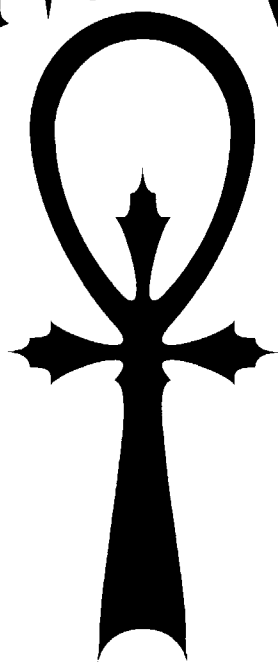


Book of the DAMNED



The World of
Darkness™

BOOK OF THE DAMNED



Book of the Damned

By Mark Rein•Hagen, Graeme Davis, Tom Dowd,
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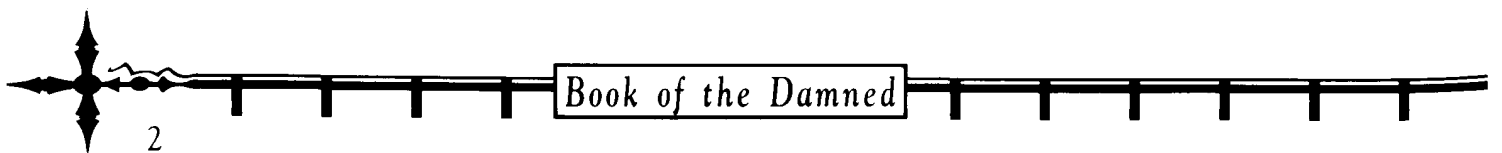
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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my Parents, Diane and John, as well as my Grandparents, Marge and Joe, who made this book possible in more ways than one. Thanks for being there for me.

– Mark Rein • Hagen





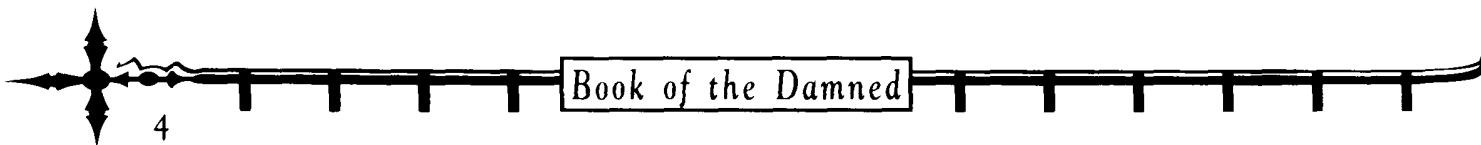
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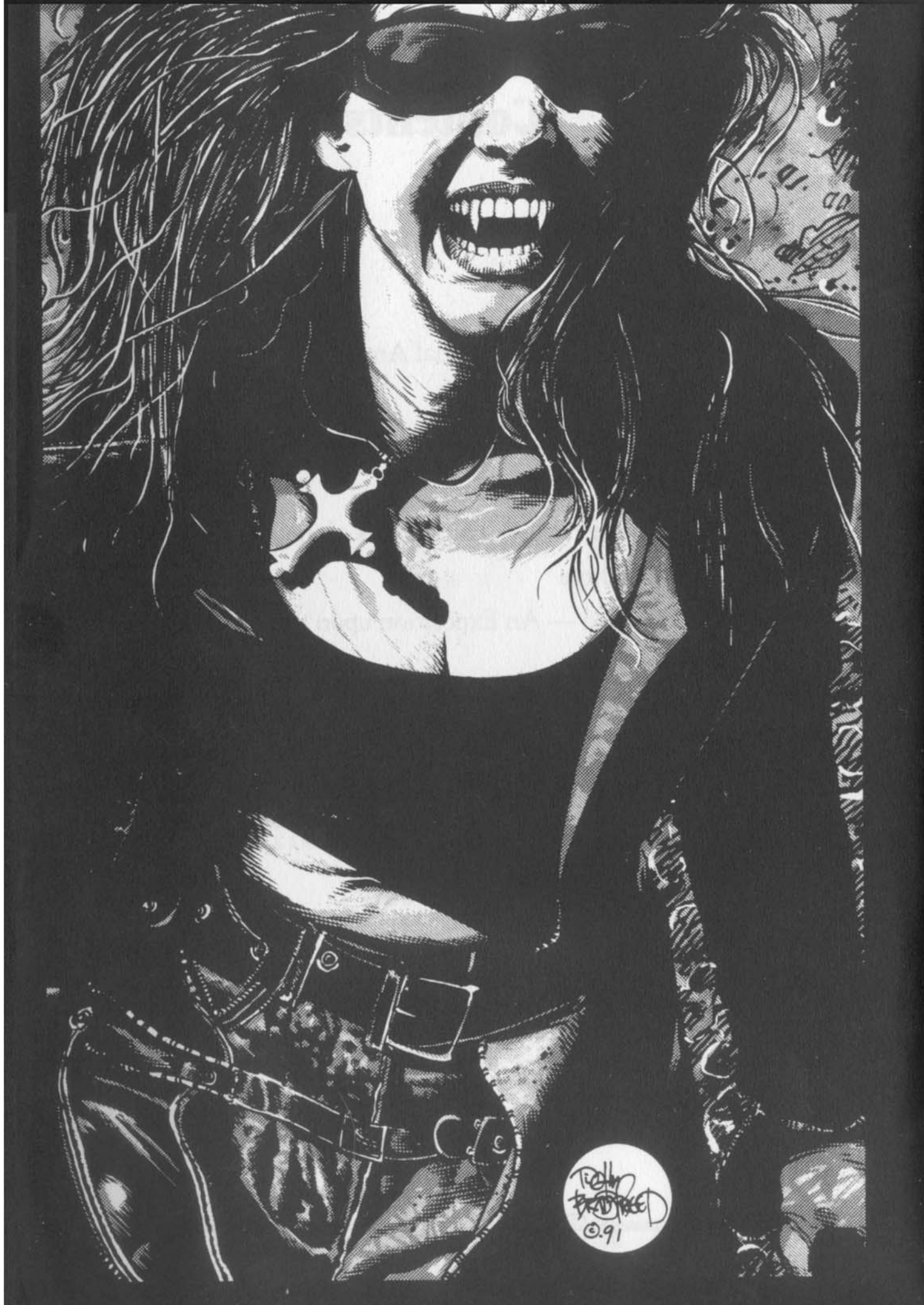
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Monsters, Monsters Everywhere...



TERRY
BRADSHAW
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Forward The Vampire – An Eternal Archetype

By S.P. Somtow

When I was a child, I knew what all children know and what many adults have grown to forget: the world I can see, taste, touch, and hear is only the tip of an iceberg that reaches all the way down to the darkest and deepest regions of the unconscious mind. It was easier to visit those regions then than it is now, because children know the way instinctively; today, though, I make my living journeying into those realms and reporting what I see there, I travel as a blind man travels, awkwardly, feeling my way, relying on fading memory.

These realms are populated by exotic creatures of every kind: monsters of myth, film, and literature; chameleons and chimaeras; and demons and angels. Naturally, the more horrific creatures were the most fascinating, especially because I enjoyed, in the privileged world in which I grew up, bordered by high walls and a mango orchard, a childhood remarkably free of horror. My nanny frightened me into behaving with tales of Si Ui, the serial killer, who cooked and ate children's livers and whose mummified body is now on display in a hospital museum in Bangkok; she told me bedtime stories about the fabulous *phii krasue*, a decapitated head that, lugging its entrails behind it, slithered around the gardens late at night, using its tongue as a pseudopod.

The 1960s was also a time when a war was waged, as it were, in our backyard; American culture was all the rage, and American movies played to packed houses. It was in those movie houses, right there among the pagodas, palaces, and pageantry of ancient Siam, that I encountered vampires for the first time. I mean the celluloid vampires, of course: as romantic as they were morbid, tall, sensuous, and serenely composed — creatures to be envied as much as feared.

Of course, sex ed. being what it was in those days, I wasn't really certain why it was so enthralling to see those vulnerable, voluptuous woman faint away in Dracula's arms, and I didn't quite grasp the double-entendre of the kiss of death. But I knew there was something really elemental going on, and it was more than just some dead guy biting a woman on the neck. With hindsight, I have to admit it was quite a bit sexier than those old *National Geographics*.

Well, the attraction to vampires might have been no more than a passing fancy, but there soon occurred one of those defining moments — you only get one or two of them in your life. In this case, it was stumbling upon a frayed copy of a horror anthology in my parents' bedroom, swiping it, and reading it by flashlight under the covers late at night, when I was supposed to be asleep. The book contained a novella by Theodore Sturgeon, called *Some of Your Blood*, and as I lay there sweating (in terror and because this was pre-air conditioning, in the tropics at the height of monsoon season), I had a revelation: vampires weren't just up there on a screen. They could be quite real.

Some of Your Blood is not about a supernatural vampire. It is the absolutely bloodcurdling tale — calmly and methodically unfolded in epistolary form, just like Bram Stoker's *Dracula* — of a young soldier undergoing psychoanalysis; he is the product of a searingly dysfunctional childhood and has developed an obsessive desire for the drinking of blood. It's a story that makes vampirism completely believable. Of course, I've since read the case histories in the psychiatric literature about vampirism as a psychological disorder — and also the many interviews that have been conducted of supposedly "actual" vampires. But it took a work of fiction to tell me that there is truth in those interviews and case histories. That is the function of fiction, of course: it is a series of lies that, put together, bring us face to face with truth.

And that is also the function of the metafiction upon which you are about to embark. You will be participating in make-believe, of course. None of you are actually vampires. Well, very few of you, anyway. But as you throw yourself into the complexities of your character and the trillions of possible outcomes that result as your life (or un-life) intersects with others', a little of yourself will be thrown into the mix.

There is a little bit of vampire in all of us.

Otherwise, there wouldn't be this fascination with them. Of all the monsters of dark fantasy, none have captured the human imagination in quite the same way. There are as many reasons for our obsession as there are vampire stories, and there are as many theories on our obsession as there are theorists.

But it all begins with love and death.

This might seem a little simplistic — after all, there is something to be said for the idea that all art deals, principally, with love and death: the two greatest imponderables of the human condition. Well, let's not mince words here — it's sex and death that are the twin poles around which the arts of Western Civilization seem to revolve. Sex and death are juxtaposed, antithesized, and equated with great frequency in literature. Indeed, in Elizabethan English, the word 'die' also meant to have an orgasm. That's why, when stabbing herself, Juliet says:

O happy dagger,

Here is thy sheath! There rust,

And let me die.

or when Othello (having killed Desdemona) says:

I kissed thee ere I killed thee: No way but this,

Killing myself, to die upon a kiss.

we are expected to feel a certain erotic friction. With the concept of vampirism, however, we have a unique situation. Instead of sex and death being metaphorically linked, they are *literally* equated. The vampire's kiss is both sublimely erotic and absolutely deadly. Those of you who are my age or older may well remember those Hammer films, loosely based on the work of Sheridan Le Fanu, that feature an immortal lesbian vampire named Carmilla (or Mircalla, or Millacara, and other anagrams). In these films, the sexual element of the kiss is made even more explicit (and titillating) by transferring it from the neck to the breasts.

Naturally, implied sexuality gives rise to a whole raft of Freudian interpretations of vampirism. At the one extreme, there's the idea of necrophilia — having sexual intercourse with the dead. Although the prospect of actually having sex with dead people is distasteful to the average person, there are analysts who claim our fascination with vampirism comes from our own deep-seated and repressed necrophiliac fantasies. Now, I've never been conscious of any such hidden urges in myself, and I doubt many of us have. . . but maybe I just haven't delved deep enough into my own psyche. On the other hand, would anyone want to delve that deep? It's a scary thought.

On the other hand, you can't deny that the vampire is the most romantic of traditional monsters. You don't have beautiful women fawning all over the Wolfman or the Mummy or the Romero-style "living dead" — even though vampires, too, are the "living dead." There are a lot more bedroom encounters with vampires than there are with werewolves. And, when we read about or watch a scene in which some werewolf tears apart some ravishing lady, we might notice a sexual element, but it's rape, not vampiric seduction.

The difference between werewolves and vampires becomes all the more mysterious when you realize that, in the Middle Ages, people didn't draw that much distinction between the two. Traditionally, vampires are shapechangers, and — before the advent of the bat-images of recent times — vampires were just as often described as changing into wolves. Genealogically speaking, the vampire seems to be a more evolved, more "civilized" incarnation of the bristly old werewolf. Both deal with one of the most powerful metaphors of all: the idea that an entity can seem, on the surface, to be quite human and

rational, but whose human skin can barely conceal the raging monster within — the Id, if you want to stick, for the moment, to Freudian terminology.

The transformation of the vampire from brute to suave seducer or seductress parallels shifts in Western culture concerning how we have perceived our own sexuality in the past centuries. Two hundred years ago, the “rotting corpse” aspects of vampires were emphasized, as in this excerpt from Lord Byron’s *The Giaour*:

But first on earth, as Vampyre sent,
Thy corpse shall from its tomb be rent,
Then ghastly haunt, thy native place,
And suck the blood of all thy race. . .

And, over one hundred years later — modern movies to the contrary — Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* posits a far more “monstrous” vampire than the cultivated elegance of a Lugosi, Lee, or Langella might suggest. This monstrosity, I think, reflects a society in which any discussion of sex was taboo and in which even the legs of coffee tables were draped to ensure they did not inflame men’s passion. Paradoxically, although no one could talk about it, sex was freely available in Victorian England, had with prostitutes, many of them very young. Such acts were frequently practiced under circumstances that seem sordid today — in alleys and against walls. Given this curiously schizoid view of sex — the whole Jekyll-Hyde thing — it’s not really surprising that the vampire — human in form and bestial in nature — grew in popularity until the stage play of *Dracula* turned vampirism into a fad on both sides of the Atlantic.

In the 20th century, the sexuality of the vampire has become more and more overt as morality has changed. In film, the latest *Dracula* of all, Francis Ford Coppola’s version, is also the most explicitly erotic. But, this development was foreshadowed in the vampire literature of the 1980s, of which there are volumes. Anne Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire* was a precursor of the erotic vampire movement, and my own

novel, *Vampire Junction*, deal for the first time with the interface between rock stardom and vampirism, a venue that Anne Rice later exploited to fine effect in *Vampire Lestat*. Nancy Collins, in *Sunglasses after Dark* and its sequel, also pursued a revisionist view of vampirism. In these works and others, vampires exist in a heightened, ultrahip reality. They are heroes (or, at the very least, antiheroes) rather than creatures of consummate evil. Certainly they inflict suffering — vampires can't help doing that — but they are seen to suffer as well; they feel guilt, pain, and, on occasion, even compassion. Often, compared to the human monsters among which they live, vampires are seen as noble, magnanimous, and even loving.

Loving and lovable monsters? Our view of monsters surely reflects our view of ourselves. In 1993, we're a lot more confused about our identity than we were in 1893, that's for sure. The world seems to transform itself entirely every 10 years; people flit from belief system to belief system. Furthermore, people no longer grow up in nurturing, stable environments that support stable value structures, whether we agree with those environments or not. The idea of an absolute evil, so firmly espoused by our moral systems of past eras, has been eroded. In today's vampire stories, we're as likely to root for the vampire as for the victim. Ambiguous people require ambiguous demons.

The fact is that, although the traditional vampire casts no reflection in the looking glass, humans inevitably do. Our monsters are ourselves. They are our inner darkness, our shadow personalities made flesh by the magic of our imaginations. So, we are brought away from the Freudian view of vampirism — the sex-and-death metaphor — toward a more Jungian view — the vampire as one of the eternal archetypes that populate our collective inner world.

I've examined the Jungian vampire pretty exhaustively in my novel *Vampire Junction*, in which our hero, the boy vampire, undergoes analysis at the hands of a Jungian psychiatrist. This isn't the place to go into a long technical exegesis on Carl Jung's theories — and I'm not an expert on them — but, simply put, Jung believes that beyond the individual consciousness of humans, there's a collective unconscious that is populated by personages called archetypes who transcend all cultures and are found in the mythologies of all peoples. Jung identifies



a number of these archetypes, such as the Anima, or soul, which in the case of a man is female, and vice versa; the Shadow, or “dark side;” the Eternal Child; and the Wise Old Man.

Now, the word “archetype” is often used rather loosely by Jungians and non-Jungians alike. There isn’t, in classical Jungian theory, an archetype that’s actually called “The Vampire.” But vampires are positively charged with archetypal resonance.

For instance: vampires do tend to attack victims of the opposite sex. This gives rise to all the sexual implications of Freudian theory, but there’s also the fact that, because the vampire doesn’t have a soul and the victim presumably does, the victim functions as the vampire’s Anima (or Animus if it’s a female vampire and a male victim). The vampire needs a soul in order to feel complete, so sucks in more than just blood — he sucks life itself (i.e., a soul). That’s an archetypal situation. In addition, there’s also the idea that the vampire is a dark reflection of the victim’s Self, which makes the vampire the Self’s Shadow, another archetypal situation. The vampire’s also a Trickster — and the Trickster is another classical archetype. The number of games you can play within this archetype system is almost infinite, and you can easily create circumstances in which a vampire can play any of the roles that archetypes are supposed to play.

This is all pretty cool if you’re into those sorts of games.

But, I think if you’ve bought this book and are reading it now, you’re probably into another kind of game. You’re about to act out these archetypal situations in real time, with a little help from your active imagination. You’re about to venture into the world of vampires — a world of violence, depravity, and startling beauty — a terrifying world with an uncanny power to fascinate. You’ll need all the courage, charisma, and imagination you can muster. I hope that, through the medium of this *Book of the Damned*, you find it possible to truly return to that dark territory beneath the surface, the world we all knew as children.

“Live your undeath to the fullest, and come back safely from the grave. . .”

— S.P. Somtow



The centuries stretch before you, beckoning. There is little in this world that is not within your reach or grasp. Now you are free, no longer a gear within a machine. The world is your stage, and all of its people mere props in your hands.

You are a predator, a hunter who feeds upon others to provide yourself life. Around you moves a great Herd, blind to your presence, unaware of the threat you pose. Ignorant, they perform the quiet motions of their lives, each simple action and gesture increasing your attraction to them. They are beauty beyond words.

You do not crave money or clothing, riches or power, though you may desire such as a passing fancy. The only thing you truly need is blood — the river of life coursing through the veins of each and every human. That is the price for what you have become — and it may cost you your soul. Blood is the be all and end all of your existence. But what an existence it is!

Day has become night, and night has become day. In the night, you are all-powerful; no mortal can surpass your potency. Neither bullets nor blades can end your existence. Only the sun do you fear. Its accursed rays bring the kiss of death.

But that is not all, for neither are you alone. Others call this world their playground, and the playground is only large enough for so many. All Kindred are your brothers and sisters now, but even a brother may kill brother, even as did the first of your kind.

Beyond the other Kindred there are the Lupines, the Magi, the Arcadian brethren, and some even say the Shades of the netherworld. Though not all are opposed to you, they do not tolerate your presence in their realms. But, sometimes two fates become intertwined.

Above all other dangers stands the wash of humanity. You are but a parasite, and if your host but knew of your existence, you would be crushed, like a flea between pinching fingers. The slightest mistake can bring the



Inquisition, with its burning torches, to the door of your haven. The Masquerade must go on, and none may learn of your existence — lest life-in-death become at last a final rest.

Though you face great peril, there is no doubt that you are a creature of immense power. Your mystical powers are vast and your potential unparalleled. The only thing over which you do not have complete control is yourself. Your limitations lie not in what you can do, but in who and what you are. The Beast that lurks within you may rise up at any time, destroying all that you touch and dare to love. It is you, yourself, not the perils and enemies you face, who makes your life a nightmare.

And as your humanity slowly slips away, you may begin to realize just what it is you have lost. . .





Chapter One Smoke

by Don Bassingthwaite

Anyone standing on the icy midnight street might have noticed that the man in the deep blue overcoat did not exhale. Brahms took a deep drag on his cigarette and leaned back against the doorway. The warm smoke curled through his grave-cold lungs and settled like a purring cat in his chest. Could vampires get cancer? Brahms didn't think so.

He let the smoke flow gently up from his lungs and out his mouth. The window beside him made a mirror, and he studied the effect carefully, allowing his face to assume the intense, bright-eyed look that had led his sire to Embrace a starving young composer. Brahms frowned and relaxed his features, then added the crowning touch to his Masquerade. Careful rhythmic bursts of smoke, long practiced, would pass for the condensation of breath in the winter air.

A door opened down the street. Brahms faded back into the shadows and waited for his quarry to pass. The homeless, the easiest prey at other times of the year, were packed into shelters or huddled together for warmth during the winter. Brahms had been forced to become more creative in his stalking. Solitary mortals could occasionally be found here, walking to the home of Grosse Madeleine, medium and fortuneteller, too ashamed to come during the day or in a group.

However, Brahms' creativity proved dangerous. Madeleine may have only pretended to the powers of a Mage, but she did have true knowledge of the Kindred. Madeleine was not to be trifled with.

But it was not the middle-aged woman whom Brahms watched leaving the shop. It was a young man, woefully underdressed for the weather. He did not shiver in the swirling snow, though, and Brahms recognized the emblem painted on his torn denim jacket. A black-bladed knife. One of the Sabbat who had recently slipped into the city. Brahms bit his lip. The Sabbat were ungodly dangerous. But, the Prince would probably like to know what the Sabbat were doing at Grosse Madeleine's house. He stepped out of the doorway and began to follow silently.

The Sabbat vampire went directly to an old factory by the river. Unlike Brahms, he did not attempt to stick to the shadows. He walked boldly through the streets and into the shell of the factory. Brahms, adopting greater stealth, carefully scanned the area for lookouts. None. The crumbling walls of the factory made easy climbing, and he was soon crouched on the ledge of a paneless window, looking down at a scene that might have inspired Dante.

Fires burning in oil drums cast a flickering light across the twisting, blood-slicked bodies of dancing vampires. Cruel, savage rock-and-roll lifted them and threw them down again. Brahms felt their frenzy touch him, and he shivered, fighting for control. At the center of the hellish dance stood an old vampire, his power covering him like a cloak. Around him were spread knives and smoking braziers, an obsidian mirror that must have been ancient, and a fine crystal goblet that might have held red wine. . . had the liquid in it not been thick, opaque, and still steaming with life's heat. The elder stood silently, unmoved by the frenzy, watching as the youth with the torn jacket wove through the dancers. The young Sabbat's eyes darted about the room, and his lips wavered between a snarl and a cry. He held himself erect, however, and walked to the elder on unsteady legs. Not a vampire, Brahms realized, but a mortal under the control of the Sabbat, probably a ghoul. "The eye of a seer," the ghoul said as he handed the elder a small package. Brahms heard the words clearly over the beating music.



Brahms knew little of the occult, but recognized sorcery when he saw it. The Sabbat elder knew the secrets of Thaumaturgy, somehow operating outside the laws that clan Tremere placed upon blood magic, and so was twice as dangerous for it. Knowing it would do him no good, Brahms crossed himself as the elder unwrapped the package and took out an object that looked for all the world like a child's marble.

The tide of the music receded as the elder began a droning chant in some long-dead language — the goblet of blood in one hand, the eye of Grosse Madeleine in the other. The young man knelt before him. In the whole cavernous corpse of the factory, only the dancing vampires, caught in their frenzy, and the leaping flames of the fires moved. The elder's chant rose to a crescendo, and, abruptly, he dropped the eye onto a brazier and dashed the blood over the obsidian mirror. While the eye sizzled on the hot coals, the elder gazed intently into the bloody mirror. At the same moment the eye collapsed into ashes, the Sabbat turned away, apparently satisfied with what he had seen. The young man stood at the same time and faced him.

"You did well." The dancing vampires almost moaned in response to the elder's praise of the mortal. "Soon you will be ready to receive our Embrace."

"Soon?"

"Yes, soon. But you are ready now to receive the name you will bear as a vampire." Again the dancing vampires moaned, louder this time. A note of celebration. "We are predators. We feed upon the humans who were his brothers and sisters when we were alive. Do you understand this?"

"Yes."

This time, the dancing vampires moaned to the words of the mortal. The elder nodded. "You have come to accept what this will mean?"

"Yes."

"What is that?"

Quietly. "I must kill."

"What?"

"I must kill."

The dancing vampires roared their approval, but the elder waved them to silence.

“You seem reluctant.”

The mortal swallowed. “I must kill!”

“Yes. There is no other way to survive as a vampire. You must kill for the blood of humans.” He paused and ran his fingers through the long, thick red hair of the mortal. “You are the first in a great many years to seek us out and request to be Embraced.” He smiled cruelly. “You are a traitor to humankind. Your name as a vampire shall be Judas.”

The roar of the dancers was deafening. The music, all but forgotten, returned at an intensity seemingly three times what it had been before. The very concrete and steel of the factory strained to respond to the savage call. The young man stood on the edge of the eye of the storm, torn between fury and calm. He glanced at the elder, who smiled again. Doubt, sorrow, and thought all forgotten with the frenzy, the mortal lifted his face and screamed wild ecstasy. He plunged into the dance, released. No vampire would harm him, no matter how much the Beast raged. He was Judas, their future kin.

Brahms stood silently and slipped back out the window. He had seen enough.

Two days later, he saw the red-haired mortal again.

He was in a store, trying on leather jackets. Brahms walked silently up behind him. “Judas,” he whispered.

The young man started and swung around, panic clearly showing on his face. Fast for a mortal, but far slower than a Kindred. He wasn't even a ghoul. From the look in his eyes, Brahms knew Judas had recognized him almost immediately as a vampire. The boy was clever. He had assumed a sublime indifference and casually turned away from Brahms before anyone else in the store could have noticed his actions.

“I didn't recognize you without the knife.” He pulled on the denim jacket he had worn before, nonchalantly checking his hair in the mirror.

Brahms almost smiled. “There are some of us you haven't seen yet.”

“I guess so. Did Jeremiah send you?”



Ah, the Sabbat elder. “No.” He slid an appreciative hand over one of the leather jackets Judas had been trying on. “Nice.”

“I wanted something, you know. . . for after.”

“Why wait for the Embrace?” Brahms ran the sleeve of the jacket under his nose, breathing in the dark, heavy smell of the leather. He glanced up at the young man. “Get one now.”

“Can’t afford it.”

“Can’t afford it?”

Judas reacted like an angry cat, almost visibly attempting to make himself look bigger and tougher — the Judas the Sabbat wanted to see. Brahms realized that maybe this wouldn’t be so tough after all. He laughed, deflating Judas a little, then flashed him that mad-bright expression his sire had loved.

“They call me Brahms, Judas. Come hunt with me.”

Judas deflated a little more, then struggled back with a snarl. “You know Jeremiah won’t let me hunt until I’ve been Embraced.” The elder was playing games with him. That would explain why he wasn’t even a ghoul. Brahms had twisted rules even when he was alive. “To drink maybe,” he snarled back, a snarl frightening enough to slam Judas back down, “but not to hunt.” He pushed Judas toward the front of the store. “How can he expect you to run before you can crawl, eh?”

Surprisingly, Judas could run. Really run. He kept up with the pace Brahms set, although it was clear he found it tiring. He was quiet, too. They slipped through the near darkness of the park’s shadows, the moon throwing just enough light onto the snow so that Judas could run without stumbling. Brahms kept them to the paths. Why humiliate Judas by leading him into the underbrush? They continued through the still night, to the other side of the park where a few modest homes backed onto the woods. Brahms stopped abruptly and motioned Judas to do the same. The young man slowed, but kept moving, walking, stretching, and breathing heavily.

Brahms glanced at him. “You a marathon runner?”

“Orienteering. High school medallist.”

“You don’t look like an athlete.”

Judas dropped to a crouch beside him. “You don’t look like a vampire.” He ducked his head, took another deep breath, then looked up again. “I took it up. As a hobby.” Pulling aside the branches of a bush, he looked out at the houses. “Which one?”

“There. That one.” A pleasant house, neat and well kept.

The walk was shovelled clean of all but a dusting of new-fallen snow. Brahms knew the woman who lived there, a widow who habitually fell asleep while watching television. When he came to her while she slept, she thought he was her dead husband. He smiled at the memories. That was one reason his sire had named him Brahms — he preferred to feed only when his vessels were asleep. Judas didn’t know that, of course. Motioning Judas to follow, Brahms crept around to the front of the house.

“I’m going to ring the bell. You,” he whispered, positioning Judas around the corner of the building, “stay here. I’ll be back. When she opens the door, you charge her. Shove her back into the house and hold her for me. Got it?” Brahms pulled back his lips to expose his fangs and ran his tongue along them. Judas swallowed and nodded. Silently, Brahms ran up the porch and pressed the doorbell twice. He caught the faint sounds of the woman stirring inside, sitting up, turning off the television, and walking toward the door. He vaulted the porch railing and rejoined Judas around the corner. “Ready?”

The door opened. “Hello? Hello?” Judas was holding his breath. So, to his surprise, was Brahms. He nudged Judas to imply, “Now!” The porch creaked as the woman stepped outside to look up and down the street. “Hello?”

The moment was perfect. Brahms nudged Judas again. Judas shook his head and refused to meet his gaze. Brahms gritted his teeth. Now or never, Judas. He shoved him out into full sight. For a moment, Judas just stood there, breath steaming red-gold in the warm light that streamed from the open door. Brahms could almost see the widow standing on the porch, her own mouth open in shock, and he wondered who would react first.

It was Judas. He turned and fled, running down the street as fast as he could. The widow screamed and slammed the door. Brahms

could hear her inside, dialing the phone, probably calling the police. He ran after Judas. He caught him in a schoolyard. For the first time, Judas was shivering in the cold.

“What the hell was that? Why didn’t you take her?” Brahms spun Judas around so they were face to face. Judas collapsed to his knees. Tears were running down his face. “I couldn’t! I can’t! This isn’t the way it’s supposed to be!”

Brahms crouched beside him and put his lips close to Judas’ ear. “How is it supposed to be, Judas? You want to be one of us, don’t you?”

“Not if it means this! Not if it means killing old women!”

“I thought you accepted that. Isn’t that what you told Jeremiah? ‘I must kill?’”

“I lied!” He struggled to his feet and ripped open his jacket and shirt, baring his chest and neck to the moonlight and cold, clear air. “Go ahead! Kill me! That’s the price for lying, isn’t it? I know the price, kill me!”

All Brahms could do was stare at his chest. It was lean and lightly muscular, but his skin was marred by dozens of scars. Old scars, from wounds cut deliberately and with care. Brahms pulled the shirt and jacket out of the boy’s hands, tugging them down to reveal his back — more scars, but lighter and less regular. The scars of a lash, but from the angle. . . “You did this to yourself?” Softly. He didn’t have the heart to torment the young man any longer.

Judas nodded and a sob escaped his throat. “Everything is too damned ordinary!” He pulled away from Brahms and let his shirt and jacket fall completely to the ground. “The world is dead! I need to know there’s something more than just. . . you know. I know there’s more out there, I can feel it. I need to feel.”

“So pain is the answer?”

“No. It wasn’t, not in the end. It worked for a while — I felt something, but. . .” He grasped at the air and then closed his fist. “Then it just hurt. And I felt stupid.”

“You tried orienteering for the same reason, didn’t you? Going for the runner’s high?”

“Yeah. Coach never understood why I really did it. The medals are gathering dust in the basement. After that it was fasting and sleep deprivation. And exposing myself to cold. I tried drugs, too. They made me sick.”

“And finally you come to us?”

He nodded. “I slept all day and stayed up all night. I wore black. I lived like I thought a vampire should live. My parents kicked me out.” Judas’ eyes took on a mad glint of their own, and this time it was Brahms who shuddered. From pity. The madness in Judas’ eyes was a desperate need to share a vision only he could see. A need to deal with the feeling that there was more to life than other people knew.

It was a feeling Brahms remembered well. The same need had driven him to spend more than one night awake at his piano, writing until his eyes stung. He looked at Judas again, this time searching for the ethereal play of colors that was the mortal’s aura. It was there, yellow for idealism, gold for strong spirituality, and brown for frustration and bitterness, but as pale as if he had truly been a vampire.

“I just about gave up on that, too, but then...”

“You saw your first real vampire?”

“And tracked her down. Left a note for her to come and get me.”

But Jeremiah came instead, Brahms guessed, maybe intending to kill the boy, but deciding to play with him first. Putting him through “tests” that would break him down and turn him into an animal. The Twelve Labors of Judas, an old Sabbath joke. He would become a vampire only after he had proven himself. But no one survived the tests.

Brahms reached out and touched Judas on the shoulder. “I saw Grosse Madeleine last night. She looks remarkably good for a woman who was supposed to have had her eye removed.”

Judas started and probably would have run again, but this time Brahms held his arm. “Jeremiah has lied to you, Judas. There are more vampires than his pack, and not all of them are like him. Most of us want to hunt down Jeremiah and kill him for the things he’s done!” Most of us would have hunted you down and killed you if we had found your note. He tore himself from that thought. “How did you fake it?”

“Grosse Madeleine collects things like that. The eye was in a jar labelled ‘Rasputin.’ One seer is as good as another.”

“Lucky.” He let him go. “Could you have gone through with it if you had to take one of her eyes?”

“No.” Judas bent down and picked up his jacket. He stared for a moment at the black-bladed knife of the Sabbat, then let the jacket drop to the ground. Brahms pulled off his own coat and put it around the mortal’s shivering form. Judas met his gaze willingly this time. “So what are you going to do with me?”

“Do you still seek the Embrace?”

He thought about it. “No. I can’t live your life. When it comes right down to it, I don’t want it.” He put his face in his hands, “I’ve failed again. But you know, this was closest I’ve ever gotten to feeling. . .”

“To your vision?”

“Yeah, that’s right, to my vision. When I was trying to trick Jeremiah into making me a vampire, I felt it. When I was trying to be something I really wasn’t.”

Something he wasn’t. . . Brahms frowned and then grinned. “Judas, my boy, did Jeremiah ever tell you about the Masquerade?”

Just after dusk the next day, they stood together again, blending in with the rest of the crowd that stood watching the old factory burn. If the fire fighters were especially observant, they might have found a number of patches of light grey ash in the remains.

Judas took a last look at the scene and turned, walking away down the street. Brahms caught up a second later. “The Prince sends his thanks. We managed to destroy the entire pack, thanks to you. The Prince not only gave me permission, but ordered me to Embrace you,” he said, as he hung a friendly arm around the young man’s shoulders. “It seems you know too much about the Kindred to be allowed to remain mortal.”

Judas laughed, with only a touch of strain in his voice. “You won’t, will you?”

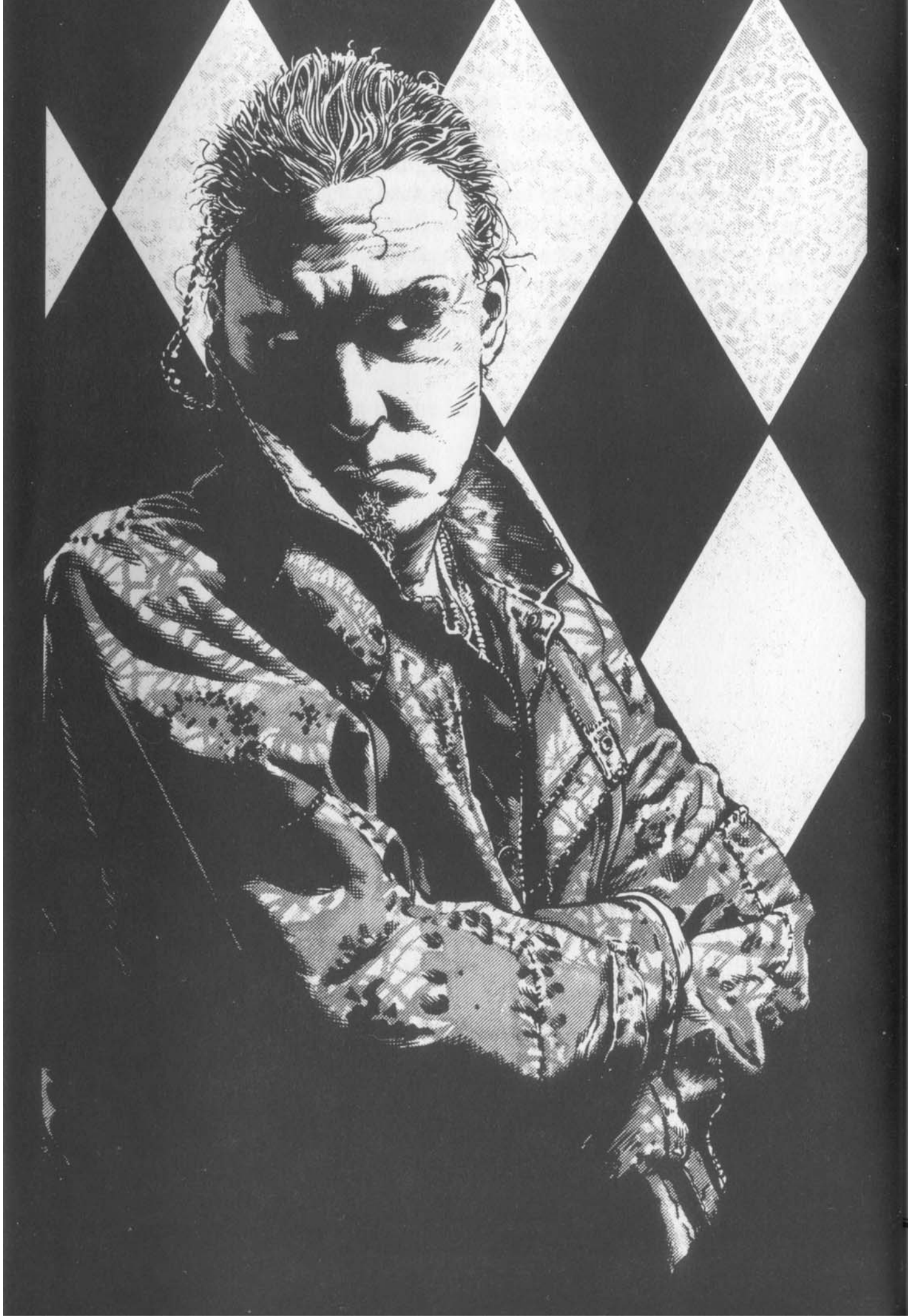
“Not unless you’ve changed your mind.”

He shook his head, then sighed. “Do you realize that I managed to live up to my name after all?” He gestured back at the fire. “I betrayed them. Aren’t you worried? That some day I’ll betray you?”

Brahms pulled out a cigarette and lit it as he walked. “Not as long as we can keep you happy being something you aren’t.” He snapped his lighter shut and stuck it back in his pocket. He wondered how the Prince and the primogen council would react when he presented them with his neonate. Not a vampire, not even a ghoul, but a mortal. His heart was still beating, but he was a natural actor, and his aura was not that of a normal mortal. Judas was anything but normal, and that was the trick. He would become Brahms’ greatest piece of work. The Masquerade in reverse.

He blew his smoke out in one long, steady stream. Breathing life into the night air.







Chapter Two

The Book of Nod

*The earliest history of the Kindred is said to be recorded in the legendary **Book Of Nod**. Named for the land east of Eden where Caine first traveled, it chronicles the tumultuous birth of the bloodlines and the origins of the Jyhad.*

In the beginning there was only Caine.
Caine who murdered his brother out of anger.
Caine who was cast out.
Caine who was cursed forever with immortality
Caine who was cursed with the lust for blood.
It is Caine from whom we all come,
Our Sire's Sire.

For the passing of an age he lived in solitude,
In loneliness and suffering.
For an eon he remained alone.

But the passing of memory drowned his sorrow.
And so he returned to the world of mortals,
To the world his brother and his brother's children had created.
He returned and was made welcome.
The people saw his power and worshipped him,
Making him King of their great City,
The First City, a place by the name of Enoch.

Though he became ruler of a mighty nation, he was still alone,
For none were as he. His sorrow grew once again.
Then he committed another great sin, for he begat Progeny,
Of which there were only three.
But from them came more Progeny, his grandchildren,
And then Caine said "An end to this crime. There shall be no
more."
And as Caine's word was the law, his Brood obeyed him.

The city stood for many ages,
And become the center of a mighty Empire.
But then came the Deluge, a great Flood that washed over the
world.
The City was destroyed,
And its people along with it.

Again Caine fell into great sorrow and went into solitude,
Becoming as a dog amidst the wastes,
And leaving his Progeny to their own ends.
They came to him and begged him to return,
To help them rebuild the City.
But he would not come with them,
Saying the Flood had been sent as punishment
For his having returned to the world of life
And subverting the true law.

So they returned alone to what mortals were left
And announced that they were the new rulers.
Each created a Brood,
In order to claim the glory of Caine,
Yet they did not have his wisdom or restraint.
A great war was waged, the Elders against their Children,
And the Children slew their parents.

The rebels then built a new city
And brought to it 13 tribes.
It was a beautiful city and its people worshipped them as gods.
They created new Progeny of their own,
The Fourth Generation of Cainites.

But they feared the Jyhad,
And it was forbidden for those Children
To create others of their kind.
This power their Elders kept for themselves.
When a Childe was created, it was hunted down and killed,
And its Sire with it.

Though this city was as great as Caine's, eventually it grew old.
As do all living things, it slowly began to die.
The gods at first did not see the truth,
And when they at last looked about them it was too late.
Their city was destroyed and their power extinguished,
And they were forced to flee, their Progeny along with them.
But many were killed in the flight, for they had grown weak.
With their authority gone, all were free to create their own Broods,
And soon there were many new Kindred,
Who ruled across the face of the Earth.

But this could not last.
Over time, there came to be too many of the Kindred,
And then there was war once again.
The Elders were already deep in hiding,
For they had learned caution.
But their Children had founded their own cities and Broods,
And it is they who were killed in the great wave of war.

There was war so total, that there are none of that Generation
To speak of themselves any longer.
Waves of mortal flesh were sent across continents
In order to crush and burn the cities of the Kindred.
Mortals thought they were fighting their own wars,
But it is for us that they spilt their blood.

Once this war was over,
All of the Kindred hid from one another
And from the humans that surrounded them.
In hiding we remain today,
For the Jyhad continues still.







Chapter Three The Damned

To WH, from your most devoted servant,

Many years have passed and I fervently hope that time will have dulled somewhat the distressing memories you carry. I dare to send this in a spirit of supplication; while your forgiveness is too much to ask, I crave at least your understanding. I owe you some kind of explanation for the events which so shattered your blameless life.

Although I exhibited precious little Menschwert before you and your companions, the flame of humanitas still burns in my breast, albeit erratically. Time and nature both struggle to extinguish it, thus completing my descent into the inferno of madness and bestiality. I must guard my soul well — as well as any priest — for any lapse in vigilance lets in the beast, with results which you yourself have seen.

I know it is impossible to atone, an eternity of pious prayer is too short a time. However, as a mark of penitence I offer you the enclosed document, the act of which makes me a traitor to my own kind. I pray you may find something in its pages to help you understand the torment I inflicted upon you, and by understanding, perhaps, dispell some little amount of the pain. The tone, I fear, is somewhat dry; a soldier has little need for pleasing tricks of poesy to beguile a reader. I have merely set down that which I know, as well as I may.

I owe you a debt which can never be discharged. If at any time I may be of service to you or your family, I am at your command.

Semper Servus,

VT

Where to begin? So much ink has been spilled down the centuries. I am constantly amazed by the regularity with which you mortals stumble across truths and half-truths — sometimes very profound ones — by the most haphazard and fallacious thinking; and then, unaware of what you have uncovered, proceed to expound generalities of entirely the wrong order.

We are monsters to thee, yet heroes as well. We are the incarnations of dark metaphors and suppressed desires, yet we are also the nobility of fairy tales, beloved of children. We are a baseless superstition, an artistic genre, a psychological condition, a yearning made flesh, an externalization of a guilt-lust-violence complex, and many other things beside.



Our True Nature

Some two and a half centuries ago, a French churchman named Calmet sought to collect all the information *extant* on the nature of vampires. It is not surprising, then, that his treatise contains many contradictions and areas of uncertainty. Quoting from the reports of Papal Commissions sent out to deal with 'plagues' of vampires in Austria, Hungary, Moravia, and Silesia, he reports that a vampire may be destroyed by being transfixing with a wooden stake, followed by decapitation and the burning of the remains. This will indeed destroy a vampire, just as certainly as it would destroy a mortal. Such a clever man, Calmet.

Motion pictures have abbreviated this treatment somewhat, creating the fallacy that the stake is sufficient. Do not believe such tales. Transfixing its heart on a stake will immobilize a vampire, but some further treatment is necessary *terminus sit*. Whether this be burning or sunlight, *ist egal*; but trust not the stake alone. Neither should you place your faith in weapons of metal, as did your American friend. Such things injure, but the wounds heal quickly — else I should not be writing now.

Sunlight, it is said, is infallible doom to my kind. Motion pictures show motley greasepaint vampires crumbling to dust at Sol's caress, or bursting into flames like those doused with Greek Fire. Sadly, this is true, if somewhat overstated. Sunlight burns our skin as does flame, and only the oldest and strongest can withstand it for long.

Thus we must sleep during the day and act only at night. During the day we are very sluggish, and find it difficult to do anything besides sleep. Only those of us who have not left our human nature very far behind are capable of taking action when the sun is in the sky. I myself have not seen the light of day in many centuries, and have nearly forgotten the gleam of the sun's golden rays. But I do not miss it.

Crosses, holy water, and the other trappings of religion may be ignored — the Church is the first refuge of mortals faced by things beyond their comprehension, especially in former times. *Ipsa dicto*, however, I have seen rare occasions where such items were capable of causing considerable discomfort — their wielder almost glowed with faith in the Divinity, and I can only conclude that the religious items

served somehow to channel the power of that faith. Ignore the tricks of the cinema, however, with their crossed candlesticks and shadows of windmills' sails.

The reputed properties of garlic, aconite and other herbs are likewise mere superstition. They repel vampires no more than they do mortals, for all the canting of the goodwives who peddle them. Like the Church, the village wisewoman was oft required to use her 'magic' against vampires, and was just as successful.

Film-makers have made other fallacious legends part of the common parlance. For instance, we can see our own reflections in the mirror, though some of us pretend otherwise in honor of the great cinematic tradition. Likewise, we can appear on film. Indeed, some of my kind have appeared in movies, and one was even a director of no little repute.

It is equally ludicrous to presume that a vampire would not be able to travel about as he would like. We Cainites (one of our race's terms for ourselves, the origin of which I shall later discuss) may enter any house and home we please at any time. It is likewise preposterous to think a vampire would not be able to cross running water. Indeed, water affects us not at all. We no longer breathe, hence we cannot drown. While being trapped underwater is unpleasant and may, if prolonged, result in some physical deterioration, no vampire has died of immersion alone, although some bloodlines are rumored to have a weakness *vis-a-vis* water. Belike this is how many of the rumors originated, for weaknesses have arisen in several bloodlines and have been passed down from Sire to Get.

The cinematic vampire, it seems, may take several forms if the human shape suits not his purpose: wolf, bat, mist — in some legends, cat and night-bird also. The powers of the Elders are considerable, and they are seldom found in those of later generation. I have seen many wonders during my brief and unwilling involvement in their game of Jyhad, and I no longer discount the stories of shape-shifting. But I tell you this — a vampire who has plural forms will either be of a rare breed, the Gangrel clan, or will be very old, very wise and very powerful. I pray that such a one will never cross your path.



Many of us, however, have abilities which a mortal would consider supernatural. As predators, our senses are sharp, and some have developed other talents to aid in the hunt. One example — the ability to inspire fear, stillness, obedience and other emotional responses — is a useful one, although popular writers have embellished it somewhat in the interests of their stories.

The Ghouls

It occurs to me that some of the confusion about a vampire's supernatural powers and weaknesses may be due to mistaken identity. There exists a class of creature in between mortal and vampire, which the Kindred (another of our self-referential sobriquets, and the most popular) have named Ghoul. It is not the legendary corpse-eating *ghûl* of the Indies, although certain individuals may display similar behavior.

Mortals who drink the blood of the Kindred without first being drained will become Ghouls. These creatures may go abroad in daylight as other mortals do, but they do not suffer the Hunger, nor do they age as long as they feed on vampiric blood regularly. They may even have superhuman strength and reflexes. From time to time, it is advantageous to create such servants, commanding their loyalty through the promise of eternal life. They need not even be human — a hound that has drunk of one's blood becomes the most perfect and faithful guardian one could desire. Thus do tales of hell-hounds arise.

While Ghouls display some of the strengths of the vampire, they retain most of the weaknesses of the mortal. Impalement will slay Ghouls as effectively as mortals, and a lead bullet will kill as surely as a silver one. They may even develop a fear of religious trappings, or garlic, or what you will — a purely neurotic phenomenon, based on the fact that they *believe* these things can harm them. The existence of Ghouls in animal form may partially explain the widespread belief in shape-changing vampires.

Some Ghouls may well believe themselves full-fledged vampires, having been deceived to that end by their creators. They may even act according to their mistaken ideas — to the point of drinking blood — for they seldom understand the ways of the Kindred any better than mortals. Most are deranged to some extent by the experiences they

have suffered — witness, *zum Beispiel*, your late husband's employer — and many are deliberately misinformed by their masters, the better to serve them.

The Embrace

Mortal superstitions deal at great length with the means by which a vampire may come into existence. These range from the predictably religious to the utterly bizarre, and can make an entertaining evening's reading if one is so inclined. Other than entertainment, however, they serve little purpose.

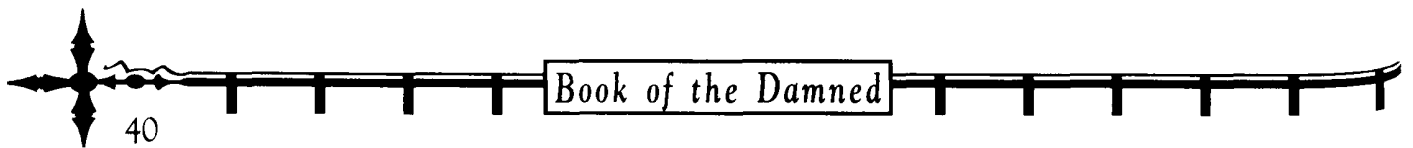
The first and most common of these myths is the legend that anyone bitten by a vampire will himself become a vampire. Thus, each time a vampire feeds, it creates another of its kind. One wonders how it is that any mortals are left in the world. Furthermore, a corpse may become a vampire if it was a suicide, an oathbreaker, a member of a tainted bloodline, or *de tout* an evil person. Again, the globe would be peopled with nothing but vampires — and I tell you this, I have not seen this army of undead.

Indeed, to my understanding, there are not many of us upon this globe. To my knowledge, there is only one means through which a mortal may become a vampire. Shame fills me again when I recall that I intended this fate for you, and I rejoice that Providence denied me. Truly do I repent the eternity of sorrow which so nearly was your destiny.

There is a grain of truth in the legend *de gustando*. To become a vampire, one must lose all one's mortal blood — but that is only part of the horror. *Mortui exsanguinati mortui veri*, if nothing further is done; the fang will kill as everlastingly as the blade or the bullet.

As mortality stands on the brink of extinction, as the flesh slowly dies, the vampire assailant may choose to spare the victim from death or deny Heaven's grace, for all is one *his rebus*. By replacing the stolen mortal blood with a little of the vampire's own, a Progeny is created. But a single drop of blood upon the lips of the dying arouses him sufficiently to drink from the wrist of his Sire.

How can I express the horror of the Embrace? The fear and confusion? The revulsion and terror? The pain? Even the passing of centuries has not dulled the memory.



Understand that I am no coward. As a soldier, I endured the privations of the camp, the perils of battle, the savagery of the victor, of which I plead guilty to my share, for such was the *Zeitsmode*. But even those things I witnessed as a prisoner of the Turks could not have prepared me for the experience of being hurled into this cursed half-life.

I was, *de gratia potestates descriptis*, in a most peaceful state of mind as my blood was stolen. As deaths go — and I have seen many kinds — this was surely the least distressing. It was as though my experience was a strange and somewhat unsettling dream. Far off in the warm, soft darkness of my failing mind, I became aware of a light; I knew that this was where I must go, and I knew that, once I arrived there, all would be well with me. I began to drift toward it.

Abruptly the welcoming light was extinguished. My face felt an impact like a musket-ball, and as I tried to scream, my mouth filled with liquid fire. The vitriol seared my throat and stomach; consciousness returned as though it would rend me limb from limb. A thousand fishhooks tore my flesh in every direction.

I prayed for death — anything to stop the pain — but I could not even lapse from consciousness. *Nec Turcos, nec Inquaesitores* ever commanded such torment. Magnify a thousandfold the sting of vinegar on a cut finger, and flood the feeling through every limb and every vein. Add to this the gnawing, starving ache of five days' forced march without food or water. Deny sleep, swooning or any other surcease from the all-consuming *dolor*. But no. My meager wordsmithing can convey nothing of it.

I knew only that I must drink, and as I did so the pain abated a little. My eyes cleared, and I saw what it was that I drank.

My first reaction was denial. This could not possibly be happening. Even in the fifteenth century, men of education and breeding scoffed at the superstitions of the peasant. As a child, my nurses had frightened me to sleep with stories of the terrible *vrolok*, but I had outgrown such tales long before. This was a nightmare, an hallucination of some kind. I tried to focus on thoughts of meat, fruit, wine — but to no avail. Blood was all. Blood was reality. All else was discarded.

I can only be thankful that I was in a remote place. Had I been Embraced in a city, with people all around, there is no telling what havoc might have ensued. The Hunger blotted out reason entirely. Had my own son appeared before me then, he would have died to feed the Hunger, for I was utterly enslaved to it. No opium fiend in a Limehouse or Shanghai den was ever so helplessly, so wretchedly dependent.

I cry for mercy. The memory — and the recollection of what followed — distresses me, and I shall not continue the narrative. Instead, I shall address another, but related, topic.

Anatomia Vampirica

Though our external appearance remains much like that of the living, there are those among us who insist that the Change transforms its subject into another species — *Homo Sapiens Sanguineus*, *Homo Sapientissimus*, and *Homo Vampiricus* have all been advanced as names for this new race, following the Swedish classification.

Be that as it may, it seems beyond dispute that the body undergoes as much of a change as the psyche. As will become apparent, much of what follows is — and can only be — conjecture, unsupported by dissection.

The gross physical changes are a matter of common knowledge, so much so that we have allowed them to remain in popular fiction. The canine teeth are indeed long and pointed, the better to draw blood. However, they are only fully extended at the time of the kill, being at other times withdrawn into their sockets by the contraction of a flexible tissue at their base. Both speech and secrecy would be most difficult otherwise. Some lack the means to withdraw their teeth, but they are easily discovered and are a dying clan.

To feed, we merely need to bite, retract the teeth from the wound, and begin to drink. If we lick the wound after we drink, then no trace of our feeding will remain. Indeed, if we lick any wound which we have caused with our claws or fangs, we can heal it completely.

Our own skin, as with the cinematic vampire, is invariably pale. Partly, it seems, this stems from our aversion to sunlight, but it is also due to our arrested state of death. *Darüber noch später.*



Our Hunger is a drive for sustenance, of that there can be no doubt. From this, and from bitter experiences with the foods I most enjoyed in my breathing days, it appears that the inward parts of the vampire have lost their facility for digestion. One seldom sees a stout vampire, and nearly all remark on a newfound slenderness after the Change. Being no longer required, the organs presumably wither.

The vampire's body remains as it was at the time of death. Hair and nails continue to grow for a few days, as they do on a fresh cadaver, but that is all. If I wish my hair or nails to be shorter, I must cut them each evening after I rise. It is my conjecture that the body of the vampire is actually dead, and is only arrested from the natural process of decay by the power of the Change. The skin becomes a little tighter over the bones, much as it does in the newly dead.

The lungs of a vampire no longer breathe — though many have learned to feign breathing while among the living — for the fresh blood of the prey provides the small amount of oxygen needed to sustain the dead tissues in their stasis. Only a young or foolish vampire takes blood from the jugular vein, where it is near the end of its journey and full of impurities; the blood of the carotid artery is clean and wholesome, and much to be preferred.

Just as the lungs no longer breathe, so the heart no longer beats. The blood of prey somehow suffuses through the body by a process of osmosis, rather than flowing along veins and arteries. This can be seen in the fact that when a vampire weeps — which indeed we do, and more often than a mortal might suppose — the tears themselves are of blood. Cut a vampire's throat, and you will find the vessels empty. The closure and atrophy of those blood vessels nearest the skin is another reason for the pallid complexion which marks the vampire, although a rosy hue is noticeable after feeding.

The blood of the prey, coupled with the blood of the Sire, does appear to have some remarkable properties. We are able to heal ourselves of most wounds with remarkable quickness. We still feel pain, and a reflex sends blood to the afflicted area — just as in life, blood will suffuse bruised tissue and colour it purple. The one exception to this rule is the stake so beloved of writers and film-makers. This will induce a kind of paralysis or trance, although it will not kill in its own right. Quite why this is so is unknown to me, for the heart

no longer beats and so is not necessary to pump the flow of blood. I have heard various mystical explanations of this phenomenon, but must confess myself at a loss to explain it rationally.

The body no longer makes and replenishes its own blood, and relies entirely on prey for fresh blood and the nutrients which Science has found blood to carry. Something in the blood of the Sire, passed down through the Change, fans the spark of Life and arrests decay, but regular infusions of fresh blood are needed lest decay begin again. And when a vampire is destroyed, that decay is fantastically swift, as though Time were recalling the debt of decades or centuries. Nothing remains but dust, which is why anatomical study is impossible and so much must be guessed.

We are able to heal our wounds using this blood upon which we feed. We are able to use it to regenerate whole limbs and organs, given time and need. Regeneration always restores us to the physical state we possessed when we died, including hair length, face shape, body weight — everything. When the body is injured, it will reform itself in the same mold again and again. We are already dead, and so cannot die except through the forces of life — the eternal sun and the primordial flame.

One last question remains *in re corporis* — a somewhat prurient one, which I shall answer with as much delicacy as I may. Through the popular entertainments, the vampire has become established as a highly potent figure of romance — and betimes of more than romance. While the act of love is physically possible for a vampire of either sex, the associated impulses, drives and responses have died along with the flesh — which, incidentally, is cold to the touch rather than warm. By effort of will we may go through the motions, forcing blood to the relevant areas in the same way as healing a wound, but that is all. The ecstasy of the Kiss replaces all such needs within us. Blood is the only object of our desire.



The Hunger

To live as a vampire is to live with horror. Always squatting on one's shoulder like a warlock's fiend is the knowledge of the Hunger. And always, always, does it approach — sometimes slowly and surreptitiously, sometimes with great haste, but always ravenously. The Hunger can never fully be satiated.

Hunger, we call it, but the term is woefully inadequate. Mortals know hunger, even starvation, but this is as nothing. The Hunger replaces almost every need, every drive known to the living — food, drink, reproduction, ambition, security — and it is more compelling than all of them combined.

More than a drive, it is a drug, one to which we are born with a hopeless addiction. In the taking of blood lies not only our survival, but also a pleasure beyond description. The Hunger is a physical, mental and spiritual ecstasy which throws all the pleasures of mortal life into shadow.

To be a vampire is to be trapped by the Hunger. The Beast may only be kept subdued by the greatest effort of will; to deny the Hunger enrages the Beast, until nothing may keep it in check. Thus we must commit monstrous acts to stop ourselves from becoming monsters — that is the Riddle. *Monsters we are, lest monsters we become.*

That is the paradox of our life. It is the curse of my own.

The Beast

The Beast rages constantly for release, and only the strongest will may hold it back. Sometimes it break its bonds, and runs riotous until it is recaptured. The strain of self-control, and the shameful memories of failed control, are hard enough to bear. Worse still is the knowledge, constant as the Hunger, that these things will surely happen again. Over the decades and centuries, this awareness gnaws at the mind like a rat at a ship's cable.

To be a vampire is to live on the edge of madness. Obsessive devotion to some self-appointed task can help keep despair from the mind, and if the task is one of great goodness, it is possible to reason that the end justifies the means. Some deliberately cultivate addictions, such as gambling or collecting art. Others shut themselves away and confine their hunting to a small, sparsely-populated area, telling

themselves that they are protecting the rest of the world. These things can perhaps delay the onset of madness, but they can also provide it with its first foothold.

Ultimately, hard as we may strive against it, madness awaits us. The flame of Humanity ebbs and sputters until finally it is extinguished. Then the Beast is victorious, and monsters we become in truth. The Beast resides within the heart, and directs us towards evil, but when it overtakes the halls of the soul, then shall we *be* evil.

Some speak of *Golconda*, the vampire's Salvation. Both mortal and Kindred lore deny us Heaven's grace, but in *Golconda* we look for surcease from the Riddle. It is a stasis, where an individual may balance the Man and the Beast against each other so that striving is no longer needful. The descent into madness is halted, and although the individual is no longer recognizable as human in his thoughts and deeds, what remains of *Humanitas* is safe. In almost five centuries, I have met a meager few Kindred who have reached this blessed state, but all desire it as mortals desire Heaven.

The Burdens of Immortality

We are, as the most cursory student of folklore knows, ageless and immortal. In this case, lore and tradition have the right of it. Once made, a vampire lives until actively destroyed, or until the Beast wins over the Man, or until, after countless millennia, the Blood is exhausted.

Down the centuries, mortals have hungered for the secret of immortality, thinking it would give them great power. From the priests of heathen times through the alchemists of my own breathing days and down to the physicians of the present, mortals have expended more wealth and effort in the war against aging and death than in the cause of any religion or trade.

Many newly made Kindred — myself included — rejoice in the thought of immortality when they first overcome the shock of the Change and begin to reconcile themselves to their new situation. Yet it is a barbed gift, and another door by which madness may enter in.

Consider, for example, having to watch your loved ones — even your children and grandchildren — grow old and die, while you remain strong and vigorous. There is a necessity to live completely outside

mortal society, or at least to move on every decade or so, lest it be noticed that you do not age. The tide of history flows over you like a stream, leaving you unchanged.

The longer one lives as a vampire, the greater the sense of detachment from mortal affairs. It can be an advantage at first, helping to deaden the guilt of killing and the pain of losing one's mortal family to remorseless Time. But as detachment grows, *Humanitas* wanes, and the Beast grows stronger. The most terrible of mortal serial killers often are detached from their kind, *atrocitates tranquilliter gestandae*. It is the same face on a different coin, as the Turks would say.

Even if one can fight off this dehumanizing *verschiedenskeit*, Time lends madness other weapons. For without detachment, guilt and remorse may work unchecked, eating at the feelings like acid eating metal. Mortal soldiers return from foreign wars wounded by the violence they have seen and done, yet they have only to live with their memories for a few brief decades. A vampire's guilt is eternal, and time can sap the strongest will. Another face of the Riddle: we may lose our Humanity to avoid losing our minds, yet what is madness but lost Humanity? *Sooner or later, grins the Beast, you shall be mine.*

A further paradox — we grow stronger as we grow weaker. The older a vampire, the more powerful — the more cunning to have lived so long, the better versed and practiced in certain arts and powers, the better able to withstand those things that are anathema to us. And, perhaps, the stronger of will, not to have become a monster. Yet the weaker, for the Beast tries the bars of its prison ceaselessly, and in time they must yield. The oldest shut themselves away from the rest of their kind, fearing the day when they shall become monsters and distracting themselves with paranoid games of cat's-paw using younger Kindred as playing-pieces.

Vita Sub Tenebras

There are other reasons for our nocturnal life besides the need to avoid the sun's rays. It is so much easier to stalk and hunt in the hours of darkness. *Imprimis*, the prey is usually dulled by fatigue — and betimes drink — and can see little in the poor light. The hunter, on the other hand, is normally fresh and fully rested, and can often see as well as a mortal does at noonday. *Secundus*, the hours of darkness are

less populous, and promise fewer interruptions. Feeding is a vulnerable time; the Beast is near the surface, and may stand at bay rather than leave a kill. This has been the undoing of more than one Neonate.

The Origins of the Kindred

Like mortals, we have our own history and lore, by which we seek to explain our existence and understand our place in the world. Just as the veracity of your legends is lost in the shrouds of history, so is the truth of our lore uncertain. However, over the years I have unearthed a number of different sources, and through painstaking study, I believe I have arrived at some semblance of fact and truth.

Most of our lore is contained within an ancient text known as the *Book of Nod*. Neither any of my acquaintances nor I has ever seen or heard of a complete copy, although fragments have been unearthed over the centuries, *multis linguis, multis causis*. There is much confusion and contradiction, and some versions appear to have been deliberately falsified.

Over the centuries, I have been fortunate to peruse fragments in Greek, Turkish, Aramaic, Latin and *Hebraica Quabalistica*, as well as translations from Old Kingdom hieroglyphics and Assyrian cuneiform. Inconsistencies are rife, but the main body of the tale states that my kind is descended from Caine, whom some call The Third Mortal.

Outcast from mortal society for the killing of his brother, Caine was cursed with eternal life and a craving for blood. We, his children, are the heirs to that curse, condemned to repeat his crime endlessly.

Caine wandered in the wilderness until his name was all but forgotten. He returned to the world of mortals and was able to establish himself as the ruler of a city, by the name of Enoch, Uniech, Enkil or what you will. Many Kindred call it the First City. Here, Caine created three Progeny — those whom we call the Second Generation. They in turn begot the Third Generation, who are numbered at nine, twenty-seven, one hundred or none at all, according to the source one reads. Caine forbade the creation of any further Kindred, perhaps having gained some understanding of what he had unleashed upon the world. There is no word of any Kindred establishing Caine's rule elsewhere, and if they all remained in the First City, their increasing numbers must have strained the mortal population.

All was tranquil in Caine's domain until a great flood destroyed the city. Caine saw this as divine punishment for returning to the world of mortals, and resumed his wanderings, leaving his Progeny to their own devices. Though he forbade them to create more, they ignored his imperative as each of his Progeny desired a Brood of its own.

No more is heard of our ancestor, although from time to time, a vampire calling himself Caine will appear in some part of the world or another. Occasionally, he is revealed as an impostor, but more often he vanishes as suddenly as he appeared. Some believe that Caine still lives, while others — myself included — think it more likely to be some subterfuge of the Elders. It is said that Caine is rent with sorrow for having unleashed such misery and suffering upon the world.

Once free of Caine's restrictions, the Second and Third Generations created a great multitude of Progeny. They ruled together briefly, but all was not calm between them. Eventually, the youngest Generations rose and slew their Sires, drinking their blood. This Fourth Generation built another great city (some sources hint that it might have been Babylon, while others suggest that it rests somewhere beneath the sands of Egypt) which we know only as the Second City.

The rule of these new vampires was not untroubled, for certain Kindred of the Third Generation still lived. Indeed, some say they were secretly behind the slayings of their Elders. It was decreed that they alone reserved the right to beget Progeny, and that any of the Fourth Generation who disobeyed them were to be hunted down and killed along with their Sires. Though the Fourth Generation lived in public, the Third Generation, whom we know today as the Antediluvians, lived in secret and revealed to no one the location of their havens. For nearly two millennia (some say 23 centuries), the Fourth Generation ruled the city, while the Third Generation ruled them. Eventually, the culture grew decadent and the city died. In a great uprising, the people rose up and killed all the Kindred they could find.

When the Second City fell, its rulers fled. Scattered far and wide, they were too numerous and too widespread for the hidden Elders of the Third Generation to threaten them, and thus was begot the Fifth Generation. The Kindred grew in numbers and settled in all parts of the world.

Mortal history records a time, beginning over two thousand years ago, of burgeoning empires locked in combat with one another — the time of the Persians, the Greeks and the Tartars. Thus did the Fifth Generation establish its own order. Meanwhile, the Antediluvians lay hidden and pursued their own mad schemes. This age of wars may even have been of their making, the beginning of their great Jihad. Whatever the truth, almost none remain to speak of it. I myself have met only one of the Fifth Generation, and at the time I did not know it.

It is said by some that near the end of this period, the Antediluvians emerged from their hiding places and sucked the blood of all my kind, each leaving but one new Progeny of their line. This legend has it that this was the close of the Second Cycle, that the Antediluvians' lust for blood was so great that they needed all of my race as their Vessels.

Those who believe in the Cycle legends predict an Armageddon in the near future. They say that the Antediluvians are asleep now, but someday they will awaken and then they will feed. The Third Cycle is coming to a close, and none but the Third Generation will remain alive at its conclusion. The true believers say that each Cycle lasts 2300 years, and soon, very soon, the time approaches. They call it Gehenna, and some prepare for it fervently. As a man of science, these beliefs seem extreme to me, but they cannot be entirely discounted.

Whatever the truth of the matter, I know that the Elders of the Fifth and older Generations exist in complete seclusion. Those of the Inconnu fear one another that much. To have lived this long, they must be cunning and powerful, and they may be expected to cover their tracks well. This leaves my own Sixth Generation and its descendants as the bulk of the visible Kindred. I have heard claims of a Thirteenth or Fourteenth Generation, but prefer to dismiss them. Such creatures must be very weak and close to mortality, for it is said that the Blood thins as it is passed from one generation to the next.

The Masquerade

In 1435, there was founded an organization, a cause, an obsession, a war. Call it what you will; history knows it as the Inquisition. Besides burning harmless old women and excommunicating French field mice for eating farmers' wheat, this Inquisition did betimes achieve its aim,

and cleansed the world of no few true witches, warlocks and monsters. Many such monsters were Kindred, and the diligent Inquisitors traced whole bloodlines and put all to the flame.

For the first time, our kind stood in real danger of extinction. Superstitious belief coupled with scientific thoroughness placed in mortal hands the wherewithal to rid the world of monsters forever. It was a terrifying time — as insane to us as the Holocaust which mortals visited on one another earlier in this century. Those Kindred who survived bear the mental scars of the Inquisition to this day, and many live a life of paranoid seclusion, dealing with the breathing world as little as possible.

Before this time, we had lived more or less openly, relying on our power and position to preserve us. Though we did not announce our presence, we did not struggle to hide it either. We had grown proud in our power, and the fall which followed was terrible indeed.

The survivors quickly learned the wisdom of stealth and secrecy, and networks sprang up as they do among mortals in times of crisis, conveying information and individuals *sub rosa* for the safety of all. This was the birth of what may be called a Vampiric society.

The name *Camarilla* arose for this organization, reflecting the small, secret rooms used for meeting and concealment. Groups made contact with one another, united for the first time by this adversity.

The first global convocation took place in 1486. Many chose to absent themselves, but this meeting gave itself the power to speak for all Kindred existing or yet to be made, and to pass laws governing all. The founders of the Camarilla made themselves its lawmakers. The first such law, and the most sacred, is that of the Masquerade. It is this law which I willingly violate by laying these pages before you.

The horrors of the preceding decades had taught us the need for secrecy and shown us that, after all, we were vulnerable. It was vital, therefore, that the breathing world be convinced it had killed the last of us, or, better yet, that we had never existed at all. We must match organization with organization and cause with cause if we hoped to survive.

The Masquerade had two faces, each with a number of contingencies and lesser objectives. *Imprimis simplicissimusque*, reasonable secrecy and care was required of all Kindred. Nothing must betray our continued existence, and any individual who broke this secrecy would be outcast and hunted down as a danger to all.

Secundus, active steps must be taken to change the character of mortal society, and direct minds away from superstitious thoughts. Many of the Kindred had turned to scholarship to beguile the lonely decades, and certain matters were made available to the *Taggänger* in the fields of alchemy, literature, art, geography, cosmology *und so weiter*. Many mortals were already turning their steps in this direction, so the task was not unduly arduous. Names spring to mind such as Bacon, Dee, Galileo, Copernicus, Ariosto, Michelangelo, da Vinci, Cellini, and Columbus. It was a brave Age we made.

With so many fresh discoveries clamouring for attention, the mortals lost their single-mindedness in chasing monsters. A little later — principally due to an alliance of French Methuselahs — material and political philosophies were influenced. Science had bred Reason, and Reason denied monsters. Over the following centuries, we were able to crush superstition almost completely. No one of any education seriously believed we had ever existed.

Adjustments continued over the decades — a war here, a discovery there to keep breathing minds focused away from us. We have had a hand in some of the most significant events in history. Do not, however, think that all your history is our work, for marionettes you are not and have never been. Marx was of your kind, and no vampire could have formulated his thoughts. Brief decades later, monstrous deeds were performed in Europe, but none of my kind were involved. Those monsters were entirely your own.

Not long ago, mortal minds turned once more to the mystical — though the greatest mystery to me is the appeal of the music which was born in those days — and superstition briefly waxed ascendant. The knowledge of certain chemical substances was made available, and many inquisitive minds were distracted or forever silenced. Throughout this last century, steps have been taken to preserve the image of the vampire in popular entertainments, for thus it may be seen more

clearly as a fiction. The Masquerade is unraveling, as the mysticism of the mortals increases. The Camarilla struggles to turn back the tide — the evidence of that is all around you.

Childer

Comical as it may seem, there is a generation gap among vampires just as there is in mortal society. The younger vampires — primarily those Embraced in the latter half of this century and those of the most recent generations — include an element which chafes at the restrictions of Kindred society and laws. Like rebellious adolescents, these “anarchs,” as they call themselves, demand their freedom and ignore the effects on the rest of their kind. They would create their own Broods without restraint, deny the authority of Princes, break the laws of the Masquerade, and do a hundred other things which would force the knowledge of our existence upon the mortal world.

The Elders, and many other Kindred, do not take kindly to this attitude, and in some places a virtual state of war exists between them. Some see this as a sign of the end of the current Cycle, and speak of our imminent extinction.

These anarchists do not believe that they are being told the truth by the Elders, and they know that they are not being told all about their situation. The Elders do not trust the anarchists, fearing that they seek to slay them.

The World of the Undead

On one level, the world of the vampire is the world of mortals. A vampire moves in the world of mortals much as a nobleman moves in the forest of beasts while hunting. Just as the noble has his castles and courts, however, so the vampire has a world of his own, where he may consort with his own kind.

Some vampires shun the society of their Kindred, but such society exists, paralleling mortal society in both function and form. Just as there are mortal rulers and mortal societies in the world’s great cities, so too there are vampire Clans and Princes.

Most Kindred seek Princedom, for it is the only means by which to create a Brood of one's own. Princes do not often allow others to create Progeny, and even if they do, they are allowed to create only one. A Prince may create as many Progeny as he wishes and their loyalty adds to his strength.

It would be fatuous to list and describe every Clan, Prince and Fief in the world. Suffice it to say that every mortal city of any size supports a vampire population, and these populations are organized in a number of different ways. Some rule collectively, others autocratically, but all rule and all resent intrusion. Like organized criminals and law enforcement agencies, they have structured their Domain to their liking and suppress anything which threatens to disturb their peace.

Accordingly, a vampire who enters a new city is required by *höflichkeit* to make himself known to its rulers and satisfy them that their rule is not threatened or challenged. To fail in this courtesy is to invite war. No witch-hunter ever pursues his prey so diligently as a Clan or Prince seeks out a stranger *nouveau arrivé*.

Most rulers, I have said, are content to keep the peace in their Fief and pursue their own arcane ends. But there are exceptions. One is the league of Clans which calls itself the Sabbat, or the Black Hand. Their Fief extends across the eastern half of North America, and they are everything that mortals expect of monstrous vampires. Reveling in the violent, the perverse and the bestial, they are shunned by their own kind, and woe betide the incautious vampire whom they find in their territory.

Above the Clans stands the Camarilla. All vampires are aware of this league, and all are invited to join. To take an analogy *ex mundo vivantis* — if a Fief is a regional or national government, then the Camarilla is the League of Nations. To my mind, it is equally effective, but some set great store by its infrequent convocations. Certainly the Elders of the Council are not to be underestimated as individual powers — most are very old and all are very powerful. Primarily it enforces the ancient Traditions, most important among them the Masquerade, so soon enough I may have cause to test its resolve and strength.

The Clans all have their various alliances and oppositions, which shift as often and widely as those of the small countries of the mortal world. I have mentioned the protocols which must be observed when entering a Fief as an outsider. These obligations and structures are no more than protocols, and may be broken from time to time; but there is a stronger bond — stronger even than the ties of blood kinship — whose *auctoritas* is absolute. It is the mystic tie we call the Oath, or the Blood Bond.

I have touched upon the power of Blood to create new Kindred and Ghouls. Its effect on Kindred is no less powerful. It is said to be the sweetest blood in the world, but it creates a potent bond between donor and drinker. A vampire who drinks another vampire's blood on three separate occasions becomes trapped in a blood kinship as strong as that between Sire and Get; in fact, many Sires force this bond upon their unknowing Get at the time of creation, the better to command their loyalty. Among the Kindred, the Oath is a most potent bond; to take the Oath is to give over one's mind and heart to another, and a willing Oath is never undertaken lightly. If all else fails and you have no other means of defence against a vampire, use my name — the chance is slender, but if your attacker happens to be Blood Bound to me, then you shall be safe.

Diablerie

By now, if my labours have been equal to my intent, it will be apparent to you that the society of the Kindred is as diverse as that of the living. We have our princes and paupers, our dreamers and men of action, our heroes and criminals, our idealists and our perverts. The matter I am about to disclose is little more than speculation, but increasingly I am inclined to believe the rumours.

I have said how the blood of the Sire empowers the blood of the prey, so that the body is sustained in its unlife. According to rumour, the blood of the Sire loses this power with the passing of centuries and millennia, and an exceptionally aged vampire must needs drink the blood of Kindred to survive. Although the decay of a mortal cadaver is spared us, time still takes a toll, and the Blood is not absolutely immortal. A young vampire of an early generation is able to subsist on

the blood of animals, but as the centuries pass — or as the blood thins with transmission — first animal and then mortal blood loses its ability to sustain.

The Antediluvians are said to prey on the Kindred as we do on mortals, and there is no end to the stories of their depravity. Increasingly, though, rumours spread of younger Kindred doing likewise. The reason for this is unclear. Perhaps the youngest generations bear so little of the Blood that it serves them only for a few centuries, or perhaps they seek the powers of the Antediluvians by imitating their ways. I have long wondered if this is the cause of the war among my kind, the Jyhad which has lasted so long. The Antediluvians hide, for they fear that they will be killed by those seeking their blood and thus their power. The Elders fear the anarchs, for they fear that they shall be eaten by them as well. The anarchs fear all those who are older than they, for they know that they are prey to a most deadly predator. The conflict between my kind is a cannibalistic and horrific war indeed.

I have already mentioned the Oath, which is undertaken by drinking the blood of another vampire (usually one's Sire or Prince). It is known that taking the blood of one's own Get carries no such bond, and it seems also that the Antediluvians — and those others who habitually prey on their own kind — are able to do so without creating any kind of bond or obligation. This fact, more than anything, makes the practice of Diablerie (as it has come to be known) a shocking and perverted thing to the Kindred, and any vampire who is a known Diabolist may be killed out of hand by any who find him. The Diabolist must hunt with care, for he stalks the most dangerous game in the world. Doubtless some find a great exhilaration in this existence.

The Elders, needless to say, deny these rumours absolutely. To admit to such things would incite a revolution as terrible as the rising of the Fourth Generation. Yet there is evidence, which the diligent can find though the Antediluvians cover their tracks ever so carefully.

Last Plea

My discourse is at an end; my treachery complete. By now, I hope you will understand in some measure what impelled me to those acts I shall always rue and why I felt it necessary now to place this document before you. I cannot ask for your forgiveness — my crimes are too great. But if there be pity in your heart, pray for me.

You now know more about my kind than any mortal living — aye, even more than your friend the professor when he sought to destroy me. The use to which you put this knowledge I leave to your own conscience.

I have changed a great deal since we last met. For many years thereafter, I sought within myself for something inexpressible. Now, I believe I have found it, or am about to. If Golconda be truly within my reach, I may endure, for in the depths of introspection which prompted my writing, I have found a desire for *quietus* at any price. That was a partial reason for my discourse. I know full well that the knowledge I have imparted could lead to the destruction of myself and my kind. The will to live — if life this be — is too strong in any vampire to allow for a more direct suicide.

Whatever you decide, I wish you and yours well. I have followed the career of your son Quincy with great interest, and the lives of his children also. I rejoice that Fate stayed my beastly hand and ensured the welfare of your fine family. What a great comfort they must be to you.

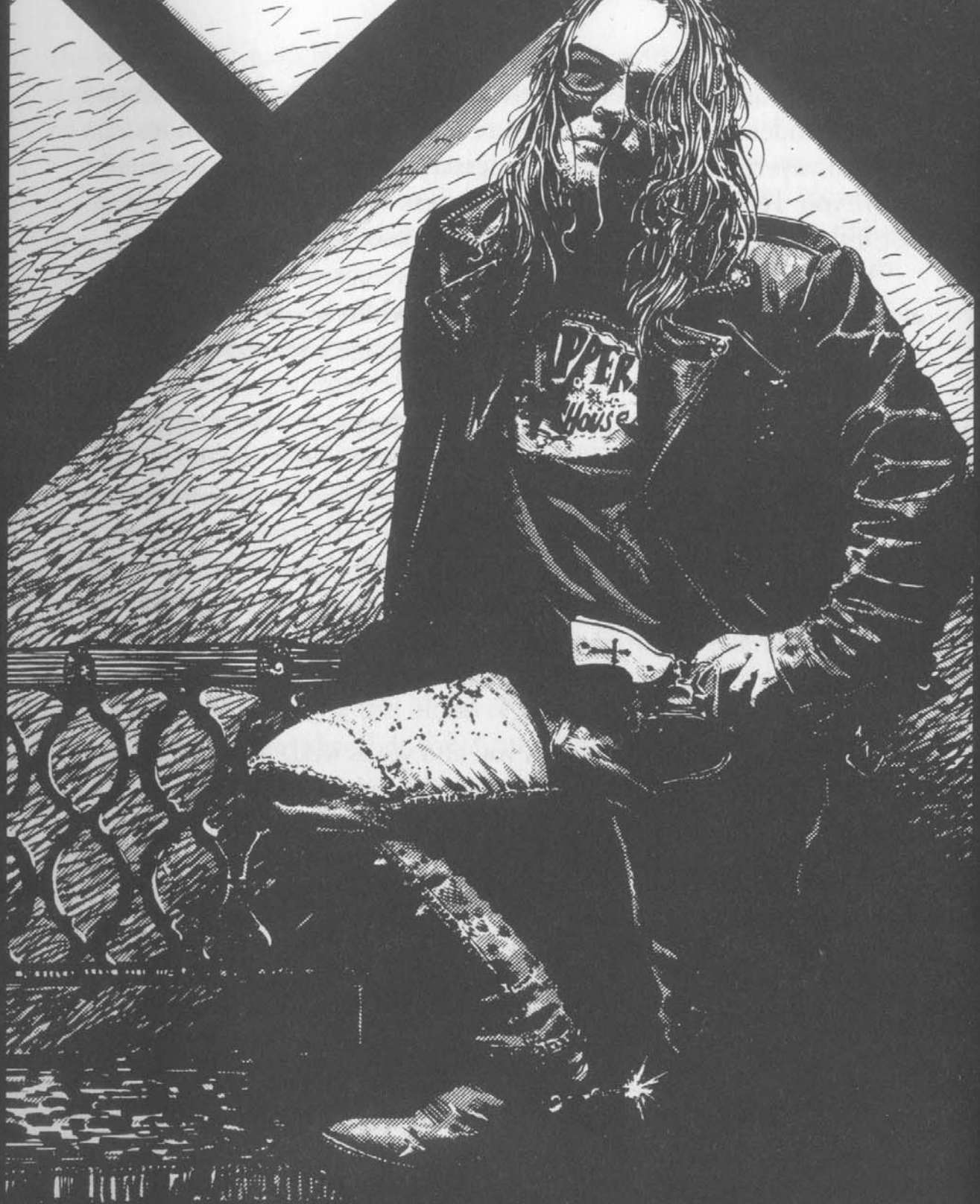
In parting, may I presume to render my condolences on the regrettable death of your husband, of which I read in the *Times* of London. Your love for him is only too well-known to me. If the prayers of such a creature may be of any comfort, know that you have mine.

You shall hear no more from me unless you wish it. I say again, my service is yours to command. I can be reached through the personal columns of any major European newspaper; merely mention my name, and your own, and my retainers shall pass on your message to me.

Adieu.

Your most devoted and penitent servant,

V.T.



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Chapter Four

Streets of Blood

What is it like to live in a world of perpetual night? To dance under the blood-red moon? To lust for the blood of living, intelligent prey?

City life is as quicksilver as the Cainite itself. Long periods of peace can explode without warning into spasms of great strife and turmoil. The vampire is an animal of twisted emotion and instinct. One Kindred's obsessions and perversions can suddenly bring her into conflict with another. Though the Kindred can live with one another in peace for years, eventually the truce ends and the cannibalistic war begins anew. The Jyhad never truly ends — it only casts a smaller shadow for a time.

Normally, a balance is reached among the Kindred of a city, whether by formal or tacit agreement. Efforts are made to minimize conflict, though strife is often unavoidable. When conflict does occur, it is almost always hidden beneath the veil of the Masquerade, and rarely noticed by the mortals of the city. Thus may a war be waged without the elders fearing the return of the Inquisition.

Some Kindred take no part in the society of the Damned, and maintain no connection with others of their kind. They are known as the Clanless, or the Caitiff. Cities are extremely large places and it is not difficult to isolate oneself from one's peers; indeed, it is said that the only Kindred who ever meet are the ones who wish to meet.

However, sometimes even the most solitary vampires can be thrust into the politics of the day — in times of need, the Caitiff are mercilessly rooted out and questioned. The Justicars, enforcers of Kindred law, have been known to use solitary vampires as scapegoats for the crimes of others.

Creatures of the City

By agreement, though some say by nature, the vampire is a creature of the city. The wilds of the countryside are left to the werewolves and their ilk. This suits most Kindred. Why roam far and wide in search of sustenance when a few square blocks of even the smallest city provide more than enough vessels?

Younger Kindred sometimes feel the need to roam, but that desire usually fades as they age. Older Cainites are more likely to have become comfortable in one location and made their haven at that spot. Those who do choose to wander the countryside will almost invariably come into contact with the Lupines, and the hatred between werewolves and Kindred runs deep.

Thus the city has become a gilded prison for the Kindred. Though the cities are the center of civilization, and in this day and age often cover enormous expanses of terrain, they are still cells from which the Kindred are unable to escape. They are trapped in both body and spirit. Imprisonment only increases the tension between the vampires, and eventually caged animals always turn on one another.

Overpopulation

Vampires are a unique species of animal, just as humans are. They must obey the laws of evolution as well as the dictates of their environment. They have a place in the food chain; indeed, one could even speculate that they fill an ecological niche. There are definite limits to how many of their kind can be supported in a given area. When they cross over the limit, natural phenomena reduce the vampiric population back within its limits, just as with any other predators.

Kindred are unique among the creatures of the world in that they are not held in check by any other species. They are their own prey and predators, and control their numbers through intense competition.

The elders remember only too well that if their numbers grow too great they will attract the attention of the mortals. Although individual vampires are many times more powerful than their mortal prey, the sheer numbers of a humanity aware of their presence would quickly overwhelm them.

Only so many hunters can be supported by one herd. In years past only one Kindred lived within each city and each could claim it as her own domain. When cities were small, being a race of loners was an effective survival tactic. However, as cities have grown, so has the population of hunters. Now it is no longer rare for many to live within the same domain.

A large city, such as San Francisco or Hamburg, normally supports a vampire population of anywhere from 15 to 30 undead. Larger cities like New York or greater London hold a proportionately larger population, and less reside in smaller cities.

As a rule of thumb, assume that there is one vampire for every 100,000 mortals. Thus, the greater Chicago metropolitan area, a region of seven million mortals, can reasonably support nearly 70 vampires. Often a prince will artificially regulate how many Kindred reside within the city, thus ensuring the sanctity of the Masquerade.

The cities could certainly hold more Kindred, but there are legitimate fears of discovery. The Masquerade is the preeminent concern of the elders — better that some anarchs die than all be extinguished in another Inquisition. Every care is taken to insure that the existence of vampires is kept secret from the mortal population. Strict controls are kept over the creation of neonates, for a surplus of vampires dramatically increases the probability of discovery. The population is also restricted by the simple fact that few potential vampires survive their Becoming; many are driven mad by it and put down by their sires.

Despite this, however, there are currently far too many Kindred for the mortal population to support; the ranks of the anarchs have swelled to unprecedented proportions. Gradually the time of the “grazing” approaches — the time fearfully whispered of in Kindred legend as Gehenna.

Normality

Most vampires desperately struggle to develop a semblance of normality in their lives and in so doing, escape the sordid truth of their existences. They create an artificial world around themselves, one that is bound to slip away with the passing years, but is pleasurable for the here and now. Some scholars among the Kindred postulate that a vampire needs this facade of life to retain his sanity. Falling into the “vampire-schtick” of the cinema and literature inevitably results in despair and eventual mental disintegration, but for the duration of the play-pretend solace can be garnered.

It has been put forth by those with learning that much of the mortal psyche survives the Becoming. That psyche, however, becomes overburdened by the supernatural drives, desires, and obsessions of the Beast. A certain amount of self-deception is necessary to retain one’s sanity.

Social Distinctions

There are a number of different social castes among the Kindred. For the most part, Cainites are distinguished by a combination of age and generation (how many steps one is removed from Caine, the first vampire, in terms of ancestry). Although there is a degree of social mobility, the elders only trust those who have proven themselves, and the best way to prove oneself is to survive a few hundred years. The elders hold the power, so the elders determine who is accorded respect and status. Of course it is always possible to engage in diablerie and thereby lower one's generation, but such kinslayers are seldom welcomed among the elders.

The highest status is that accorded to the Antediluvians — Cainites of the third generation. The lowest is that accorded to the childer and the Clanless, who are generally of the 13th or later generations and have only recently been Embraced.

- **Caitiff:** Even though many Caitiff are Clanless but otherwise “normal” vampires, others have become so degenerate that they feed only off the weak and the dying. Some Caitiff live apart from vampire society on purpose, but many have been cast out. Some Caitiff were once a part of Kindred society, but have lost so much Humanity that they are unable to maintain relations with any other creatures. They know only survival, and live from night to night in search of food. Eventually they will die, but it may take many years.

- **Childe:** Vampires of this class have not yet been introduced to the prince, nor have they been released by their sires. They are not considered to be full members of vampire society and are thus shown no respect. They are, in short, treated as children. The term is sometimes used out of contempt. Kindred who have committed especially stupid acts may be called and considered childer.

- **Neonate:** These vampires have been recently released and presented to the prince, though they have not yet made their mark in their society. The neonate is the caste of youngest vampires who have

been released by their sires. If they behave themselves and do not join the anarchs, they will eventually become ancillæ, usually after 50 to 100 years.

- **Anarch:** The anarchs have status because they are noticed and respected for what little power they have achieved. They are recognized for their energy, drive, and consistency. Though they are the enemies of the elders and especially the prince, they are still respected, if not openly, for by rebelling they have given themselves an identity.

- **Ancilla:** These Kindred are still young, but have proven themselves to the elders. The ancillæ are the up-and-coming Cainites, the ones who play by the rules (mostly) in order to achieve greater power. This is the rank between neonate and elder, where the vampire is given increasing respect and power. Most have existed for one or two centuries in their vampiric form.

- **Elder:** When vampires reach a certain age, there are few above them who still hold power in vampire society. The elders are the Kindred who are in control and who seek to dominate all the others. The elders are normally between 200 and 1000 years old, but like all things undead, this can vary immensely. In Europe, a vampire has to be much older and more powerful to be considered an elder than she does in the New World.

- **Methuselah:** When a vampire reaches a particular age, somewhere between 1000 and 2000 immortal years, a profound change invariably overtakes him. It has long been argued whether this change is mystical, biological, or is in fact a social change brought about through changing needs and desires. Certainly, by the time a vampire reaches this age, a boredom and melancholy sets in, as well as an increased paranoia. Those who are weak, take risks, or unconsciously desire suicide do not survive to this age — only the very strongest attain the station of Methuselah.

As a means of self-preservation, Methuselahs retreat from the world and those younger than them. The constant struggle of facing the young reckless ones, who seek power through the blood of their elders, grows numbing. Eventually one of the anarchs will get lucky and dispatch the ancient. Thus, the only option is to retreat fully from society, and go into torpor. Some Methuselahs remain involved in power struggles and the Jyhad of the Kindred, but do so from complete anonymity.

- **Antediluvian:** These are most ancient vampires, and they are likely the most powerful creatures in the world. For the most part they are considered to be the grandchilder of Caine, and are of the third generation. When they do involve themselves in the affairs of Kindred, they seldom leave things untarnished by their touch. The mere word of an Antediluvian is enough to provoke enormous strife and conflict among the Kindred. Their eternal struggle, the Jyhad, affects all the Kindred.

The Prince

The modern age (the last millennium by Kindred reckoning) has produced a new social order among the undead. At one time Cainites lived alone or with their broods; each was lord of its own city, and it is from that era that the Traditions came. Some gave themselves titles and honors, but this practice was unimportant as there were none but mortals to impress.

But when cities grew into metropolises, and there were enough vessels to support many Kindred, vampire society began to change. The age of the princes began.

The term prince, though sometimes used with contempt, is used to refer to the elder who holds domain over a specific metropolitan area. In formal terms, a prince holds the power of domain; he or she makes the laws and is responsible for keeping order. In practical terms, the prince is merely the one who is dominant and best able to keep the anarchs in their place. In the beginning, the strongest vampire in each city simply claimed domain. Over time, however, traditions have grown around the making and keeping of that claim. The Camarilla has codified and enforced these traditions.

After the Inquisition, the importance of the Masquerade was imprinted upon the minds of the elders, and they increasingly distrusted the younger vampires, whom they called anarchs. The revolt of the sect known as the Sabbat was the source of much of their distrust, for they feared that it could happen again. The neonates created during the 18th century were the children of a modern age, and alien to the mindset of the elders. After an incident in London in 1743 where the Masquerade was broken by an anarch, the Camarilla decided to formally acknowledge what had already been fact for many centuries — the power of the prince.

The term “prince” is simply that: a term. It is not a titular holding, nor a hereditary position of any kind. In fact, many Kindred object to the use of the term “prince” for those very reasons. It is simply the name and the assumption of rights that a powerful vampire might achieve. Not all cities even have princes; indeed, some are ruled by councils, while others are not ruled at all. The modern usage of “prince” is a



reference to the age when each Kindred was the secret ruler over the city in which she lived, a practice most common in medieval Italy. In some places, titles such as Duke, Baron or Count (in their culturally correct forms) are used.

The prince does not truly reign over a city; rather, the position is akin to that of an overseer. Above all else, the prince is the final arbiter of disputes between the Kindred in her city and is responsible for ensuring that the Masquerade is preserved. The elders generally interpret this to mean that the prince must suppress and persecute the anarchs.

The Kindred in the city owe the prince no oath of fealty and must obey only as much as their cowardice demands. When the rule of a prince is questioned or thwarted, the prince must use force to maintain control. If he does not have enough power, then his rule is at an end. There are some princes who do not understand the informality of their position; they believe themselves kings and their reigns involve much protocol and regal ritual. They hold court, and demand that all Cainites within their domain attend them while they pass judgment on those brought before them. The arrogance of these princes is often more than can be tolerated, but it is understandable — who but the insane or the truly egotistical would want such a dangerous position?

Many Kindred ignore the prince, just as they ignore all others of their own kind. The powerful beings who together comprise the Inconnu, and many of the elders, are not impressed by such idle pronouncements of power. They see the title as representative of the arrogance of one still young enough to lust for power. The prince is not an authority to whom they would bow. When they visit a city, it is to them that the prince would bow, if the prince is wise.

Taking Charge

The prince is traditionally the eldest of a city's Kindred, though this is no longer universal. The method of "coronation" varies from city to city and prince to prince. It is normally a violent usurpation of power, for only those with power and ambition are able to hold their claims unchallenged. Typically the support of the elders of the city is

required. The most powerful of these elders are known as the primogen, and they often form a council of advisors to the prince. The prince needs their sanction in order to rule.

Anyone can make the claim of princedom, but only when none opposes the would-be prince may she hold domain over the city. If there is a challenge, the contenders must battle one another until sovereignty is determined.

This warfare is not as simple as a duel, or even any sort of direct combat. It is, like all conflicts between vampires, a part of the great Jyhad in that it is a progression of games and maneuvers, tricks and threats, violence and bloodshed. The various elders, broods and coteries ally themselves to one side or the other — either out of strong personal beliefs, promises of great reward, or threats of retaliation. Frequently, mortal institutions that are under the control of the vampire, such as the police, banks or the media, may be employed in the war. Almost always, the process ends with the death of one combatant or the other. It is rare that the winner is magnanimous, and even if she were, the far-sighted primogen would not allow it.

Coups are difficult due to the fact that the prince is personally very powerful and nearly always creates a brood to protect him. Another consideration for a would-be insurgent is that taking on the prince usually means taking on the elders of the city. The elders, when united, have enough power to defeat all comers.

An attempt to usurp the princedom means a period of great instability, as the warfare can spill over into the mortal realm and threaten the Masquerade. Fear of this stays many elders from changing sides or dividing their support among two or more contenders.

Most elders support the prince because they do not wish to risk turmoil. They have grown protective of their long lives, and do all that they can to provide themselves with a stable environment. They are extremely conservative in all that they do, for they seek only to survive, not to promote change.

With the support of the primogen, it is nearly impossible to successfully challenge a prince, for these elders will direct their influence, followers and even personal powers to benefit the prince. Though many try to challenge the prince, most are destroyed before they even begin.



Thus, is it possible to rule the Damned. Princes have been known to voluntarily abdicate their position, though this rarely occurs.

Advantages of Princedom

Many vampires seek the position of prince simply for the glory. There are, however, a number of advantages to the title which might not be readily apparent.

- **Right to progeny:** The prince is the only vampire who is able to freely create progeny. No others have this freedom unless the prince grants it to them. The prince thus maintains powerful control over other vampires, for most, at some point, wish to create a childe.

- **Protection of the elders:** The primogen will generally support the prince as long as she maintains the Masquerade and suppresses the wilder stirrings of the anarchs.

- **Political power within the Camarilla:** The prince has greatly increased status and is listened to by most elders.

- **Mastery over those who enter one's domain:** It is the prince's traditional right to exert controls over all Kindred who enter his area of influence, and newcomers must report to the prince when they first arrive in the area. If they do not, it is considered within the prince's rights to punish them.

- **Freedom to feed:** The prince is also able to limit (for the good of the city) the feeding of others. In the name of protecting the Masquerade, she may place restrictions on some or all of the Kindred who live within the city. Usually this affects where and from whom they may feed. If they disobey, she may accuse them of violating the Masquerade and punish them accordingly.

• **Power over one's enemies:** The prince has the authority to call a Blood Hunt, and thus possesses the power of life and death over those who cross him. He is not allowed to kill at will, but if the prince determines that any have broken the Traditions, he may punish them accordingly. This is subject to much abuse, and thus provides a great deal of power.

Intrigue

The power-politics around the prince can be quite dynamic, especially when more than one elder is present and attempting to sway the decisions of the prince. Each may attempt to threaten, cajole and even trick the prince into doing things a certain way, all the while feigning disinterest in the whole sickly affair of politics. The elders do not dare push things to the point where the prince is overthrown, but they will play the game very close to the edge. The Jyhad exists on more than one level, and many different generations play this game.

By dwelling within a city overseen by a prince, a vampire must accept certain obligations. The city provides a certain security that all within benefit from, and to maintain that security, certain rules of behavior must be followed. In one form or another, most of these rules are nearly universal. They are known as the Six Traditions, and they are the oldest laws known to the Kindred — it is the prince who enforces them. Kindred relocating from San Francisco to Moscow can rightfully assume that these Traditions apply. Ignorance is no defense.

The anarchs rebel against all the strictures of the elders, their hated enemies, which are represented by the prince's power. These fledglings believe that there is little to fear in the modern world, and that the old superstitions and Traditions should be thrown away. Some believe that the Masquerade is but an embodiment of the terror of Kindred grown too old and too fearful. The prince must constantly work to keep the anarchs in line, and prevent them from creating any disruption in the Masquerade. Sometimes threats are not enough.

Most anarchs do not believe that Gehenna is a threat, and many doubt that the original vampire was Caine. They simply do not believe these legends, and treat them as they do the stories of a Garden of Eden

or a Tower of Babel. They suspect that the elders use such stories to put fear into ancillæ and thereby control them all the better. Among the anarchs, it is considered bad form to admit to any faith in such myths. They chafe against the restrictions placed by the elders, and have not yet learned the wisdom of age. The fledglings are largely powerless within vampire society, so it is no great surprise that they rebel.

The modern age has wrought much change in the soul of humanity, and it is from these humans that the new vampires are created. With the increasingly rapid changes in modern culture, many Kindred expect a wave of increasingly rebellious anarchs. Some within the Camarilla have called for a halt to the creation of all new vampires, but it is unlikely that any sort of ban could ever be enforced. Most elders simply trust that natural factors will take their course and that the most radical of the anarchs will be wiped out before they can give the vampire community away.

Primogen

Most princes are “advised” by a group of elders who are collectively known as the primogen. Collectively, these elders can be considered the most powerful Kindred in the city; individually, they either are not quite as powerful as the prince, or do not care to endanger or bore themselves with the duties of such.

The primogen is extremely influential, and serves as an important check on the dictatorial powers of the prince. At the same time, its members usually have their own agendas, and it is not uncommon for their bickering and infighting to cause as much trouble as any prince’s high-handed commandments.

Elysium

A prince often declares certain portions of his domain to be free from the taint of violence. Such locations are known as the Elysium, and they tend to be the places where the elders of the city spend most of their time. Much intrigue and debate occurs at these locations, and

it is in the Elysium that the business of the city takes place. Though on rare occasions the sanctity of the Elysium is violated, the *Pax Vampirica* is usually upheld.

Normally certain buildings are designated to be a part of the Elysium, most commonly places devoted to the fine arts or places which are in some way artistically or intellectually stimulating. Thus the Elysium tends to be such places as the opera, theaters, art museums and art galleries. Sometimes the havens of certain Cainites or even nightclubs are so designated, however.

The rules for Elysium are typically quite simple. First and foremost, no violence is permitted on the premises against Kindred, kine or physical objects. On pain of Final Death no art is to be destroyed (thus making the Toreador among the strongest supporters of the custom of Elysium). Elysium is considered neutral ground, with no conflicts between Kindred allowed upon its premises. Thus, while intrigue and verbal sparring can be quite fierce, rarely does the conflict escalate to violence. Finally, most consider it very bad manners to attract attention entering or leaving Elysium. Some areas are closed at night, and thus special arrangements have been made for Kindred to leave and enter.

The Traditions

The Six Traditions form the age-old code of laws of the Kindred, passed down from the early days following the kin-slaying that begat the second cycle. The Traditions are not formal, written laws, but are nevertheless known by all Kindred. There are many variations, and though the words may vary, the intent endures.

It has become something of a ritual for the Traditions to be recited by a sire to his progeny, just before presentation to the prince. Though the fledgling may know of the Traditions already, the words are still spoken. It is a vital element of the Becoming.

Some Kindred maintain that these codes were originally conceived by Caine himself when he sired the second generation of Kindred. Thus, it is possible that these words are those of the ancient one himself, as he spoke them to his own progeny. However, it is far more likely that the Traditions were created by the Antediluvians in their attempt to restrict their own progeny. The tradition of the Masquerade is likely to have existed for some time, though in much more diluted form. It was not until the Inquisition that it was reaffirmed and its wording and intent strengthened.

Many of the laws below are couched in fairly formal terms. These are the words and phrases of the elders, and not necessarily how they would be expressed by the anarchists. Many younger Kindred see the Traditions in an entirely different light.

The Tradition of the Masquerade

The First Tradition is the heart of what has become known as the Masquerade. Age-old law demands that the knowledge of the existence of true vampires be kept from mortal man. To reveal such to them would place the Kindred in dire jeopardy.

Violation of this tradition is the most serious offense a vampire can commit. The strengths and resources of humanity in the modern age are such that were human and Kindred to war, the survival of the Kindred would be in question. In more superstitious times, this tradition was less revered.

To violate this tradition is to risk one's own destruction and the destruction of all the Kindred.

The Tradition of Domain

This tradition has faded in importance as the population of the cities has risen so dramatically. Individual vampires no longer claim domain, but leave the rights of such to the prince.

Now, only the most powerful vampires in a city can claim domain over it. They do so according to the tradition, and pretend that all others live there only at the pleasure of the prince. Princes claim they possess the cities, and in most ways, they do. This tradition is used by them to support their claims. This tradition is what gives a vampire the right to claim principedom.

There is a prevalent misconception among anarchs that princes give different portions of their domain to favored associates as "turf." Though a prince only allows certain trusted Kindred to watch over portions of the city, this has only increased the cry for the rights of domain. Increasing numbers of Kindred are claiming "turf" within the city and treating it as their own private hunting grounds. Broods or even solitary Kindred stake claim to certain prime areas of the city (such as slum areas) and attempt to prevent other Kindred from feeding there. Though the city is vast enough that such claims have little value, they seem to have a special worth to these downtrodden anarchs. Few if any princes actually grant territory, but that is not enough to prevent the anarchs from taking it for themselves.

Some of the younger Kindred have made attempts to revive the tradition of domain, seeing in it a similarity to some of the mechanics of organized crime. Small gangs will often attempt to establish turf within a city, often in opposition to the other Kindred of the city. This often becomes a difficult situation, with the fear of strife looming over everyone's heads. Because of this, gang problems within a city can easily endanger the Masquerade. If the gang supports the prince, its members may be tolerated, or they may have the power to resist all attempts to dislodge them. Elders do not like to confront gangs of anarchs. Though the elders possess superior power, there is still too much risk of death.

The anarchs primarily fight among themselves over turf, and usually do not attempt to prevent elders from feeding on their turf. Their activities are frowned upon by the prince, but as long as they do not threaten the Masquerade and do not get out of control, the anarchs are allowed to continue their battles. Indeed, many princes view it as a means of using the anarchs to suppress themselves, and will seek to provoke internicine conflict.

In cities where the prince does not have a firm grasp on power, certain elders may claim domain on an area within the city. Their power may be respected by other primogen, and they may be tolerated by the prince if they in turn support the prince. The establishment of one or more domains within a city can create powerful political dynamics, as those domains, intentionally or not, create rival power bases. In fact, occasionally a prince is only the first among a group of equals, the chairman of a committee of elders who each stake their own claim to a domain within the city.

Regardless of whether he has claimed domain or not, each Kindred is to some degree responsible for the area around his haven or the area which he frequents. Although the Kindred rarely involve themselves in mortal concerns, the affairs of the supernatural are another story. Kindred are expected to report details of strange events that occur in the vicinity of their territory to the prince.

The Tradition of the Progeny

Throughout most of vampiric history, the “elder” of this tradition was one’s sire, though a looser interpretation has evolved in recent times. Many princes have stipulated that they are the elder referred to in this tradition and refuse all who dwell within their domain the right of creation without permission. They insist on their approval before any mortal is Embraced and often kill those who disobey. Most Kindred obey, but more out of fear than respect. In situations where a neonate has already been created, the prince may claim the individual as her own, may declare said neonate and her sire outcast, or may even put them both to death. The Camarilla officially supports the right of a prince to restrict the creation of new vampires, understanding that it is the only way to control the population of anarchs.

Those of the Old World, the Europeans, are even stricter on this point than the upstart Americans. One's own sire must be consulted, and if a prince has claimed domain over the area where one has one's haven, permission must be sought from her as well. No amount of tolerance is given to those who do not do so.

The Tradition of the Accounting

One who sires a childe assumes responsibility for that childe's existence. If the childe is unable to endure the burden of its new existence, it is the sire's responsibility to take care of the matter. If the childe attempts to betray the Kindred and threaten the Masquerade, it is up to the sire to prevent him. While still a childe, under the direct care of one's sire, a vampire has no rights.

If a childe takes actions which threaten the security of other Kindred, they hold the sire responsible. The sire must carefully weigh the maturity of the childe he has spawned. He does not want to remain responsible for the childe forever (though extremely long childehoods are not unknown), but at the same time he does not want to release the childe before it is ready.

Long ago, release involved introducing the childe to one's own sire, but that has since changed; now, the sire introduces the childe to the prince in whose domain sire and childe dwell. Until that time, the prince is under no obligation, unless he chooses otherwise, to recognize the childe as one of the Blood. Unless the sire protects the childe, any may kill or feed from it.

Following the release, the childe-no-more is allowed to dwell in the city with full rights. This introduction process is similar to that of the Tradition of Hospitality mentioned below. If the prince does not accept the childe, it must leave and find some other city in which to live.

The release is a great rite of passage, for the sire no longer retains any responsibility for the childe. It is the activity of the childe-no-more that determines if he is accepted as a full member of the community and considered a neonate. If he continues to be rash and

foolish, he remains a childe in the eyes of all. If he shows the wisdom his new existence demands, others will accord him the respect given to an “adult.”

The Tradition of Hospitality

Though vampires are loath to travel (the risks are tremendous), they occasionally do. Ancient custom dictates that when entering a new domain, a city claimed by an elder, the newcomers must present themselves to the elder. This was so even before there were princes, in a time where there was only one Kindred in each city. It was simply a tradition of politeness; one knocks before entering.

The procedure varies in formality from location to location, and even from prince to prince. Some require formal presentation and the recital of one’s lineage, such as it is known. Others are happy if simple contact is made with an underling. Those who do not bother to present themselves had better have the power to withstand the prince’s anger.

The prince has the right to refuse acceptance in his domain to any he chooses. This rarely occurs, except when the newcomer has a poor reputation or many enemies. Even those who do not present themselves at all, but are later discovered are not often chased from the city. They are roughly presented to the prince, shown their place, and released into the streets once again.

Over time, this tradition has become a primary means for the prince to maintain power, for it gives her the right to question all who enter her domain. She may not have the power to expel the more formidable interlopers, but her right to examine all is unquestioned.

Some Kindred bristle at the thought of having to “present” themselves for acceptance. Many are too proud and have a strong independent streak. The anarchs have too little respect for the Traditions, while the Methuselahs have too little respect for the princes. The Methuselahs see themselves as demigods towering above mortal and Kindred alike and needing to bow to none. To them,

abasing oneself before another is unthinkable. They existed long before the princes ruled, and can see beyond the prince, knowing who pulls the strings.

Many Kindred never present themselves, choosing instead to live in darkest obscurity. They hide in the cold, quiet places and rarely venture forth. They are tolerated as long as they remain unobtrusive. The Nosferatu are the best at this, for their powers augment such activities. These reclusive Kindred are known as the *autarkis*, for they refuse to become a part of vampire society.

The Tradition of Destruction

This tradition has caused more controversy than any other, and reinterpretations are continually being discussed. It seems to imply that the right of destruction is limited to one's own bloodline. Only the sire has the right to destroy his progeny.

However, the shift in meaning of the word "elder" has resulted in most princes claiming this right over all those who dwell within their domains. They claim that only they have the power of life and death, and for the most part this interpretation has been supported by the Camarilla. The veracity of this claim is the source of much of the conflict between many of the older and younger vampires.

Most princes strictly enforce their monopoly on the tradition of extinguishment. All others are forbidden to destroy other Kindred. If a vampire is ever caught in such an act of "murder," then no punishment may be considered too severe. Often the perpetrator of such a deed will be destroyed herself. The prince will usually investigate the deaths of those who have been destroyed in order to find the killer. Of course, the higher the status of the destroyed vampire, the more thorough the search for his murderer will be.

Only in times of great strife do younger vampires dare slay each other, though the elders are said to do so all the time. A would-be kinslayer had best step carefully.

Most often, the prince enforces his right of destruction by calling a Blood Hunt, which is discussed below. Only if a prince openly calls a Blood Hunt is he allowed to slay one of the Kindred.



Lextalionis

The Traditions do not stand alone, for there is and always has been a system of punishment for those who transgress them. The system is simple: a vampire who breaks the rules is slain. Those who violate the Traditions and thereby anger the elders are hunted down and extinguished by all those who hear the call. This credo of “just retribution” is known formally as the Lextalionis, and more commonly as the Blood Hunt.

Tradition demands that the Lextalionis can only be called by the eldest Cainite in a city. In modern times, this individual is considered to be the prince. Other elders or even ancillæ could call for a Hunt, but most Kindred would not respond, for they risk the wrath of the prince in so doing. Normally, a prince will only call a Hunt over a breach of one of the Six Traditions. If a prince calls a Hunt purely for his own purposes, few will aid him in the Hunt, and the prince will lose considerable status.

Assisting one upon whom the Hunt has been called is a serious insult to the prince. Betraying the offender is often the only recourse to having the Lextalionis called upon oneself as well. Sometimes a prince will be insulted if a particular Cainite does not participate in the Hunt. If the prince is powerful enough, and the crime great enough, he may have the authority to insist that all Kindred who live within the city participate.

Before the imagery becomes too ingrained, it should be pointed out that the Blood Hunt is not truly a formal hunt. The vampires do not gather in a convenient park with their packs of frothing hellhounds, and then set off across the city once the prince blows a horn. It is both more informal and more serious than that. The hunters spread out over the city and scour the streets for the individual whom they pursue, calling in others once they track him down. In true Kindred tradition, it is a secretive and stealthy hunt. Mortals rarely realize anything is amiss; they usually notice only that it is a strange night, full of bizarre happenings. If the police are controlled by the prince or one of her minions, they will either be pulled back from the streets or mustered to assist in the search (without truly realizing for whom it is they search).

The Hunt can be viewed as a violent form of excommunication. Sometimes the subject is not killed, but is merely maimed and then released outside the perimeter of the city. The Kindred against whom the Hunt is called becomes *persona non grata*. Any who find the offender have the right, in the prince's name, to conduct summary justice upon the outcast. They may also partake of the offender's blood. This is why the youngest Kindred are often the most avid pursuers in the Hunt.

The Lextalionis is not called lightly. Most Kindred can count on one hand the number of Blood Hunts they have heard of, let alone participated in. The Camarilla reserves the right to an informal tribunal of sorts, most often after the fact. Evidence is presented to the Conclave for and against the offender, and the prince's decision is either ratified or dismissed. The prince who has his decision reversed suffers no formal punishment, but often loses considerable status.

Sometimes the offender survives the Hunt (perhaps under the protection of an enemy of the prince) and may actually plead his case. Often, the threat of the Conclave, and the beginning of its proceedings, are enough to dissuade a prince from calling a Hunt. Tradition dictates, however, that once a Blood Hunt has been called, it cannot be stopped.

An outcast may attempt to flee the city she is in and find refuge elsewhere. Many princes will offer this alternative to the offender instead of calling the Hunt. Though the outcast may flee, the Hunt remains permanently in effect in that city, regardless of who ascends to power in the future.

The Hunt is usually the business of the Kindred of that city alone, and word of it rarely travels far. In some cases, however, the crimes of the outcast are so heinous that emissaries are sent to the princes of other cities so that a Hunt may be called there as well. The most famous example of this was the outcry in the aftermath of the Whitechapel, England slayings during the latter half of the 19th century. A Hunt was called against the offender throughout Europe and much of North America. The culprit, however (the self-proclaimed Lord Fianna), remains at large.

Sects

Over the past few centuries groups known as sects have appeared among Kindred society. Many ancients deride the existence and concept of sects as “. . . *modern foolishness. The blood is all that matters,*” but still the power and influence of these organizations grow. Well over half of the Kindred in existence belong to one sect or another; the rest either maintain their independence or are attached exclusively to their bloodlines. The largest and most dominant sect is the Camarilla, though the smaller Sabbat contends with it on every front. Though the Inconnu claim they are not a sect, they appear to have some sort of organization and stay well clear of the other sects.

Camarilla

The Camarilla is the largest single sect of vampires as well as the most open; theoretically any vampire may claim membership, regardless of lineage. In fact, the Camarilla assumes that all vampires are members of their sect — whether they want to be or not. The founders of the sect view it as the Great Society of undead, and take offense at any suggestion otherwise.

The Camarilla’s primary concern is the maintenance and preservation of the Masquerade. The sect was organized in the 14th century in response to the growing influence of the Inquisition. Historically, there have been many attempts by the leaders of the Camarilla to assert more authority over other aspects of vampiric existence. Each time, the attempt has failed in a wave of bloodshed. The princes do not brook interference into what they consider to be their historical rights and privileges, nor do the Methuselahs desire a competitor who could thwart their aims. Therefore, the Camarilla remains a divided sect of only moderate influence. The elders who control it use it as yet another means to oppress and manipulate the anarchs.

It is thought the Ventrue played a primary role in bringing together the seven founding clans of the Camarilla. Their efforts and imagination certainly lay behind its improbable origin. Though the Camarilla holds itself open to all bloodlines, those that choose to participate

represent only slightly more than half of the known clans. Only seven of the 13 clans were among its founders, and only these clans regularly attend meetings of the Inner Circle. Individuals from other clans may be a part of the Camarilla, but no other clan as a whole is.

The Camarilla does not openly recognize the existence of the Antediluvians. Statements about them are publicly derided. As far as the Camarilla is concerned, they are but myths.

Conclaves

Conclaves are important and potentially dangerous political events in the Camarilla. Open to any and all, they are the means by which the Camarilla functions as a sect. Much care is taken to insure the secrecy of the Conclave site before the meeting, as is care devoted to physical security while the meeting is in progress; an enemy of the Camarilla could take such an event as an opportunity for mass assassination. The Conclave may last anywhere from a few hours to many weeks.

Conclaves began as a ritual gathering in the first years of the Camarilla. The Conclave was a method used by the Camarilla (and their Justicars) to punish princes or to remove them from power. It was a means by which vampires expanded their authority and dethroned those rulers who opposed them. The Conclave has since evolved into a method used to handle all types of disputes that are beyond a prince's domain or control. In the past, Justicars were supposed to call Conclaves before they passed judgment on a Kindred and exacted punishment. Recently, though, some Justicars have been calling Conclaves after exacting justice rather than before. Nevertheless, Conclaves are still held regularly as a means by which all Kindred can be involved in the affairs of the Camarilla.

Conclaves can only be called by a Justicar (of which there are seven at any one time). They are generally meetings open for any and all Kindred to attend. However, great strides are taken to keep these meetings a secret from the Camarilla's enemies and, because of this, certain groups of anarchs might not be properly informed.

Functions of a Conclave

Usually, Conclaves are only called when they are needed and are held in the geographic region most concerned with the problem at hand. The primary function of the Conclave is to make recommendations on matters brought before it. Any Kindred may bring a matter before the Conclave, and most concern the adjudication of grievances between Kindred. Often complaints against princes are brought up at Conclaves, as are petitions by princes to deal especially harshly with the anarchs in a city. Any action that would be considered a breach of tradition must be discussed and agreed upon by a Conclave in order to avoid future punishment by a Justicar.

The Conclave interprets the Six Traditions and, in some instances, may even establish new ones. It may also call Blood Hunts, even against princes, who are otherwise safe from them. In times past, Conclaves have been convened for the sole purpose of removing a prince from power. The Camarilla has always vigorously maintained its right to depose the rulers of the cities.

During a Conclave any matter can be brought before the Assembly (which encompasses all Kindred who are in attendance). However, members of the Assembly only have the right to address the Conclave if supported by at least two members of the Assembly. While the main issue is what brought them together, many have their own secret agendas to pursue. A Conclave is a very dangerous time for a prince, for he holds no formal power at such meetings and is responsible for all violations of the Traditions in his city.

There is often something of a population explosion after a Conclave, as princes reward those who voted in their favor, allowing supporters to produce progeny. Many times an orgy of destruction counterbalances this growth as the losers pay the ultimate price.

Positions of Power

The Assembly is the group of Kindred that has gathered for the Conclave. They can be of any generation or clan and must have sworn loyalty only to the Camarilla, which is assumed if you have been presented to a Camarilla prince. All of the resources, connections, and

influence of those in the Assembly are assumed to be at the disposal of the Conclave. A particular member may refuse his assistance if called upon, but risks losing status and invoking the wrath of the Justicar.

The Justicar (or Justicars) who calls the Conclave presides over it. She acts as judge and mediator throughout the duration of the meeting, voting only in case of a tie. It is the Justicar who determines who shall speak, when they shall speak, and for how long they shall speak (giving her a great deal of influence over the proceedings). The Justicar also has the right to disband and reconvene the Conclave. All of these functions can be overridden, on a case by case basis, by a majority of the Clan Elect.

The Council of Clan Elect is composed of one representative from each of the seven Camarilla clans. Each delegate is usually the eldest of her clan, but not always so. Each clan has a meeting to decide who will represent them. The Kindred with the most votes from her fellow clan members is the elected representative of that clan. The representatives are expected to act in the interests of their respective clan when they sit on the Conclave's Clan Elect council (however, this is not always the case).

A Conclave's Clan Elect can override some of a Justicar's authority with a majority vote. The Clan Elect can override the Justicar's decision to allow (or not allow) someone to speak with a majority vote. The Clan Elect has similar influence over a Justicar's decision to disband and reconvene a Conclave. Caution should be used when attempting to override decisions. Justicars do not appreciate having their authority challenged and may place pressure on a clan to replace its chosen representative.

The Voting Protocol

When a Conclave has reached a point where it is time to vote on an issue, every member of the assembly has a say in the matter, at least technically. The voting is done along clan lines, and therein lies the rub. All of the Kindred place their votes with their clan's Clan Elect representative (who often has assistants to compile these votes). The Clan Elect representative is then expected to vote as the majority his or her clan decided. Of course, this is not always the case, as a vote may

be influenced by personal goals, Blood Bond, blackmail, and bribery. However, if a representative does not vote in the interest of her clan, it is unlikely that she will have the support necessary to represent her clan again.

Intrigue

Conclaves are potential sources for a tremendous amount of intrigue. Once a Conclave is convened, any issue can be brought before it. Furthermore, it is not unheard of for various clans to influence one another's voting or election process. It is the vote of the clan's representative, not the clan itself, that determines the outcome of a Conclave. As such, many sources attempt to influence a clan's representative. In some instances, even the Justicar tries to influence the outcome of the Conclave. Great care should be taken when electing a representative, which is why the eldest (and most powerful) are usually chosen for this purpose. Overall, a Conclave is a place where diplomacy is the mainstay, with intrigue and betrayal awaiting the unwary and unprepared.

The Order of Proceedings

I. Opening the Conclave — The Justicar opens the Conclave by ritually sending a messenger to "Gather the Cainites," even though this has already been done. He then introduces himself, stating his name, title, clan, and length of time he has served as a Justicar. An address will usually be made in which the Justicar comments on the state of the city since the last conclave. Decorum requires him to recognize the prince and the primogen but otherwise no special treatment is given.

II. Rite of Delegation — The Assembly is divided into clans. Each clan elects a representative for the Conclave's Council of Clan Elect, if it has not already done so. A formal vote is made, in public,

if required. Each representative then assumes her position at a table in front of the Assembly and states her title (if any), name, clan, and generation.

III. Recognition of the Issues — The chamber is sealed for this portion of the Conclave. A castalian is then appointed by the Justicar to prevent anyone from leaving or entering (usually an Archon). It is here that the reasons for the Conclave are explored and detailed (sometimes the Justicar will reserve some especially dramatic accusations until after the chamber has been sealed). It is also at this point that any other issues can be brought before the Conclave by any recognized member of the Assembly.

IV. Deliberation of the Issues — The Conclave doors are often opened for this session. It is during this time that evidence and witnesses that may pertain to the issues at hand are gathered. The issues are dealt with in whatever order the Justicar desires.

V. Resolution of the Issues — It is at this point that those involved with the issues make their closing statements. The Assembly votes and the Clan Elect, in turn, place their votes. This is a sealed session.

VI. Enactment of the Judgments — It is at this time that any punishments or judgments are metted out. Once justice has been done, the Justicar reviews the purpose of the Conclave and the decisions that the Conclave reaches and orders that they be remembered by all who attend (nothing is ever written down as it is technically a violation of the Masquerade). The Justicar ends the Conclave with the ritual statement, “So has our voice spoken on this night.”

The Ordeals

Decisions made by the Conclave may be challenged by undergoing an ordeal. This can be nearly any sort of exacting trial, mission, or quest that is given by the Conclave to test the suspect. Such ordeals



may last only a minute or may take many years; if not completed satisfactorily, the officiating Justicar is free to assign any penalty. If the crime is considered too great to allow the vampire to complete an ordeal, the offending Kindred may face a challenge by one of her accusers. The two antagonists battle one another in ritual combat. This may be a duel fought without weapons, but with each opponent blindfolded, or a contest where each sucks the other's blood until one of the two is extinguished.

The Inner Circle

Every 13 years there is a meeting of the elders of each clan and, not coincidentally, the founders of the sect. This is the true hub of the Camarilla. Compared to this assembly, all other Conclaves are but puppet shows. The Inner Circle always meets in Venice, just it has done for the past 500 years.

Each bloodline is allowed one representative to sit on the Inner Circle. Only this individual may vote, though all those who attend may speak. The eldest member of each clan present places the vote for that clan. It is a majority of age. This is the primary reason why the anarchs are so frustrated.

The primary function of the Inner Circle is to appoint the Justicars — the judges of the sect. One Justicar is chosen from each of the seven clans. They act of their own accord, but are required to take the decisions of the Inner Circle under consideration. By decree of the Inner Circle, Justicars hold the power to deal with members of the Camarilla who transgress the Traditions. The seven Justicars hold the true power in the Camarilla.

The appointment of a Justicar is a long, drawn-out political battle; while the major bloodlines would each like to select the representative of their choice, it is difficult to obtain the majority needed. The losers in the intrigue end up with a Justicar of young years or weak powers who will be ignored for 13 years. Thus, those finally appointed tend to be compromise candidates or chosen from the lower rungs of a line. Sometimes, even obscure Kindred are chosen by elders who believe they will be easy to manipulate once appointed.

Justicars

It is at first difficult to grasp the relationship of the Conclave and the Justicar. The Conclave is forbidden by tradition to pass any judgment directly upon any member of the Camarilla. This tradition limits the possibility of any abuse of power. The Conclave's only avenue of control lies in its judges, whom they appoint to pass sentence for them.

Justicars have the only true authority, which they hold over all the Camarilla, and indeed all Kindred, *except those who sit on the Inner Circle*. They have the ultimate decision-making and adjudication power over matters involving violation of the Six Traditions. No member of the Camarilla is considered above them in this area. If one of the Blood is found to have violated the Traditions, it is a Justicar who decides the punishment. There are no guidelines concerning the punishment; it is left to the discretion of each Justicar. Their decisions are often harsh. They are supposed to hold a Conclave each time they wish to pass judgment, but over the years the Justicars have assumed more and more power and no longer feel the need to do so. Justicars can call a Conclave at any time, either to confirm a ruling or to make a momentous decision a Justicar does not care to make himself.

The decision or action of a Justicar can only be challenged by another Justicar. If a major point of contention arises between Justicars, a Conclave is held where the Justicars come together and resolve the dispute. The resolution usually comes in the form of a vote, but sometimes, depending on the dispute, personal challenges can arise.

Many elders resent the authority of the Justicars, and some among them are very outspoken in their opposition. Most accept it, however, for fear of opposing the Justicars, who are frequently of considerable age.

Justicars often have coterie of other vampires who do their bidding; these Kindred are known as Archons. These are often the brood of the Justicar and are always willingly Blood Bound to the Justicar. Archons enforce the Justicars' will and report breaches of the Traditions. The Archons are the eyes and ears of the Justicars.

The Sabbat

Known to many as the Black Hand, the Sabbat is rumored to have evolved from a medieval death cult. Little of its nature has changed since then. It is the largest sect next to the Camarilla, and is aggressively attempting to increase its domain.

The Black Hand rules through fear, hatred, anger and physical violence. In North America, it holds undisputed control over Detroit, Toronto, Montreal, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Portland, and is close to gaining supremacy in Boston and Baltimore. Until recently, Miami was also under Sabbat control, but recent events have caused a swing in the power balance there.

The Sabbat is organized in units known as “packs,” which are strongly loyal to one another, feeding and traveling as one group. Indeed, in the Camarilla, it has become a derogatory term to call a coterie a “pack.”

Members of the Sabbat come from many different bloodlines, though two clans dominate the organization: the Lasombra and Tzimisce. Though it may be possible to join the Sabbat, almost all members are created. The Black Hand requires strict devotion and adherence to the will of the group.

The Sabbat initiation procedure is designed to destroy any of the vestigial will in a new vampire. Initiates are slain, slowly and painfully, and then given the Blood. This blood doesn't come from one member of the Sabbat, but from as many as are present at the initiation, combined into a chalice. Once the Initiate has been given the Blood, he is buried alive, and must crawl out in order to live. Those who do not spend eternity buried under the earth. The process of digging oneself from a grave tears the Initiate's humanity from him and opens him to the subjugation and brainwashing of the Sabbat.

Once the Initiate breaks free, he is Blood Bound to the pack that Embraced him. In a strange ritual, which occurs over two more nights, the Initiate is given more blood.

The Black Hand is concerned solely with power in all its forms. It is actively engaged in diablerie and has a fanatical opposition to life and its trappings. The Sabbat views mortals as lesser beasts to be dominated and used as need requires. The Sabbat worships at the places of the dead — cemeteries, tombs and charnel houses. The

members of the Sabbat understand themselves to be undead, and behave accordingly. Any who oppose them are burnt; indeed, Sabbat packs seem to have a fascination with fire, though they are no more immune to it than any other Kindred.

The members of the Sabbat revel in being vampires and living out their instincts. They find other Kindred contemptible because they try so hard to retain their humanity. For the Sabbat, this is the greatest blasphemy.

The Sabbat often sends packs into cities held by the Camarilla, either to scout out the opposition or to hunt for those who have fled from the covens. Camarilla politics are invariably complicated by the presence of Sabbat Kindred.

The Sabbat is said to engage in a strange sort of diablerie, wherein its members ritually butcher the elders of their kind so that stronger, more aggressive and younger Kindred may take their place. However, like so much else spoken of among Kindred outside the Sabbat, this is unconfirmed. The princes of the major cities worldwide would give much to gain hard facts about the workings of the Sabbat. All of them fear the danger of its steady growth.

In the end, nothing certain can be said of the Sabbat. Indeed, all that the Camarilla believes about it could be false, rumors spread by Antediluvians who wish the two sects to fight. It is unlikely, but all too possible.

The Inconnu

“Inconnu” is the term used to describe those vampires who have distanced themselves from the others of their kind. It is not so much a sect as it is a classification. The Inconnu are old, powerful, and as such have little need, and less desire, for the company of their brethren. They tend to live in the wild among the animals and sleep within the earth when the sun is in the sky. (It is unknown how they manage to live in peace with the shape-changers who rule the wild areas.) Certain Inconnu still live within the cities, and may even be interested in the Jyhad, but by the rules of their sect may not become involved in

it. Some have attended Camarilla Conclave meetings, creating great awe in the other Kindred. The Inconnu, like all Kindred, are always invited.

Most of the Inconnu have grown so old that they may sleep for months or years before awakening. They are like the Antediluvians in that they are no longer completely of this world, but have grown apart from it. Most of them are several millennia old and are the most powerful vampires most Kindred will ever encounter.

Many of the Inconnu are members of the fourth and fifth generations who were at one point or another involved in the Jyhad. They have won their places in the hierarchy of Kindred by dint of age or through the devouring of their own elders. They have gone into hiding out of fear for their existence and out of distaste for the modern world. They believe that only by removing themselves from the world can they escape the Jyhad. Despite the best efforts of the sect, some of its members still become involved in the Jyhad. As a whole, the Inconnu punish all of their order who continue to take part in the Jyhad or meddle in the affairs of lesser Kindred. This is their only law.

A sizable minority of the Inconnu have actually achieved Golconda. This may explain their distaste of the Jyhad and their rational approach to many problems among the Kindred.

The Inconnu will allow no Kindred to harm or injure any of its members, no matter what those members have done. All rights to punishment are reserved solely for themselves, but it is very difficult to contact them to petition for such. In the end, the Inconnu are a most enigmatic and mysterious sect. Their organization and priorities are unknown, if indeed it can even be said that they have such.

Bloodlines

Many modern philosophers argue that the present age has caused an apathy and disinterest in the ties of faith, nation, and blood. Certainly for the Kindred, the concerns of faith and nation are as dead as ever, but none care more dearly for the ties of blood.

While those of the Blood seem to be loners by nature and necessity, the need for society and structure seems to tug at them as strongly as it does mortals. This is most evident in the importance of lineage to the Kindred. Much of the respect one is due is based on the identity of one's sire, and the sire's sire, and so on. Even the most moronic of Kindred is entitled to some respect if his lineage is of regard.

At one time, each vampire could name her sire, and her sire's sire, and so on all the way back to Caine. The importance of bloodlines has diminished of late, as Kindred have become more and more removed from Caine. Their connections to the elders of import are lessened by the many generations between them. The relative peace offered by the Camarilla has made them soft and self-satisfied, and they have lost respect for the elders. As might be expected, this is deeply resented by the conservative elders. Most Kindred created in this century know little of their lineage and seem to care even less.

Even so, within the world of the vampire the bloodright of one's clan is still of crucial consequence. Most vampires can trace their general lineage, if not the precise bloodline, back to an Antediluvian of the third generation. While the founder of the bloodline may no longer exist or may at least have dropped from sight, all of his progeny still hold many traits in common. Each clan possesses certain gifts and curses associated with it that others do not share; more importantly, members of the same clan hold similar values and virtues.

Represented within the Camarilla are seven major clans, though Kindred of any bloodline are welcome. There are allegedly 13 distinct clans, as well as innumerable minor bloodlines. Two of the clans are said to be of the Sabbat, while the remaining four clans owe allegiance to neither sect.

There are likely many more unknown bloodlines, especially when one considers the mysterious eastern Kindred, who undoubtedly have their own unique divisions.

Brujah

The Brujah are all rebels of one kind or another, forever searching for the ultimate expression of their individuality. They are punks, skinheads, bikers, rockers, freaks, socialists, and anarchists. They tend to be stubborn and can be highly aggressive and ruthless. Sensitive to slights, they can be extremely vengeful, as well. They are the most uncontrollable of all Kindred.

These malcontents tend to be fanatical in their disparate beliefs — the only thing that unifies them is their desire to overthrow the social system, be it vampiric or mortal, and to replace it with one of their own making (or with nothing at all). Many are bullheaded crusaders of the worst sort: those who are so devoted to their cause that they are blind to any other shades of truth.

Though the Brujah are incredibly fractious, they come to each other's aid in times of need, regardless of past disputes and antagonisms. If the Brujah call is made, the others will respond, but the gathered host will be enraged if they think the call was unwarranted.

The clan is poorly organized and only occasionally holds informal meetings. Indeed, they rely on their chaotic behavior to gain the results they desire. The other Kindred allow them their eccentricities; what would get other Kindred extinguished is qualified by a remark, "Oh, a Brujah." Insolent outbursts and fevered ravings are to be expected from the Brujah. The other Kindred have simply learned to provide the Brujah the leeway that would be given to no other vampire.

Gangrel

The Gangrel are wanderers, rarely holding to one place for any real period of time. In this, they are very different from most Kindred, who find a haven and hold to it. There is no record of who the eldest in their line is, and there are no established leaders of the clan. On the whole, Gangrel are unconcerned with such things. They are known for being withdrawn, quiet and solemn. They certainly keep their cards close to their chest.

This is a lineage of survivors — vampires who are capable of making it on their own. They do not despise civilization or the society of their Kindred, they simply do not require it. They are known for their lack of concern about crossing the lands of the Lupines (shape-changers), for it is said they have friends among them.

Gangrel always pick their progeny-to-be very carefully, seeking those who are survivors and capable of existing on their own. Once they Embrace these mortals, passing the Curse to them, they abandon them, leaving them to make their way through the world. Though they may watch their progeny from a distance, sires rarely intervene. When they feel the childe is ready, they present themselves and teach the childe the true ways of the line.

The Gangrel are very capable transformers, which may explain their ability to cross wild areas unmolested. There are no reports of them being able to transform into anything other than wolves and bats, but there are old tales of a Gangrel elder being able to achieve a mist form. Perhaps because of this Protean Discipline, they often have features distinctly reminiscent of some animal. Each time they frenzy, the Gangrels gain another animal feature.

If the stories are to be believed, the Gypsies are the mortal descendants of the Antediluvian who stands at the head of the Gangrel line. They are under his protection, and any Kindred who harms or Embraces one of them will answer to him. Regardless of whether this is true or not, Kindred are loath to harm a Gypsy.

Members of the Gangrel clan are expected, through long-standing clan tradition, to aid the Gypsies whenever necessary. It has been known for them to be aided by the Gypsies, as well. Certain members of the Gangrel clan have adopted much from the Gypsy culture, including their manner, aspects of their language, and in some instances their dress.

Malkavian

The Malkavians are all insane. But from madness comes wisdom, and from wisdom comes power. The Malkavians are true creatures of chaos. However, the Malkavians are also known to be clowns and pranksters. As with all things connected with them, not everything makes sense.

This clan is known for its destructive and nihilistic membership. Malkavians have a reputation for being sadistic and holding weakly to the sanity they still retain. But, if truth be known, such Malkavians are a minority. The members of this clan regularly surprise the Kindred, for they do not seem insane. This is so common that many Kindred believe the Malkavians have an undeserved reputation. However, remember that sometimes the most normal-seeming people have the least grasp on reality.

There is a long tradition among the Malkavians of playing practical jokes upon both kin and kine. The shape and form that these “pranks” take can vary wildly and can range from harmless fun to the potentially terminal. The Malkavians, when they interact at all with one another, tend to award prestige to one another on the basis of these pranks. Many Malkavians have the solemn belief that the Jyhad is a joke created by the founder of their line.

The Malkavians are very choosy about whom they Embrace. Typically, only those on the edge of sanity are chosen. The members of this clan search long and hard for someone who has seen so much truth that they have descended into the pits of chaos and thus have a unique perspective on reality. However, if the progeny-to-be is sane, the sire will make the Embrace and Becoming as difficult as possibly, seeking to drive the mortal mad in the process.

Nosferatu

The Nosferatu are the least human in appearance of all the lineages. They look something like feral animals. Their scent and appearance is revolting — one could even say monstrous. They have long bulbous ears, a coarse-skinned skull covered with tufts of hair, and elongated faces covered with the most disgusting warts and lumps.

After a Nosferatu has been Embraced, he undergoes an exceptionally painful period of transformation. Over a period of weeks, he slowly shifts from his mortal to Nosferatu guise. In the beginning, the childe may revel in his new-found powers, but soon the pain and the changes begin. It is likely that the psychological trauma is more painful than the physical symptoms.

Nosferatu only Embrace those mortals who are twisted in one way or another: emotionally, physically, spiritually or intellectually. They consider the Embrace to be too horrific to bestow on any worthwhile human being. With the change into a Vampire, the Nosferatu hopes to somehow redeem the mortal, to give them a second chance. It is surprising how often it works. Underneath the grim exterior, the Nosferatu are practical and mostly sane.

It is said that they revel in being dirty and disgusting and do little to make themselves look better (though there is very little they could do). Despite this, they are cheerful amid their squalor, especially so when others are forced to enter their realm. They are known for being grumpy and lewd and cannot be trusted to maintain the standards of civilized society.

Though they travel through mortal society, because of their powers of Obfuscation, they are not able to interact with it. Therefore, they must live apart. The habits that grow up from such a lonely existence extend even to their interactions with other vampires. They avoid all contact, preferring their own solitary existence to the burdens of interaction with others.

Though they may not interact with other vampires, Nosferatu do remain cognizant of the pulse of the city. They favor such tactics as listening to the conversations of other vampires from a hiding place, and have even been known to sneak into a prince's haven to discover

the deepest secrets of the elder. If you wish to know of any information about the city or its immortal inhabitants, you need only speak with a Nosferatu.

The Nosferatu do stay in contact with one another and have developed a unique subculture among the Kindred. They play host to one another with the most elaborate politeness and gentility. They share their information among themselves and, as a result, are probably the best informed of the Kindred.

Toreador

The members of this clan are known for their hedonism, though that is a misinterpretation of what they truly are. They are indeed proud and regal Kindred, highly excitable with expensive tastes — but hedonism is going a bit too far. Artists are always so misunderstood.

The Toreador are known to be the most sophisticated of the clans. They are concerned with beauty in a way no mortal can fathom. They use the rarified senses and tastes given to them with the Embrace to become as consumed and impassioned as possible. Ideally, to a Toreador, nothing matters as much as beauty, though in many cases the search for beauty simply degenerates into a search for pleasure, and the Toreador becomes little more than a hedonist.

Like all true artists, they search for a truth beyond the existence they fear to be meaningless. It is that struggle for truth, and ultimately salvation, that has brought them to what they consider to be their mission: to protect the genius of the human race. Toreadors are truly in love with the vigor and passion of the mortals and never tire of marveling at their creations.

The clan as a whole considers itself conservators of the greatest artists of any variety. They specifically search out those who they consider to be the most worthwhile and bring them into immortality, thus protecting their genius against the ravages of aging and death. Toreadors constantly search for new talent and spend a great deal of time deciding who to preserve and who to leave to fate. Among the Toreador are some of the greatest musicians and artists who have ever lived.

The greatest weakness of the Toreadors is their sensitivity to beauty. They so reflexively surround themselves with elegance and luxury that they sometimes lose sight of their goals and become concerned only with self-gratification — the reputation of the entire clan suffers from these individuals.

Tremere

The members of this clan are dedicated and extremely well organized. Others, however, think of them as arcane and untrustworthy. They are aggressive, highly intellectual, manipulative, and they respect only those who struggle and persevere despite all odds. The Tremere believe that they must use the other clans in order to prosper. “Be friendly with them, let them think that we are one with them, but never forget that we serve our clan first and foremost. If you must use your friends in service of the clan, then you know that your time was not wasted.”

Tremere are an odd lot, indeed. They claim to have once been wizards who voluntarily gave up their “art” for the powers and eternal life of the vampire. They have never named a founder, and some claim they have none, having discovered and harnessed mystical powers to achieve their state. Many of the elder Kindred discount this claim, considering it like those made by other so-called “magicians” of Europe who are almost uniformly deluded or schizophrenic.

The Tremere link to the substance of blood apparently runs deep, as they are rumored to be able to use blood in special ways to gain extraordinary powers. Some believe elder Tremere were actually practitioners of some ancient blood magic. They also believe the knowledge of those practices has been passed down from generation to generation, such that it is now viewed by the younger Tremere as natural and commonplace, and certainly not magic.

The leaders of this clan are based out of Vienna, though they have chantries on every continent of the world. A council of seven elders is said to control the entire clan from the Vienna chantry. From that locus, they maintain a tightly ordered, highly hierarchical group — one that allows no one outside the lineage to view their inner workings.

The younger members of clan Tremere are expected to obey their elders without question. But this is not as true as it once was. Tremere typically have immense love and loyalty for their clan, largely because they are Blood Bound by seven elders of the clan. They come to love the clan because of the love they feel for their masters. Though there are some rebels and anarchists from the Tremere line, it is likely they are posing as such on orders of the clan, as part of its long-term plots.



Ventrue

Old-fashioned and tradition bound, Ventrue are sophisticated and genteel. They believe in good taste above all else and work hard at making their lives comfortable. They are most frequently the leaders in the Camarilla, though avoid what they consider to be the crude and decadent office of prince. They are cautious, honorable, social, and elegant Kindred.

The Ventrue fancy themselves a clan of the modern world and deny that they live in the past. This may be true of the most powerful members of the clan, but many are not able to give up the habits and manner of dress of the time when they were Embraced. The attitudes and beliefs they held as mortals are never forgotten by a Ventrue.

Ventrue are most often found among the upper crust of the mortal world, most mingling and fitting in quite well. Their sophistication stands them in good stead among the elite of mortal society, and it allows them to control many of the more powerful members of the city. Because of the relative ease in which most Ventrue travel among such company, the Ventrue often have a monopoly on the political control of the city. If something goes wrong, it is often to them that the other Kindred turn to for control.

There is a strong Ventrue tradition that any member of the line may find safe haven with any other member of the line and cannot be refused. Thus, many Ventrue aid their fellow clan members before the need arises for this tradition to be called upon. However, harboring a fugitive in your haven can have detrimental effects to one's welfare.

Ventrue are very proud of their leadership of vampiric society and will always insist that they were the founders of the Camarilla. They will do nearly anything to retain their grip on the politics of the cities and the Camarilla and are exceedingly protective of their reputations.

Caitiff

Some Kindred do not have a clan at all, but are of bastard blood. This is sometimes because they were abandoned by their sire, or were Embraced by an outcast vampire. A combination of a thinness of blood and a lack of social training has made them Clanless. This is a fairly recent phenomenon, and thus they are disdained by many of the older Kindred. Though many Caitiff are considered to be pariahs or anarchs, not all of them are outcasts. Some are accepted among the Damned, but none have yet reached an age where they have achieved any real power. Indeed, it seems as though the greatest explosion of the Clanless has occurred in the last 50 years.

Generations

Kindred produce progeny, much as mortals do, and different generations exist among them in much the same manner. There exist more than 13 generations of Kindred, and the more distant a Kindred is from Caine, the first vampire, the weaker that Kindred is as well. Kindred are commonly identified by what generation they belong to.

It is important to understand that generation does not necessarily indicate age. A vampire of the 10th generation could be twice as old as a vampire of the sixth generation.

If vampires engage in the practice of diablerie, the slaying and drinking the blood of Kindred of earlier generations, they may raise their effective generations. For example, if an eighth generation vampire slays and drinks the remaining vitæ of a seventh generation vampire, her effective generation will now be seventh, not eighth.

Caine

Tradition holds that Caine, the Biblical slayer of his brother Abel, is the Sire Of All Kindred. There is much controversy over this within the Kindred community, as there are none still existing who can claim with utter certainty to have met Caine. Certainly, those of the second generation would know, but they're not talking. Some of the third generation who yet exist claim to have met a being who may have been Caine, or simply a powerful Kindred of the second generation.

It is an unresolved question — a mystery of heritage.

Second Generation

The existing translations of the *Book of Nod* place the number of second generation Kindred at three. Caine in his sorrow created them to live with him in his great city of Enoch. Nothing is known about these three.

One can assume, based on the *Book of Nod*, that they were slain either during the Deluge or in the First War following the Flood. As one might expect, all those of age are reluctant to speak of their sires and the great strife that overcame them all. Undoubtedly, some know more than they are revealing.

Were any of the second generation still in existence today, they would be powerful beings: akin to demigods, perhaps.

Third Generation

It is believed that seven members of the third generation exist, though the names of only two, Lucian and Mekhet, are widely known. In common argot, they are referred to as the Antediluvians, and they are the founders of the 13 vampire clans. All remain hidden, lost in the workings of the Jyhad, the war that has lasted nearly as long as recorded history. They continue their struggle, but now instead of openly warring on the battlefield, they use subterfuge, guile and outright deceit. Their primary activity seems to be tracing the activities of each other and thwarting whatever moves their opponents make.

These moves seem to range from something as petty as the acquisition of a piece of artwork or property, to grand schemes involving nations. Those of the third generation see themselves as manipulators and dominators, split between those who would live within the mortal world and those who would live without. It is unclear if this reflects the origins of the Jyhad, or is just what it has degenerated into. There are other suspicions, based on the origins of the word *Jyhad*. Some among the third generation may indeed have reached Golconda and are attempting to assist others of their kind attain this state. They must war with the other Ancients who do not wish this to come to pass.

Those of the third generation are powerful beings, with abilities and powers only guessed at by their lessers. Some say they are the last generation to have true mastery over the powers of life and death, and can only die the Final Death if they choose or are slain by one of equal power. Is this, perhaps, the Jyhad? A maneuvering to see who shall be the last of their kind?

Fourth and Fifth Generations

These vampires are known as the Methuselahs, for they are nearly as powerful and secretive as the Antediluvians. Those of the fourth and fifth generations are most often the pawns of choice in the Jyhad, as they may have political power among the other Kindred. As a result, their numbers have dwindled significantly with the actions of the Antediluvians. Few of this generation remain active, and many have become Inconnu out of fear of the Jyhad and diablerie. The Inner Circle of the Camarilla is said to be composed of members from the fourth generation. There are even rumors that the true purpose of the Camarilla is to blunt the efforts of the third generation to manipulate the younger generations.

Though the blood of Caine begins to dilute somewhat at this distance, those of the fourth generation are still extremely powerful.

Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Generations

Vampires of these generations are powerful enough to think they can resist the workings of their elders, and so remain deeply involved in Kindred society. They control the Camarilla (at least they think so), comprise the majority of the princes, and are the primogen of many cities. Those who remain in positions of visibility tend to be important figures: leaders of clans or bloodlines, or princes of great cities. Most of the princes of European cities tend to be of the sixth generation. Princes of American cities tend to be of the seventh or eighth generation.

Interestingly, the members of the eighth generation seem to be the last Kindred viewed as “elders.” Perhaps it is because the majority of them were created before the modern age, and that is evident in their manner and bearing.

Ninth and Tenth Generations

Though they are sometimes called elders, these Kindred often associate themselves with members of the younger generations. Mem-

bers of these generations are frequently called Ancillæ, though of course this is based on age more than generation. Most were created in the modern era, and thus are somewhat alien in temperament to the older Kindred. In more ways than one, they bridge the gap between the anarchs and the elders.

Eleventh, Twelfth, and Thirteenth Generations

The most recent generations of Kindred are often called neonates. They are still powerful creatures, but the special gifts of Caine's blood (the unique powers and abilities) are rarely found here. Born within recent memory, the Kindred of these generations are products of societies that have received the benefits of, and been victims of, rapid change.

Fourteenth and Fifteenth Generations

There are exceedingly few Kindred of these generations, and none beyond. Indeed, those of 15th generation have failed to sire any progeny. Their blood is far too thin, and they are too removed from Caine, to be able to pass on the curse.

Listen sweet Childe.

And learn what you must soon face.

The streets the Vampire walks are the same streets the living walk. It is the Vampire that is the difference. It is the Vampire of whom you must be wary.

Vampire society is built upon the principle of power. Those who exert it the most forcefully can claim Domain over the city, and by controlling the cities, they can restrict the other Vampires who live there. Though a Vampire may claim Domain over a city, never can one become Prince if one's claim is challenged. Once challenged, only blood will settle the dispute. Thus, only the powerful seek Domain.

However, such power is of little meaning to the wisest Kindred. The desire for it is a human instinct, and over time, the desire and respect for power should disappear. While there are certain rights that go with it, only those who have not left behind their human needs require it. No Vampires may Sire without the permission of their Prince, and until Neonates are presented to the Prince, their sins are the Sire's responsibility. When wrong is done, only the Prince may call a Blood Hunt. Finally, those who enter the Domain must present themselves to the Prince, though we of the Inconnu, of course, do not ever submit ourselves to them. These Princes may be Elders, but they are not our equals.

The largest Sect among the Kindred is the Camarilla, and it is to them you must go. They live within mortal society, as well as prey upon it. They still struggle to preserve the Masquerade, to keep the mortals from learning

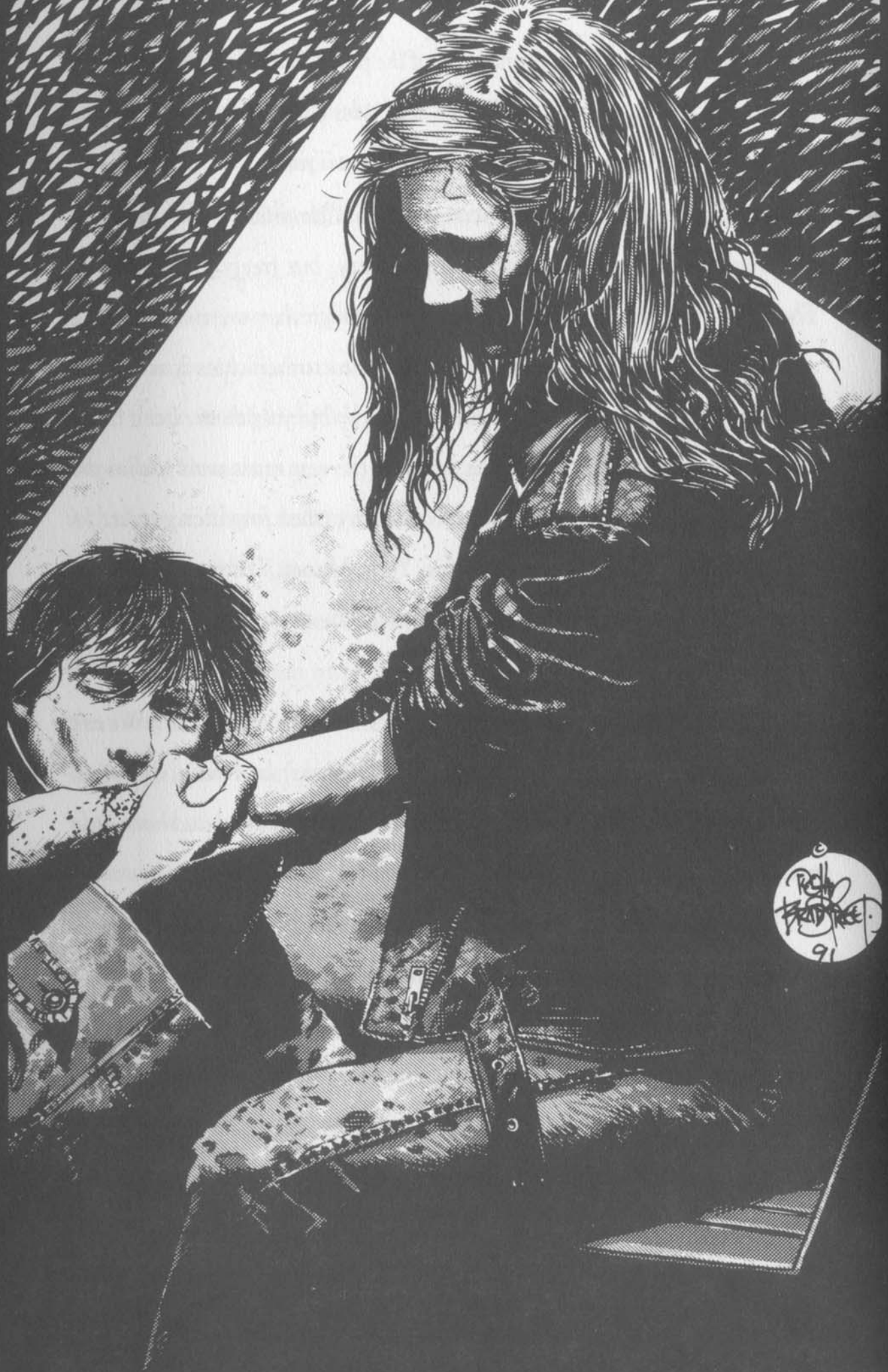
of us. The Camarilla is the foundation of the peace that exists between most of our kind, and it supports the Prince who rules each city, for they are the only ones with the power to support the ancient Traditions.

The Sabbat are the great enemies of the Camarilla. This group of psychotic diabolists lives outside human society, but freely preys upon it. They play a most potent role in the Jyhad, though they are not under the complete control of the Ancients. All who venture to their cities do so at their own risk. The Sabbat inducts their Neonates by burying them alive. Only a few ever manage to crawl to the surface; the rest must wait within the ground for all eternity — screaming soundlessly in their forgotten graves. In North America, the Sabbat controls New York, Miami, Toronto, Montreal, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Portland, and Philadelphia, as well as a number of smaller cities.

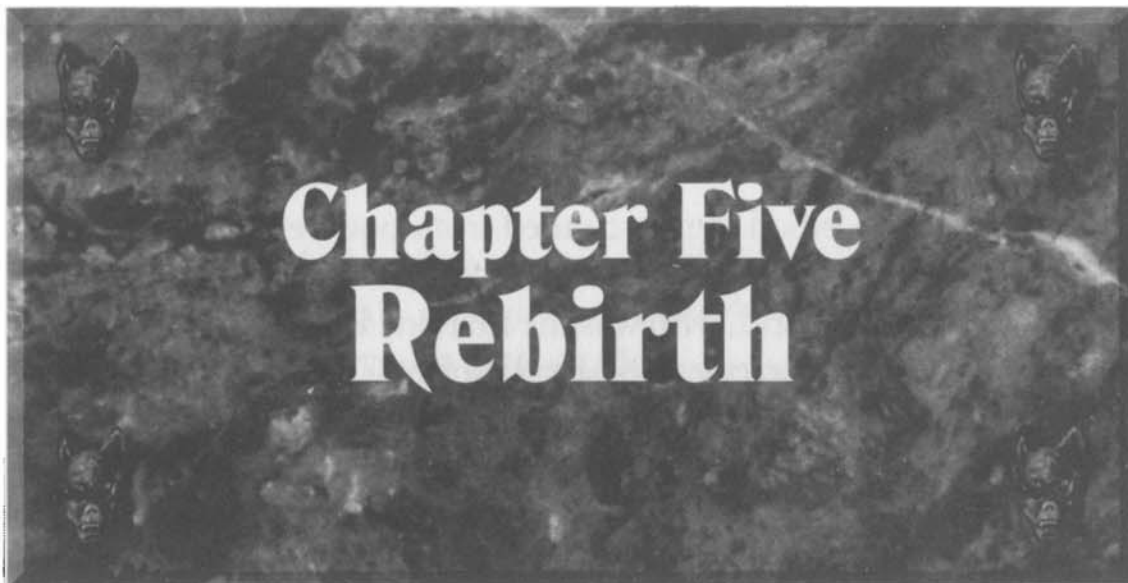
And finally there is the Inconnu, the most obscure of the sects. We are the Eldest of Elders, other than the Antediluvians, and have distanced ourselves from the other Kindred. We are ancient, powerful and have little need for the company of either humans or Kindred.

Though you must be wary of the witch-hunters, it is the other Vampires you should fear most. The Blood of some Elders has thinned and they can no longer survive on mortal Vitæ, but must instead feed upon other Vampires. Many of us create Broods so that we can feed from them, as we cannot be Blood Bound by our own Progeny.

That is why I created you. . .



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Chapter Five Rebirth

So you have come all this way, just to hear my dying words?

You should know better than to listen to the rumblings of a sick, old man.

Ha, foolish one. You crave to understand your predicament? You seek to know what you have become? To be told the secrets of the undying race, the flesh eaters?

Very well, I shall tell you, not because I am afraid, but because it is my last wish to tell you these things. Listen closely, for I will not tell you of these things a second time.

You are cursed, know that first. You are cursed, and you are condemned. Nothing you ever do will change that, for it is you who are evil. Do not pity yourself; the Damned are not allowed such petty sentiments. Never again shall you feel the pleasure of a clean heart. When you die, you will learn of your punishment. You are a monster, and none among your kind has ever been able to control the Beast within. Neither shall you be able to resist it. I know this to be true. You need but look into your eyes to see that.

The vampire is the pinnacle of the food chain; they are the hunters of the hunters, the peak of performance. On this earth, there is not a more advanced creature, a more rarified tool, a more efficient predator.

The life of the vampire is marked by the crossed swords of ecstasy and despair. Torn by their extremes, vampires are wondrous beasts, as often venerated as reviled. Beauty of form and action, deadly of intent and purpose.

Those of the blood are descended from one being, the mythical Caine. It is said that vampires are descended from the third mortal being to walk this world, who was the first one born to that state. If it is so, and a vampire can trace his blood back to Caine through less than 12 Generations, then that vampire is closer to God than we mortals can ever hope to be.

A disquieting thought, yes? Ironically, the Kindred see themselves as being closer to Hell than Heaven; forever damned to walk the earth until fate or circumstance brings them final rest. The imagery serves them well if they are indeed the children of Caine — cursed by God to wander the earth, deathless, as punishment for the slaying of his worthy brother, Abel.

It is said that mankind itself is doomed by the original sin of Adam, who disobeyed God by his consumption of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. It is only through purity of action and deed that mankind may redeem himself and achieve perfection. It is irrelevant whether you believe in Adam and the Tree of Knowledge, for its truth holds strong regardless.

None of us are perfect beings, neither Kindred nor kine, and we do not live in a perfect world. That is virtually all that can be said for certain. It is our duty to improve the state of our existence and that of those around us, regardless of whether we believe an ultimate reward exists for our actions or not. We must all move from our imperfect beginnings to a greater perfection above us. We must work to carry those around us forward, as they will be as weak as us. You may view the struggle as a ladder, if you wish: each rung, each act of goodness, takes us one step closer to redemption.

Do not be alarmed. I did not call you here to discuss philosophy. Or theology. We are here to discuss Humanity. Mine and yours.

You laugh at my words; you believe evil to be an antiquated concept. Evil is all too real, you but have to meet it to know its name.

Evil cannot describe an individual, however, it can describe the actions that those individuals do. Vampires are not creatures of pure evil, lacking even the tiniest shred of humanity. No creature lives in such a world of black and white, not even them. You cannot judge them so easily.

How do we define evil? No, no, have no fear, I will not tread that well-worn ground. Still, though, it is a worthy question to ponder.

There are some, many in fact, who believe quite strongly that there is real evil in the world. Many vampires believe they are it. They point to the fact that Caine's curse was, and remains, transferable. They argue that it is God's will that Caine's sin curse the world the way Adam's did, but in a much more direct form. The vampire is the agent of that curse — the evil inherent in the world. A very real, very active evil.

This disturbs many, as you might imagine. It is one thing for there to be temptation in the world, and the acceptance of evil, therefore, being purely self-determined. It is another to believe that there are actual agents of that evil. Many vampires see themselves as mankind's torment. They revile in their role of evil incarnate. Why should they not? They are already damned.

Others believe in an inherent duality of existence. They point out that there can be no true damnation without the prospect of salvation. For without the latter, the former has no value. Without hope, there can be no despair. Without love, no hate, and so on.

If this is so, then salvation is always attainable, even for the worst of us.

The vampire may be damned from the moment of his creation, but that only means the ladder he must climb is greater. His road to salvation is longer and more treacherous, but his redemption is grander.

This is the path I chose long ago. But fate was crueler than my desire. And now you see me as I am. I am condemned for eternity for what I have done, and if I say it was done out of need, it is no excuse. Evil still flows in my blood.

Golconda.

There are other words for it, of course, but that is the one the vampires most often use. The ones who are concerned with it, in any case.

What is it?

Golconda is either a place or a state of being, depending on whom you speak to. It is the point to which all Caine's descendants aspire. It is the point where true redemption occurs — the point of absolute understanding. The point where forgiveness is possible.

Forgiveness?

Why, of Caine's, of course. I have been told that one of the later passages in the *Book Of Nod* says, (we pass these things along verbally you know):

To rise from the darkness

To soar from the heights

To reveal the light inside

To forgive our Sire his sin

And thereby redeem our souls

That is our struggle

That is our test

We are the blessed

We are the damned

We are his Children

To forgive Caine his sin would redeem all of his line. All would be saved.

All.



Even those who do not seek to forgive Caine. Even those who haunt this world as evil incarnate.

And therein lies the rub.

From the beginning, there have been those who believed their roles as evil resplendent, divinely proscribed. They do not believe in forgiveness. They do not believe in redemption. They have no need for such things. They are the Damned.

Those who climb the ladder, who wage the struggle, have always been at odds with those who see darkness as their Domain. The Damned do not see a ladder to climb, they see only the walls of their pit.

What?

Good against evil? Light against darkness?

Hardly. Can the ignorant be evil? No, no, I will not lapse into this either. You may, if you wish, view it in this manner, but your misperception will hinder you. Not all who aspire to Golconda will attain it. They will fall short because of their imperfections — failings that seem as “evil” as anything the darkest mind could imagine. You forget that the vampire must kill to survive. The older he gets, the more powerful the being he must consume to live. Are these the warriors of light and goodness? Yes, you begin to understand.

The word Jyhad has come to be used for the conflict between the factions. Realize that there are more than two; it is not a binary proposition. There are fanatics and conservatives on both sides.

A simple gauge of a vampire’s power is by its generation. How many generations are they from the legendary Caine, the Sire of all the Kindred? It is known that some of a vampire’s power is passed down to its childe. With this in mind, it is easy to understand how and why the oldest Kindred, those closest to Caine, are the most powerful. Caine’s Blood, as it has passed down through the generations, has become diluted with each making. The youngest of the Kindred are nothing compared to their ancestors.

They are still, however, powerful creatures, but the special gifts of Caine’s Blood, the unique powers and abilities, are rarely found here. Born within recent memory, the Kindred of these generations are products of societies that have received the benefits of, and been victimized by, the rapid change.

A glimpse back at the last 100 to 200 years clearly shows the tremendous changes that have swept over the world. Changes not only affecting the geo-political world, but the realms of philosophy, science, psychology, medicine, law, and sociology. These are heady times for those whose near immortality allows them to live through, experience, and ultimately outlive some of those changes.

Many of man's views and attitudes of the world have been reshaped or recast within the last quarter millennia. Science has answered or explained many of the fundamental mysteries of life and the cosmos, deepening at the same time the mysteries of the Kindred. Though some have tried, the same science that can reveal the atomic heart of the molecule, or the graceful curves of the DNA spiral, falls short of rationally explaining the immortal vampire.

Where does this leave the modern Kindred? In a world that values reason and fact above emotion and mystery, where do we stand? Are vampires creatures of this world, or are they, in fact, the ill-begotten descendants of a man cursed by God? And if they are, what future do they have?

What future, indeed?

But I apologize. I had promised to speak of what it is to be a vampire, today. Here and now.

Pay attention.

Vampires' great Jyhad is simply their fight for dominance, the dominance of the pack. They have slaughtered all other rivals, and now they only have one another to combat. They joined together to slay their sires, for individually, each of the elders was far stronger than the younger ones; now vampires war among themselves.

Their contest is something of a ritual, an age-old ritual, you might say.

Those of the third generation, progeny of Caine, hide now, somewhere, working their strings of power from the shadows. In their day, they ruled great nations and wielded power the likes of which those beneath them had never witnessed. When their power grew too great and they moved to dominate the world, Caine himself is said to have moved against them. All of his line are as damned as he, and the assumption of power would be an insult to God's desire. Many were

destroyed. Those who survived withdrew from mortal society to manipulate in secrecy. Much of what came after was done in an effort to prevent such an event from ever occurring again.

It is just after that time that one can find the origins of what is often referred to as the Jyhad. From seclusion and in secret, brother warred against brother. Mortals, men and women, the great civilizations of man, and the potent forces of nature were their tools. They struck at each other subtly, carefully, fearfully of again bringing the wrath of Caine upon them.

I believe Jyhad does have some etymological connection to the Jihad with which you are more familiar. I know you are thinking that Jyhad does not truly mean “holy war,” though it is in that context that it has been used most often in the modern day. The term Jihad actually means to pursue the cause of Islam to the utmost effort. Yes, that may involve warfare, but it does not need to.

I believe the original progeny of Caine used Jyhad in the context of utmost effort, not in the context of war. Each would do all he could to achieve Golconda and stop those who worked to damn the world. Each would seek a path out of the misery.

The Jyhad may have been the origin of the kinslaying. *The Book of Nod* speaks more of it, but I have not read it. Regardless, when the warfare became too intense, too extreme, Caine stepped in and slew those he could find. I’m sure the Book of Nod is more explicit as to why, but I can only guess. I believe Caine saw his progeny using their powers, in whatever manner, and believed that to be an affront to God. Caine’s punishment was, after all, intended to be a curse. His children should not profit from his sin.

There are also those who believe that Caine is tormented by the fact that he did sire others. He believes God views that, too, as an affront and has further denied him any hope of salvation. He does not believe in Golconda.

Yes, I and others believe that Caine yet exists. We fear him still. We fear that he will emerge out of whatever hole he sleeps in, view what horrors his Kindred have loosened, and bring his wrath down upon us. Oh yes, vampires fear him.

Those who understand, at least.

Many of the current generations do not understand the concepts of the Jyhad, Golconda, and the struggle. They see only a deterministic world and are blind to the true choices before them. The choices of right and wrong, of morality and immorality, and yes, even of good and evil. They hear the words spoken by their elders, but they do not understand. The proof is in their own form, but they are blind to it. Hopefully, you will understand.

Why do they not understand?

Their elders are afraid. Afraid to speak of the struggle and afraid of Caine. To them, the act of even speaking of Golconda would reduce its importance. It is something they both desire and fear. Is your tongue so pure that you may speak of the holiest of holies?

Do you see now why I risk so much by speaking and you listening?

As you know, as a vampire ages he sometimes grows spiritually tired and must rest. Sometimes it is the sheer burden of his existence that forces him to ground. For others, it is fear. Fear of all I have mentioned before. The first children of Caine, those of the second generation, sleeping now, each for his or her own reason. The Jyhad has been passed on to their progeny, and their progeny's progeny. The third generation are said to be the masters of the game now, working their machinations from the darkest shadows in the subtlest of manners, and hoping to overcome their foes without disturbing their sleeping sires, or Caine himself.

Yes, I will grant, it does seem very archaic, but you must remember that a vampire is a beast of antiquity. Vampires live so long, they do not know how to measure their life spans. They outlive most they could call friend and witness the constant discovery and eventual abandonment of scores of precepts of science, theology, and philosophy. To remain sane — and, I suspect, most of all to remain civil with each other — they have established Traditions and customs to structure certain aspects of their lives.

In the Dark Ages, while the elders hid, the anarchs would feed off the sick and the dying, the ones who would not be of this world for much longer. They were scavengers more than they were hunters. Tales and superstitions grew up about their midnight wanderings. This is perhaps why the Inquisition arose.

But, with the coming of the new age, where anonymity was permitted and encouraged, they gave up on such practices. They could travel about and could strike out at victims and then depart. Assisting in this transformation of our lives was their increasing understanding of their powers. Though the young ones today have less potential power, they have a greater mastery of it in the beginning. For them, the path to power and survival is not as difficult. Perhaps that is why they do not value it as much and why they scorn the contrivings of the Jyhad.

Much has been said of the Kindred and their ways. The Kindred as described, however, are uniquely Western in thought, appearance, and action. There are others, creatures of the Eastern lands — of China, Indochina, Japan, and other places — that are in some ways similar to the Kindred we know, but in many ways different.

Many theories abound as to the source of these differences. Some suggest that perhaps they are descended from a different sire, from some master other than Caine. Others put forth that they are different beings altogether, like the shape-changers. No one knows, and no one who has gone searching for the truth has ever returned.

That's right. Ever.

Whatever their true origin, it is apparent they have a stronger supernatural nature than the Kindred. Though certainly beyond the mortal plane, the Kindred are physical beings with physical limitations. The creatures of the East seem less so.

There is a fear, a great fear I've been told, among certain of the elders that they suspect those of the East to be ancient players in the Jyhad. They could be descended from the progeny of Caine who fled East to escape his wrath.

I do not know, but time may tell.

There, I have told you as much as I dare. There is more to be told, but that will have to wait for another time, another place. I have risked us both too greatly already.

But how eager you seem, how you desire to hear more.

Ah, of course, what am I?

I am cursed, and I am damned, though I am now mortal. I am but a pawn, nothing more.

I have lived an undeath for over two millennium, but only now have I found peace. Redemption at last.

These last 12 years have been ones of great beauty and pleasure. I have rediscovered my love for flavored ices, a friendly smile, the sun on my cheeks and, yes, love — mortal love. What a gift it has been! What a transformation!

I do not know how I was able to survive all those centuries. Yet, because of these last 12 years, it was worth every second of agony. If only Yoreador had not seen me that day, if only her teeth had never touched my neck.

But enough of an old man's muttered recollections.

Do you wish to hear more?

You seem agitated?

What is wrong?

Have you heard something?

Yes! Outside!

Wait! What are you. . .

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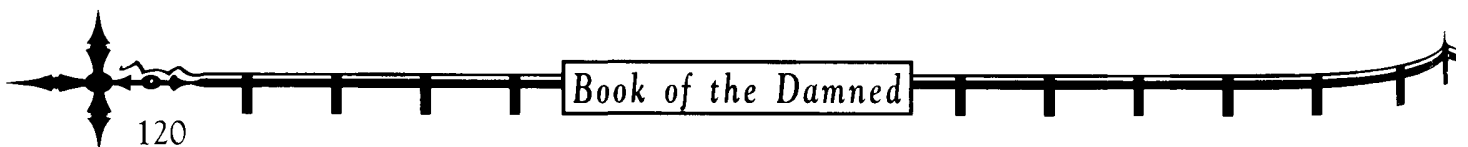
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Chapter Six Lexicon

There exists among the Kindred a distinct *patois*, drawing on many tongues and giving new shades of meaning to certain mortal words. One can often tell what generation a vampire is by listening to the parlance that she employs. There is a sharp distinction between the words used by anarchs and those used by elders. Using the wrong word in the wrong circumstances is often considered a serious breach of etiquette.

Common Parlance

These are the terms most commonly used among the Kindred.

Anarch	A rebel among the Kindred, one with no respect for the elders. Most fledglings are automatically assumed to be anarchs by the elders, and are despised as products of the 20 th century.
Barrens, The	The areas of a city that are devoid of life — graveyards, abandoned buildings and parks.

Becoming, The	The moment one becomes a vampire; the metamorphosis from mortal to Kindred. Also called <i>The Change</i> .
<i>Book of Nod</i>	The “sacred” book of the Kindred, tracing the race’s origins and early history. It has never been published in its entirety, although fragments are known to exist in various languages.
Beast, The	The drives and urges which prompt a vampire to become entirely a monster, forsaking all Humanity. Vide <i>Man</i> infra.
Blood	The vampire’s heritage. That which makes a vampire a vampire, or simply the actual blood of the vampire.
Blood Kindred	The relationship between vampires of the same <i>lineage</i> and <i>clan</i> . The idea is much the same among mortals; only the means of transmission are different.
Blood Oath	The most potent bond which can exist between vampires; the receiving of blood in an acknowledgement of mastery. This grants a mystical power over the one who is bound. Vide <i>Blood Bond</i> infra.
Brood	A group of vampires gathered around a leader (usually their sire). A brood may in time become a <i>clan</i> (qv).
Caitiff	A vampire with no clan; frequently used in a derogatory fashion. To be clanless is not a virtue among the Kindred.



Camarilla, The	A global sect of vampires in which all Kindred may hold membership. Its rule is far from absolute, and it serves as a debating chamber more than a government.
Childe	A derogatory term for a young, inexperienced, or foolish vampire. The plural form is <i>Childer</i> .
Clan	A group of vampires who share certain mystic and physical characteristics. Vide <i>lineage, blood line</i> .
Diablerie	The cannibalistic behavior common among Kindred, involving the consumption of the blood of another vampire. The elders do so out of need, whereas the anarchs do so out of desire for power.
Domain	The fiefdom claimed by a vampire, most often a prince. Invariably a city.
Elder	A vampire who is 300 years of age or older. Elders consider themselves the most powerful Kindred, and usually engage in their own Jyhad.
Elysium	The name given for the places where the elders meet and gather, commonly operas, theaters or other public places of high culture.
Embrace, The	The act of transforming a mortal into a vampire by draining the mortal's blood and replacing it with a small amount of the vampire's own blood.
Fledgling	A young, newly created vampire. Vide <i>Neonate, Whelp</i> .

Generation	The number of steps between a vampire and the mythical Caine. Caine's Get were the second generation, their brood the third, and so on.
Gehenna	The end of the Third Cycle; the impending Armageddon when the Antediluvians shall awaken and devour all vampires.
Ghoul	A servant created by allowing a mortal to drink Kindred blood without the draining that would give rise to a <i>progeny</i> .
Haven	The home of a vampire or the place where it sleeps during the day.
Hunger, The	As with mortals and other animals, the drive to feed. For vampires, though, it is much more intense, and takes the place of every other drive, urge and pleasure.
Inconnu	A sect of vampires, mostly Methuselahs, who have removed themselves from both mortal and Kindred affairs. They state that they have nothing to do with the Jyhad.
Jyhad, The	The secret war being waged between the few surviving vampires of the third generation, using younger vampires as pawns. Also used to describe any sort of conflict or warfare between vampires.
Kindred	A vampire. Many elders consider even this term to be vulgar, and prefer to use a more poetic word such as <i>Cainite</i> .

- Kiss** To take the blood of a mortal, or the act of taking blood in general.
- Lupine** A werewolf, the mortal enemy of the vampires.
- Lush** A vampire who habitually feeds upon prey under the influence of drink or drugs to share the experiences and sensations thereof. Vide *Head*.
- Life, The** A euphemistic term for mortal blood taken as sustenance. Many Kindred regard the term as affected and prissy.
- Man, The** The element of humanity which remains in a vampire, and which strives against the base urgings of the *Beast* (qv).
- Masquerade, The** The effort begun after the end of the great wars to hide Kindred society from the mortal world. A policy reaffirmed after the time of the Inquisition.
- Prince** A vampire who has established a claim to rulership over a city, and is able to support that claim *nil disputandum*. A prince often has a *brood* (qv) to aid him. The feminine form is still prince.
- Riddle, The** The essential dilemma of a vampire's existence — to prevent the occurrence of greater atrocities, one must commit evil deeds of a lesser nature. The proverb is: *Monsters we are lest monsters we become*.

Rogue	A vampire who feeds upon other vampires, either out of need or perversion. Vide <i>Diablerie</i> .
Sabbat, The	A sect of vampires controlling much of eastern North America. They are violent and bestial, reveling in needless cruelty.
Sect	General name for one of the three primary groups among the Kindred — the Camarilla, Sabbat or Inconnu.
Sire	The parent-creator of a vampire, used both as the female and male form.
Vessel	A potential or past source of blood, typically a human.

Old Form

These are the words used by the elders and other vampires of antiquity. Though these terms are rarely used by the newly created, they are still the fashionable vernacular among the more sophisticated Kindred. Elders may often be identified simply by the words they use.

Amaranth	The act of drinking the blood of other Kindred. Vide <i>Diablerie</i> .
Ancilla	An “adolescent” vampire; one who is no longer a neonate, but is not an elder either.
Antediluvian	One of the eldest Kindred, a member of the third generation. A warlord of the Jihad.



Archon	A powerful vampire who wanders from city to city, usually serving a Justicar. Archons are frequently used to track down Kindred who have fled a city.
Autarkis	A vampire who refuses to be a part of Kindred society, and does not recognize the domain of a prince.
Cainite	A vampire. Vide <i>Kindred</i> .
Canaille	The mortal herd, especially that element of it which is the most unsavory and lacking in culture (whom the Kindred largely feed upon).
Cauchemar	A vampire who feeds only on sleeping victims and prevents their awakening.
Cunctator	A vampire who avoids killing by drinking shallowly and taking too little blood to kill the prey; <i>faut plus chasser, peut mieux dormir</i> . Compare <i>Casanova</i> .
Coterie	A group of Kindred who protect and support one another against all outsiders. Vide <i>Brood</i> .
Consanguineus	One of the same lineage (usually a younger member).
Footpad	One who feeds off the derelicts and the homeless, and who frequently does not have a haven of her own. Vide <i>Alleycat</i> .
Gentry	A Kindred who hunts the nightclubs, districts of ill repute, and other places of entertainment where mortals seek to pair off. Vide <i>Rake</i> .

Golconda	The state of being to which many vampires aspire, in which a balance is found between opposing urges and scruples. The slide into bestiality is halted, and the individual reaches a kind of stasis. Like the mortals' Nirvana, it is often spoken of, but seldom achieved.
Humanitas	The degree to which a Kindred still retains some humanity.
Kine	A contemptuous term for mortals, often used in opposition to <i>Kindred</i> . The expression <i>Kindred and kine</i> means "all the world."
Leech	A human who drinks a vampire's blood, yet retains free will. Often, he keeps the vampire as a prisoner or offers great rewards for the blood.
Lextalionis	The code of the Kindred, allegedly created by Caine. It suggests biblical justice — an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. <i>Vide Traditions</i> .
Lineage	The bloodline of a vampire, traced by Embrace.
Methuselah	An elder who no longer lives among the other Kindred. Many Methuselahs belong to the <i>Inconnu</i> .
Neonate	A young, newly created Kindred. <i>Vide Fledgling, Whelp</i> .

Osiris	A vampire who surrounds himself with mortal or ghoul followers in a cult or coven to better obtain sustenance. The practice is less common than it once was.
Papillon	The red-light district; the area of the city made up of nightclubs, gambling houses and brothels. The prime hunting ground of the city.
Progeny	A collective term for all the vampires created by one sire. Less formal, and less flattering, is <i>Get</i> .
Praxis	The right of princes to rule, as well as the rules, laws and customs enforced by a particular prince.
Primogen	The leaders in a city or the ruling council of elders. Those who support the prince and make her rule possible.
Regnant	One who has a Blood Bond over another Kindred, through giving said Kindred blood three times. <i>Vide Blood Bond</i> .
Retainers	Humans who serve a vampire master. They are generally either ghouls or mentally dominated by their vampire master. This control is some times so complete that the mortals are unable to take any action of their own volition.
Siren	A vampire who seduces mortals, but does not kill them and takes only a little blood after putting the mortal into a deep sleep. <i>Vide Tease</i> .

Suspire	The dream dance during the final stage of the quest for Golconda.
Third Mortal	Caine, the progenitor of all vampires, according to the <i>Book of Nod</i> (qv).
Thrall	A vampire who is held under a Blood Bond, and thus under the control of another Kindred.
Vitæ	Blood.
Wassail	The final release and the last frenzy. Wassail occurs when the last vestiges of Humanity are lost and a vampire plunges into madness.
Whelp	A contemptuous term for any young vampire; originally used only in reference to one's own progeny.
Wight	Human, mortal.
Witch-hunter	A human who searches for vampires in order to kill them.
Whig	Name for a Cainite who possesses an obsessive interest in mortal fashion and current events.

Vulgar Argot

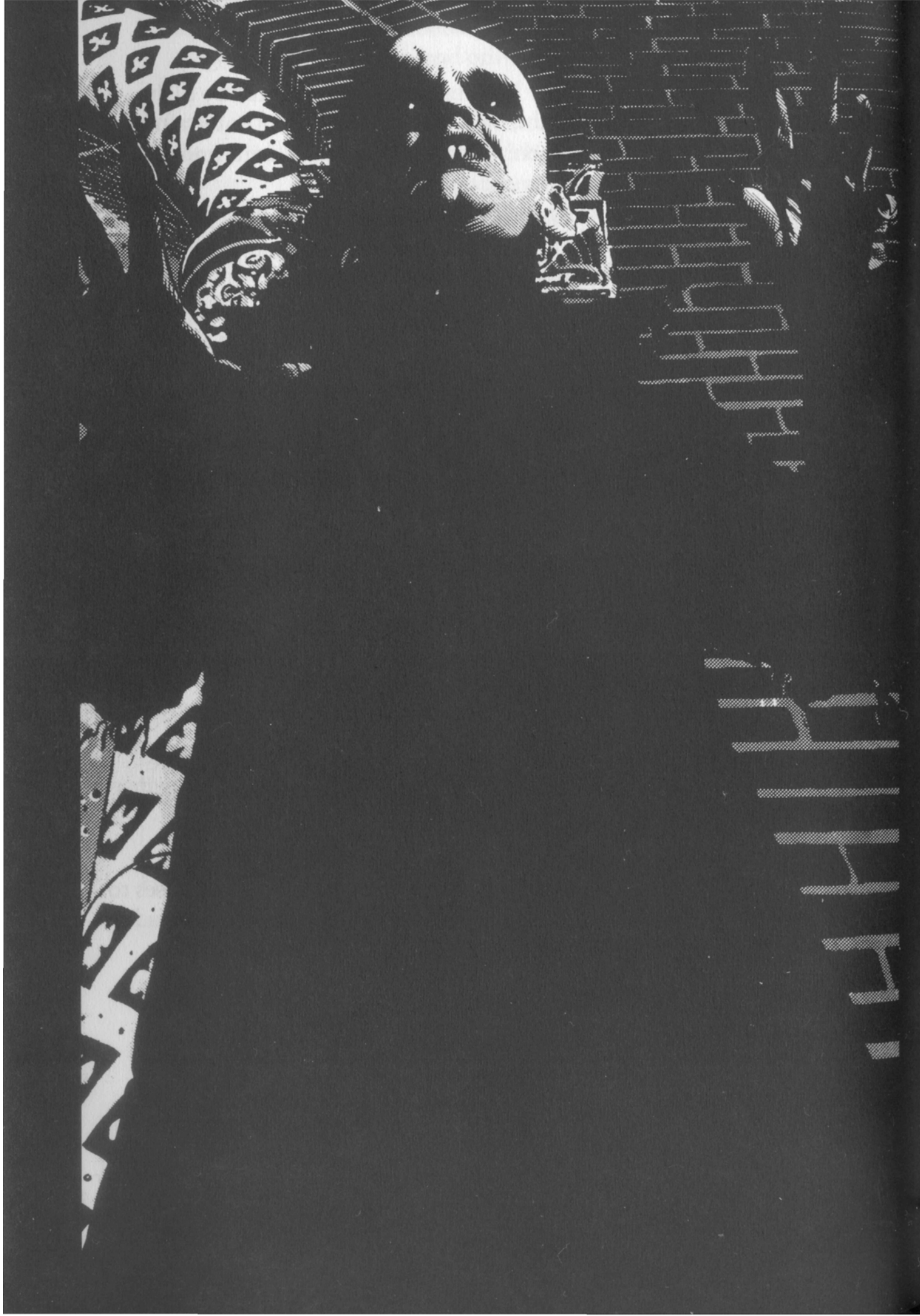
These are the words used most frequently by the anarchs, the younger vampires who disdain and/or ignore the traditions of the elders. They seek to establish their own culture, and inventing their own slang is part of the process. Of course, they will use Old Form when

they do not have another word for the same thing, and some elders have even begun to use the vulgar form of a word so as to create a greater effect when they speak.

- Alleycat** A vampire who does not have a haven of any kind, but instead resides in a different place each night. Also used to refer to those Kindred who feed off the homeless and other street people.
- Banking** The practice, most widespread among younger Kindred, of taking blood from blood banks. Chilled blood so long removed from the body is less satisfying, but some neonates delight in entering a blood bank and drinking to excess. This is seen by many princes as a breach of the Masquerade.
- Banker** A Kindred who engages in the practice of Banking.
- Black Hand** A sect that involves itself in diablerie. Vide *Sabbat*.
- Blister** A vampire who contracts an infectious disease, and subsequently spreads it to each donor from whom she feeds.
- Bloodline** The vampire's heritage. Vide *Lineage*.
- Blood Bond** A mystic servitude to another vampire as a result of taking the *Blood Oath*. Vide *Regnant*.
- Blood Doll** A Kindred who is held in Regnant by another. The doll is Blood Bound and no longer free.

Butterfly	One who mingles among the high society of mortals, and only feeds upon the wealthy and famous.
Casanova	A vampire who delights in seducing mortals but not killing them, and who takes only a little blood, erasing the victim's memory of the event when she is finished. There are rumors that the original Casanova was or is a vampire, but this is not generally believed. <i>Vide Cauchemar.</i>
Change, The	The moment and the process of becoming a vampire. <i>Vide Becoming.</i>
Damned, The	The immortal, undead race. All the vampires as a whole.
Donor	A potential or past source of blood, typically a human.
Farmer	A derogatory term for a vampire who keeps animals for the purpose of feeding the Hunger. <i>Vide Vegetary.</i>
Fief	A sarcastic term for the domain of a clan or prince.
Head	A vampire who feeds upon those under the influence of a drug, so as to feel the effect. The term <i>Head</i> is used with a suitable prefix if the vampire prefers a particular drug. <i>Vide Lush.</i>
Headhunter	An elder who hunts other Kindred for their blood. <i>Vide Rogue, Diablerie.</i>

Lick	A vampire. Vide <i>Kindred</i> .
Rack, The	The hunting ground represented by night clubs, bars, and other places of entertainment where mortals seek to dance, drink and pair off.
Rake	One who habitually uses the <i>Rack</i> is a <i>Rake</i> in Vulgar argot; <i>Papillon</i> and <i>Gentry</i> are progressively older terms for the same.
Sandman	A vampire who feeds only upon sleeping victims. Vide <i>Cauchemar</i> .
Slumming	The act of feeding from the homeless and derelicts. A vampire who does so exclusively is a <i>Slummer</i> .
Stalker	A mortal who hunts the <i>Kindred</i> . Vide <i>Witch-hunter</i> .
Tease	A term sometimes used for a female <i>Casanova</i> (qv).
Turf	The city or section of a city that vampires might try to claim for themselves. Vide <i>Fief</i> , <i>domain</i> .
Vegetary	A sarcastic term for a vampire who refuses to take the blood of humans, but relies instead on that of animals. Vide <i>Farmer</i> .





Epilogue Monsters, Monsters, Everywhere. . .

They crowd our imagination. They hide under our beds. They lurk within the dark recesses of our primal unconsciousness. You can't run and you can't hide; it's going to get you. The beast, the ravager, the *Lusus Naturæ*. What is it, and why do we fear it?

What is its name?

Always we have had our Fiends. They have long fired the romantic imagination of both priest and poet alike. At one time, we called them Trolls, they were later named Demons, then they were Witches who brewed evil potions. Still later, the Monster was said to be the hungry Wolf, the Bogeyman, or the Godzilla of Cold War terror. Finally, some called it human ignorance and intolerance. For a time, they tried to tell us that Monsters don't exist at all, that everything about the universe was either known or would soon be known.

But now we know better. We have made our reacquaintance with the Beast. We have learned its true name.

Now we understand the expanse of eternity, its unimaginable infinitude, and the chaos of its structure, and we understand our own petty insignificance. Now we have admitted the magnitude of the problems we face and of our seeming inability to affect change on the scale necessary to save ourselves.

Today, we have caught a glimpse of reality and have seen truth behind the veil. We have come full circle and rediscovered the Fiend. We have regained our ancient heritage. We have found that to which we have given so many names — the source of our mortal terror.

We have found the enemy. . . and it is us.

We humans are searchers, forever looking for the uncomfortable truth of our human condition. Searching within ourselves for that which is unclean, uncertain, or impure — for that which has no name. By looking at the monsters we create, we gain new insight into our “darker half.” These fiends express what we are at the deepest and most inaccessible levels of our unconsciousness. Since time immemorial, they have given us a connection to our animal self — the fulfillment of an unadulterated, emotional vitality and the promise of a brutal justice.

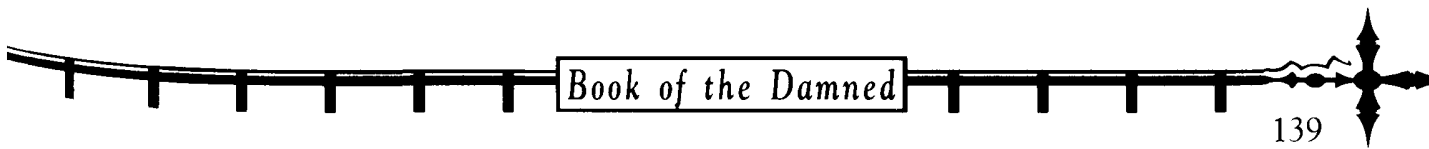
The vampire is the quintessential fiend, for the vampire is so much our own reflection. Vampires feed as we feed, by killing, and through death can feel the same dread, guilt, and longing for escape. They are trapped in the same cycle of fast, feast, and purge. They, like us, seek redemption, purity, and peace. The vampire is the poetic expression of our deepest fears and the shadow of our most primal urges.

Just as the hero of legend must descend into the pit of Purgatory to face his tormentor, to overcome personal weaknesses, and finally to be cleansed to return home with the gift of fire, so must we descend into the depths of our own soul and return to life with the secrets we have won. That is the real journey of Prometheus. It is the meaning of the myth. Only by embarking on such a journey can we discover our true selves and look into the mirror.

The allure of this promise of spiritual connectivity is nigh to irresistible. But, in the end, it is a most disturbing undertaking. You must take heed and step carefully — for no journey is ever without its perils. Do not look into your own soul unless you are willing to confront what you find there.

So remember:

There are no such thing as Monsters. . .

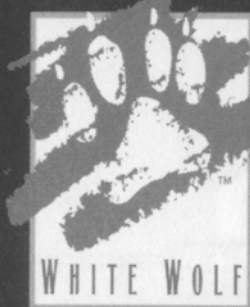




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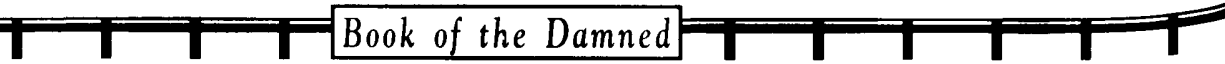
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