Mastery of that Coil would be described as having a "mind like a diamond." Thus, a Master of Banes would instead be called "Anicca with a diamond mind," while someone with the first levels of Blood and Beast but nothing else might be described as "having a mind like an open sore, suffering under the beast and a blood thirst." This may seem long and cumbersome, but the titles are reverential and used in many meditations.

### *The Cessation of Suffering: Coils in the Sakadagami*

Most Kindred in Thailand do not doubt the veracity in the Sakadagami claim that they have found a way out and past the trials of the Requiem. Most have seen, in one form or another, the Ordained of their society resist even the most powerful traps and temptations the Kindred condition knows. But how? It is possible that the Sakadagami of Thailand are the ancient roots of the Ordo Dracul, so ancient that they now do not know one another. A Storyteller can reflect the Sakadagami's path of denial and conquest of defilement with use of the Coils of the Dragon (see p. 149 of *Vampire: The Requiem*). The Order refers to these gifts as the Three Treasures of the Mae Ji. Simply change the names as suggested below:

- Coil (Ordo)    Treasure (Sakadagami)
- Blood Tahna (Blood Thirst)
- Banes Anicca (Setting Back Impermanence)
- Beast Dukkha (Suffering the Beast)

The Sakadagami refer to their Treasures differently than the Ordo does its Coils. To say that a vampire has a first tier of a Coil, he would be described as having a "mind like an open sore." To say he had mastered a second tier of a Coil, it would be said he had a "mind like a flash of lightning."

Of course, the similarities between the Treasures and the Coils begin and end with how they function. The Sakadagami recognize neither maddening research nor pseudoscience behind the Kindred condition. Researching Wyrms' Nests would sound as absurd to a member of the ordained as it might to a human hearing it for the first time. To the Sakadagami, there is no mystery in the Kindred state. It is merely a physical expression of the metaphorical descriptions of suffering in Buddhist teaching. It is not that freedom from these weaknesses are unobtainable by the uneducated, but that most Kindred are simply too weak to let go of their attachments.

Of course, collecting the Treasures is hardly a matter of listening to some stories and agreeing to let go. A devoted member of the order must test herself against temptation and desire constantly. Desire is a very personal thing, of course, and attachments cling to a Kindred in many different ways. While one young Venture might play at games of domination and intrigue only to force himself to lose and be free of the longing to win, an elder lustful Daeva might fill his cell with plump blushing maidens in order to bring his weakness to the fore.

Not all ordained understand their attachments, though, and many are too weak to admit them to themselves. Sometimes the eldest of a temple assist. Kindness and mercy are important to mortals, of course, but in the path to peace, many of the eldest monks have let go of such human concepts. To an outside observer, the ritual abuse and torture of young Kindred within the order might seem gratuitous, but rarely does the Temple see it that way.

The truth is, though, Treasures may free a Kindred of some of her weaknesses, but they do not make her human, and some of the most centered and meditative Ordained are little more than introverted monsters who simply do not realize they are capable of selfish evil.

### *Upadama "Loose the Bonds of Attachment"*

The Sakadagami see great strife and suffering grow from the attachments of the blood. Through centuries of trial and error, in an attempt to remove these terrifying bonds of the blood, some few Ordained have mastered the Treasure listed below.

**Mind Like an Open Sore:** The Sakadagami is able to affect the blood addiction she causes, and her own vulnerability to it. By spending one Willpower point for an evening, the Sakadagami's Vitae causes no blood addiction,

and if she feeds from other Kindred, the roll to resist doing so again (see p. 158 of *Vampire: The Requiem*) receives a +2 modifier.

**Mind Like a Flash of Lightning:** A monk has not mastered the addictive qualities in his blood, but is able to minimize the damage that the Vinculum can do. Kindred blood only causes Vinculi that last one month per step, and the Sakadagami loses one step of the bond per month, unlike normal Kindred.

**Mind Like a Diamond:** Now, with almost complete understanding of the ties of blood, the Ordained can reduce the threat of blood borne attachment, even from those closest to him. The character's blood cannot be identified as belonging to any clan, should someone attempt to do so using the Taste of Family (p. 163 of *Vampire: The Requiem*) or more rarified methods like Blut Alchemie (p. 83).

*The feeding restrictions were the hardest part, without a doubt. Some elder monks were so very violent when we would weaken and fall to our hunger and rage. Twice I was beaten into torpor for baring fangs at a mortal I was begging from late in the night. Begging was, at first, very humiliating, and it was many years before I found it humbling instead. Once a week, sometimes less frequently, I would be taken out of the temple with an elder monk and would walk through the streets of Bangkok with my eyes on the ground. When mortals would stop to speak to us, we would ask if they would like for us to teach them about Dharma in exchange for a few moments of their life. If they agreed, we would see them into an ally and were allowed to feed a very little bit before offering same teachings and starting out again. We were allowed to feed only so much as to stave off hunger for another week. Regularly, the laity would come to the temple bringing vessels of blood in order to receive blessings and to make merit. Though the blood tastes stagnant and barely satisfies me, I have grown to prefer it as it is less distracting and more practical. One of the eldest and most venerable monks, other than our abbot, sometimes can lend his blood to those who are very weak from having forgotten to feed or from pushing themselves too far.*

Early in their training, most of a novice's concerns revolve around staying fed and staving off frenzy. Unlife is very harsh and Final Death is not uncommon at this point. If the vampire

survives, the Sakadagami's meditation practices and training around the Three Treasures of the Mae Ji will eventually develop and curb some of the struggle. Of course, that's the point.

*Now that I have more peace about me, I am able to really appreciate the fortune I have here at the Wat Nung. Once, a monk from a far off forest temple came to visit with us. He said that his feeding restrictions were far stricter and that they were allowed no attachments, so that no monks or nuns had names and none were allowed to speak to one another except to repeat scriptures. That visitor suggested their training was superior and their monk was far more enlightened than ours. I don't think so; Pha Thet is a good man and very patient with everyone. He keeps to the traditions of the Sukhothai Kings of old. There is a bell that anyone can ring, from the lowest mortal to the most powerful Kindred, and the abbot will see to them, personally helping them with problems if he can or giving advice if he can't. I have heard rumors that people think he might reach Anagami any night now. Some wonder if he will take the path of the Bodhivistta or end his existence. I hope he stays to teach.*

Though the rewards are great, many lay Kindred have to wonder who would suffer the hardships of monastic unlife for the ultimate goal of being burned. So who would take up the robes and seek refuge? In the times of the founding of the Sakadagami Order many came to the temples as unwanted childer, incompetent hunters, humanists who couldn't cope with their new existence or monsters dangerously close to losing themselves to the Beast. In the

past few hundred years, very little has changed. Sires in Thailand just like anywhere else still Embrace on impulse, and regret their choices later. There are still incompetents and pacifists, and still serial killers turned undead. Beyond that, some Kindred go to the order to continue their practices from life, some to bring merit to their families. Occasionally, a Kindred takes on the robes for social or political gain. It is a hard road to power, and one that



## THE MAE JI

In mortal Thailand women are still unable to become nuns. This gender bias does not exist among the dead. However, for the sake of tradition, many Sakadagami Temples still have the ceremonial role of a Mae Ji in deference to the first. She is revered and respected for taking on a nearly sacrificial mantle. The Mae Ji in any given temple is expected to clean and perform manual duties for the monks. She is treated as little more than a servant and is not allowed instruction in meditation or the Three Treasures. What's more, she is expected to train and learn to meditate on her own, as the original Mae Ji did. Given time, it is rumored that some actually do achieve the same inner strength as their forerunner, and when they do they leave as unliving saints and pilgrims who travel the world spreading the wisdom they have garnered.



may ultimately collapse on itself, but one the arrogant or confident monster might follow.

For the mortals in Thailand, it is not uncommon for a young man to become ordained for a short period of time, living at a temple before taking off the robes and returning to the secular life. At one time any able boy would do so at the age of 20 and could not marry before he had spent his time as a monk. For the Kindred of the Sakadagami, taking off the robes is a much more serious and difficult matter. Re-joining the laity can be a painful experience because without the strict temple structure, many do not survive long – their Beasts run loose. Some, usually due to outside influence (such as political pressure) leave the temple and retain many of the techniques without the ethical obligations.

### *Enlightenment Outside of the Free Land*

It is easy to assume that the Sakadagami have remained in their insular kingdom untouched by outside Kindred and never leave that place to interact with the rest of the world. Nothing could be further from the truth. Since travel for Kindred has gotten slightly less perilous, and immigration for mortals is such a regular occurrence, some small number of the Ordained and the laity have left the place of their training for new fertile ground. Indeed, pilgrimage for certain members of a temple is a long standing tradition (see the Mae Ji above).

So why, then, have western Kindred not interacted with members of this order? Some have, but they may simply not have realized there was anything worth noting about the foreign Kindred. On occasion, immigrant communities can be even more insular than their original nation may have been. In resistance to the culture shock, it is not surprising

that a people would fight change initially, and Kindred are typically even less able to change and adapt. It is unlikely that, on meeting a western Kindred, a Sakadagami would announce what he was, spill all his secrets and invite the stranger to start training with him. More likely, he gives a polite greeting, speaks softly and observes until he is able to return to his work and studies without being rude.

But things change, whether Kindred wish it or not, and with new Embraces in a cross-cultural era inevitable, more western Kindred are having deeper brushes with Thai Kindred and their paths to peace. Some ideas:

- A Mae Ji, having left her temple a hundred years ago, exists in quiet contemplation among the Thai population of Los Angeles. She has spent the last 20 years observing the western Kindred and has finally decided to step into their Requiem and offer them a better path. Of course, that means that the more worldly Kindred of the Carthian Movement might immediately seize on her as a symbol of revolution.
- An old Acolyte from Thailand, surviving off her Thai cult in Philadelphia, hears a young Carthian spouting ideals similar to the Children of the Naga. Amused, she persuades the neonate (and his coterie) to go to Thailand and look for the truth behind his philosophies.
- In Providence, Rhode Island, an Ordo Dracul coterie and a Sakadagami temple have accidentally uncovered one another. At first their similar goals opens the door to discourse between the two on technique and philosophy. However, when the Ordo discovers the Sakadagami aren't scientists, and the Sakadagami discover the Ordo are not philosophers, but both are somewhat successful, a war of ideologies might not be far behind and bloodshed seems likely.



## WHAT ABOUT OUTSIDERS AND THE UNENLIGHTENED?

Of course, besides the secret worshipers of Vedic and Brahman demons, Thailand has Lancea Sanctum dwelling and worshiping in and among its small Muslim and even smaller Christian populations. The widening world has room in it for atheists, foreigners, and any number of different faiths in large cites like Bangkok. Officially, most temples follow the lead of Wat Ning and accept all kinds in their open social discussions with political decisions made by a loose sort of democracy. Of course, official doctrine and reality are rarely one and the same and not all Ordained or laity are open and welcoming to Kindred not on the "right path."



# BLOODLINES OF THE CRUSADES (CE 1095-1300)

The fall of the Camarilla plunged the Kindred of Europe into a dark age. The widest ranging Kindred culture that has ever existed splintered into hundreds of discreet societies with a multitude of philosophies that would, through the combined efforts of the Invictus and Lancea Sanctum, eventually vanish from the night. The Invictus Empire, a group of German princes hoping to place all of Europe under their dominion, served as the first of these efforts, flagging only as it crashed into the remnants of the Camarilla in Constantinople. Though inner conflict tore the Empire apart, the conglomerate of domains managed to spread an orthodox Kindred society across Europe, absorbing or destroying competing systems and philosophies.

Yet few things are more difficult to destroy than an idea. Where a covenant may fall in the face of its enemies, a bloodline can uphold an obscure faith or way of unlife. While the Lancea Sanctum purged the Gnostic heresies within its ranks, the Mystikoi survived to uphold their bizarre dualistic philosophy. Though the knightly orders of the past became the social clubs of the modern Invictus, to this very night the Order of Sir Martin maintains the ideals it cleaved to in the 12th century.

## MYSTIKOI

The things you do not know could fill this world. Indeed, they do, and many more besides.

A heresy may outlive the attempts to stomp it out, if it is given a fertile and insular home in which to flourish. The Mystikoi, a dualist heresy born in the early years of the Lancea Sanctum, survives to this night in the shadows of the Ordo Dracul. The Dragons encourage their studies, pressing them forward in their own search for spiritual transcendence.

For the Mystikoi, however, transcendence means far more than freedom from the shackles of the Kindred curse. The Mystikoi seek nothing less than the reunification of all life with the godhead. Only through a return to the divine source can the evil world be scourged from existence and all souls, human and Kindred alike, raised from inequity and polished to reflect the glorious light of heavenly perfection.

Such an ascension can only be gained through a perfect understanding and reconnection with the divine source, the original Unity, which can only be approached through an increase in Gnosis, or understanding of creation. While the night of ascension remains far off,

the Mystikoi devote themselves to understanding the universe, both in its base physical and higher spiritual aspects, and reshaping their own forms in what they believe to be God's image. Unfortunately, their primary guide in this endeavor is their Beast.

**Parent Clan:** Gangrel

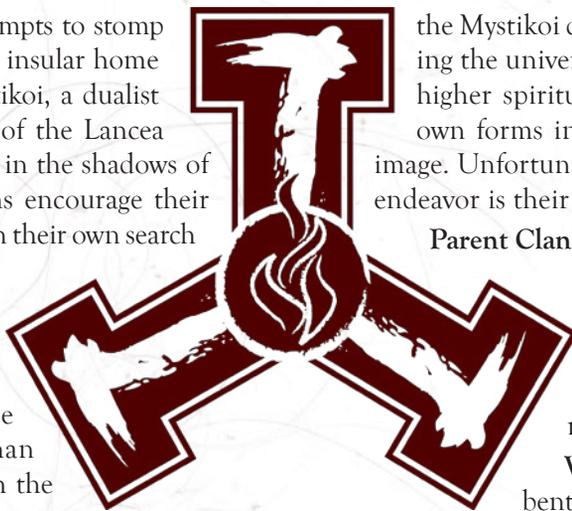
**Bloodline Disciplines:** Animalism, Protean, Resilience, Spiritus Sancti

**Nickname:** Illuminated, Bureaucrats (Archaic)

**Weakness:** Despite their scholarly bent, members of the Mystikoi bloodline suffer from the Gangrel clan flaw

(see p. 107 of **Vampire: The Requiem**).

Additionally, the Mystikoi possess a connection (and some would say a subservience) to their Beast that few among even the Gangrel know. A Mystikos may never spend Willpower to add dice to a roll to resist frenzy (though she may do so to ride the wave). The Mystikos may not spend a Willpower point to resist a Discipline or other supernatural power that would force her into



frenzy. The Coil of the Beast, too (p. 149 of **Vampire: The Requiem**), works slightly differently for the Illuminated. The first tier, Chastise the Beast, requires that the player spend the Willpower point to avoid frenzy before rolling dice, rather than allowing the option of spending after a failed roll. The second tier, Lure the Beast, does *not* waive the Willpower point requirement to ride the wave. The third tier, Exhaust the Beast, is unchanged.

**History and Culture:** Byzantine Emperor John I Tzimiskes, in power during Armenia's decision to grant legal religious freedom to the dualist Paulician sect, encouraged an influx of members of the sect into Byzantine lands. With the sect came a small group of Armenian Kindred nomads devoted to the Lancea Sanctum, but possessed of a heresy similar to that of the Paulicians. These Kindred, almost exclusively of Clan Gangrel, had long eked out a furtive existence on the very edges of the Longinian world. Now in Christendom's greatest metropolis, the sect came to the attention of the Sanctified authority who worked to absorb the nomads into their orthodoxy. With the exception of a pair of elder Savages, the Sanctified met with success.

The two Gangrel, however, found that their relatively easy new existence within the Tagma ton Xenon (the primary military group of the Byzantine Kindred) granted them a reprieve from the base struggle for survival, and they turned their attention ever more deeply to their spiritual explorations. Over time they sired a small brood, which devoted itself to furthering the philosophy of the line, and the group garnered a reputation for studious understanding and spiritual sensitivity that rivaled the Mekhet. The Priscus of Gangrel petitioned the Imperator to elevate the group to the rank of Theme. He did so, naming them Mystikoi and granting them exclusive feeding rights over a monastic order within the city so long as they kept safe the many detailed records of the Athanatoi. This action birthed a thousand-year feud with the Agonistes line (which had, until then, been the primary record-keepers and historians of Constantinople).

At the same time, the eldest Illuminated began slipping into seclusion, often wearing heavy robes to obscure the strange malformations taking root in their physical forms. Only among other members of the line did the Mystikoi leave their physical changes exposed, and within the fellowship the bizarre markings came to signify advanced spiritual understanding. The line withdrew from the Tagma ton Xenon and petitioned for membership in the Lancea Sanctum. They were rejected and took shelter instead under the aegis of the Athanatoi.

The destruction of Constantinople saw the scattering of the Mystikoi. Most traveled north into the Carpathians

or east into Russia. There they became wondering priests, a role they were particularly suited to, bridging the gap between animist native Kindred and the monotheistic religious tradition that the pagans found so difficult to understand. In time, the Illuminated drew the attention of a Transylvanian vampire called Vlad Dracula, and the lineage became one of the early cornerstones of the Ordo Dracul, lending the covenant many of its ideals.

### *The Hidden Church*

The bloodline takes care to choose its childer from among the faithful and studious. The lineage respects scholarship and quiet meditation, tasks often at odds with the vociferous Beast of Clan Gangrel. As a result, members must be intelligent and willful enough to overcome the instinctual need to exist forever in the moment. Sires largely reject ceremonial trappings during the Embrace and entrance into the bloodline. They usually encourage childer to continue the research they pursued as mortals, but to add to it studies of faith and philosophy.

The Illuminated maintain a strange, uncomfortable relationship with their inner Beast. Mystikoi philosophy posits three levels of being: the physical, the intellectual and the spiritual, each a more pure pursuit than the last. Traditional Mystikoi faith upholds the Beast as the syzygos, the Divine Self, a spiritual guide towards transcendence. The Beast is that which is eternal within the Kindred, and thus more akin to the divine source than not. While the Sanctified pursue oneness with the archons, the Darkness's jailors over his creation, the Illuminated step up the rung, setting their sights on the higher Unity. Through the secrets of Spiritus Sancti, the lineage communes with the hidden world. Most consider the spirits they encounter through the power to be higher beings, the spiritual counterparts to physical creation, and emulate them in order to become more like them. (The vicious behavior among spirits observed by elders of the line serves as part of the reason that so many consider their Beast a divine guide.)

In modern nights a schism has formed within the bloodline. Some members claim that the Beast, as a creation of the Darkness, serves primarily as a cruel warden over the jail of the adherent's physical form. Furthermore, the spirits the Mystikoi venerate exist primarily as a reflection of the physical world. No understanding of the divine can be garnered from meditation on such base entities. These Kindred instead work to reject and chain the Beast, pursuing perfection primarily through the Coils of the Dragon and utilizing Spiritus Sancti as a tool of study.

Like many older bloodlines, the Mystikoi have almost nothing in the way of an overarching organization. Their

rejection of ritual as frivolous pomp results in a culture based primarily in the members' understanding of how one goes about scholarship and study, an understanding that changes over the centuries. Teachers have a position of particular reverence within the line, however, and those who serve as Avus to bloodline applicants earn a great deal of respect.

**Reputation:** The Mystikoi, though historically important, remain a small and insular bloodline in the modern nights. They tend to operate in separate enclaves, sharing their discoveries with one another and the Ordo Dracul. They rarely burden unbelievers with their theories and almost never proselytize. As a result, few Kindred have a strong opinion of them. They go largely unnoticed by both the Invictus and the Carthians, who simply don't share their esoteric interests. The Circle of the Crone feels that the line likely began among their number but has become woefully misguided over the centuries. The Sanctified still consider them heretical, but hardly any more so than the Dragons who they associate with.

Members of the Ordo Dracul tend to hold the lineage in some esteem. The Illuminated not only focus their existence on the study of philosophy and esoterica (primary concerns of the Order as a whole), they were also the first lineage outside of Dracula's to pledge itself wholesale to the Dragons in the early nights of the covenant's history. To this night, the vast majority of the Mystikoi hold membership among the Dragons, while a rare few join the other major covenants. For their part, the Mystikoi work well with members of other lines and covenants, as they are often eager to learn more of the world around them in all of its endless variations and more than happy to explore the philosophies of other vampires, at least for a while.

**Concepts:** Antiquities dealer, bizarre banker, Catholic priest-turned-Longinian heretic, drug-addicted student, esoteric scholar, New Age guru, science fiction writer, sorority sister, street corner preacher, weird scientist

### *Spiritus Sancti*

The Illuminated believe that the original being, the divine Unity in its perfection, must emanate lesser selves into the universe. Like a fire, the heat of the divine grows weaker the further it gets from the source. In short, the dark imperfections of the world, including vampires, exist in the shadows cast at the edge of the Unity's own light.

The Mystikoi also accept the Holy Trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each is an aspect of the Unity that has been emanated into the world. The Father is the Logos, the most perfect emanation of the Unity that can exist until all is reintegrated into a perfect singularity. The





Son (in short, Christ) is the divine guide sent by the Father into the world of the living to show humanity the way to return to the Unity. The Holy Spirit (the spiritual realms) is the animating breath that envelops the world like a net, saving it from a fall into complete material squalor. Through the secrets of Spiritus Sancti, the Mystikoi peel back the layers of the world like an onion, delving into the darkness within and finding an enlightened communion with their own Beast.

• *Embracing the Invisible Other*

The Illuminated opens her mind to the whispers of her higher self, the syzygos, and heeds its teachings. She learns to give the Beast its due, and the two work in tangent to overcome the obstacles of the material realm.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** No roll required.

**Action:** Reflexive

The player may choose to spend one Vitae at any time to activate this ability. Doing so allows the character to ride the wave of frenzy (p. 181, **Vampire: The Requiem**), even if she would normally be unable to do so (such as if she were in an involuntary Frenzy or in the process of being programmed through the Discipline of Dominate). Additionally, it grants the character a bonus to each roll to ride the wave equal to her dots in Spiritus Sancti.

All other rules regarding riding the wave (including the Willpower cost, the fact that it is an extended action, and the number of requisite successes) remain the same. A character using this power can also benefit from Lure the Beast (p. 150, **Vampire: The Requiem**).

•• *Eyes of the Inner Archon*

The Illuminated closes her eyes, opening her soul to the wisdom of the Beast. When she opens her eyes again, they have filled with the rage of the Beast, transforming into a pair of slits, not unlike a great cat, that reflect red when they catch the light. While in this frenzy, she casts down the lies of the demiurge in order to perceive the purer spiritual truth of the world.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae and 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** Resolve + Composure + Spiritus Sancti

**Action:** Extended. Each roll represents one turn of concentration. Five successes are required. If the character possesses Lure the Beast, activating this power requires only three successes (due to the Mistikoi's bloodline weakness, it still costs a Willpower point).

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** The character fails utterly, accidentally loosing the Beast upon herself. She immediately enters

an uncontrolled frenzy. She may not use Embracing the Invisible Other to resist or exit it.

**Failure:** The character enters an uncontrolled frenzy.

**Success:** The character makes progress towards her goal. Upon accumulating the required successes, the character rides the wave of Frenzy, gaining all of the benefits and drawbacks thereof. However, she can also perceive all local entities in Twilight for the remainder of the scene. The power confers no ability to see through walls; any opaque structures block the character's sight of the spiritual. (Thus a ghost could, were it to think of it, hide behind a desk and avoid detection.)

**Exceptional Success:** The character's Beast sharpens even her mundane senses considerably, granting her a +2 to all Perception rolls.

#### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	The character is in the vicinity of a powerful Wyrms' Nest.
+1	The character is in the vicinity of a weak Wyrms' Nest.
-1	The character is hungry.
-2	The character is starving.
-2	The character is in a dense urban environment.
-3	The character is in a sterile environment (such as a laboratory).

#### ••• *In the Presence of the Holy Spirit*

Through the animalistic urges of the Beast, the character gains an understanding of the spiritual world. While using this power, the character can communicate with entities in Twilight, regardless of what language they speak, but loses the ability to converse with the denizens of the material realm. Instead she barks and growls at apparently empty air, hanging at the very edge of frenzy.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae and 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** Resolve + Expression + Spiritus Sancti

**Action:** Extended. Each roll represents one turn of concentration. Five successes are required. If the character possesses Lure the Beast, activating this power requires only three successes (due to the Mistikoi's bloodline weakness, it still costs a Willpower point).

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The character fails utterly, accidentally loosing the Beast upon herself. She immediately enters an uncontrolled frenzy. She may not use Embracing the Invisible Other to resist or exit it.

**Failure:** The character enters an uncontrolled Frenzy.

**Success:** The character makes progress towards her goal.

Upon accumulating the required successes, the character enters a form of half-frenzy in which she can communicate through speech with local entities in Twilight for the remainder of the scene. She loses the ability to converse with those present physically, however. She rides the razor's edge of frenzy and must make a reflexive Resolve + Composure roll for each minute of conversation she engages in. If she fails, the power ends and she enters an immediate uncontrolled frenzy. Otherwise, the player may end the power voluntarily, choosing whether the character rides the wave or abandons frenzy entirely.

**Exceptional Success:** As above, save the character and her Beast act as one. She need not roll to resist frenzy during the course of the power.

#### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	The character is in the vicinity of a powerful Wyrms' Nest.
+1	The character is in the vicinity of a weak Wyrms' Nest.
-1	The character is hungry.
-2	The character is starving.
-2	The character is in a dense urban environment.
-3	The character is in a sterile environment (such as a laboratory).

#### •••• *Communion with the Higher Realms*

The Illuminated learns to let go of her Beast, allowing it to roam free and join the sacred breath of the Holy Spirit. As her Beast communes with the divine, she falls into a deep sleep reminiscent of torpor from which she cannot be awakened. When she opens her eyes again, she has gleaned information from the cosmos and garnered truth from the Holy Spirit.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae and 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** Resolve + Occult + Spiritus Sancti

**Action:** Instant. Lure the Beast does not affect the use or cost of this power in any way.

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The character fails utterly, accidentally loosing the Beast upon herself. She immediately enters an uncontrolled frenzy. She may not utilize Embracing the Invisible Other, Leashing the Beast or Chastise the Beast to resist or exit it.

**Failure:** The character enters an uncontrolled frenzy.

**Success:** The character enters a death-like trance and casts her Beast into the void. She remains in the trance for an hour minus five minutes per success rolled.

**Exceptional Success:** Additional successes are their own reward.

The character must specify a particular question or concern she wishes information on before activating the power. If successful, the character awakes with memories of a surreal vision that offers insight into the question. These can be prophetic, but more typically offer abstract clues to help the character resolve the situation at hand. The Storyteller may be as obtuse with this information as she wishes, but is encouraged to make it useful.

Mechanically, the character gains a +2 to all rolls to investigate the dream imagery (including rolls to investigate the subject of the vision). Furthermore, she acquires a +3 bonus to apply to a single roll that works towards resolving the situation (as she comes to understand some of the imagery in a sudden flashing moment of insight). The character may benefit from only one vision at any given time. Using this power a second time removes all mechanical benefits garnered from the first use.

#### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	The character meditates successfully prior to the ritual, garnering four or more successes (see p. 51 of the <b>World of Darkness Rulebook</b> ).
+2	The character is in the vicinity of a powerful Wurm's Nest.
+1	The character is in the vicinity of a weak Wurm's Nest.
-1	The character is hungry.
-2	The character is starving.
-1 to -3	The character is in a distracting environment, ranging from loud, distant noises (-1) to immediate flashing lights or pounding music (-3). Penalties for each distraction are cumulative.

#### ••••• *Accepting the Mantle of the Divine*

Elder Illuminated profess not only to an understanding of the nature of reality above that of any other Kindred, but also defend that knowledge with powers beyond the pale of the average vampire's experience. Such savants become changed by their encounters with the divine, their forms shifting and gaining features that are at turns angelic and demonic.

Through this power the Mystikos allows her Beast to rise to the surface of her flesh, blending her body and spirit into a single terrible whole. She gains subtle inhuman features, often based in part on the Disciplines she

knows. A character's skin may seem to thicken into a gray or hairless hide or chitinous shell (Resilience), become translucent, or develop chameleon scales (Obfuscate). More exotic Disciplines result in stranger changes: she may develop animalistic features such as tufted ears or elongated fingers tipped with sharp claws (Protean) or gain unusual or unpleasant mutations that seem utterly alien to this world (Spiritus Sancti). Such changes risk the Masquerade, so Mystikoi under the influence of this power take pains to hide their deformities.

Worse yet, the character's Beast becomes infused in her flesh, making it impossible for the character to utilize the other powers of Spiritus Sancti. The advantages, however, are considerable, and a character who has accepted the Mantle of the Divine becomes a terrible foe to her enemies.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae and 2 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** Resolve + Composure + Spiritus Sancti

**Action:** Extended. Each roll represents thirty minutes of prayer. Six successes are required. If the character possesses Lure the Beast, activating this power requires only four successes.

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The character fails utterly, accidentally loosing the Beast upon herself. She immediately enters an uncontrolled frenzy and remains in it for the rest of the scene. She may not utilize Embracing the Invisible Other, Leashing the Beast or Chastise the Beast to resist or exit it.

**Failure:** The character enters an uncontrolled Frenzy.

**Success:** The character makes progress towards her goal. Upon accumulating the necessary number of successes, the character garners an Investment (see below). This Investment remains part of the character's person for one night per success on the activation roll. The power may not be ended early.

**Exceptional Success:** As above, save the power can be ended early at the character's whim.

While the character is under the affects of this power, she exists in a state of frenzy available only to masters of Spiritus Sancti. She may not ride the wave while benefiting from this power (meaning that she cannot utilize the first three powers of Spiritus Sancti) nor can she separate herself from her Beast (and thus cannot use Communion with the Higher Realms). She is not, however, immune to frenzy (quite the opposite, in fact). She cannot utilize Chastise the Beast nor Leashing the Beast to resist frenzy (though she can use the latter to inspire it in herself or others), nor does she gain the usual bonuses from frenzy when she enters that state.

Instead, the following applies to the character, whether or not she is in Frenzy:

- The character gains a +3 bonus to all Animalism rolls.
- The character gains the Unseen Sense Merit for all supernatural entities who can enter maddened rages (vampires and werewolves, for example) as well as for entities who exist primarily in Twilight (such as spirits and ghosts). By spending one Vitae, the character can perceive Twilight entities for twenty-one seconds (seven turns).
- The character gains an Investment (see sidebar). A character may only have a single Investment at any given time.

Modifier	Situation
+2	The character meditates successfully prior to the ritual, garnering four or more successes (see p. 51 of the <b>World of Darkness Rulebook</b> ).
+2	The character is in the vicinity of a powerful Wyrms' Nest.
+1	The character is in the vicinity of a weak Wyrms' Nest.
-1 to -3	The character is in a distracting environment, ranging from loud, distant noises (-1) to immediate flashing lights or pounding music (-3). Penalties for each distraction are cumulative.

### INVESTMENTS

A character utilizing Accepting the Mantle of the Divine garners one of the following abilities. These powers include a physical manifestation of the improved or additional ability, from bulging muscles to razor-sharp fangs.

**Focused Will:** The character gains the 9 again rule when spending Willpower for extra dice. When using Willpower to avoid being hit or otherwise resist a power, she enjoys a +4 rather than a +2 modifier.

**Furious Strength:** The character gains a bonus die to all physical dice pools. Furthermore, she benefits from the 9 again rule on such rolls. Finally, her attacks cause Knockdown (p. 168, **World of Darkness Rulebook**).

**Incredible Hide:** The character gains an Armor rating of 1 (this stacks with other forms of Armor and is not reduced by Armor piercing weapons) and ignores wound penalties.

**Mandate of the Archons:** The character may utilize the Dominate power Mesmerize (whether or not she has it) on spirits and ghosts. The Illuminated adds her rating in Spiritus Sancti rather than Dominate, and the Twilight entity resists with Power + Resistance. The character need not establish eye contact, but both the target and the Illuminated must be able to perceive one another. The power otherwise functions as normal (see p. 125 of **Vampire: The Requiem** for details), but the character may not use this Investment to control the actions of entities other than spirits or ghosts.

**Predator's Awareness:** The character gains a +1 to all Perception rolls. Furthermore, she benefits from the 9 again rule on such rolls. Finally, she benefits from the Danger Sense Merit.

**Primal Appearance:** The character gains the Striking Looks Merit at four dots for the duration of the Investment.

**Resolute Heart:** All attempts to influence the character's mind, by Dominate, Majesty or other means, suffer a -3 penalty. Rolls for the character to resist or throw off mental influence receive a +3 dice bonus.

**Vicious Bite:** The character's fangs elongate and sharpen, but can never be retracted while she benefits from this Investment. She need not grapple before making a bite attack and her fangs inflict aggravated damage.



# ORDER OF SIR MARTIN

The disease I got only goes to the bones. Yours goes soul deep.

The First Estate's acceptance of the bloodline and knightly order known as the Order of Sir Martin comes as something of a surprise to most Kindred. Often described with epithets ranging from "unpleasant" to "scurrilous" or worse, the Knights of Sir Martin seem at first glance antithetical to the First Estate. They claim to uphold the law, never openly defying it and always adopting a stance of submission towards the authority of the Invictus, yet they seem constantly plagued by accusations of secretly flaunting the edicts of the domain and spreading disease among the masses.

In truth, the Order of Sir Martin acts as a sort of secret police for the Invictus, willing to act in ways and investigate in places that the more proper members of the covenant could never sanction. The eclectic membership of the order opens it to Kindred who would never otherwise find a niche within the First Estate, while the covert operations it engages in on behalf of the Invictus allows its members to channel their most destructive impulses into productive avenues. The Invictus appreciates the Leper Knight's unique talents and have kept them close to their breast for almost a thousand years.

**Parent Clan:** Nosferatu; rumors persist, however, that the Order of Sir Martin can spread their foul disease to members of other clans, drawing them into the bloodline against their will.

**Bloodline Disciplines:** Nightmare, Obfuscate, Resilience, Vigor

**Nickname:** Leper Knights (or more derogatorily, simply Lepers)

**Weakness:** Members of the Order of Sir Martin suffer from the Nosferatu clan weakness (see p. 111 of **Vampire: The Requiem**).

Additionally, they are wracked with a foul disease that upsets their humors. Whenever a Leper Knight feeds, her player rolls Resolve + Stamina. On a failure, she vomits up an amount of Vitae equal to her Blood Potency or the amount of blood she consumed, whichever is less. This applies whether the feeding occurs in the course of play or falls to an abstract roll (see **Vampire: The Requiem**, page 164).



The regurgitated liquid remains human blood and carries no risk of Vitae addiction or Vinculum (though few vampires would risk exposing themselves to the Lepers' taint, even for the heady rush of Kindred Vitae). It may be possible to consume the Vitae again, depending on the circumstances, though unless special care is taken, most of the Vitae will be lost (assume that in most situations one quarter of the Vitae vomited can be reclaimed). Licking vomited Vitae from the ground is not only disgusting, but also requires the Leper to roll again to avoid vomiting.

While the majority of the members of this line don't have horrific physical deformities (at least not in the modern nights), such malformations remain common enough to be considered part of many Kindred's stereotype of the bloodline. For their part, deformed Leper Knights wear their blemishes as badges.

**History and Culture:** The Most Noble Order of the Fallen King, more commonly known as the Order of Sir Martin, originated in the late 11th century, just as the Crusades first fell upon the Holy Land. Bloodline legend accredits the formation of the line to an ancient monster called Martin of Jerusalem. The Haunt, long blighted with deformities that gave him the appearance of a leper, dressed in rags and existed among the colonies of the diseased and infirm. Over the centuries he drew several vampires to him, most of which were Haunts whose curse had manifested in ways they felt too severe to allow them to exist within the framework of Kindred society.

The pilgrims of the First Crusade slaughtered much of the populace of Jerusalem, robbing the local Kindred of a once-plentiful herd. While his more erudite and sophisticated contemporaries fell into torpor, Martin adapted, moving among the mortal knights and spreading the diseases he had long carried within his blood. The population of hospitalized westerners rose, and Martin moved among the blighted knights, studying their philosophies and religion and melding it with his own understanding of the world. A few of the warriors proved too pleasing to release to the cold grasp of death, and Martin took on new childer, empowering them with his Vitae and teaching them his own brand of survival.



By the end of the 12th century, the lineage had grown to almost a dozen Kindred residing throughout the Holy Land. While a few were directly related to Martin, most were European monsters who had followed the Crusade east. Martin took such outcasts to his bosom, as he had always done, and taught them to move with subtlety and guile. Better to skulk, hide and survive within Kindred society than be banished to the wilds and fall to the rapacious monster within. Yet the line faced rejection, both from the local Kindred, who felt Martin had become too westernized, and from the Sanctified and Invictus that had followed the Crusade, who saw Martin as a local heathen and threat.

Martin again adapted, adopting the organization of the knightly orders that accompanied Kindred of the two great covenants to the Levant. In 1183, Martin gathered his extended family and bound them together in an oath, christening his group the Most Noble Order of King Baldwin the Leprous (who was then the King of Jerusalem). After Baldwin's death two years later, Sir Martin renamed his followers the Order of the Fallen King.

Though the Leper Knights never gained the respect of the other knightly orders of the period, they both outperformed and outlasted the vast majority. Martin taught his followers to cleave only to the words of oaths, discarding the spirit for a convenient loophole. He taught them to defend themselves, not only with weapons and armor, but with the fear of the diseases they might have. Members of the line teach their childer the following aphorism, attributed to Martin himself: "Be so unpleasant that they cannot bear to look at what you are doing. Smell so of filth that they keep their noses out of your business."

The lineage began haunting the various roads between the west and the Holy Land, feeding on the sick and infirm and spreading fear and loathing in their wake. The western covenants, too repulsed by the Order's habits, failed to realize the wide-ranging network the Order had established. A dark reflection of the Knights Templar, the Order began trading in favors and influence, allowing a Kindred to provide a service to a Leper Knight in Europe for the promise of a later favor in Jerusalem. Nomadic

Kindred leapt at the opportunity, allowing the Order to garner wealth and power at a startling rate. Members of the Order printed notes with special seals that attested to what the traveler was owed by the line. The Leper Knights of the Levant even honored the writs of those few vampires who survived the arduous journey.

With Martin's blessing, the Order melded with the Invictus in 1317. Since then the Order has grown in size, always clinging to the outskirts of Kindred society, providing necessary services that the majority of Invictus find too repellent to perform themselves. The Order continues to take in those who would otherwise founder in the Danse Macabre, teaching them to overcome their curse and work towards their own welfare rather than devolving into slaving monsters.

Tonight the Order looks much as it always has. In Europe, where the bloodline boasts the most members, the Leper Knights organize into Chapters, each of which usually covers a small region (such as London and its environs). In areas with smaller populations, a Chapter may cover a larger geographical area, but never so large that the Chapter cannot gather four to five times a year or easily communicate. Nomadic members of the lineage, called Rovers, travel between the Chapters, providing information and aid to compatriots in distant domains. Thus the bloodline manages a rough communication system that spans Europe, allowing information within the line to pass between domains far more quickly than it does through other sources.

In the Americas, the Chapter system breaks down, and few such organizations exist outside of New England. More typically a small city may include one or two members of the line, while a larger metropolis may boast a small gang of Leper Knights (who often adopt a gangland attitude and fashion sense, if only to further their unwholesome image). Groups of Leper Knights (even the New England Chapters) in the Americas rarely communicate across the vast expanses of wilderness and don't benefit from the same information network that their European cousins do.

**Reputation:** The Order of Sir Martin has never enjoyed a particularly positive reputation among either its peers within the Invictus or in Kindred society as a whole. The Carthian Movement, especially, finds the Order distasteful. According to the Carthians, they serve as exemplars of the worst mercenary tendencies of the Kindred, willing to take any assignment, no matter how degrading, for whatever table scraps the Invictus throw their way. Most grating to the Carthians is the fact that many of the Kindred the Order takes on were vampires who the Movement was eyeing for recruitment.

The Lancea Sanctum and Circle of the Crone have eerily similar opinions about the Order. Both groups feel that the bloodline wallows in self-interest, rebuffing any opportunity



for enlightenment or grace. In short, the line fails to uphold the will of God (or the gods). The Leper Knights don't share the animosity, and in domains in which the Invictus has a strong relationship with either covenant, members of the lineage often attend mass or the solstice rituals.

While Kindred of the Order of Sir Martin almost universally swear fealty to the Invictus, a rare few forsake the First Estate for the Ordo Dracul. Such Kindred are almost always elders who have decided that they want something more out of unlife than the riches that come with membership in the Invictus. These Kindred find enough familiarity in the Order to embrace it, and many become celebrated members of the Sworn of the Axe. Unfortunately, leaving the Invictus requires a Leper Knight to recant his sworn oath to the knightly order. The lack of reprisal such turncoats face often worries the Ordo Dracul, and the Dragons usually watch their new members with extreme care, making entirely clear what will befall them if the local Invictus begins showing signs of the Coils of the Dragon.

**Concepts:** Anti-Crone crusader, apparent AIDS victim, disease carrier, doctor-turned-murderer, extremist militant, gangland tyrant, information broker, spy in a foreign court, unceremonious prostitute, urban cowboy

### *The Advantages of Membership*

Members of the Order of Sir Martin gain two advantages. First, upon entering the bloodline, the character swears an oath of fealty to his fellow Leper Knights. The Knights help one another regularly, forming a web of mentorship with a slightly different focus than the Invictus. As a result, characters who claim both membership in the bloodline and Status of at least 1 in the Invictus may purchase the following Merits at half the usual cost in experience: Fighting Styles, Haven, Mentor and Retainer. They *do not* continue to purchase Herd at half price, and this bonus does not apply at character creation.

Additionally, members of the Order of Sir Martin gain access to the following Devotions. Each is a closely guarded secret within the sect and never taught to outsiders.

### *The Rejected Malady*

**(Resilience •, Vigor ••)**

The character becomes a master of her body, learning to reject that which would sicken her. Through this power she may completely eliminate all natural diseases and toxins from her body. In doing so, she vomits forth a thick, acrimonious black bile.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae and 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** Resolve + Medicine + Vigor

**Action:** Instant

If the invocation roll is successful, the character immediately banishes any diseases, poisons or other deleterious substances or toxins from her system. She spends the turn in which she uses this power curled over and vomiting. She may take no other action and does not benefit from her Defense, even through the use of Celerity or other supernatural powers, though armor still applies. After the power has been used, she no longer suffers any ill effects from the foreign substance, nor can she pass a disease on to another being. (Leper Knights occasionally seek out specific diseases to spread to other Kindred or mortals, knowing that they can reject the disease afterwards.) This power has no effect on supernatural diseases or poisons (though natural diseases exacerbated through supernatural means, such as the Discipline of Cachexy, are affected) and cannot remove the effects of consuming the blood of other supernatural entities, such as werewolves.

This power costs nine experience points to learn.

### *Repulsive Men*

**(Nightmare ••, Obfuscate ••••)**

The Leper Knights know the reputation they have even among the Invictus. Rather than refute it, they utilize the rumors to the utmost. This power plays on the targets' assumptions and fears about the Leper Knights, what foul action they plan to take and what diseases fester within their dead arteries.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** Manipulation + Subterfuge + Nightmare vs. subject's Composure + Blood Potency (The Nosferatu clan weakness does not apply to the Discipline user's roll.)

**Action:** Instant and Contested

As per Dread (Nightmare ••, p. 133 of **Vampire: The Requiem**), save that rather than inspiring fear in any targets who fail to overcome the character's activation roll, this power magnifies their assumptions about the Leper Knight. Those who assume that she is a traitorous wretch notice her shifting eyes and fidgeting hands; those who believe she is a disease carrier notice that she's looking sickly and pale. The usual effects of Dread apply, but only in regards to the character. Any actions taken against her are penalized, including attempts to uncover her emotions or motives, physical attacks or efforts to spot hidden weapons, as the character is simply too repulsive to pay much attention to and targets thus affected cannot spend Willpower to enhance actions against the character. Furthermore, this power only affects other Leper Knights if they have an excellent and concrete reason to mistrust the user.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

# Ahl al-Jabal

## The Martyrs

The Middle East may be the cradle of civilization, but it is a cradle set afloat upon a sea of blood. For thousands of years the men and women of the Holy Land have met one another with daggers, swords and stones, murdering in the name of faith, tribe or creed. Some of the faithful know that the violence their compatriots pursue only serves to keep humanity divided and weak in the face of the greater threat: demons and monsters of the night. For as long as the faithful have crouched about fires in the deserts of modern day Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Syria, so have monsters haunted the shadows about those fires, waiting for them to gutter out and die, that they might fall upon a prey without recourse.

The violence continues to the modern night. A decrease in sectarian violence within an Iraqi city may only mean that the Sunni or Shiite militants have utterly wiped out the other faction within its borders. Palestinian terrorists destroy embassies and hotels, and the Israeli military responds with fighter jets and assault rifles. An American soldier moves to help a fallen Iraqi citizen only to be hit in the back of the head with a brick by another (a man who is riddled with bullets moments after by the Marine's squad mate).

Some might expect that the monsters have won the Middle East, that the people of the region are too busy fighting one another or plotting terrorist strikes to organize themselves against the monsters of the night. Those people haven't heard of the Ahl al-Jabal, the People of the Mountain, who test themselves nightly against the darkness, afraid of death only inasmuch as it represents the end of their vigil.

Early Islam was particularly rife with violent schisms, often over issues of orthodoxy and leadership. The first of these, the break between the Shiites and Sunnis, occurred almost immediately after Muhammad's death. The latter upheld Abu Bakr, a compatriot of the Prophet, as the new caliph of Islam. The Shiites felt that Ali ibn Abu Talib, the son-in-law of Muhammad, should take up the mantle of the spiritual leader of Islam. When the Sunni faction passed up Ali, again, when choosing a successor for Abu Bakr, the Shiites diverged from the larger faction, becom-

ing a rallying point for numerous groups of dissent within the Islam faith. The Shiites upheld the position of Imam, the holy leader of Islam and direct heir to the Prophet. A disagreement over the succession of the Imam within the Shiite populace resulted in a second schism, producing the Twelver Shiites and the Ismailis. Yet another schism within the Ismailis produced the Fatimid dynasty of caliphs and the Naziri Ismaili, the most infamous of which were the warriors of Alamut.

Hasan-i-Sabah, a charismatic and brilliant leader, formed the sect that would eventually operate from Alamut. The sect garnered numerous epithets, the most lasting of which was *Hashshashin*, the origin of the word assassin. The *Hashshashin* served as a combination holy order, secret society and revolutionary state, with several independent cells operating within strongholds across the region, each answering to the highly secure mountain stronghold of Alamut. They practiced an ascetic approach to Islam, and each member was slowly initiated into the deeper esoteric truths (the *batin*), an initiation that included a preliminary period of dissolution of each initiate's faith in the larger society and priesthood of Islam. Were the *Hashshashin* merely a heretical offshoot of a heretical branch of a grand heresy within the region's foremost faith, they may have been left largely alone. Instead, the sect, under the orders of Hasan, struck at highly-placed officials and rulers within Islam (and later, the Christian Crusaders), killing each in broad daylight with a dagger to the heart, earning the enmity of much of Islam.

Over time, the *Hashshashin* weathered heresies of their own, but it was Rashid ad-Din Sinan, the *Shaykh al Jabal* (Elder of the Mountain), the leader of the Syrian Assassins during the Crusades, who was responsible for the greatest (and least historically known) schism among the assassins. Sinan followed the lead of his contemporary at Alamut, Hasan II (Hasan-i-Sabah's grandson), in rejecting the overt ritual trappings of Islam. After Hasan II's own family murdered him, Sinan refused to follow the orders of Hasan's son and successor. He instead clashed with the dominant Muslim warlord of the age, Sultan Saladin. The pair shared a particularly vicious rivalry as assassins struck

I don't mind being  
snuffed out,

so long as I keep alive  
the flame of the human spirit.

## SINAN THE MAGICIAN

A scholar of great renown, Sinan bore a reputation for mastery of alchemy and astrology, and other tales paint him as an adept of sorcery and psychic powers. Though the Alamut Hashshashin sent assassins to strike at Sinan, he somehow managed to neutralize or subvert each of his attackers. Tales bestow Sinan with the ability to deflect falling stones with but a wave of his hand and an aura so fearsome that it kept his enemies beyond spear's reach. One story speaks of Sinan calling a few of his followers to him to witness the reanimated head of a fallen assassin; the followers claimed afterwards that it spoke most eloquently of the Paradise that awaited those who died in jihad.

Vampires who learn of the Ahl al-Jabal and Sinan often come across these stories. Some recognize the powers of a Kindred at work, and assume that Sinan was yet another ghoul under the influence of yet another Kindred, one whose faction eventually slipped loose of her control (or is perhaps still following her orders to this night). Others believe that Sinan may have become a mage over the course of his hunt. A rare few Kindred believe that Allah gifted Sinan with the ability to perform miracles. More commonly, scholars theorize that Sinan unearthed some of the abilities of those he battled and chose to fight fire with fire.

Whatever the truth of the matter, no Martyr in the modern nights has ever displayed abilities similar to those possessed by Sinan. Even were one of these holy killers to develop such skills, her fellows would almost certainly destroy her as one of the enemy.

at the Sultan and the Sultan's armies overran *Hashshashin* strongholds. Yet the two met in 1176, then went their separate ways, never to clash again.

Only the closest followers of Sinan knew what had occurred between the two men. Sinan, who had learned that a blood-drinking monster had infiltrated Alamut and manipulated his former friend, Hasan II, had turned his attention from murdering enemies of Islam to destroying those very same monsters and the political figures he believed to be under their sway. Saladin had seemed to be just such a figure. Saladin, too, had heard tales of Sinan's abilities and worked towards defeating the *Hashshashin* for the same reasons. Once the two learned how the paranoia engendered by their enemies had poisoned their efforts, they made a pact to establish a new group of warriors, a hidden sect dedicated to ridding Islam of the progeny of Hell.

Saladin continued to wage war against the Christian invaders, and Sinan traveled constantly between the mountain fortresses under his banner, dispatching assassins as he always had. Yet the two remained in contact, through secret missives coordinating strikes against the greatest enemies of humanity. Eventually their secret war must have overwhelmed them, exposing them to their adversaries: Saladin and Sinan died within months of one another.

Yet their secret society of assassins persisted. Even after Alamut fell to the raiding Mongols and the Nazari Ismaili migrated into India (where they remain to this night), the Ahl al-Jabal (People of the Mountain) continued their holy war against ghouls, sorcerers, jinni, ifrits, lilitu and stranger creatures yet. Tonight, unaffiliated cells spread across the nations in which Islam remains a major religion. Members are drawn almost exclusively from the Muslim community, initiated first into the Ahl al-Jabal's interpretation of the Ismaili faith, then into the business of monster hunting. In the Americas, an increasing number of Martyrs are drawn from the population of the prison system, where Islam takes root in followers who are or (through the overcrowded prisons) quickly become familiar with the vagaries of violence.

### Philosophy

The Ahl al-Jabal largely adhere to the Nazari Ismaili faith. They practice a form of Islam that largely disregards the importance of the ritual and law of the religion (though most continue to practice such rites) in favor of a deeper philosophical understanding of the faith. Furthermore, they include in their studies Greek philosophy, mysticism and Gnosticism, as well as mathematics, astrology and various natural sciences. The Ahl al-Jabal tend to be fiercely loyal to their teachers, the *dai*, willing

to perform murder or die at their orders. After all, the *dai* hold the secrets of spiritual understanding; the future of one's soul is reliant upon them, and dying in their service is a sacred honor.

The primary tenet of the Ahl al-Jabal that separates them not only from the Nazari Ismaili but also from the *Hashshashin*, is the understanding that monsters haunt the world. Such creatures, the *dai* teach, are the offspring of Satan, and they perform his work by crushing joy, learning and creativity among the mortal masses. It is the duty of each Martyr to fight back that darkness so that humanity may shine more brightly in Allah's image.

## The Enemy

Ahl al-Jabal consider their mission a holy one, a matter of faith. Their chosen flavor of religion, Ismailism, puts significant emphasis on the subtle, esoteric aspects of Islam, while the history of abuse the Shiites and Ismaili have faced have engendered in the Ahl al-Jabal a strong tendency towards secrecy. Furthermore, the current world culture tends to turn a suspicious eye on any insular group of Muslims, especially when they carry weapons and combine their daily prayers with training in multiple forms of combat. As a result, members rarely coordinate with outsiders, including most of the major groups of monster hunters in the world.

The Ahl al-Jabal approach the hunt with a determined stoicism and quiet faith. They train heavily in the use of both the kukri and dagger, traditionally utilizing the larger weapon against monstrous or undead foes and the dagger against the human enemies of humanity. Ahl al-Jabal practice the Shiite survival skill known as *taqiyya*, a dispensation among the faithful to hide their true religious beliefs and affiliation when under the threat of violence or persecution. As the Ahl al-Jabal recognize that they always face the threat of undead monstrosities or devil-hearted wizards, they tend to live their entire lives in secret, letting their guard down only among other Martyrs. As a result, members come from all walks of life and may hold down any number of jobs. Other hunters, from

other organizations, sometimes suspect that a few go so far as to join their groups while hiding who they actually are, but such must surely be the modern day equivalent to the prejudice the assassins have always faced.

The Martyrs also uphold *jihad*, the holy struggle to improve society. They believe that each monster they destroy weakens the influence of Satan in the world. Furthermore, they know that if they die in the course of the struggle, they will be reborn into Paradise. The Ahl al-Jabal do not, however, murder indiscriminately. Like the original *Hashshashin*, the Martyrs strive to do the most good with the fewest possible acts of violence. Rather than assault a vampire with guns blazing, a tactic assured to kill at least some of the vampire's unfortunate slaves if not a number of innocent bystanders, the Martyr infiltrates the vampire's lair, destroying the creature directly, often as it sleeps. Furthermore, the Ahl al-Jabal recognize that not every supernatural creature qualifies as a monster. The Martyrs do their best to explore and understand their enemies, judging each one on its own merits rather than murdering every unusual entity they come across. After all, their own founder was a man of many unusual and varied talents, yet the world has never seen a Muslim more devoted to the faith. While the Martyrs are willing to die in the pursuit of their cause, no member of the Ahl al-Jabal has ever become a suicide bomber; such indiscriminate destruction represents everything that their faith abhors.

Members of the Ahl al-Jabal possess a surprising amount of lore regarding the supernatural threats facing them in the World of Darkness. Unfortunately for them, the lore is spread so widely and so thin, that no individual cell of hunters benefits from the bulk of it. Most members of the Ahl al-Jabal recognize that fire and sunlight serve as the most efficient means of destroying a vampire (as the light of Allah, they claim, cleanses all inequity). They know that placing a wooden stake through its heart and cutting off its head can also destroy a vampire. (They traditionally utilize blessed stakes made of aspen trees and their kukris to complete their grim task.)

## MARTYR CHARACTERS

The Ahl al-Jabal have been presented primarily as antagonists for Kindred characters across the ages. Readers with access to *Hunter: The Vigil*, however, will notice similarities in the way the Martyrs are presented to the organizations in that book. Feel free to borrow from the Hunter rules to increase the lethality of Ahl al-Jabal antagonists or to import this compact to your Hunter game.

Most hunters come to understand that vampires divide themselves into several social groups, and two have become particularly loathed within the sect. The first, the Lancea Sanctum, seems to exult in all of the worst excesses of Christianity, going out of their way to inflict harm upon the mortal populace. The second, the Daeva, work to lead the faithful to sin, making them drunk without alcohol and inflicting every form of abuse upon their body and spirit. Such monsters rarely earn a Martyr's mercy.

## Status

Status within Ahl al-Jabal results largely from one's understanding and acceptance of the faith. Ironically, though ostensibly an organization devoted to the hunt, destroying monsters rarely constitutes justification for an increase in Status on its own. Instead, a comprehensive insight into the esoteric truths revealed by the faith and the ability to relate them to others tend to serve as the primary measures of worth among the Martyrs.

- You've been accepted as one of the *fidai*, the faithful. Your faith in traditional Islam has been dissolved and you have begun the study of the *batin* as well as extensive

training in the Martyr's fighting style. You may purchase the Fighting Style: Two Weapon Merit (p 112, **World of Darkness Rulebook**) at half the usual cost in experience, whether or not you meet the prerequisites. If you fail to meet the Merit's prerequisites, you may only use it when wielding a kukri in one hand and a dagger in the other.

- You have devoted yourself as one of the *rafik*, becoming deeply initiated into the esoteric secrets of your teachers. You gain a free Occult Specialty in Mysticism, Gnosticism or Philosophy. Additionally, you acquire a free dot of Allies (Ahl al-Jabal).

- You have risen to the rank of *dai* and are a missionary within your sect. You have met with other *dai*, and they expect you to travel to a new city and establish a new cell. It has become your mission to further the faith rather than risk your existence in the jihad. You gain the Inspiring Merit (p. 115, **World of Darkness Rulebook**) for free, whether or not you meet that Merit's prerequisites, but can only use it when interacting with other members of your sect. If you already possess the Inspiring Merit, its affects stack, now granting two Willpower points whether bolstering the spirits of those within your sect or without.



# BLOODLINES OF THE BLACK STREETS OF BABYLON (625-539 BCE)

The fragmented memory of the Kindred recalls the Babylonian empire as it was at its height – a magnificent paradise of jeweled ziggurats and moonlit alleyways, ruled from the shadows by the Damned. Kindred arose from the masses as subtle gods among men, and the streets of Babylon were stalked by the progenitors of some of the most powerful bloodlines that exist tonight. In those nights, demons and desert whispered their secrets to Kindred, and they were host to many strange powers.

Every golden age must come to an end, however, and the Damned of ancient Babylonia were decimated by a new predator born through blasphemous rite, the Edimmu. The seven spirits tore the empire apart from within, and the streets of Babylon were black with the dust of slain Kindred. The few who survived bound together for the sake of survival or fled from the Near East altogether, scattering their kind throughout the world.

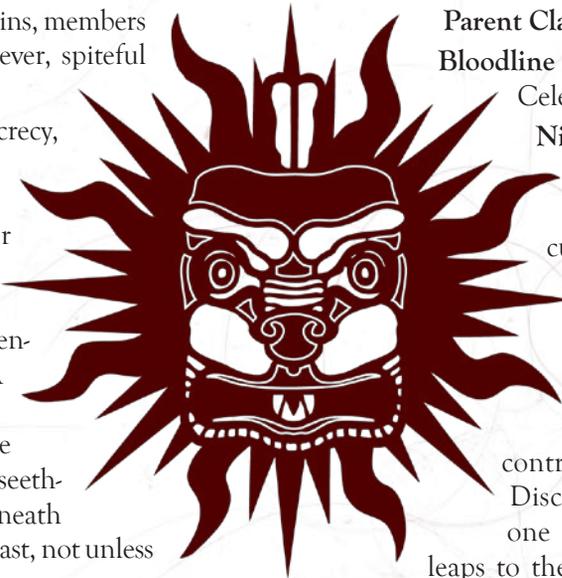
## ILTANI

You don't remember me, do you? That doesn't matter, darling, because I certainly haven't forgotten you. Now why don't I help refresh your memory?

Dark sorcerers and subtle assassins, members of the Iltani bloodline are as clever, spiteful and venomous as snakes.

They operate in stealth and secrecy, and are masterful manipulators and deceivers. Vipers are unusually adept at controlling their own emotions, and they cling to their anger in death, fueling and transforming its corrosive energy to suit their own purposes. A vampire meeting an Iltani for the first time could never hope to see or understand the depth of the seething anger that is forever just beneath the surface of her stoic gaze – at least, not unless she chooses to unleash her fury.

The rare and highly specialized poisons the Iltani use to weaken their enemies are distilled from anger, spite and resentment. Kindred scholars speculate that it is by channeling this dark, emotional energy and transforming it through the Beast that members of the bloodline are able to harness their unique abilities. Whether or not this theory has any veracity may never be ascertained, as members of the bloodline are uncommonly elusive and secretive.



**Parent Clan:** Mekhet

**Bloodline Disciplines:** Animalism, Auspex, Celerity, Obfuscate

**Nickname:** Vipers

**Weakness:** The Iltani have the same weakness to sunlight that curses all Mekhet (p. 109 of *Vampire: The Requiem*).

Additionally, an Iltani's Beast makes her blood seethe with anger and resentment, and never misses a chance to seize control. Whenever the player fails a Discipline roll, the Storyteller rolls one die. On a 1, the Iltani's Beast leaps to the fore, forcing the player to roll to avoid frenzy (two successes required; see p. 179 of *Vampire: The Requiem*).

**History and Culture:** The Iltani bloodline can be traced back to ancient Mesopotamia. The bloodline's founder, Nanshe Iltani, was a powerful priestess of the Coven of Nanaja, and a consult to the Kindred royalty of the shadow empire of Babylonia.

According to Kindred of the bloodline, Nanshe Iltani had a lover, Arahunaa, to whom she was deeply devoted.

One night, the En (a title for the Kindred emperor in ancient Babylonia) came to consult with Nanshe Iltani. When the En saw the beautiful Arahunaa, he immediately wished to possess her. Despite Nanshe Iltani's desperate pleading, En Isiratuu took Arahunaa back to the royal temple to live at his side. Adding to the tale of treachery, Arahunaa went with the En willingly — preferring an unlife of royal luxury over the companionship of Nanshe Iltani. The cruel actions of Arahunaa and the En enraged Nanshe Iltani, and she vowed from that night forward that she would be the one to bring about their Final Deaths.

She knew that she would never succeed in killing her betrayers outright and survive. Instead, she would be patient, using a subtler approach of stealth and sorcery, striking when the moment was right. It was Nanshe Iltani's desire for vengeance that led her to uncover the secrets associated with her bloodline tonight.

In the years that followed, Nanshe Iltani devoted herself to finding new ways in which her powers could be used to destroy Arahunaa and the En, taking many solitary walks through the moonlit steppes and deserts of Babylonia to reflect upon her goal. It was during these travels that Nanshe Iltani was believed to have developed her affinity for the venomous, lowly creatures of the earth: snakes, spiders, insects and scorpions. That she was drawn to such creatures is not surprising, as she herself was poisonous from her own festering resentment. She found that she could call the stinging, biting creatures of the desert to her side, and even influence their movements. After a time, she uncovered methods of condensing and transforming her anger, through the Beast within, into potent venoms. Eventually, she made use of the creatures she called upon to act as vessels of her spite, using their stings to deliver her poison to the victim. While Nanshe Iltani did not succeed in discovering a poison strong enough to lead to instantaneous Final Death, her newfound abilities were useful to her cause nonetheless.

One night, Arahunaa appeared to Nanshe Iltani in a dream. According to her former lover, the En had developed a terrible, dark gift, the likes of which the Damned of Babylon had never seen. Soon, the En would be unstoppable, and the empire would suffer for it.

Seeing that the news could be used to her advantage, Nanshe Iltani seized her chance. Feigning sympathy for her plight, Nanshe Iltani gave Arahunaa a scorpion with a poisonous sting to set upon the En. The venom of Iltani's scorpion did not directly cause the deaths of Arahunaa and the En, but it was potent enough to indirectly guide them to their ultimate end. It was through Nanshe Iltani's

cursed venom, members of the bloodline claim, that the Edimmu of legend were able to gain access to the En, tearing him apart from within and then subsequently killing Arahunaa in the massacre that followed.

In the chaos that occurred shortly after the death of the En of Babylonia, it is unclear what became of Nanshe Iltani. Since then, however, her progeny have spread throughout the world, refining her techniques and passing along her secrets in low whispers to each new generation.

Kindred of the bloodline almost always choose to sire a child from an individual who was resentful or bitter during his mortal life. Iltani encourage their childer to cling to their anger, to fuel and strengthen it, but *never* to allow their fury to show. If anything, a Viper appears void of emotion. It is through an Iltani's ability to control her feelings that she gains her power — skillfully transforming and molding her vitriol into useful manipulative tools.

Initiates to the bloodline must prove that they can control their anger. New Kindred are treated harshly, chastised and provoked until the young vampire enters a state of anger frenzy. The initiate must successfully “ride the wave” (see pp. 178-181 of **Vampire: The Requiem**) to prove he has the self-control required to become an Iltani.

**Reputation:** Members of the Iltani bloodline are unusually guarded and secretive, even for the Damned. Many Kindred tonight believe that the Iltani bloodline does not exist at all, and that it is simply a legend from the long-forgotten past. Those who do know of their existence, however, fear them for their strange ways and deadly abilities.

Because many Kindred laugh at the notion of the Iltani bloodline's very existence (and the Iltani prefer to keep it that way), members of the bloodline are excellent assassins. While some Iltani may be willing to offer their services as an assassin, it usually comes with a steep price. Vipers are much more likely to use their abilities to manipulate rather than kill. They prefer to stand in the shadows, watching as their venom slowly tortures or drives their victim to madness.

Kindred who know of the Iltani also know never to cross one. An Iltani never forgets those who have betrayed her, and she uses memories of past transgressions to fuel her anger. A vampire who betrays an Iltani may not pay immediately, but he *always* pays dearly in the end.

**Concepts:** Kindred assassin, lord of the flies, manipulative sociopath, espionage agent, underhanded informant, stoic enforcer, herpetologist, power behind the throne, eccentric collector, mysterious apothecary

## Mérges Sorcery

The Sumerian word “Mérges” can be translated to mean “poisonous” or “angry.” It is a fitting descriptor, therefore, for the brand of sorcery practiced by the Iltani bloodline. Iltani have the unique ability to distill their negative emotions (anger, spite, resentment, hatred, etc.) into rare and highly-specialized magical venoms. The secrets of Mérges Sorcery are jealously guarded and carefully passed down from one generation to the next. Iltani have been known to hunt down and kill undeserving Kindred who have learned of its mysteries.

All vampires who become skilled in Mérges Sorcery develop specialized, hollow fangs that can be used to administer venom. When not in use, the fangs fold back against the roof of the mouth and are enclosed in a membranous sheath.

**Cost:** The use of Mérges Sorcery always costs the character one Willpower point. It is the Iltani’s own will that instigates a reaction between his hatred and the Beast within, and it is through this reaction that the venomous curse is formed. Willpower spent in this manner does not add three dice to activation rolls. (However, subsequent extended Mérges Sorcery rolls, past the initial activation roll, may be augmented by spending a point of Willpower).

Mérges Sorcery does not have the same linear progression that other Disciplines do. It is a character’s mastery that dictates the highest level of the rituals he may learn. For example, a character with two dots in Mérges Sorcery can know an unlimited number of level one and level two rituals (provided the experience points are paid to learn each), but he may not learn any level-three Mérges Sorcery rituals until his Mérges Sorcery level is increased to 3. Each time a character acquires a dot of Mérges Sorcery (including at character creation), he gains a ritual of that level at no additional cost. New rituals can be bought at a cost of two experience points multiplied by the level of the ritual.

To master Mérges Sorcery, an Iltani must never let go of his hatred. Instead, he must fuel it, control it, and transform it through his Beast. In the time that passes after his Embrace, a Viper gradually forgets how to forgive others, and he cannot recall what the peace of absolution felt like as a mortal. To an Iltani, anger is fuel, but because he never ceases to carry corrosive emotions within himself, his own hatred slowly begins to eat away at his Humanity. A character’s dots in Mérges Sorcery, subtracted from 10, is the maximum to which his Humanity may rise. For

example, a character possesses Mérges Sorcery at level three. His maximum Humanity is therefore 7. If a character increases his Mérges score higher than his Humanity would normally allow, his Humanity immediately drops to the appropriate level and the player makes a Humanity roll to see if the character acquires a derangement in the process of heightening his occult knowledge. (See pp. 182-188 of **Vampire: The Requiem** for more on Humanity rolls and derangements.) If a character learns both Crúac and Mérges Sorcery, his Humanity is limited by the higher of the two traits.

**Dice Pool:** Resolve + Intimidation + Mérges Sorcery

Because negative emotions are the source and fuel of Mérges Sorcery, characters with the Vice Wrath add +1 to relevant rolls. Conversely, characters with the Virtue Temperance take a -1 penalty to relevant rolls.

**Action:** Extended. The number of successes required to activate a ritual is equal to the level of that ritual (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 incurred in a turn is a penalty to the next casting roll made for the character, in addition to any wound penalties suffered.

If a character fails to complete the ritual in time (such as by being sent into torpor before accumulating enough successes) or decides to cancel the ritual before garnering enough successes to activate it, the effect simply fails. Any Willpower expenditures made are not recovered.

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The ritual fails spectacularly, and the character enters an immediate anger frenzy, which lasts for the rest of the scene.

**Failure:** The ritual fails entirely, but not dangerously. Willpower is consumed as normal, but the ritual has no effect.

**Success:** The ritual takes place as described.

**Exceptional Success:** In many cases, extra successes are their own reward, causing additional damage or conferring extra duration or capacity.

### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	Power is turned against, or applies to, a vampire with whom the user has a blood tie (see p. 162 of <b>Vampire: The Requiem</b> ).
—	There are no threats or distractions to bother the character.



-1 to -3

The character is rushed or distracted, such as by invoking a ritual in combat or while trapped in a burning building. This penalty is cumulative with multiple distractions (such as by casting a ritual in combat during a hurricane). Successes gained on a meditation roll for the night (see p. 51 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**) offset interruption penalties on a one-for-one basis.

### *Venomous Bite*

#### (Level-One Mérges Sorcery ritual)

An Iltani can distill her own emotions into specialized poisons that can be injected into her victims through the vampire's bite. As described on p. 157 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, a character attempting to bite as a combat action must first achieve a grapple hold on the target. Then, on the following turn, the attacker can use the venomous bite ability. An Iltani may not consume Vitae from victims in the same turn that she uses Venomous Bite.

The Iltani can activate this ritual at any time in a given night, whereupon she is capable of using Venomous Bite until the following sunrise. She does *not* have to reactivate the bite to use different kinds of poisons (see below).

Traces of the venom remain in the victim's body even after its effects have worn off, and are still present in the victim's remains after death – unless the Iltani covers her tracks by using Antidote (see below). Once delivered, the victim's player rolls Stamina + Resolve – Toxicity Rating. If the victim fails, the poison automatically takes effect and deals immediate damage equal to its Toxicity Rating, unless stated otherwise (see the poison rules in the Introduction to this book). The Toxicity Rating for Mérges Sorcery poisons is equal to: **Blood Potency + Mérges Sorcery**.

An Iltani can produce a number of venom doses per day equal to her Blood Potency.

Venomous Bite may be used multiple times on the same victim. If an Iltani chooses to do so, the victim may be affected by multiple poisons simultaneously. Similarly, an Iltani may administer multiple doses of a single type of poison to intensify its effects (see Compounding Poisons, below).

**Compounding Poisons:** Some Iltani poisons can be compounded, while others cannot. With subsequent





doses of the same poison, the effects may increase or intensify, depending on the nature of the venom.

When compounding a poison, the concentration of the toxin in the victim's blood increases with subsequent doses. The concentration of a poison within a character's blood is measured by his Toxin Level. As the Toxin Level increases, the effects of certain poisons become more pronounced or severe. There are five Toxin Levels: levels 1-2 are considered low amounts of a particular poison, level 3 is a moderate amount, and levels 4-5 indicate high or lethal amounts of a poison within the victim's blood. At levels 4-5, any vampire who drinks the blood of a poisoned victim might feel the effects as well. The player rolls Stamina + Resolve – the Toxicity Rating of the poison in the victim's blood. If the roll fails, the consuming vampire also suffers the effects of the poison. Members of the Brothers of Ypres bloodline (p. 22) are not subject to this, and can drink from victims of Mérges Sorcery poisoning with no ill effect.

When a poison with a specific duration is compounded, the duration resets and begins again from the last dose administered, without weakening or losing previous effects. For example, Venom of Paralysis (see below) is a poison that can be compounded. Venom of Paralysis completely paralyzes a victim for a number of hours equal to the Iltani's rating in Mérges Sorcery. If an Iltani with three dots of Mérges Sorcery administers Venom of Paralysis, the victim would normally be paralyzed for three hours. Instead, the Iltani waits two hours and administers a second dose. The duration resets, and the victim remains paralyzed for another three hours (five hours total).

If a poison cannot be compounded, its effects last for the stated duration. The duration cannot be lengthened by additional doses, although an Iltani *can* wait until the venom wears off and then administer a new dose.

The effects of poisons may be compounded as long as the toxin remains within the victim's system. In this way, an Iltani can repeatedly administer a poison to a victim night after night, slowly killing him or driving him mad.

Upon learning this ritual, the Iltani gains the ability to use a poison that causes muscle spasms, painful cramps and damage to the nervous system. In game terms, the poison simply inflicts physical damage based on the Iltani's master of Mérges Sorcery:

Mérges Sorcery Level	Type of Damage
1	Bashing
2	Lethal
3	Lethal
4	Lethal
5	Aggravated

A Viper can choose to inflict a less severe type of damage if she wishes to.

In addition, the character can learn to produce other types of poisons. Each of the poisons counts as a separate level one Mérges Sorcery ritual for purposes of experience points.

### Sample Venoms

**Venom of Paralysis:** The victim is completely paralyzed for a number of hours equal to the Iltani's level in Mérges Sorcery. This poison causes no physical damage.

This poison can be compounded. With each dose successfully administered, the duration is extended in the typical fashion. No new effects are added.

**Venom of Madness:** A victim poisoned with Venom of Madness develops a derangement of the Iltani's choice for every Toxin Level (see pp. 96-100 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). Each Toxin Level can either inflict a mild derangement or increase an existing derangement (whether one the victim already possessed or one caused by this poison) to severe. Therefore, a victim poisoned at Toxin Level 3 (with no preexisting derangements) could have three mild derangements or one that is severe and one that is mild. The effects of this venom last for a number of nights equal to the Iltani's level in Mérges Sorcery. Venom of Madness causes no physical damage.

This poison can be compounded. With each dose successfully administered, the duration is extended in the typical fashion.

**Venom of Lethargy:** Venom of Lethargy inflicts no damage, but saps the victim's drive to act, and slows his movements temporarily. The victim's Speed becomes equal to his Strength alone (rather than the usual Strength + Dexterity + 5). The victim's Initiative modifier becomes the lower of his Dexterity or Composure, and the Fast Reflexes Merit no longer applies. Venom of Lethargy lasts for a number of hours equal to the Iltani's level in Mérges Sorcery.

This poison cannot be compounded.

### *Control Anger*

(Level-One Mérges Sorcery ritual)

An Iltani is able to work herself into anger frenzy with ease, and is adept at maintaining control over her mind and actions while in such a state. Thus, she is able to reap significant benefits from the heightened emotional state of frenzy. An Iltani who successfully performs Control Anger may activate its effects as an instant action at any time during the same night the ritual is performed. Once activated, the Iltani enters a state of frenzy that lasts for one scene (a character may choose to end the anger frenzy

prematurely if she wishes). This has the following effects on a character:

- The character ignores wound penalties until wounds become severe enough to render the character torpid.
- The character receives one extra die to all Physical Attribute rolls.
- The character receives a +1 bonus to all Mérges Sorcery rolls while in a controlled anger frenzy.
- The character has no mental deficits normally induced by a state of frenzy.

### *Plant Venomous Bite*

(Level-Two Mérges Sorcery ritual)

An Iltani may plant her venom within a snake, spider, insect, scorpion or other stinging or biting creature. Many Vipers make use of Plant Venomous Bite to attack their victims from a safe distance, or to store their poisons for future use.

An Iltani can produce a number of venom doses per day equal to her Blood Potency. Rather than using Venomous Bite to immediately deliver her poison, she may choose to plant some, or all, of her daily doses within living creatures. Only insects and animals that naturally have a poisonous bite or sting may be used in this ritual. Once the venom has been planted, an Iltani may use the Animalism Discipline to further instruct the host. A single creature can hold one dose of venom, and the poison remains useable within it for a number of nights equal to the Iltani's Blood Potency + Mérges Sorcery, after which the creature dies.

The poison begins to take effect once the victim has been stung or bitten. Immediately after the creature has delivered its venom, it crumbles to ash. Once poisoned, the victim receives the usual chance to resist (Stamina + Resolve - Toxicity Rating). If the victim's resistance fails, the poison automatically takes effect. Poisons administered using Plant Venomous Bite may be compounded as described in Venomous Bite (above).

### *Invoke Vice*

(Level-Two Mérges Sorcery ritual)

Anger can bring out the worst in people, causing an individual to say and do things she ordinarily wouldn't. An Iltani can invoke anger in his foe, temporarily causing her Vice to dominate her actions. While under the effects of Invoke Vice, the subject becomes obsessed with indulging her Vice, leaving all other obligations by the wayside. The victim will only pause in her pursuit if her own life is in danger, and only until the threat is resolved, after which the obsession returns. The Iltani must be able to see or

touch the victim in order to use this ritual. Invoke Anger lasts for a number of hours equal to the Iltani's level in Mérges Sorcery.

### *Antidote*

#### (Level-Three Mérges Sorcery ritual)

The Iltani is able to remove all traces of venom or poison from any person or object. In living and undead creatures, Antidote stops the effects of poisoning (both natural and supernatural) in its tracks, and prevents any further damage or influence on the creature by the poison. Iltani often use Antidote on the remains of their victims to cover their tracks by removing trace amounts of residual poison from the body. Antidote may also be used to render naturally poisonous plants or animals harmless, or to purify poisoned food or water.

### *Venom Mastery*

#### (Level-Four Mérges Sorcery ritual)

An Iltani with Venom Mastery can produce exceptionally deadly and powerful venoms. Venom Mastery poisons may be administered as described in Venomous Bite or Plant Venomous Bite (above). Each of these poisons counts as a separate level four ritual for purposes of experience points.

**Venom of Weakness:** The Venom of Weakness temporarily withers the victim's muscles, causing acute fatigue and weakness. For one night, all Physical Attributes are reduced by a number of dots equal to the Toxicity Rating of Venom of Weakness. This poison causes no physical damage (but reduces Health indirectly by reducing Stamina).

This poison can be compounded. With each dose successfully administered, the duration is extended in the typical fashion. No new effects are added.

**Venom of the Slow Burn:** The victim's skin becomes highly sensitive to light of any kind when poisoned with Venom of the Slow Burn. Even moonlight and artificial light slowly damages a vampire or mortal afflicted with this poison. At low to moderate Toxin Levels (levels 1-3), Slow Burn is more painful than deadly. However, the target still feels his flesh slowly and excruciatingly burning away, which usually causes the victim to avoid light altogether. Some Iltani are known to use the Venom of Slow Burn as a brutal means of extracting information from their foes. After paralyzing a victim, an Iltani administers the venom, then uses a flashlight as an instrument of torture.

Higher levels of the poison are much more deadly, as described below. The effects of this Venom of the Slow Burn last for a number of nights equal to the Iltani's level in Mérges Sorcery.

**Damage:** See Toxin Levels, below

This poison can be compounded, and the duration is extended in the typical fashion. The victim does not take damage from Venom of the Slow Burn until exposed to light (of any kind). With each dose administered, the length of time a victim can remain in the light before sustaining an additional point of damage shortens.

#### Toxin Level

#### Toxin effect

1 (minimum)

Exposure to any kind of light (natural or artificial) causes the victim noticeable discomfort. The character takes one point of bashing damage per hour he remains in the light. Additionally, when exposed to light, the victim takes a -1 penalty to all actions that require mental focus or concentration. The damage at this level is subtle enough that the target might not notice what is causing it.

2

Exposure to any kind of light (natural or artificial) causes the victim pain. The character takes one point of bashing damage per each 30 minute interval that he remains in the light. Additionally, when exposed to light, the character takes a -2 penalty to all actions that require mental focus or concentration.

3

Exposure to any kind of light (natural or artificial) causes the victim intense pain. The character takes one point of lethal damage per each 15 minute interval that he remains in the light. Additionally, the character takes a -3 penalty to all actions that are not devoted to seeking total darkness. At this point, the victim can feel his skin blister and burn under even fluorescent lights. Vampires must check for Röttschreck upon seeing *any* source of light (2 successes required).

4

Exposure to any kind of light (natural or artificial) causes the victim intolerable agony. The character takes one point of lethal damage per each five minute



interval that he remains in the light. Additionally, the character takes a -4 penalty to all actions that are not devoted to seeking total darkness. Vampires must check for Röttschreck upon seeing *any* source of light (3 successes required).

5 (maximum)

Exposure to any kind of light (natural or artificial) causes the victim's skin to bubble, blister and melt. The character, if mortal, takes one point of lethal damage per each 10 second interval that he remains in the light. For vampires, this damage is aggravated. Additionally, the character takes a -5 penalty to all actions that are not devoted to seeking total darkness. Vampires must check for Röttschreck upon seeing *any* source of light (5 successes required).

**Venom of Deceit:** A character under the influence of Venom of Deceit believes anything he is told to be the truth, no matter how absurd or irrational. The victim then acts under assumptions based upon the false fact for the poison's duration (regardless of being confronted with the truth). For example, a man who is told "your wife has been murdered" acts as he would if his wife had actually been murdered for as long as the poison remains in his system, even if he is confronted by his wife, alive and well. (He may attempt to rationalize her appearance by believing that she is some imposter trying to fool him, but he will not realize that she is truly alive until after the poison wears off.)

Upon successful administration of Venom of Deceit, the Iltani may state a single "fact" to the target. The statement should be no longer than a sentence or two, as the victim only remains impressionable for a matter of seconds (if a character rambles on for too long, how much the victim believes of what the Iltani tells him is at the Storyteller's discretion). The victim believes the statement for a number of hours equal the Iltani's level in Mérges Sorcery.

Venom of Deceit does not *directly* force the victim to behave in any particular way or feel any differently than he would ordinarily. For instance, a victim who is told "find the man who murdered your wife" may not actually do so. Having heard that statement, the victim now believes that a man has murdered his wife, but if he was waiting to cash in on the life insurance, he may not care much at all about finding her killer. He might book a trip to Tahiti with his mistress, instead. The statement "you are looking for the man who murdered your wife" might seem more

effective, but in this case, the same man would probably just sit around until the poison wears off – believing the statement to be true, but wondering what possessed him to set out looking for his wife's murderer when he would rather be in Tahiti with his mistress.

This poison can be compounded. With each dose successfully administered, the duration is extended in the typical fashion. No new effects are added. Venom of Deceit inflicts no physical damage.

### *Master Rage*

#### (Level-Five Mérges Sorcery ritual)

Master Rage is a more powerful version of Control Anger (above). The Iltani has mastered her hatred, and may enter anger frenzy at will. As with Control Anger, An Iltani who successfully performs the Master Rage ritual may activate its effects as an instant action at any time during the same night the rite is performed (the character rolls Wits + Intimidation + Mérges Sorcery to activate the effects of the ritual). Once activated, the Iltani enters a state of frenzy that lasts for one scene (a character may choose to end the anger frenzy prematurely if she wishes). Frenzy initiated by the Master Rage ritual has the following effects on a character:

- An Iltani ignores wound penalties to dice pools. The character can also avoid torpor for a short time. Once the character's last Health box is marked with lethal damage, the character remains active for a number of turns equal to her Blood Potency + Mérges Sorcery before falling into torpor. The character cannot avoid torpor at this point (that is, the player can't spend Vitae for the character to heal some damage and dodge falling into torpor), but she has a few extra seconds to exact retribution.
- The character adds two dice to any Physical Attribute roll.
- The character receives a +2 bonus to all Mérges Sorcery rolls while in a controlled anger frenzy.
- The character has no mental deficits normally induced by a state of frenzy.
- While Master Rage is in effect, an Iltani's anger is so powerful that it becomes infectious. If a Viper chooses to do so, she may loose her anger upon her foes. For each turn the Iltani chooses to use this ability, enemies within a radius of 50 yards for every success rolled (so 100 yards for 2 successes, for example) must make a contested Resolve + Composure roll -3 to avoid falling into an anger frenzy themselves. This only affects creatures with the capacity to enter some kind of berserk frenzy (vampires, werewolves and other supernatural creatures at the Storyteller's discretion), but only vampires take the -3 penalty to avoid it.

# En

What was your name again, boy? Forget it.  
Where are the seven staked neonates I ordered you to bring me?

Members of the En bloodline seek power above all else, and will stop at nothing to obtain it. They hail from royal blood, and believe themselves worthy and entirely deserving of unquestioning loyalty from their lessers. Emperors are self-made and self-proclaimed leaders, and often seek positions of political, financial or even military power. En are not known for their patience, however, and many gain their power through corrupt means, rather than through work and hard-won support of others.

While many of the Damned have a thirst for power, the En bloodline is, perhaps, more capable than most to achieve greatness. Members of the bloodline are host to symbiotic demons, called alu, that grant the En potent abilities and assist them in their rise to power. An En must always remind himself of who he was before his union with the demon, however, lest he lose himself entirely on the path to greatness.

**Parent Clan:** Daeva

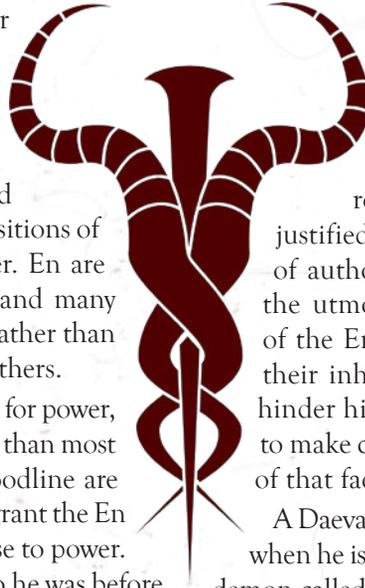
**Bloodline Disciplines:** Celerity, Dominate, Majesty, Vigor

**Nickname:** Emperors

**Weakness:** Like all Daeva, En have difficulty resisting temptation (see p. 105 of **Vampire: The Requiem**).

Emperors also tend to be intensely focused upon their own power and advancement. As such, En frequently underestimate and misjudge others. While they can learn to fake social niceties, it doesn't come easy for them. The untrained penalty on Social Skills is -3 rather than -1, and En characters do not benefit from 10 again on rolls involving Empathy, Persuasion or Socialize (not including rolls to use Disciplines).

**History and Culture:** The En bloodline takes its name from the Sumerian word meaning "lord" or "god" which was also the title given to the Kindred ruler of the shadow empire of ancient Babylonia. The En bloodline traces its roots back to a singularly puissant En, Isiratuu, who held regency over much of Babylonia for twelve thousand years. It is said that the founder of the bloodline gained a "great and terrible gift" from a dark stranger in a dream. It was this gift that gave him the strength and the right to rule over all. Kindred descending from the En are said to have



similar experiences involving a shadowy being of some kind.

Members of the bloodline are born leaders, and, as most En would say, were obviously meant to reign due to their royal lineage. Many Emperors feel utterly justified in unceremoniously claiming positions of authority, and they expect nothing less than the utmost respect when they do so. Members of the En bloodline do not tolerate objection to their inherited supremacy, and, when it will not hinder his advancement, an En uses brutal means to make certain that contesting vampires are aware of that fact.

A Daeva is recognized as a member of the bloodline when he is chosen by a "Dark Stranger" — a symbiotic demon called an alu. Alu feed off of the corrupt power of their Kindred host, and, in return, they assist those of the bloodline in their rise to greatness by granting them certain abilities known as the Gifts of the Alu.

An alu seeks out a Kindred host and offers a partnership. While any Daeva might be suitable, Alu tend to prefer Kindred descended from En Isiratuu, perhaps drawn to the lust for power passed on through the progenitor's blood. If the vampire accepts the demon's offer, he becomes a full-fledged member of the bloodline. The alu merges with the new Emperor, becoming one with his blood. As the demon feeds off of its host it increases in power, and the abilities it bestows upon the vampire become more formidable. The powers granted by an alu should be used carefully, however, as the En runs the risk of losing himself entirely by consorting with the demon (see Gifts of the Alu, below).

En Embrace often, but are relatively few in number because they typically do so purely to build up a support system of loyal followers. They are not fond of competition, and as such, En typically try to Embrace from mortals who others easily manipulated in life. However, because members of the bloodline are so focused upon their own advancement, they tend to frequently misjudge the strength and potential of their children. True En arise from these errors in judgment, as an alu can recognize innate potential for power even if an Emperor cannot.



New En surpass their sires to repeat the vicious cycle with each new generation.

**Reputation:** En have a reputation for using corrupt methods to quickly rise to power, making them unpopular to all but their most devoted subjects. Diablerie is common among the En bloodline, and Emperors do not suffer the same detriments that other vampires would by committing such an act. Perhaps because of this, Kindred who know of the En greatly fear the bloodline.

Some vampires, however, are more than willing to follow an En, as power often trickles down to those beneath. An Emperor can be most generous to those who serve him devotedly and acknowledge his superiority, granting favors and portioning authority among his supporters.

**Concepts:** Corrupt politician, rising starlet, demanding father-figure, brash drug lord, deluded serial killer, condescending magistrate, cult leader, callous CEO, mob boss, arrogant aristocrat

### *Gifts of the Alu*

The abilities an En gains from his alu are devastating to those who hinder his advancement to power. A vampire in partnership with an alu must be careful, however. If an En's Humanity should ever drop to zero, the alu takes over the body of its Kindred host entirely, destroying the soul of the vampire in the process. Even more frightening is that an alu who takes over its host can do so seamlessly, being intimately familiar with every detail of the unlife of the vampire whose body it shared – leaving those around the En none the wiser. An Emperor who wishes to reap the benefits his symbiotic demon provides must carefully balance his actions and forever remind himself what it was like to be human, lest he cross the point of no return and utterly lose himself to his demon.

Activating Gifts of the Alu requires no roll or expenditure unless otherwise stated. A character always has the option of using a Gift available to him, though benefits of the Gift may be “turned off” at the Kindred's discretion.

Gifts of the Alu are purchased with experience points at the same cost as in-clan Disciplines, with the number of Gifts available to the En serving as the current level, and the “new level” being the next Gift to be achieved. For example, a character with Addiction Immunity and Transcend Amaranth would need to spend 18 experience points to buy Build Brood. Gifts of the Alu do not necessarily need to be purchased in any order, but they each require a specific level of Blood Potency. A character who has purchased Build Brood can only use it if his Blood

Potency remains at 4 or higher. If, for some reason, his Blood Potency drops below four, he still possesses the Gift, but he may not use Build Brood until his Blood Potency returns to the required level (although he can use Gifts that are at lower levels, with lower Blood Potency requirements). Required Blood Potency levels are noted for each Gift below.

### *Addiction Immunity*

#### **Required Blood Potency: 1**

If an En wishes to become truly powerful, he must be unhindered by the urges of addiction. It is imperative that he be able to gain his power wisely and strategically, and preoccupation with an addiction can obscure the path to greatness. An Emperor with Addiction Immunity is shielded from addiction by his alu, and cannot become addicted to drugs, Vitae or the act of diablerie. The En has complete control over whether or not he consumes substances or commits acts that would ordinarily be addictive to most Kindred. For example, if a character who has imbibed Vitae has the chance to do so again, the player need not roll Resolve + Composure for the En to resist the temptation (as he feels none). He may, however, choose to drink the blood again if doing so serves his purpose. Emperors with Addition Immunity are still able to be bound by Vinculum, however.

### *Transcend Amaranth*

#### **Required Blood Potency: 2**

The act of diablerie is the single most efficient way to gain great power in a short period of time. While many Kindred fear the consequences of the tradition of Amaranth, an En's alu shields his host from most negative effects of drinking the soul of another vampire. When an Emperor attempts to commit the act of diablerie (as described on pp. 158-160 of **Vampire: The Requiem**), his alu assists him in the process. As such, he has a limit of rolls when attempting to commit diablerie equal to the diablerist's Willpower dots +3. If the act is successful, the En reaps all of the typical benefits from diablerie. Additionally, the alu cleanses the En's aura of the telltale black veins that would typically reveal his crime. The character's Humanity automatically drops by one, but he does not need to roll to avoid a derangement.

### *Build Brood*

#### **Required Blood Potency: 4**

A leader is only as strong as his followers. To acquire greatness, an En must have a solid base of support. Inherently understanding the basic primal fact of power in numbers, an Emperor's alu



can assist the vampire when he Embraces a new childe. An En with Build Brood may Embrace with the expenditure of a *point*, rather than a dot, of Willpower. As such, he may build up his number of progeny quickly, Embracing many new Kindred at a time if he chooses to do so.

Embracing brings the curse of undeath upon mortals, however, and doing so casually or in great numbers may cause an En to lose touch with his Humanity. When a character uses the Build Brood Gift he must make a degeneration roll (roll two dice). If the character fails the degeneration roll, he loses a dot of Humanity, but he does not take a derangement, as his alu shields him from madness.

### *Blood of the En*

#### **Required Blood Potency: 7**

An En never falls into torpor from having a high Blood Potency. When an En's blood becomes so potent that feeding becomes difficult, his alu can sustain him until suitable nourishment becomes available. During the time that an alu sustains its host, the En is perpetually hungry, but not to the point that hunger frenzy occurs. An alu is only able to sustain his host for so long, however. If an En is unable to find a suitable source of Vitae within a number of weeks equal to his Blood Potency, the alu reduces his host's Blood Potency by one dot per week until it is at a more manageable level. The En's Blood Potency does not drop below 6, however, as the required Blood Potency to use this Gift is 7. This ability allows the En to rule indefinitely, weathering the times when suitable nourishment is unavailable, and allowing him to build his strength back up when food is plentiful once more – without losing authority or position by falling into torpor.

### *Loose Alu*

#### **Required Blood Potency: 8**

The En's alu has become so powerful that the En no longer needs to commit diablerie. With a single touch, the alu can reach from its host into the victim, pulling the target's soul directly from her body and integrating it into the En. In combat, an Emperor must successfully grapple his foe in order to use Loose Alu. Once the character achieves contact with his victim, he may perform Loose Alu as an instant action. If the act is successful, the En drains the victim of her soul and the empty body immediately dissolves to dust. All of the usual effects of diablerie apply, including the acquisition of a dot of a Skill or Discipline. The En's Humanity automatically drops by one, but his

alu shields him from having to take a derangement, and removes the black veins from his aura. Loose Alu is contested by the victim's Resolve + Composure.

**Action:** Instant and contested; target rolls Resolve + Composure reflexively

**Dice Pool:** Resolve + Brawl + Blood Potency

#### **Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** Part of the En's own soul imbues his victim. The En's adversary may take a dot in either a Skill or a Discipline that the En possessed at a higher level than the target does. The increase need not be paid for with experience points. The victim does *not* lose a dot in Humanity. The En's Humanity still automatically drops by one, however, and the attempt fails.

**Failure:** Loose Alu fails entirely, but not dangerously. The En's Humanity still automatically drops by one.

**Success:** Loose Alu takes place as described.

**Exceptional Success:** No effect for extra successes.

### *Reshape Soul*

#### **Required Blood Potency: 10**

At a Blood Potency of 10 an En's alu has reached its full potential, and can reshape the very soul of its host to accommodate abilities he would never be able to contain otherwise. An En may use the gift Reshape Soul in tandem with Transcend Amaranth or Loose Alu. The gift Reshape Soul allows the En to take a dot in any bloodline's *unique* Discipline, *in addition to* the benefits already reaped from Transcend Amaranth or Loose Alu. The Emperor may take a dot in any bloodline's unique Discipline that the victim possessed at a higher level than the En. He can learn bloodline-specific Disciplines *only* by using this Gift. An En may *not* spend experience points to gain additional dots in another bloodline's unique Discipline, for example.

### **THE ALU TRIUMPHANT**

What happens, then, when an En's alu symbiote overtakes him? Such creatures do not enter the perpetual frenzy of other zero-Humanity Kindred. Alu-controlled vampires are capable of behaving exactly like their former hosts, using their Skills and Disciplines, and, of course, the Gifts of the Alu. Such beings are extremely dangerous to other Kindred, since they retain their taste for diablerie.

# THE EDIMMU

There are seven! There are seven!  
Return to the depths of the ocean!  
Return to the heights of the heaven!  
Return to the ocean stream in the palace of your birth!  
Heed us and return!  
There are seven! There are seven!  
Twice over there are seven!

—An ancient Babylonian Chant to exorcise the seven spirits of the Edimmu

As the records of the United tell, in ancient Babylonia the first Edimmu was created by a coven of mystics in order to destroy En Isiratuu. The En's swift rise to power was due to his unique ability to drink the souls of Kindred, while never falling into torpor or succumbing to madness and growing ever more powerful with each soul consumed. Knowing this, the Coven of Nanaja created a creature that would tear the En apart from within if he should ever try to consume its soul. The monster the coven created was a perfect weapon to use against the En.

A cold, calculating killer, the Edimmu has the ability to appear as though it were simply another vampire. Inside the creature, however, are seven vengeful spirits driven to destroy the Damned. Once the original Edimmu had achieved its purpose and destroyed the En, it was unable to be controlled (scholars of the United suspect that the Coven of Nanaja may have been tampering with forces they only partly understood). When the En attempted to diablerize the soul of the Edimmu, the seven spirits did destroy the En as the coven had planned. But in addition to killing En Isiratuu, it fed upon him, Beast, body and soul, multiplied, and continued to massacre the Damned of ancient Babylonia until the remaining Kindred gathered their forces and slowly regained control.

**Background:** Those well-versed in the occult believe that the seven spirits harbored within the Edimmu were never meant to be called to Earth. It was Kindred who tore them from their paradise for selfish reasons. Perhaps this is why it is all Kindred who seemingly must pay.

Although Edimmu seek to destroy all Kindred, they can only multiply through the act of diablerie, and so they rely upon the very creatures they wish to annihilate to help them proliferate. An Edimmu who wishes to "breed" seeks out a vampire with a black-veined aura, and then goads that target into committing diablerie upon him. When a vampire attempts to drink the soul of an Edimmu, the seven spirits rush from the body of the creature into the

unsuspecting Kindred. The seven spirits consume the body, Beast and soul of the vampire, and then multiply by seven. Once the vampire has been utterly consumed, seven skeins — each with seven new spirits — burst forth into the night in search of nearby Kindred to possess and transform into new Edimmu. Each skein can survive a single night without a host, after which the seven spirits are unmade. The spirits' attempt to possess a new host is an instant, contested action. A skein rolls one die for each spirit (7 total), and the host resists with Resolve + Stamina. If the possession attempt succeeds, the host's soul is consumed and a new Edimmu is created. If the possession attempt fails, the skein seeks a different host. A skein never tries to possess the same vampire twice.

In ancient Mesopotamia, it was customary for certain high-ranking vampires to perform diablerie on their enemies with proper ritual. The act was a display of authority, and the power gained was publicly said to be for the good of the Empire. This practice was tolerated and accepted due to the fact that any given vampire in a position of authority who performed diablerie would succumb to madness or torpor (and sooner, rather than later), clearing the way for a new successor. It was due in part to this custom that the Edimmu became such a threat. The seven spirits fed upon the Beast of the diablerizing host, multiplying by seven each time and leaving no witnesses to tell tale of the act. Because diablerie is less common tonight, the Edimmu's numbers are greatly diminished, but the threat still remains.

**Description:** The Edimmu, in its "natural" form, has a generally humanoid shape, but its limbs and flesh are warped by the seven vengeful spirits it carries. Its skin may bulge and ripple from the movements of the spirits within, or it may appear to have too many or not enough joints, causing it to move or walk strangely. An Edimmu has no eyes, instead, its empty sockets burn with the cold, blue light of the seven vengeful spirits — windows to the

## THE UNITED

As coterie formed to fight the Edimmu, it became clear that a means of organizing attacks between independent groups of Kindred was needed. Thus, the United was formed. The United was a group of Kindred devoted to making information on the Edimmu available to all vampires who asked — the better to expedite the destruction of this common threat. Such generosity was born purely from necessity. Tonight, the United continues its role of acquiring information on supernatural creatures that threaten the existence of the Damned. Following the traditions of Babylon, once a document is marked with the seal of the United, it must be made available to any Kindred who asks to view it.

world outside. The Edimmu always has a distinctive brand somewhere upon its form, where the flesh of its host was burned by the force of the seven spirits rushing into the body. To unsuspecting Kindred, an Edimmu has the ability to look like the vampire whose body it claimed. In vampire form, the only way to distinguish an Edimmu from an unpossessed Kindred is by the distinctive “Brand of the Edimmu” that appears somewhere upon the creature’s body, impossible to hide through magical means but able to be concealed with clothing or makeup.

The destruction of even a single Edimmu was a long and arduous task. Each of the seven spirits within the body of the undead host has a ban, so seven bans must be collected. The bans might reflect the nature of the spirits or something appropriate to the type of spirit composing the skein. A death-spirit might respond to cemetery dirt, for example. Other bans reflect the nature of the host, something personal to the vampire who the seven spirits destroyed upon possession. The blood or tissue of a living relative of the vampire, a favored possession, or even the vampire’s birth name spoken aloud might qualify.

Each spirit contained within an Edimmu is distinct from the others, and they alternate dominance over the host. As each spirit’s personality comes forward the Edimmu’s speech, mannerisms and preferences might change (a spirit of a reptile might avoid cooler areas and seek heat, for example). Through observation and study, coterie tracking an Edimmu may gain clues about the nature of each particular spirit. It may take years to uncover all seven, despite the meticulous records of the United cataloguing known bans. Once the bans are collected, the Edimmu can be contained within a circle of the seven bans and a ritualistic chant can be performed, exorcising the seven spirits from the body of the possessed Kindred.

An Edimmu confronted with any of its bans is rendered immobile, at which point a coterie may perform an exorcism. The exorcism is an extended and contested action, with each roll representing five minutes of chanting (troupes performing an exorcism should refer to the rules for Teamwork on p. 134 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). The exorcists’ players roll Resolve + Composure + (the total number of bans collected by the group) versus the Edimmu’s Wits + Composure. On each roll, the side with the most successes causes the other to lose one point of Willpower. In the event that the Edimmu obtains the most successes, it regains movement for a number of turns equal to its current Willpower, interrupting the exorcism. When the Edimmu is subdued once more, the exorcism may pick up where it left off. The exorcism rolls continue until the characters voluntarily abandon the attempt, or one side runs out of Willpower. If a character runs out of Willpower during an exorcism, he falls into torpor (if using the teamwork rules mentioned above, only the primary actor loses Willpower, and the character acting in this capacity can change from turn to turn). If the Edimmu runs out of Willpower, the spirits are no longer able to maintain their hold on the host. The spirits disincorporate, leaving behind an empty body (which subsequently dissolves to dust).

Note that it is possible to destroy an Edimmu piece by piece, but that the greatest advantage lies in assembling all seven of the bans at once. The Edimmu’s traits do not decrease as the number of spirits do, but the bonus to the exorcism roll is only equal to the number of bans assembled at that particular exorcism. Once a given spirit is destroyed, its ban ceases to have any effect.

For example, a coterie might learn that an Edimmu’s bans include bat’s blood. They confront the Edimmu with a cut open bat, rendering the creature immobile. In the ensuing exorcism, the characters’ roll is Resolve + Composure + 1, since they have only acquired one ban. If the exorcism attempt is successful, one of the seven spirits of the Edimmu is destroyed, and the bat’s blood ban no longer applies.

Note, too, that an Edimmu that manages to reproduce (by inducing a vampire to diablerize it) regenerates all missing spirits. Upon being diablerized, an Edimmu with even one remaining spirit still produces seven skeins of seven spirits each.

**Attributes:** The Edimmu keeps the host’s Attribute ratings, but adds seven dots as the Storyteller sees fit.

**Mental Skills:** An Edimmu has the same Mental Skills that its host had before her body was claimed by the seven spirits, as well as an additional +2 Investigation and +1 Occult.

**Physical Skills:** An Edimmu has the same Physical Skills that its host had before her body was claimed by the seven spirits, as well as an additional +2 Athletics, +1 Brawl and +2 Stealth.

**Social Skills:** An Edimmu has the same Social Skills that its host had before her body was claimed by the seven spirits, as well as an additional +1 Intimidation, +2 Persuasion and +2 Subterfuge.

**Merits:** An Edimmu has the same Merits that its host had before her body was claimed by the seven spirits, as well as Fast Reflexes 2 and Fleet of Foot 3.

**Willpower:** Resolve + Composure

**Health:** Stamina + Size

**Initiative:** Dexterity + Composure + 2 (for Fast Reflexes)

**Defense:** Higher of Wits or Dexterity

**Speed:** Strength + Dexterity + 8 (for Fleet of Foot 3)

**Size:** as host vampire

**Essence:** Edimmu have an Essence pool equal to five times the number of spirits composing them (35, unless some spirits have been destroyed). They regenerate Essence at one point per day, and spend Essence in the same manner that vampires use Vitae (to heal, power Disciplines and increase Physical Attributes). Edimmu can spend up to five Essence per turn.

**Weapons/Attacks:** An Edimmu has the same weapons/attacks that its host had before her body was claimed by the seven spirits, in addition to Spirit Burn (see below).

#### Supernatural Aspects:

- **Hide True Form:** An Edimmu has the ability to look like the vampire whose body it claimed. At will, it can hide its true form to appear like an ordinary vampire. When Hide True Form is activated, the only way to distinguish an Edimmu from a typical Kindred is by the distinctive "Brand of the Edimmu" that appears somewhere upon the creature's body. This mark is impossible to hide through magical means, although an Edimmu is able to conceal their telltale mark using bandages or clothing, for example. Edimmu can trigger Predator's Taint if they so desire, and may choose the level of Blood Potency that other vampires' Beasts perceive.
- **Know the Host:** An Edimmu possesses the same knowledge of clan Disciplines that its host had before her body was claimed by the seven spirits, and may use these Disciplines as its host did in unlife. The Edimmu's effective Blood Potency is equal to the number of spirits that dwell within it (seven, unless some have been exorcised). Instead of Vitae, the creature spends Essence.

- **Goad Hunger:** Once per night, an Edimmu can induce a supernatural hunger so intense that a vampire will likely attempt diablerie upon it. While this power can be used on vampires who have never committed diablerie, it is much more effective on vampires who have performed diablerie in the past.

**Cost:** —

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Persuasion – Resolve

**Action:** Instant

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The attempt fails and the Edimmu may not attempt to use Goad Hunger again until the following night.

**Failure:** The attempt fails and the Edimmu may not attempt to use Goad Hunger on that vampire again until the following night.

**Success:** The Edimmu induces a state of intense hunger in the targeted vampire, putting him on the verge of hunger frenzy (see p. 179 of **Vampire: The Requiem**). Once Goad Hunger is in effect, resisting frenzy is an extended action, as usual. If the character fails to resist wassail, once Goad Hunger has been successfully performed, he immediately feels compelled to diablerize the Edimmu (allowing the Edimmu to multiply, and causing the Final Death of the vampire) and suffers all other usual effects of Wassail. Vampires under frenzy induced by Goad Hunger may not attempt to ride the wave.

**Exceptional Success:** No special effect for extra successes.

The following factors dictate how many successes must be achieved in order to resist wassail brought about by Goad Hunger.

Successes Required to Resist	Situation
2 successes	The character has never performed diablerie.
3 successes	The character is blood-addicted.
4 successes	The character has performed diablerie once.
6 successes	The character has performed diablerie repeatedly.

- **Mental Influence Immunity:** Edimmu are impervious to all Disciplines and other vampire-specific supernatural powers that would otherwise cause it to be controlled, compelled or mentally influenced in any way. It is resistant, though not completely immune, to other such supernatural powers. If the

power usually subtracts a resistance trait from the roll, the Edimmu's relevant number is *doubled*. If the power involves a resistance roll, the Edimmu enjoys a +3 to that roll (in addition to the creature's effective Blood Potency; see above).

- **Spirit Burn:** An Edimmu can cause its spirit-infused flesh to burn any vampire it touches. When the Edimmu grapples a vampire and inflicts damage with an overpower maneuver (see p. 157 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**), the damage is considered aggravated.
- **Warp Form:** Edimmu are held together by the spirits within, and as such can reflexively alter their forms as an instant action, twisting, stretching or warping their flesh and muscle to gain unusual advantages. For example, an Edimmu can retract its ears back into its scalp to muffle sound, or lengthen its arms to reach a handhold that would normally be too high. These changes last for one scene or until the Edimmu chooses to revert to its typical form. Several possible uses of this power are described below:
  - **Muscle Augmentation:** By shifting its musculature, detaching currently unnecessary muscles and reinforcing those being actively used, an Edimmu can increase its Strength or Dexterity by +2. Doing so causes the opposing Attribute to drop by -2. Thus, increasing its Strength impacts its Dexterity, and vice versa.
  - **Muscle Hardening:** By moving muscle fibers around in its body to compensate for impact, the Edimmu gains an Armor rating of 2. This armor is cumulative with armor from other sources. This shift is performed as an instant action, and the Edimmu suffers a -1 to Strength and Dexterity while using this ability.
  - **Entanglement:** By shifting and stretching its flesh, an Edimmu can entangle and enwrap an enemy. This grants a +2 to all grapple rolls, but inflicts a -1 to its Strength and Dexterity for all non-grappling purposes. To use this ability, the Edimmu must inflict one point of lethal damage on itself, in order to extrude the muscle fibers.
  - **Brachiation:** By exuding muscle fibers from its shoulders, back or arms (generally through a break in the skin somewhere), an Edimmu may use muscle tendrils to climb, either allowing them to pull its form upwards, or using them to aid its own climbing efforts. If it chooses to allow the fibers to

do the climbing, it is capable of using its hands for other things. It gains a reflexive action each turn that is only used for climbing (whether to perform climbing as an instant or extended action).

If it chooses to aid its own climbing efforts, it gains a +3 to its climbing rolls, and each climbing roll in an extended action takes only 30 seconds, rather than the normal minute. Use of this ability inflicts a -1 to its Strength and Dexterity for any non-climbing purposes. To use this ability, the Edimmu must inflict one point of lethal damage on itself, in order to exude the muscle fibers. See Climbing on p. 64 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.

- **Attack:** By exuding muscle fibers into a strong, thin whip-like tendril, an Edimmu can attack its foes. This may be exuded from its body anywhere it bears a wound, creating a mobile tendril that can attack any opponent within two yards. This tendril can be used to open terrible gashes by making the end of it thin, or may bludgeon opponents with a thicker ball of muscle. This is a Strength + Brawl roll, with a +2 bonus (if it inflicts bashing damage), or no bonus (if it inflicts lethal damage).

If the tendril is exuded from the arm, the Edimmu may use that arm to facilitate the attack; this adds one die to the attack pool. While using this ability, the Edimmu gains a -1 to its Strength and Dexterity for any non-attacking purposes (as well as to Defense). To use this ability, the Edimmu must inflict one point of lethal damage on itself, in order to exude the muscle fibers.

- **Other:** This ability can be used for a variety of effects not covered above. With the Storyteller's permission, assume that it can be used to gain a +2 to a roll involving muscle power, though the Edimmu suffers a -1 to Strength and Dexterity for all other tasks not directly related to those the muscles are dedicated to at that moment.
- **Unnatural Predator:** An Edimmu can instinctively sense the presence of the Damned, and can recognize its prey immediately on sight. If a vampire has hidden itself, or attempts to flee, an Edimmu receives a +5 modifier to tracking and finding its prey.
- **Aura Perception:** An Edimmu can see the aura that surrounds each vampire, (see p. 162 of **Vampire: The Requiem**). This requires a Wits + Composure roll. In this way the Edimmu can detect the black veins present in the aura of a diablerist, finding more suitable targets to attempt Goad Hunger on (see above).

# BLOODLINES OF ANCIENT EGYPT (CIRCA 1279 BCE)

Egypt was a land of one religion, yet many gods, each one focusing on a core necessity in the lives of the average citizen. The Sun (Ra), the Desert (Set) and Knowledge itself (Thoth) all had their own deities. The Underworld had several gods assuming various roles, including those of arbiter (Horus), judge (Anubis) and guide (Osiris). In the mid 1300s BCE, Pharaoh Akhenaton attempted to monotheize Egypt's culture through military might. This had serious ramifications for the undead, as well as the living, of Egypt.

After almost a hundred years of infighting, the followers of the pantheon of gods finally looked past their differences and banded together, forming what is known today among some Kindred historians as the Great Covenant. The gods returned to their rightful places in Egyptian society, led by the Servants of Ra and the Warriors of the Dead (and supported by Pharaoh Ramses II).

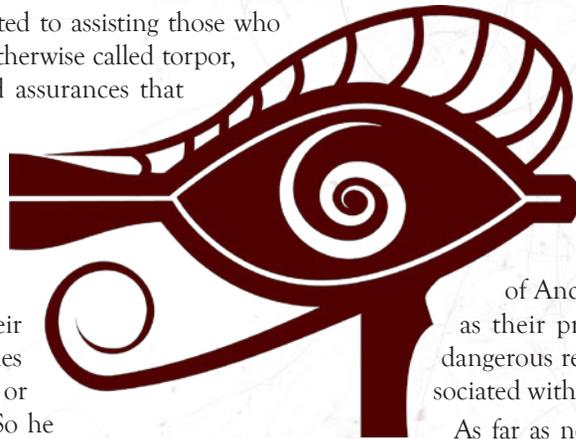
The Great Covenant was composed of members from all five known clans and brought together the various gods in a unique power-sharing structure. The Servants of Ra would oversee most major long-term decisions affecting Egyptian Kindred as well as be final arbiter of all disputes, the Warriors of the Dead would have final say on all matters regarding the Embrace and torpor, while the followers of the other gods were given supreme, night-to-night control over all other aspects of their specific city-states.

The unity that the Great Covenant brought to Egyptian Kindred and their herds was unparalleled and remained intact for hundreds of years, even after the Greeks invaded the Nile valley. It all came to an end, however, when the Roman Empire, specifically, Ventrue-led Kindred, invaded Egypt and systematically wiped out or sent into hiding the followers of the pantheon of gods. It is believed that several bloodlines were hastily created in order to keep the secrets of the gods hidden from the invaders. The Anubi, a Gangrel-dominated bloodline, claim to be descendants of that time period, while the Circle of the Crone holds within its ranks Kindred who still worship the female gods of Ancient Egypt. Two other bloodlines, however, have recently emerged.

## USIRI

Yes, of course you can trust me.

The Cult of Osiris was dedicated to assisting those who knew that the brother of sleep, otherwise called torpor, was soon to come. They offered assurances that memories would be kept safe and that battles against the demons of the Underworld and the God of the Dead would be fought and won. The creator of the bloodline, a Nosferatu High Priest of Osiris, became concerned that their secrets could easily be stolen by spies from the traitorous Cult of Set or even from lands beyond Egypt. So he decided to make sure those secrets would be safe from anyone and everyone who were not of his blood.



The Usiri, who called themselves the Warriors of the Dead, were quite different from what most other Kindred believed them to be. In reality, they were collectors of information, hoarders of that most precious of commodities: secrets. The rest of the Kindred of Ancient Egypt, however, saw the Usiri as their protectors and guides through the dangerous realm of nightmares and dreams associated with torpor.

As far as non-Usiri knew, the Warriors had a twofold mission: to fight Kindred enemies in the dreamscape of torpor and to assist their Kindred allies on an

undoubtedly difficult and often nightmarish journey through the Underworld. Those who awakened from torpor often found themselves being comforted by an attending Usiri priest, who would whisper to them of the glorious battles they had fought against demons and, in some cases, even manifestations of Osiris himself. These whispered tales were described by the Usiri in exhaustive detail, providing the newly awakened Kindred with numerous images and stories to draw upon.

In modern nights, the Usiri have found a niche as information gatherers, Kindred psychologists and advisors to elder Princes who covet what the Usiri offer. Thus, the Warriors of the Dead have reinvented themselves. They still proclaim to do battle with the spirits of the Underworld and they continue offering to protect and store the memories of those Kindred who near their time of torpor. Now, though, they do so from a more secular standpoint. The ancient Egyptian god of the dead has no place in the modern world, it seems, and some ultra-orthodox Usiri fear that Osiris might consider them betrayers, and even go so far as to exact vengeance upon them for abandoning Him. This consideration has caused those Sleepers to take their own, memory-saving precautions.

**Parent Clan:** Nosferatu

**Bloodline Disciplines:** Auspex, Hypnagogia, Nightmare, Obfuscate,

**Nickname:** Warriors of the Dead (ancient times), Sleepers (modern nights)

**Weakness:** Usiri suffer the Nosferatu clan weakness (see p. 111 of **Vampire: The Requiem**).

Further, the Usiri truly believe that whenever they fall asleep, they enter the Underworld to do battle with the demons and horrors that exist there. They also believe that they must traverse numerous obstacles within that Underworld. This mental and spiritual struggle throughout the day takes a toll on the Usiri sleeper and one point of Willpower is lost upon awakening each night. This point can be regained by fulfilling their Virtue or Vice or by accomplishing a significant goal (see p. 96 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**).

**History and Culture:** Usiri was initially the title given to the High Priest of Osiris. Kindred who worshipped this particular god became fascinated with stories of the Underworld and with assisting Ra, the Sun, in its nightly battle to rise again each morning. The Usiri began searching for ways, through study and prayer, to protect the mind while the body slept and the spirit waged war on the Underworld's demons. The Usiri became known as Warriors of the Dead, Kindred who would take and protect the memories of their allies as they slept. They were trusted among many ancient Egyptian Kindred (including followers from the Cults of Ra, Anubis and Horus, for example) and rejected by others (the Cults of Set and Thoth, whose followers feared the idea of trusting others with their thoughts more so than losing those memories to the fog of time).

Everything changed for the Usiri upon the Roman (and Ventrué) invasion. The gods of Egypt were dismissed as mythology and the Usiri were decried as liars and tricksters. It was then that they made a pact among themselves to leave the waking domain and enter Osiris's Realm. They agreed to enter voluntary torpor and vanish into the Underworld until such a time as the invaders had long forgotten them. They hoped that, by spreading their memories and histories among each other, through numbers alone enough of their history would survive the time spent in the Underworld. Until enough of them are awakened, the Sleepers bide their time.

Enough Kindred in modern nights fear what they could lose should they be forced prematurely, for whatever reason, into torpor. The Usiri use this fear as a tool to gain positions of power within various Courts. They can be found

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### AN USIRI TRUTH

Before the birth of Christ, when preparation for the final sleep included both judgment and the actual journey into the Underworld, Usiri Kindred used their abilities to pretend at being real warriors of the dead. Any problems with a memory that was unrecoverable, for whatever reason, could be explained away as the wrath of Osiris or a battle lost within the dreamscape. Obviously, this rarely happened, otherwise the Usiri reputation as knowledgeable guides and steadfast protectors would suffer.

Usiri of the present are faced with a much more difficult conundrum. Belief in the Underworld is no longer a given in modern nights. A vampire may indeed fear torpor enough to ask for Usiri protection, but that aegis might be from something that the Sleepers know nothing about. Usiri awakening in modern nights are therefore drawn to the occult and, specifically, to more recent Kindred history, in an effort to get "up-to-speed" on the fears and needs of their clients.

The Sleepers are masters at making their clients believe what they want them to believe. The truth of the Usiri predicament is far more pathetic than a simple lie, however. The Usiri *know* that everything they are peddling to their clients is a complete fabrication. They manufacture magnificent Underworld battles and plant those thoughts, images and ideas into the minds of their clients. The members of this bloodline are aware of this and it is their job to continue to spread the lie, if only to keep their bloodline from being hunted down and destroyed by those who might take offense. They are the faux guardians of the dreamscape. Their existence is predicated on the ability to keep torpid vampires from losing their memories (and their minds). In this, at least, they offer a great service to many within the Kindred community, regardless of how they sell themselves.

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in every covenant, whispering to whomever will listen to them, offering guaranteed protection from the brother of sleep and returning the memories handed over for safe storage. Fortunately for the Usiri, the information they help to protect will always be a part of them.

In their efforts to adjust to present time, the Usiri have begun making overtures to their ancient allies, the Anubi, and the re-awakening Bak-Ra, concerning the formation of a pact between their respective bloodlines. Whispers within the Circle of the Crone suggest that they, too, have been contacted by the Sleepers. After all, they have given up so much and have received so little in return. The Sleepers are snake-oil salesmen, except that their particular concoction is the stuff of nightmares. They continue to perform their rituals of memory protection, however, all the while collecting and storing every other bit of information they can to help them survive.

**Reputation:** The history of the Usiri has been lost, as far as most Kindred know. These days, they are thought of as either the protectors of secrets (by those who believe in dreams, the occult and superstition) or as con-artists (by those Kindred with mental abilities who aren't so swayed by the power of dreams or the threat of losing precious memories). At this point in the modern Requiem, there are simply too few of them to make an accurate assessment of the bloodline as a whole, although if they are capable of even half of what they claim, there might be reason to worry. The Usiri bring into question the entire notion of what is real and what isn't — a vampire might ask, are the thoughts in my head my thoughts or were they placed there by someone else?

**Concepts:** Court advisor, bodyguard, dream interpreter, spy/information gatherer, occult instructor, new-age guru, private detective, Egyptologist, archeologist, Kindred psychologist

### *Hypnagogia*

Hypnagogia is that brief state between consciousness and sleep where the mind and spirit go to prepare for their journey into the Underworld. It is a feeling of total relaxation, a moment of perfection after a long night of struggle and before the inevitable horrors of daylight slumber.

The Usiri use this Discipline to take memories for “safe-keeping,” add memories for “client pliability,” create a place of bliss where the Beast cannot enter, convince the sleeper that they are friendly guides who have come to protect and help him, or, in extreme cases, brutally attack and erase whatever memories they uncover.

Hypnagogia can be a tool for bringing calm to allies, gathering information or, ultimately, as a weapon to destroy an enemy.

Using this Discipline requires that the Usiri is within (Blood Potency in yards x 10) of a sleeping or torpid vampire. While using Hypnagogia, the Usiri is, to all scrutiny, asleep. If someone tries to rouse her, she responds as described on p. 184 of **Vampire: The Requiem**).

Usiri are able to take a specific memory from another Kindred and collect it for themselves. The memory is instantly stored in “the void,” a part of the Usiri's own subconscious mind that she has compartmentalized and kept separate from her conscious. It takes a great deal of control and willpower to keep the walls of the void in place, but as long as the Usiri remains active that control is maintained.

If, however, the Usiri falls into torpor, all control over the void is lost. If she hasn't yet returned the stored memories to their rightful owners, they become as susceptible to the Fog of Eternity as any Kindred's.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Persuasion + Hypnagogia vs. Resolve + Blood Potency

**Action:** Instant and contested (resistance is reflexive)

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** For the rest of the night, the user instantly adopts any derangements present in the target.

**Failure:** The user is unable to grasp the subject's target memory. Another attempt cannot be made until the next evening.

**Success:** The user successfully grasps the subject's target memory, where it immediately goes into the void for safekeeping.

**Exceptional Success:** The user grasps the subject's target memory and another random memory along with it. The subject is unaware that a second memory has been taken.

### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	Power is focused on, or applies to, a vampire with whom the user has a blood tie.
-	Power is used on a willing subject.
-1	Power is used on an unwilling subject.
-3	Subject has a suspicion or paranoia derangement.

### •• *Overwrite*

The Usiri is able to overwrite a specific thought or image from his victim with one of his own choosing. She now believes that this new “memory” is her own and that she has personally experienced it at some point in her past.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** Manipulation + Persuasion + Hypnagogia vs. Composure + Blood Potency

**Action:** Instant and contested (resistance is reflexive)

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** For the rest of the night, the attacker is unable to overwrite the victim's memory and instantly adopts any derangements present in the victim.

**Failure:** The character loses or ties the contested roll and is unable to overwrite the victim's memory. The target is aware that someone is attempting to manipulate her and recognizes both "memories," including which one is real and which one is false.

**Success:** The character wins the contested roll. He is able to overwrite a memory with one of his own choosing. The victim believes that the new memory is, in fact, what really happened. She recalls the experience vaguely, as if it happened to someone else, but still believes it to be her own recollection.

**Exceptional Success:** The character wins a contested roll with five or more successes. He is able to overwrite an undesirable memory with a new one. Further, he is able to provide some supporting details, giving it a more "real" feel. The victim recalls the experience subjectively, as if she was an integral part of it.

The overwritten memory cannot encompass more than a scene's worth of time, and if the subject is ever confronted with direct evidence of the truth, the subject's player rolls Intelligence + Composure. If this roll succeeds, the character's original memory comes back. If the use of Overwrite resulted in an exceptional success, the subject receives a -2 modifier to the roll to remember.

#### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	Power is focused on, or applies to, a vampire with whom the user has a blood tie.
-2	The victim has the Eidetic Memory Merit.
-3	The victim has a suspicion or paranoia derangement.

#### ••• *The Realm Between*

This power is the true definition of Hypnagogia. It allows the Usiri to project a feeling of bliss and perfection onto another individual, relaxing and smothering him in a state of euphoria. The Beast itself is completely denied and violent activity isn't even a consideration while in the Realm Between. The victim is in a state of Hypnagogia and can remain in such as state until the end of the scene.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower

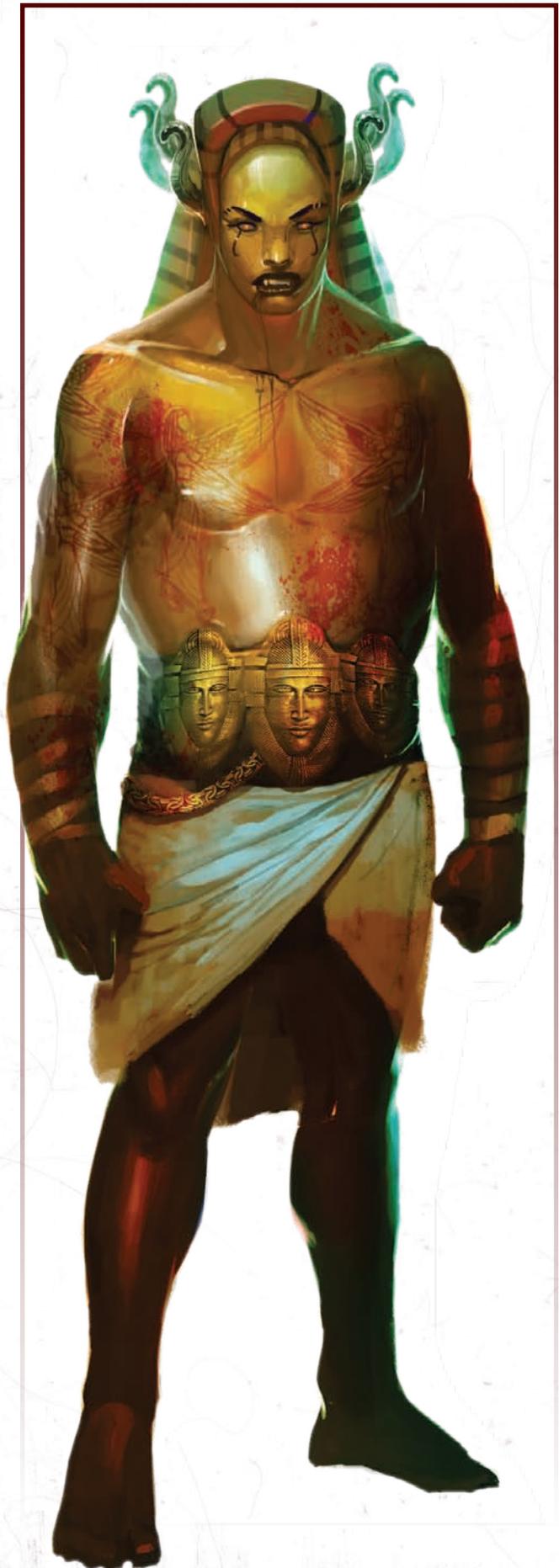
**Dice Pool:** Manipulation + Persuasion + Hypnagogia vs. Composure + Blood Potency

**Action:** Instant and contested (resistance is reflexive)

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** Rather than pacifying the Beast, the character unleashes it and the target must check for frenzy.

**Failure:** The character loses or ties the contested roll. The attempt to pacify the Beast fails and the target is unaffected.





**Success:** The character wins the contested roll. The target feels all his rage begin to dissolve. He finds himself feeling peaceful and content. The character suffers a -3 modifier to all violent or aggressive actions for the rest of the scene, and all rolls to resist frenzy receive a +3 modifier. Riding the wave requires seven successes, rather than five.

**Exceptional Success:** The character wins a contested roll with five or more successes. As success above, except that the effect extends until the end of the night. The Beast is completely pacified and the subject has no clear understanding of how it happened, nor does she care.

#### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+1	The target is in a state of relaxation.
-1	A conflict (physical or otherwise) involving the target has occurred at some point during the present scene.
-3	The target has a suspicion or paranoia derangement.

#### ◆◆◆ Spirit Guide

While the subject sleeps, the vampire makes contact with the sleeper's dream-image and attempts to convince his target he is her friend and confidant in the dream world. He is able to extend his awareness into the mind of the target and pretend to be a friendly dream guide there to assist the subject. While in the dream state, he is able to interact with the subject and, potentially, milk her for whatever information he's looking for.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae + 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Persuasion + Hypnagogia vs. Composure + Blood Potency

**Action:** Instant and contested (resistance is reflexive)

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The character instantly adopts any derangements present in the target for the rest of the night.

**Failure:** The character loses or ties the contested roll and is unable to make contact with the subject's dream self. The victim remains asleep and unresponsive.

**Success:** The character wins the contested roll. He convinces the sleeper that he is, indeed, a good and trusted friend. He is able to ask his target one question and get the correct answer back immediately. This supersedes the victim's good judgment because the sleeper perceives the Usiri as part of her own dream — answering the question is therefore less a matter a literal conversation and more of the Usiri manipulating the victim's subconscious mind.

**Exceptional Success:** The character wins a contested roll with five or more successes. As success above, except that he is able to ask a second question of his victim and gain an additional piece of information.

### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	Power is focused on, or applies to, a vampire with whom the user has a blood tie.
+1	The user knows who the victim's allies are.
-3	Victim has a suspicion or paranoia derangement.

### ••••• *Tabula Rasa*

This is arguably the most fearsome power an Usiri, or any Kindred for that matter, can summon forth. It has the capability of completely wiping the mind of the intended target clean, erasing all memories of who and what the Kindred has been and still is, essentially creating a blank slate to be molded by the caster's will. The target is usually an unaware Kindred in torpor, but this can also be attempted against a waking target (willing or unwilling), provided the caster wishes to take the risk of destroying his own mind. This ability is invasive, to say the least, and few would ever willingly subject themselves to it, although one never knows what a paranoid Kindred might do to protect himself long-term.

If a player decides to use this power against an unwilling target, he must make a successful degeneration roll if his character's Humanity is above 4 (roll three dice).

Unlike other Hypnagogia powers, Tabula Rasa can be used against waking targets as well as sleeping ones. In this case, the target must be in the attacker's line of sight.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae + 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Persuasion + Hypnagogia versus Resolve + Blood Potency (willing subject or in torpor) or Manipula-

tion + Intimidation + Hypnagogia versus Resolve + Composure + Blood Potency (if the victim is awake and unwilling)

**Action:** Instant and contested (regardless of whether the subject is in torpor, is willing or unwilling, as the mind does not easily give itself to a foreign presence; resistance is reflexive)

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The vampire and the target are both subjected to surreal, terrifying nightmares. The attacker's player must succeed on a Resolve + Composure roll, or else the Usiri gains a severe derangement (paranoia is a good choice).

Also, regardless of whether the victim is willing or unwilling, the player must make a successful roll against degeneration.

**Failure:** The target's memories remain secure and intact. Further, the player of the Usiri must make a successful degeneration roll for his character regardless of whether the victim was willing or unwilling.

**Success:** The victim loses all short-term memories, from the present moment back to the beginning of the story. All Skills or Disciplines learned during this time are lost and must be relearned, but at half cost.

**Exceptional Success:** The victim of Tabula Rasa loses all memory of his identity. He is unaware of his vampiric condition and knows nothing of who he is, where he is or what has happened to him. He is a true blank slate, in the most complete meaning of the term.

### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+1	Power is focused on, or applies to, a vampire with whom the user has a blood tie.

## THE RAMIFICATIONS OF TABULA RASA

This is a truly devastating use of the Hypnagogia Discipline. The Storyteller needs to seriously consider the ramifications of what this power can do in the context of a game setting. Think about it: what if a character actually succeeds in erasing the mind of some unsuspecting elder? She no longer knows who or what she even is. It then becomes the job of the players and the Storyteller to incorporate this turn of events into their overall chronicle. What will become of the blanked Kindred's place in the power structure? What will her sire or her childer do when she is discovered as nothing more than a neonate? What will her covenant leaders do? Retrain her? Destroy her outright? Mold her into the perfect drone? Let her go to fend for herself?

Also, Tabula Rasa isn't the sort of power that the Storyteller should spring on players without some attention to whether they'd find sudden revocation of purchased traits and character memories entertaining. It might be wise to build some way for the memories to return into the story. Perhaps if the character confronts the Usiri who did this to her in the dreamscape, she can battle him and take back her unlife. But then, that raises the question of whether she *wanted* to lose those memories in the first place...

# BAK-RA

Help us break the curse or spend the rest of your undead lives in the darkness.

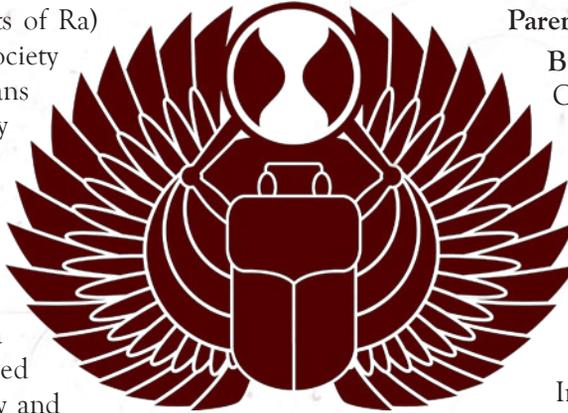
The Bak-Ra (literally, Servants of Ra) were once leaders of a great society of Kindred. They united the clans of Ancient Egypt when solidarity was needed most. They led by example, by fear and by wielding power that both terrified and awed their brethren. Once the Romans invaded the Kingdom of the Nile, however, the Bak-Ra found themselves being hunted down and persecuted for heresy and other crimes against the “one true God.”

Many of the Bak-Ra decided to enter voluntary torpor as a means of escaping the insidious traps of the Roman Kindred, hoping to keep Ra’s greatest, most powerful secrets away from the mongrel Ventrue of Rome and their vampire puppets.

Unfortunately for the Bak-Ra, they were forgotten, left buried in their tombs for an unfathomable three thousand years, unable to awaken themselves, consumed by madness and trapped in the fog of time. Now, they have an unquenchable thirst for everything that was taken from them. For the Bak-Ra of modern nights, their only hope is to rediscover their history and locate the rituals, tools and abilities that made them what they once were. They are in a desperate search for their identity and clues to their place in modern nights.

Now, an irresistible drive to remember who they were, and what they were once capable of, fills their blood with renewed purpose and vitality. The Bak-Ra who have awakened in the modern nights have become obsessive scholars, doing everything in their power to relearn their history. Sadly, those who have managed to crawl up from their earthen tombs find that they are often the targets of scorn, ridicule and mockery. This only fuels their insane fervor more, feeding their Beast for the night that they can unleash it and exact their revenge.

Finally, it is important to note that all the Bak-Ra know about their past is what is available to the historians of the modern nights, along with the few fragments that individual Bak-Ra kept in their tombs. No known member of this bloodline has awakened with her memories intact.



**Parent Clan:** Mekhet

**Bloodline Disciplines:** Auspex, Celerity, Majesty, Obfuscate

**Nickname:** Servants of Ra, Childer of the Sun, The Sun-Stroke (derogatory)

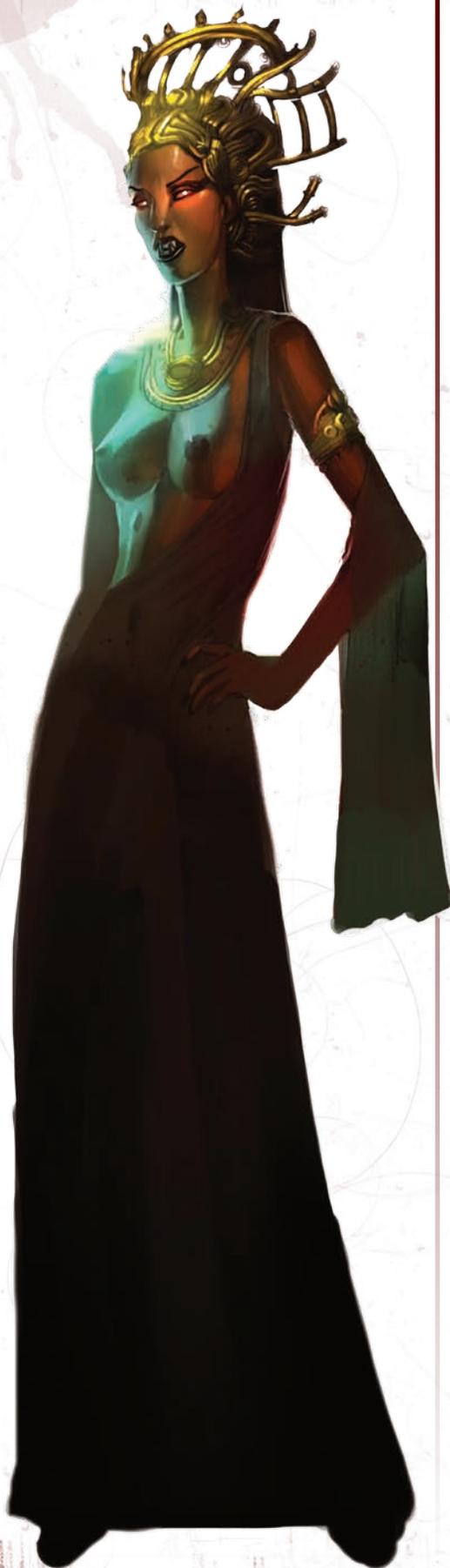
**Weakness:** The Bak-Ra have the Mekhet clan weakness (see p. 109 of *Vampire: The Requiem*).

In addition, the Bak-Ra, as devoted (some would say fanatical) sun-worshippers, have difficulty leaving the sunlit world behind and joining the dark Requiem every night. Bak-Ra characters require an extra Vitae point to wake up each evening.

**History and Culture:** It seems odd that a clan most noted for its aversion to the sun and affinity towards shadows should, in fact, not only worship the god of the sun, but claim to have once been able to walk beneath it as easily as any human. The power of Ra, however, remains within their collective souls. They fervently, obsessively, believe that they were once able to walk during the day, beneath the Sun, and they know for certain that it is only a matter of time before they remember how to do so again.

Perhaps the secrets are still hidden in one of their buried tombs. Perhaps one of their allies, the Usiri, has their secrets and memories stored in dream-space somewhere. Whatever the case, the Bak-Ra are intent on rediscovering their past glory. In the meantime, they endure the ridicule and spend much of their time in self-imposed exile, studying and waiting for the night when they can make the heretic invaders suffer for their transgressions.

What the Childer of the Sun know in their undead hearts is that Ra ruled the heavens and thus, it is only logical that his followers ruled the Earth. However, history tells them that Ra’s priests didn’t rule unilaterally, but rather that the Cult of Ra merely managed an already unified covenant of gods. Rather than provide comfort however, this information merely angers and confuses them. How could such disparate beliefs ever come to a consensus and unity? Why would Ra deign to share power with lesser beings?



And yet, every historical artifact discovered and every piece of information received leads the Bak-Ra to the realization that this was, indeed, the case. The possibility that their history is a lie, a fiction written by the murderous, invading Ventrue dogs of Rome, flames their already virulent distrust and hatred of the Lords. There can be, in their minds, no other plausible explanation for what has happened to them. Why hadn't the others awakened them sooner? Where were the Anubi, the Usiri, the Hori or the Thothites? Why hadn't they come?

The one thing that *all* Bak-Ra retain is their physical ties to ancient Egypt. They often appear in colorful, flowing gowns which are always adorned with scarabs and symbols of Ra somewhere on their person. Their havens display Egyptian artifacts as if they were artwork. Indeed, the Bak-Ra can often be seen creating new papyrus in the ancient style, perhaps as a way of relearning their culture. Whenever entertaining a perspective client, it is always remarked, later, that the look in the Bak-Ra's eyes is one

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### A TERRIFYING NEW WORLD

Recently, a Sanctified coterie, searching for relics beneath one of the great pyramids of Giza, located a well-hidden entrance beneath the deepest of the known archeological digs. This opening dropped the coterie deeper into the Earth and fed into a trap-laden network of caves and crawlspaces. The coterie lost two of its members in the exploration, which eventually ended in the tomb of an ancient Kindred, still in torpor. The remaining vampires decided to awaken the sleeping vampire, curious as to what it was and, hopefully, prepared for what they would learn. He rose from his sleep enraged, claiming to be something called a Bak-Ra. He began screaming incoherently, and the coterie believed that he had been driven insane by the amount of time spent in torpor. The coterie quickly subdued the Bak-Ra and realized that they had discovered an ancient vampire who might offer them power beyond their imagination. They returned to the surface with their find and showed the ancient vampire what he had awakened to, hoping that he would understand the futility of his situation and go with them for further study and indoctrination into this terrifying new world he had been awakened into. The shock of seeing such dramatic change was enough to shatter what was left of his precarious sanity. He escaped the coterie and fled back into the depths of the Egyptian sands. The coterie attempted to track him, but lost the ancient in the tunnels. They left before sunrise and when they returned the next evening, they discovered that the entire network of tunnels beneath the pyramids had collapsed. Their prize was gone, and with him whatever secrets he may have held in his withered brain.

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## THE BAK-RA AND THE AGONISTES

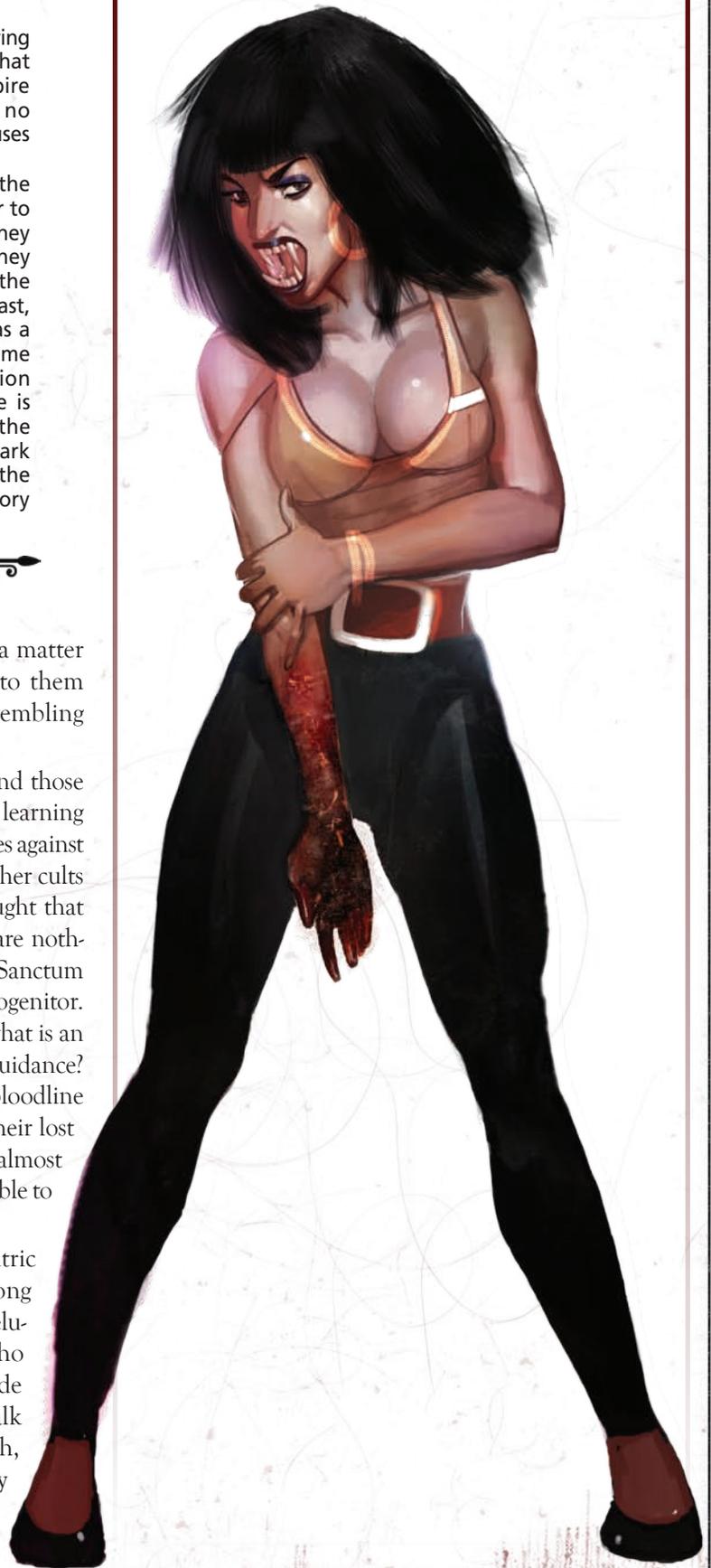
The Agonistes are a bloodline devoted to uncovering the truths of Kindred history and spreading that truth to every covenant and individual vampire they can. Unfortunately, the Bak-Ra have no memory of their past. This severely limits their uses to the Agonistes.

The Bak-Ra have been reduced to begging the Agonistes for the use of their libraries in order to gather more information about themselves. They promise to share with them everything that they discover. However, there is no guarantee that the Bak-Ra will ever learn *anything* about their past, although the Servants will never admit that as a possibility. Thus, they spend much of their time questioning the Agonistes, whose information of Kindred history prior to the fall of Rome is incomplete at best. The Bak-Ra hope that the Agonistes will provide something that may spark a fog-enshrouded memory to surface, or show the path to discovering where those bits of history might be.

of joyous expectation, as if they know it is only a matter of time before the lesser “covenants” look up to them once again, begging them for Ra’s mercy and trembling in fear of the Sun God’s wrath.

The Servants of Ra disappeared from history and those who have been awakened do not like what they are learning of the past three thousand years. They harbor grudges against their former allies, the Usiri, the Anubi and the other cults of Egypt that still exist. They shudder at the thought that Ventrue hold so much power and that the gods are nothing but myths, parables and fables. This Lancea Sanctum troubles them, as does the Ordo Dracul and its progenitor. The Carthians make no sense to the Bak-Ra, for what is an existence without the gods to offer strength and guidance? Only the Circle of the Crone and the Agoniste bloodline offer them hope that they might regain some of their lost knowledge. Unfortunately, the Circle’s history is almost as muddled as their own and the Agonistes are unable to provide the Bak-Ra with what they really need.

**Reputation:** The Bak-Ra are considered eccentric and excitable misfits. They have a reputation among Kindred of the modern nights as neonates with delusions of grandeur, sad little sun worshippers who can never get what they want. The Sun-Stroked hide in their shadowy lairs, wear their fancy robes, talk to their beetles and whisper to themselves in harsh, guttural curses. Especially among the Invictus, they are considered useless.



Derogatory nicknames notwithstanding, the Bak-Ra are absolutely certain that they were once able to walk in sunlight without fear of the curse burning them to ash. They are convinced that all they need to do is rediscover the secrets that time has stolen from them. Those secrets are surely hidden somewhere inside their minds or beneath the desert sands and it is only a matter of time until they are found.

From a practical standpoint, it is impossible to argue with a Bak-Ra regarding her beliefs. The total conviction each member of this bloodline possesses seems to be hard-wired into their blood and that kind of religious zeal is difficult to refute.

They say that history will prove that their claims are not just lies and madness. When they discover the truth, and they *will* discover the truth, the Servants of Ra will remember those who helped them. And they will *especially* remember those who stood in their way.

**Concepts:** Psychology student, eccentric collector, self-help guru, political advisor, ancient history professor, Kindred sociologist, astronomer, Agoniste stalker, occult preacher, Harpy

### *Devotions of the Bak-Ra*

#### *The Shadow's Revelation*

(Auspex •••, Majesty ••)

This Devotion allows the Kindred to project a specific emotion onto an inanimate object, thereby forcing the next person who touches it to feel the emotional impression left behind. Further, the target feels compelled to share with the Kindred a specific memory attached to that emotion, as if the only way to purge the feeling is to talk it out.

A cunning and manipulative vampire should be able to get the information he needs from his victim simply by being nearby when the target touches the prepared object. Then, using whatever Attributes or Skills he possesses, the Kindred can guide the target into telling him everything he wants to know.

A Bak-Ra using this Devotion should consider two points of caution, though. One is to be careful when applying anger. Should the victim suddenly feel such a powerful burst of rage, she might be thrown into an uncontrollable frenzy. This might be a convenient method of pitting one of the Kindred's foes against another, of course, but wouldn't be pleasant to be around. Second, if the victim has a derangement that is triggered by a given strong emotion, she might be overcome by it and be unable to provide any useful information.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** Manipulation + Empathy + Majesty - Composure

**Action:** Instant

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** Not only is the wrong emotion transmitted to the object in question, but the target realizes that she is being manipulated in some way and that someone is actually trying to get information out of her.

**Failure:** The victim feels as if something isn't quite right and immediately drops or removes her hand from the object. No further attempt can be made to manipulate the target by using the same object.

**Success:** The correct emotion is projected onto the object. The character can then play to that emotion, ferreting out information from the target by taking advantage of his fragile emotional state. This grants a positive modifier to Social rolls with the target (not including rolls to use Disciplines) equal to the successes that the player rolls.

If the Bak-Ra implants anger, a vampire who touches the object must roll to avoid frenzy.

**Exceptional Success:** Extra successes are their own reward.

Once an object is "imprinted" with an emotion, the power remains for a number of turns equal to the Bak-Ra's Blood Potency. If the object ever leaves her sight, the Devotion's effects end.

#### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+3	The target is already under the influence of Entrancement.
+2	Power is focused on, or applied to, a vampire with whom the user has a blood tie.
+1	The target is able to get full hand contact on the object.
-	The target merely gets a finger-touch on the object.
-3	The target is an enemy.

This power costs 15 experience points to learn.

### *The Glory of Ra*

(Auspex •••••, Majesty •••••)

By their very nature, Kindred are unable to feel the touch of the sun on their skin without watching their flesh roast and shrivel in excruciating pain. Any vampire who believes otherwise will most certainly be burned to ash. That didn't stop the Bak-Ra from making others *believe* that they had conquered the curse, however. It was the one major point that succeeded in uniting all Kindred under one Great Covenant during the

era of Ramses II. If *any* vampire could actually achieve this miracle, they *must* be truly graced by the gods and deserve to be followed. Appearances, however, can be deceiving.

A Kindred with this Devotion appears able to defeat the vampiric curse by sending out his “ghostly body,” while his corporeal form rests in day sleep, and actually becoming visible to those whom he wishes to be seen by. Should anyone become curious and approach the vampire using this Devotion, they encounter what seems to be a solid, fully aware vampire, walking beneath the Sun. In reality, the Glory of Ra does not provide a solid form, but only the appearance of a solid form. Should someone touch the character, the witness believes he is touching the Kindred, when, in fact, he is so blinded by the vampire’s Majesty that his mind fools him.

**Cost:** 2 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Persuasion + Majesty vs. subjects’ Composure + Blood Potency

**Action:** Instant and contested (resistance is reflexive)

This Devotion relies on the user’s ability to make others believe he is really walking beneath the sun. The Kindred is not really there, except in his ghostly state, even though it appears as if he is solidly walking or performing actions as normal. Everything he does is dependant upon the belief of those who see him. They can “hear” him speaking, “feel” his hand as he reaches out to touch, and watch him lift objects, open doors or simply sit in a chair. The experience is exactly what they expect it to be.

The Kindred cannot use any of his other Disciplines except Auspex and Majesty while in this form, although,

he can make it appear as if he is using other powers by playing into what those who are interacting with him expect. If they anticipate a show of Celerity, for example, that is what they’ll see.

The group hallucination can be maintained even if one person doesn’t believe in it. However, to break the spell over an entire group of individuals, the disbeliever must act against the Kindred’s form and do something that specifically proves that the vampire isn’t really there (e.g. walk through him when the ghostly image can’t avoid such a move.)

Anyone who sees the vampire makes a resistance roll and compares the results to the activation roll for this Devotion.

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The Kindred appears in daylight, but his form is anything but solid. It seems as if his body is being projected, like a holographic image, and his claims are obviously false.

**Failure:** The user fails to appear at all.

**Success:** The Kindred becomes visible and is likely able to convince any onlookers that he is standing before them, solid and unharmed. He can perform simple actions like sitting in chairs or walking and standing around, but his interaction is limited.

**Exceptional Success:** The vampire appears solid and unharmed by the sun’s rays. He can perform complex actions and can appear to manipulate objects, such as opening doors, carrying books and shaking hands.

This power costs 30 experience points to learn.



# REQUIEM DIARY: INITIATIONS OF DREAM AND FLAME

The study of ancient Egypt – “Egyptology” – has been a popular field for thousands of years. The Egyptians themselves spent time and resources restoring historic tombs, temples and other buildings, and the Greeks and Romans had their own accounts of Egyptian history. But it was Napoleon’s “Egyptian Campaign” that placed ancient Egypt firmly in the minds of European citizens, and even now, modern people have a distinct set of images concerning the lands of the Nile.

The undead were not immune to Egyptomania. The Kindred of Europe in the 19th century saw artifacts and historical discoveries being shipped from Egypt back to France and England, and wondered what secrets of their kind might be buried in ancient tombs. Their curiosity, of course, was well justified – in those dusty crypts lay the story of the Great Covenant, and the slumbering Bak-Ra and Usiri, among other bloodlines.

But just as mortals are wont to misinterpret their findings at first, the Kindred have an incomplete picture of their roots. Unlike mortals, vampires are decidedly ill-suited to revising their beliefs as further facts come to light, in part because they can’t really trust their own memories. That is why the Bak-Ra now believe that they were glorious rulers of the Great Covenant, Kindred who defeated the curse that locks them from daylight, rather than the charlatans they truly were (and remain). That is why the Usiri scour their own memories and the memories of any vampire foolish enough to let them. These vampires are searching for a past, but not the one their people really had.

In 1998, a book entitled *Initiations of Dream and Flame* was discovered in a crypt in Abusir. Although the pyramid had been excavated years before, the researcher from Waseda University in Tokyo (a ghoul) claimed that it dated back at least 3000 years. Recognizing some of the symbols as vampiric (specifically Mekhet), the researcher, one Jirou Sato, kept the discovery from the living and passed it on to his regnant. This vampire, a Shadow named Kotone, left Japan, first for England and then to travel to the United States. She was looking for help in translating the book, and in verifying her ghoul’s claims.

Within a year, both Kotone and Sato were dead and the book had disappeared. Kindred, it seems, could be as obsessive and starry-eyed about ancient Egypt as mor-

tals, and the promise of magic so long removed from the Lancea Sanctum was tantalizing. The book eventually fell into the hands of a vampire named Renfro Delaney, who, an Egyptologist in life, was able to translate it. It was his work that led to stories of the Usiri and the Bak-Ra being spread throughout Kindred society. The rumors spread slowly, but the one that captured the attention of vampires across the world was, of course, that of the Bak-Ra and their ability to withstand the sun.

Delaney survived long enough to translate the book and carbon date some of the material in it to approximately 1000 BCE. Most vampires who followed the rumors assumed that the Lancea Sanctum had found and destroyed him – he himself was certainly terrified that the Kindred Inquisition was coming for him. But others wondered if that was really the case. Delaney put forth the notion that Theban Sorcery predated Christianity by many years, but anyone with a good grip on history knew that theory was probably the case (it came from *Thebes*, after all). Other undead scientists and philosophers had been saying exactly that for years, and the Lance hadn’t buried them. So what, then, did Delaney *really* discover?

While fragments of his notes, recordings that he made to himself while working and letters from correspondents exist, the full truth may never come out. What is known, though, is that the book itself doesn’t date back to ancient Egypt. A simple glance at the book proves that – it includes papyrus, vellum and several other types of “paper.” Some of it, yes, does date from the time that Delaney specified, but much of it is considerably more recent. This fact tends to get glossed over when vampires discuss the *Initiations*. Likewise, Delaney added pages for his translations, and carefully bound it all together in a huge, unwieldy tome. The result is a mélange of ancient Egyptian philosophy and history, 19th century European attempts to make sense of this philosophy, and modern ramblings on how a vampire might walk beneath the sun without being burnt to a crisp. A reader would need more than a firm background in the requisite languages to read it. He would need the patience of Job and a good imagination.

But for a vampire with that patience and imagination, the *Initiations of Dream and Flame* does hold some value. He might find magic embedded in those pages, magic

that casts doubt on the divide between Crúac and Theban Sorcery. Thus far, no vampire, not even Delaney, has discovered it, but it's there, waiting to be found.

Of course, it might not be entirely *safe* to have the book in one's possession for any length of time, for a variety of reasons.

### *The Initiations*

The book details how vampires are to be admitted into the "Warriors of the Dead" and the "Children of the Sun." Of course, both of these august groups are bloodlines, and so being "admitted" to them is less a matter of joining a club and more a matter of altering one's blood accordingly. However, like many bloodlines, the cultural aspect of the groups was given a great deal of weight.

### *Warriors of the Dead*

According to the *Initiations*, a vampire meaning to join the Usiri would be brought to the High Priest after having been tested and observed by others of the bloodline for months. Once the High Priest judged him favorably, he was either Embraced or indoctrinated into the bloodline (the book is unclear on how this was accomplished directly after an Embrace) and forced into torpor for a period of one month, without blood to sustain him. He had to survive the nightmares of torpor unscathed, and then also find a way to awaken himself and escape his tomb. Should this happen, he was then provided enough sustenance to keep the Beast at bay. Finally, he was forced to consume the blood from a living, human heart – a member of his own mortal family – in order to complete the initiation.

Since the exposure of the *Initiations*, modern Usiri have attempted to perform this ritual, and the book bears testimony from those who have endured it. One of the problems that they encounter, of course, is that for a vampire to enter torpor and then arise after a month, he must be relatively close to the Man (that is, have high Humanity) and weak of Blood (low Blood Potency). Prospects aren't always vetted that way, though, and so the bloodline sometimes winds up with potential recruits who can't wake themselves up. The book doesn't offer any hints about what to do with vampires who fail the test this way, and so it is very much down to the proclivities of the Usiri presiding over the initiate.

### *Children of the Sun*

The Bak-Ra cling to their idealized belief in the past and the glory of what they are certain is to come. The account of their initiation ritual is more complicated (and poorly translated) than that of the Usiri, and consists of three

trials: mind, body and soul. Unlike the Usiri initiation, which involves only one supplicant, the *Initiations* seem to indicate that the Bak-Ra were indoctrinated as a group. Such a group was composed either of mortals (or ghouls) who wished to obtain the Embrace, or Mekhet who wished to join the bloodline. However many vampires there were in ancient Egypt, it's rare in modern nights for several vampires of the same clan to come together wishing to join the same bloodline, and so when this ritual is performed at all, it usually involves mortals.

### *Mind*

The test of mind allows a prospect the opportunity to manipulate his way out of a deadly situation. If he is able to convince his fellows that he is the one who must survive (or that the others do not deserve to live), then he moves to the next level of the initiation process. If not, the Bak-Ra search for a new prospect.

### *Body*

The test of body is a way for the prospect to prove to the Bak-Ra that he is capable of surviving as a vampire. He is placed into another situation similar to the test of mind, except that, in this case, he must not only survive physical obstacles, but must also ensure that the others in his group do *not* survive the test. If the prospect succeeds, he moves to the final test.

### *Soul*

Once a prospect has survived the testing of mind and body, he must endure the test of soul. Unfortunately, this part of the *Initiations* is unclear, and Delaney's translation didn't shed any light on the subject. The Test of Soul refers to "dark and venomous things" being allowed to attack the one surviving subject, "poisoning his soul and tainting his body." Delaney interpreted this symbolically, reasoning that since the test of body had already concluded, the ancient Bak-Ra wouldn't have wasted time with a further physical ordeal. He was unhelpful, though, in providing a solution as to what the passage really did mean, and so the Bak-Ra of tonight had to come up with their own ideas.

They place the subject in a situation where his faith will be tested, usually telling him that for all his moral sacrifice and cleverness, he has been denied membership and is going to face destruction the next morning. He is then given the opportunity to make his peace in any way he sees fit. It is here, the Bak-Ra feel, that the true measure of the man is revealed. Is *power* his god? Is it wealth? Knowledge? It only really matters that he believe in *something*, because the Bak-Ra are so convinced of their own superiority that there is no doubt that any prospect

who survives the initiation process will eventually come to believe in Ra's eternal magnificence.

### STORY HOOK: SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

Have you seen the movie *Cube*? How about *House on Haunted Hill* or *No Escape*? Think of any movie that has placed a group of people together and asked them to fight and think their way out of their trap. Life and death are the only two possible outcomes, and only one will survive.

The Bak-Ra "initiation" might make for an interesting prelude. Of course, as written, only one character survives to get the Embrace, but the Bak-Ra don't know what the hell they're doing — so there's no reason to assume these rules are inflexible. Likewise, you could just as easily use the story as a prequel to the real chronicle, one in which *all* of the characters die and the characters in the **Vampire** chronicle run across their remains (or ghosts) later.

### *Magic in the Book*

The Storyteller needs to decide what rituals might be discovered in *Initiations of Dream and Flame*, of course, but the precepts of Crúac, Theban Sorcery and even, if the Storyteller so desires, Mérges Sorcery (see p. 147) are likely candidates. That means that a character who spends time studying the book (subject to the systems below) can receive bonuses to learning rituals from those sorceries. The *Initiations* lays out the underlying philosophies of vampiric blood magic in such a way as to remove contemporary or even ancient theology from the matter, and a vampire who can understand these philosophies stands to become a powerful magician indeed. Of course, few Kindred are capable of this kind of lateral thinking, even without the language barrier.

In order to study the book, the character must either read Delaney's translations or learn Late Egyptian. In either case, the player rolls Intelligence + Academics as an extended action. Each roll requires four hours of research, and 20 successes are required.

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** All previous successes are lost — the character has been basing his research on a flawed interpretation of the text or a mistranslation.

**Failure:** No successes are accumulated toward the total.

**Success:** Successes are added to the total. If the player achieves the requisite number of successes, he immediately makes an Intelligence + Occult roll for the character. For every success on this roll, the player subtracts one experience point from the cost of buying: Theban Sorcery,

Crúac, Mérges Sorcery and any other blood magic that the Storyteller would like to include (the Coils of the Dragon are not blood magic, and do not apply), and associated rituals. The successes can be spread out over multiple expenditures, but cannot reduce the cost of a given trait below one.

**Exceptional Success:** Considerable successes are added to the total. If the player finishes the research action with at least 25 successes, he adds three dice to the ensuing Intelligence + Occult roll.

#### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+1	Character already has dots in a form of blood sorcery (Crúac, Theban or Mérges Sorcery, Kindred Vodoun, etc.). These modifiers are cumulative — a character who knows both Crúac and Theban Sorcery would receive a +2 modifier.
+1	Character has a Specialty in Ancient Egypt.
-3	Character has no dots in Occult.
-4	Character is working from Delaney's translations.

### *Dangers of the Book*

The most obvious danger associated with the *Initiations* is that several factions of vampires are after it. Neither the Lancea Sanctum nor the Circle of the Crone want the tome in the hands of another covenant, and obviously the Ordo Dracul would love to have such an important occult resource. The Invictus and the Carthian Movement aren't as interested in the book for its own sake, but recognize its potential as a bargaining chip (and, should word get out that it can be used to learn blood sorcery, its value to those covenants increases dramatically).

Likewise, a number of bloodlines see the *Initiations* as their property. The Usiri and the Bak-Ra are, obviously, chief among them, but the Iltani (see p. 145) would also be highly interested in the book. Any bloodline with an attraction to blood sorcery, or the Lancea Sanctum in particular (such as the Septemi, p. 89) might also like a look.

But quite beyond factional disputes, the book itself is dangerous. As mentioned, while parts of the tome do date to the New Kingdom, others are much more recent. In fact, one of the most disturbing passages in the book, one that Delaney never translated, was written in the late 19th century.

A Bak-Ra vampire named Asaremhet awoke from torpor in 1894. Trapped in his tomb, he employed his mastery of Auspex to flit about the land in Twilight. He entered the

resting place of the *Initiations*, searching for the torporous remains of one of his comrades from the Great Covenant. He found the vampire – seconds before French explorers excavated the tomb. Sunlight entered the chamber for the first time in centuries, and the ancient vampire, Asaremhet's friend, was burnt to ash in seconds.

Unable to take direct revenge, Asaremhet cursed the men, using his Devotions to appear before them, haunting them, leading them into the tomb's many traps. Within a month they were dead, and Asaremhet used his blood magic to possess the corpse of the lead Egyptologist. He unearthed his friend's Requiem diary and, using the blood of the grave robbers, entered a curse upon all who would use the treasures of the past for their own ends.

The curse took a great deal of Asaremhet's power, and murdering the Egyptologists had taken a toll on his Humanity. By the time the curse was laid, Asaremhet could only return to his body, wasted and half-mad, to sleep for another century (he appears in his current form in **Ancient Mysteries**). He has no memory of writing in *Initiations of Dream and Flame* or of placing the curse, though he does sometimes dream of his friend's death in the sun.

The curse does not affect anyone who attempts to read or translate the book. It becomes active only when a vampire tries to use the knowledge that the book bestows, whether to perform one of the initiations or to gain the benefit of blood magic. The curse is the loss of one's own memory, a hastening of the Fog of Eternity. The vampire begins to lose memories every time he goes to sleep, rather than during long periods of torpor.

Mechanically, a vampire who takes advantage of the benefits described above or presides over or partakes in either of the initiations described earlier in the chapter

gains the Flaw: Memory Erosion. Other vampires can take this Flaw as well and reap the normal benefits, but a vampire suffering under Asaremhet's Curse does not gain experience points when the Flaw hinders him.

**Memory Erosion:** Whenever the vampire sleeps, his memories begin to fade. Upon awakening in the evening, the vampire can either lose *three* points of Willpower (this Willpower is spent over the course of the day in a struggle to retain the memories) or the player can roll Resolve + Composure – Blood Potency.

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The character loses his mind entirely, becoming a complete amnesiac. Traits are unaffected, but the character has no memory of his unlife as a vampire, or his mortal existence. Discovering the truth will doubtless be a great shock.

**Failure:** The vampire suffers a -2 penalty on rolls based on recall (normally Mental rolls, but other types of rolls might qualify at the Storyteller's discretion) for the remainder of the night. If the player fails a number of these rolls in a row equal to the vampire's Resolve, the vampire loses a dot of a Skill (player's choice).

**Success:** The character suffers no ill effects for the evening.

**Exceptional Success:** The character suffers no ill effects for the evening, *and* realizes that his mind is slipping away. This might allow him to pursue a cure.

The curse might be cured by further study of the book, by traveling to Egypt to seek out other such works, by helping Asaremhet to regain his memory (though he's unlikely to want to undo the curse once he does, since he would then remember why he placed it), or by soliciting the help of the Usiri bloodline.

IN A SOCIETY  
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OF THEIR OWN  
EXISTENCES, WHO  
CAN TRUST THE  
CONCEPT OF  
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*Clans? Clans don't exist, child.*

*The Blood is mutable,*

*and every passing century,*

*every whim of an elder,*

*every errant Embrace colors it*

*like a drop of ink into a glass of wine.*

*What you think of as "clans" are merely the*

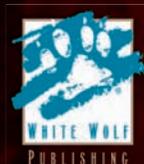
*most tenacious of the Kindred lines...*

*and even they can fall.*

*— Courant, Nosferatu of the Ordo Dracul*

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