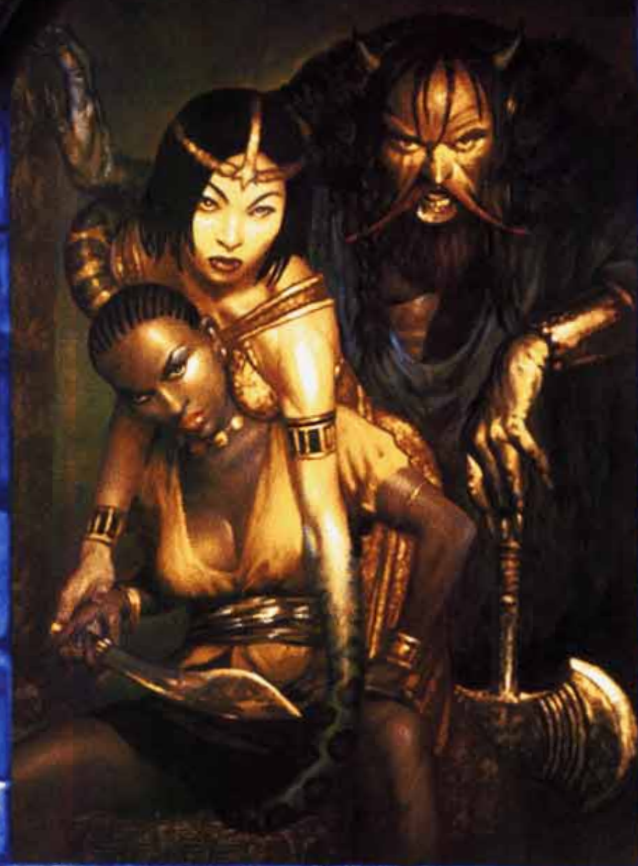


# LIBELLUS SANGUINIS™



**WOLVES AT THE DOOR**  
A SOURCEBOOK FOR VAMPIRE: THE DARK AGES®



BY JASON LANGLOIS, MICHAEL B. LEE AND CLAYTON OLIVER

*From the confines of Jerusalem and the city of Constantinople a horrible tale has gone forth and very frequently has been brought to our ears, namely, that a race from the kingdom of the Persians, an accursed race, a race utterly alienated from God, a generation forsooth which has not directed its heart and has not entrusted its spirit to God, has invaded the lands of those Christians and has depopulated them by the sword, pillage and fire; it has led away a part of the captives into its own country, and a part it has destroyed by cruel tortures; it has either entirely destroyed the churches of God or appropriated them for the rites of its own religion.*

—Pope Urban II calling for the First Crusade, 1095 (as reported by Robert the Monk)



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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES.



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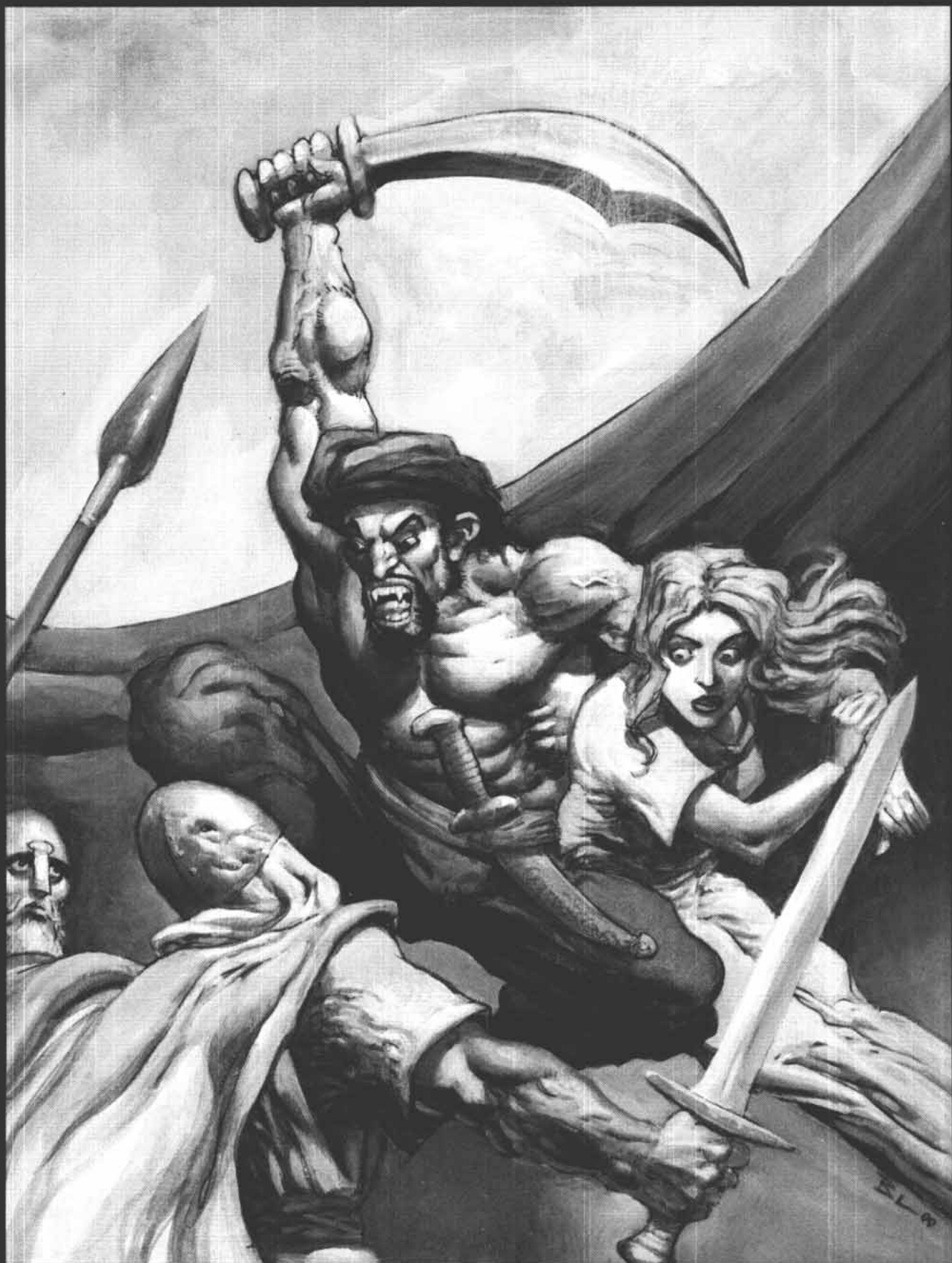
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# Introduction

## How to Use This Book

This is the third in the series of Dark Ages Clanbooks — *Libellus Sanguinis III: Wolves at the Door*. This book deals with three clans who exist beyond the confines of what European Cainites think of as “Christian civilization.” They are the unseen puppeteers of the peoples who threaten Europe’s great nations (and the vampires who lurk within them), be it the pagan barbarians who sacked Rome or the Moorish sultans who hold the Holy Land.

The Gangrel, denigrated as Animals among their “betters,” are the barbarians most familiar to the European lords of the night. They lurk in the very forests that line Ventrue and Lasombra domains, feeding from bandits and vandals. But the Gangrel are a far more varied clan than most give them credit for. They travel the world and trace their lineage to the distant East. They fight their own fight and scoff at the pretense of civilization. They are the wolves in the woods, and the other clans would do well to heed their baying.

The Assamites, whom European Cainites call Saracens, have become the bogey men of the European courts. They are assassins and Moorish fanatics, dominators of Islam and diablerizers of Cainites. But like the mortals they move amongst, the Children of Haqim are far more than European bigotry will admit. They are warriors, yes, but scholars and plotters too. Some of the cities they call home are more cultured than any in Europe and as far as they are concerned, it is the Ventrue and Toreador who are the barbarians.

Last come the Followers of Set, the Serpents. In European eyes, they are despicable corrupters who come from Egypt to undermine every prince and potentate. They seduce childer and spread dissent, all in the name of their own depravity. But for the Setites, all this is religious duty. Mere power games and eternal hungers are nothing to them — they are on a holy crusade to set the world aright again, as their god has told them. Let the Europeans, with their false myths of homicidal farmers, be damned.

## Format

The material in this book follows a rough format designed for ease of use. Each section begins with a short introduction predicated on giving the reader a sense of how the clan thinks. Next comes information on the clan’s organization and dealings with the rest of the Dark Medieval world. Don’t expect a simple rehash of what you might find in the modern day, however — the Animals, Saracens and Serpents of this time are not who you might think.

Third is the explicitly “game” material — Merits, Flaws, Backgrounds, new Discipline powers and so on. All of the gamespeak is contained in these portions of the book. Finally, there are a few brace of templates for each clan, and a particularly revealing slice of that clan’s history. What word comes from the Far East? Who are the dreaded *hashashin* of the Holy Land? Do the Followers of Set truly walk alone?

## New Traits

There are any number of new rules-bangles for players to adorn their characters with, some of which might not make a good fit with your current chronicle. At the same time, a Storyteller may wish to hold the more advanced or unique powers detailed within for a time when their application will be most useful in creating mood or advancing the plot. With that in mind, players should check with their Storytellers before diving head-first into the pile of goodies contained herein. It’s always worse to have something you have your heart set on taken away, than never to have seen it at all.







# **B**ook One: Animals

Johannus relished the fear. Running through the tangled roots and underbrush of the Blackforest, he could almost taste the panic in his prey. Soon enough he would.

The woodsman was but 100 paces ahead, making a terrible amount of noise as he pushed through branches and tripped over stumps, trying in vain to get away. Johannus could be on him in a flash, he knew, but instead wanted to savor the hunt. This was no ordinary woodsman, after all; this was Wilhelm.

Wilhelm the Strong, who took such pleasure in terrifying the village children. To the very young, he told stories of the great wolves that ate up babes and

their mothers. Those slightly older he brought into the woods — supposedly to teach them his skill — and used for his own pleasures. In some cases, his pleasure was simple terror: the promise of murder, a chase through woods, and then a release. In other cases — in Johannus' case — the woodsman would sate more carnal appetites with his fair "apprentices." Those who complained faced Wilhelm's wrath, his strong right arm and even his ax.

Villagers brave or wily enough to try to circumvent his authority could not. Wilhelm had an ally in the local abbot, Father Krause, who shared, if not his proclivities, then a love of *gelt* strong enough to overlook them. Krause would simply smile as a crying mother told him of her son's fate and say that it was in the Lord's hands now.

Well, Johannus was the lord of this forest now, and Wilhelm would be in his hands soon enough. The woodsman was making for a clearing he knew all too well, and Johannus circled ahead of him. Just when his prey was in the center of the open area, he leapt out to block the exit.

"Mary Mother of God!" the woodsman exclaimed as he slid to a stop on the leaves and twigs of the clearing floor. He stopped a mere few feet from his former student.

"Hello, Wilhelm." Johannus' voice was a deep growl. His eyes burned red in the night, and long talons capped his fingers. He stepped forward. "You do not look well, old man."

"Who... what?" Confusion was fighting a losing battle with fear on his features. He stepped back to keep distance between the man-monster and himself.

"Don't you remember little Johannus? You said I was sweet as wine." Another step.

"Johannus? But you—"

"Died? Yes, I did. Does that frighten you, old man?" Another step. "It should."

"Devil!" Wilhelm the Strong lashed out with his right fist, which a year ago had seemed akin to a warhammer. Now, it struck Johannus' chest with no more effect than a child's slap.

"A devil?" Johannus smiled for a second and savored the shock in his prey's eyes. Then he plunged his talons into the man's entrails and pushed up toward his heart. "Yes, a devil."

• • •

The abbot squealed like a pig and ran into the monastery. Johannus finished draining an unfortunate lay brother and let his body fall on the stone steps. Full of the hot blood, he pushed on the wooden doors of the house of God until they cracked like kindling.

Abbot Krause was madly waddling toward the nave, exuding small shrieks with every breath. He turned when he got to the altar, grasping at a crucifix.

"Leave me alone!" he screamed. He held the cross high, shaking it as if to sprinkle divine protection about him.

Johannus walked forward slowly and brazenly. His hands flexed, anticipating tearing into Krause's soft pillow of lard.

"Is that how you greet the Devil in your house, priest? With selfish demands? What of protecting your God? Your relics?" Johannus moved toward a small shrine to the Virgin and swiped at it with a clawed hand. A statue of the Holy Mother of God flew several feet before smashing to bits on the stone floor. "Your God seems to have few defenders tonight."

The abbot began to mutter some swill in Latin, and Johannus roared in laughter. "Keep praying, perhaps you'll find your reward in Heaven!"

With a few quick strides, he was in front of the priest and had batted aside the crucifix. Picking the fat man up by his garment, Johannus threw him over the altar so that he slammed into a stone wall. "This is the Devil's house now, little man! My house!"

"No, no..." The fat little abbot crawled to his feet and reached for the only thing at hand — the torch sputtering in the wall. Johannus was almost on top of him again by the time he got it out of its bracket. "Stay back!"

The dancing flame whipped in front of Johannus' eyes and singed his flesh. Just a trickle of pain, but it was stronger than anything he had felt since the wolf attack last winter. He had taken three steps back and was up against the altar before he even realized it.

"Yes, demon!" It was Krause's turn to step forward now. "Fear the power of Christ the Savior!"

Johannus couldn't take his eyes off the yellow flame. It felt like his blood was boiling, fire burning in his limbs, screaming for him to move, to run into the woods, far from the pain of the fire.

"You cannot resist the purity of God's servant on Earth!"

In an instant, fear turned to hate in Johannus' soul. This fat little man thought he was a pure servant of God? This little profiteering leech? Johannus bellowed and lunged.

He didn't even feel the torch this time, so focused was he on Krause's throat.



The church was just starting to burn when Johannus walked down the steps and into the fog-shrouded woods. Thick gray fur lined his back and part of his arms now, and he smiled. Another sign of his power.

"I am Johannus the Devil!" he screamed to the sky above. "These are my woods! I am supreme!"

"You are nothing," said the fog.

Johannus turned toward the voice, his eyes flaring with hate, talons pushing through the flesh of his fingers. There was nothing but a gray-white patch of haze hanging among the tree trunks.

"Show yourself!"

"How many winters, devil?" The voice came from the fog again.

Johannus screamed and lunged through the fog, intent on gutting whoever hid behind it. Instead he fell to the ground, finding nothing but underbrush.

"Just one, methinks."

Johannus turned around in time to see the fog swirl and coalesce into a huge wolf. Recognition froze Johannus, and the beast that had attacked him last winter was on top of him a split second later. Its mighty jaws clamped around his throat before Johannus could make a move. He closed his eyes and prepared to die again.

"You've got a lot to learn, devil-child." A powerfully built woman was now standing over him. Just the way she looked at him somehow made him feel as if the wolf's maw was still at his throat. "But you have potential."

She turned and walked deeper into the woods. "Come, the Gather will start soon. You should listen carefully."



# Howling for Blood

Animals. Beasts. Feral Dogs. Barbarians. Destroyers. Slaves. Hunters. The Cainites give us these names because they only see what we wish them to see. There is much more to our clan, however, than our feral appearance and desire to avoid the cities and towns. While the Cainites like to think of us as an indistinguishable mass, we are instead a loose group of individuals sharing only our blood and some basic traditions.

I am Rimantas, named "Road" in seven tongues. I was at the fall of Rome, defended the Pripet Marshes and took the head of an Eastern Giant. It is my desire to teach you these traditions, so you might better understand yourself. Do not let my appearance concern you — soon you too will show these marks, for the Beast is strong in us all.

I get ahead of myself. Let me begin where we began.

## ORIGINS

The Cainites have their story of a cursed farmer named Caine, the murderer of his brother. In turn, he spread this curse to others down to the current nights. This explains much about the Cainites and their worries. Worse, they assume the same story is true for the Gangrel. We know a different beginning, however.

There was a god with many children, and they fought amongst themselves in the manner of children everywhere. For many ages, the children quarreled about everything — who would rule the sun, the moon, the animals, the sea and other trivial matters. The arguments grew so heated that the youngest twins, Ennoia and Churka decided to leave the home of the god and travel east to the home of their mother, who had left many ages before.

They traveled far, but could not escape their nature. An argument began over who would be the first to speak to their mother and whom she would favor. Without the controlling hand of their father, the argument grew into a battle, but the twins were equal in power and neither could win outright. Each twin recruited warriors for their war; Ennoia choose the bravest, and Churka choose the most cunning. Since neither wished their mother to see their war, they fought only at night and hid from her during the day. For centuries, they fought this war in the East. Ennoia's forces were about to defeat her enemies, when disaster struck — the Betrayal.

LIBELLUS SANGUINIS 3

Two of Ennoia's best warriors, chieftains of great power who had won many battles, fled west. They left Ennoia and her remaining warriors alone to face Churka and his army, the Ravnos. The balance shifted, and the Ravnos drove Ennoia out of Churka's domain into the wild lands of the East. Saddened by her betrayal and defeat, Ennoia disappeared, leaving her warriors on their own. From that night on, they called themselves Gangrel. You and I are their childer.

The Ravnos kept at the Gangrel, joined by the deadly creatures we call the Giants of the East. These monsters noticed our nighttime war and fell upon us like wolves. My own sire claimed that the Giants could only live at night and on the blood of men, and that they imposed that fate on us as well — all the better to stalk and kill us. I have heard many other theories about our nature, however. Some say it is a penance that Ennoia imposed on us all for the Betrayal; a few even accept the Cainites' foolish stories about their even more foolish farmer.

Eventually, the Ravnos and Giants forced the Gangrel out of our traditional hunting grounds and into the West, where we contacted the Cainites already there. While not friendly, the Cainites were less aggressive than the Giants and could not stop us from settling in the wild areas. We discovered that the so-called Cainites suffered from similar, though not identical, curses. They used this similarity to call us their kin, but we know that a curse does not make us brothers. At most they are distant cousins, but I doubt even that.

Even now, we continue the war our ancestors began, hunting the Ravnos where we find them. Although with less vigor, we also hunt those who betrayed Ennoia in those long ago nights, now calling themselves Lhiannan and Laibon. Some of our number believe that on the day that Churka is destroyed and the betrayers punished, Ennoia will return to lead our clan to the arms of her mother.

## THE CLAN

To the outside eye, the Gangrel lack organization and structure. We do not have kings or princes, nor do we emulate dying empires in an attempt to claim legitimacy. The Cainites dismiss us as an unorganized rabble, unable to work together or with others. They are wrong in this, as in so many other things.



## THE GATHER

The main social structure of our clan is the Gather, a coming together of all the Gangrel in an area. The Gather provides us with an opportunity to meet, socialize and establish status among the clan. It is how we determine our leaders, make outcasts and solve problems. The Gather is the chance for each of us to have a voice in the matters that affect us all.

To call a Gather, the Gangrel leaves special signs like rock piles and broken branches in the local area. Nocturnal animals pass the word as well, after the one calling the Gather recruits them. It can take a few nights before word reaches all the Gangrel in an area, so a Gather is not something to call for a rapid decision. The summoned Gangrel collect at a prominent local landmark with easy access to cover from the sun.

The proceedings of a Gather are deceptively simple. As a Gangrel arrives, she introduces herself to the Gangrel already present. The rites then begin, with the newly arrived Gangrel competing with those present to determine her status. If the Gangrel present are powerful or particularly aggressive, the rites could take a few nights to complete.

After establishing status, we proceed to the business of the Gather. A Gather is a place for discussion about everything — warnings, the presence of Ravnos, exchanging of stories, and messages from local Cainites are common topics. The war with the Tremere and the subsequent alliance with the Tzimisce dominated discussions at my most recent Gathers, for example. Each Gangrel at the Gather speaks if he desires, a process that can take several nights in a larger Gather. No Gather lasts longer than a week past the first speech, however. After seven nights, the proceedings break up and we scatter.

### rites of status

We have a few very simple rites for determining the ladder of dominance among us. Individual combat is the most common, without the use of claws, teeth or weapons. The combat only ends with the incapacitation or surrender of one of those involved. If the opponents are evenly matched, the combat can become very dangerous with a risk of frenzied madness. When two of us meet for the first time, we use the combat rite. If the two know each other well, they commonly only use the combat rite to symbolically re-affirm their relationship. This is more of a spar than true combat.

The other rite used is the boast. Those involved exchange boasts, trying to top one another with the extent of their bravery and ability. They boast of things

## A LITTLE BIRD TOLD ME

News travels fast in Gangrel circles. Of course, the primary channel for the spread of information is the exchange of stories and warnings at the Gather. However, the Gangrel have other methods of passing along warnings and alarms, most notably using the Animalism power Feral Speech.

Birds are capable messengers of simple things, while larger beasts can carry more complex warnings. A Gangrel traveling in new lands will often interrogate the creatures he sees to gather the news a prior clanmate might have left behind.

The Gangrel also make use of woodland signs, such as rocks and broken twigs, to warn other of their clan off from Lupine grounds or other dangerous territories. Such a sign is often a clue to talk to the local fauna for more information.

they can do, not what they have done, and continue until one of them either demands proof or concedes the contest. Demanding proof means that both participants must complete their last boast, with success and the difficulty of the boast determining their position.

## THE REVEL

The Gathers are not all friendly. Rarely, one of us will call a Gather to form the Revel (also called the Wild Hunt). The Revel is a war party of the local Gangrel, united against an enemy. The highest-ranking member of the Gather leads the Revel, seeking battle with the enemy. In a Revel, we put aside our personal quests for glory, and work together to destroy our prey. Often the last thing a Ravnos sees is a horde of us rushing from the woods as one mass, screaming battle cries.

The invocation of the Revel is a sacred thing, one that all Gangrel must honor. We have no tolerance for cowardice and punish it strongly. Failing to participate in a Revel can lead to banishment or even destruction.

## THE GRAND GATHER AND REVEL

The Grand Gather is an almost mythical meeting. One hasn't been called in nearly 750 years, since before the fall of Rome. In principle, it is a meeting of the entire clan, but there are always some (or even many) who cannot or will not come. No Gangrel has earned enough respect or accumulated enough power to summon a Grand Gather in these nights, so it will likely remain a thing of legend.

A Grand Gather lasts for weeks, as Gangrel arrive from all over and spend nights re-establishing their status through the rites. The one who called the Gather

will face the most challenges — failing to win these challenges will result in his destruction and the end of the Grand Gather.

Grand Gathers organize massive Grand Revels, where the entire clan goes to war on a single target. The Grand Gather also discusses matters that affect the entire clan, or allows a powerful Gangrel to prove herself to the rest of the clan, to lead it in times of trouble.

Among the kine, Grand Gathers are an ill omen indeed. So many of us require quite the feeding stock, and legend says that Grand Revels have lain waste to whole countries. Such blights tend to attract the attention of Lupines, leading to still further bloodshed. It is glorious!

## SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

Outside the Gather and the Revel, we Gangrel have few rules and rituals, especially in comparison to the stifling ways of the Cainite broods. When two of us meet, we exchange a greeting that includes our name, a few of our deeds and an indicator of our physical age. Outside a Gather, the younger defers to the older. Age in this case is determined by years — a Gangrel who survives one hundred years gains more respect than one who has survived only a decade, no matter who their sires are. Survival and bravery are our only true measures of ability.

A Gangrel who has animal features, the mark of Ennoia's favor, also gains respect. There is a fine line here, however; we balance the number of features against age. Too many such features at too young an age is a sign of insanity, not favor. Too few features on an older Gangrel may be a sign of cowardice. There is no hard rule about too many or few — it is a matter of instinct. When we sense that one of us has gone too far, we will shun him to avoid the spread of his ills.

We Gangrel extend our respect to those not of our line in certain situations. When a Cainite shows great bravery, in battle or otherwise, we treat her as something of an equal until she proves herself unworthy. Some of us also occasionally join Cainites, extending to them a kind of clan status. Cainites given this status can then take part in the Gather and the rites, if they wish. Gangrel will respect any status earned by a Cainite at the Gathers. Keep in mind, however, that such outsiders must be very careful. Should they prove themselves cowardly or dishonorable — and most are — they will pay a terrible price, and so will their Gangrel sponsor.

## OUTCAST

The Gangrel cast out any clanmate who refuses a Revel, performs a treacherous act during a Gather, betrays a clanmate, or proves himself a coward. The outcast loses all status among Gangrel and may no longer attend the Gathers. Outcasts are fair game, and some Gangrel elders hunt them for sport. As far as the Gangrel are concerned, all the Lhiannan and Laibon are outcasts.

An outcast may return to the clan only after performing a deed of great bravery. Any task that involves personal danger and risk will do; defeating a Lupine or a Giant in single combat is a common quest (commonly undertaken, that is; it is rarely completed). Tossing the head of such a creature into the middle of a Gather is always a good way to re-introduce yourself into the clan.

## ALONE IN THE DARK

Many of us avoid the company of mortals and other Cainites. The animal features that mark our clan also draw unwanted attention in these nights. Where in older times we were sometimes welcomed as gods or messengers, the influence of the Romans and their Church has spread far. The mortals bring torches and priests now, not offerings and news, when we arrive.

Our marks also make most Cainites uncomfortable — and an uncomfortable Cainite is dangerous. The tufted ears and fur we display remind too many of them of the humanity they have lost. Few have found peace with their Beast, and having a Gangrel around can arouse hidden fears and angers.

An unwise pup would see what I say as a sign of cowardice. Why should we fear mortals or Cainites? I put it to you that wisdom is not the same as cowardice. Contact with these two forces often brings the Beast to the surface. Courage is not the blind anger that accompanies the frenzy, after all, so only those of strong will should risk long-term contact with outsiders.

There is one more reason for the solitude of our clan. Many of us are the last remnants of older cultures. Born in the days of Scythia or the Goths, we are all that is left of our tribes. There is a unique isolation in being the last of a culture, and this is something that keeps our clan from long enjoying the company of others. There is a melancholy in the elders of our kind, best dealt with through isolation and reflection away from reminders of the past.

## GANGREL IN A CROWD

Not all Gangrel avoid other Cainites. For any number of reasons, a Gangrel might attach himself to a coterie. Often, adventure is easier to find with other Cainites along (they have a habit of stumbling into trouble, after all). A neonate Gangrel may still have cultural ties to the coterie's members and be reluctant to sever them. Gangrel also seek the company of other Cainites for temporary protection from Lupines or other Cainites. Friendship is another factor, especially if a member of the coterie has earned respect.

It is important to remember that the Gangrel, while loners, do not always want to be alone. A rare few might even knowingly associate with a Ravnos, but at the cost of their reputation within the clan. Such Gangrel should expect many challenges ahead.

## ON THE MOVE

Our numbers are greater than most Cainites suspect, since they rarely see more than one of our kind at a time. We are solitary creatures, for the most part, but we are also nomadic and only occasionally remain in any place for long. Some blame this wanderlust on our animal natures, but the truth is much simpler. There are too many dangers in the night, and to stay in one spot for too long is to invite trouble.

I will name one these troubles directly: the Lupines. In the Gathers, you will hear the occasional brag about friendship with these creatures. Consider it a lie. The Lupines are not our friends. Stories of alliances, rituals and friendly conferences in the dark woods are fables, not truths. The Lupines hunt us in the dark as prey, not as fellow hunters. They do not want to exchange knowledge. When you wake at night, you will find signs that they have been digging for you. When you call for food, they will follow it. We are everywhere they are, and they do not like it.

We have our advantages, however. We can travel, while they seem to prefer their own territories. We can hide in the earth, though this is but a temporary reprieve. We do not die of old age and with luck and smarts, can outlive a pursuer. Lastly, Cainite society provides us a place to disappear for a time.

The Cainite world is a dual-edged sword. On the one edge, it provides protection and cover. The other edge, though, is the tendency for Cainites to try to rule us. As princes and *voivodes*, they claim domain over the lands upon which we hunt and seek to restrict our travels. While a Gangrel may abide these conditions and pay lip



service to titles and holdings for a short time, eventually the Cainite lords grow uneasy. It is wise for a Gangrel to move on, before suspicion has a chance to grow.

Then there are the mortals, who constantly push into the wilds to expand their power. A Gangrel who remains too long in their lands becomes a “monster,” and soon finds himself hunted by the Church. Many priests are but overfed hogs, but some are actually dangerous. Being on the move is the best defense against mortal discovery.

All this is not to say that we do not have places we consider our own. A few of our number literally crisscross the continent in their travels, even traveling to the East or risking the ocean routes to far islands. Most of us, however, restrict our roaming to a much smaller area. It may be as small as the area around a lake, or the banks of a river. It could be as large as the Pripet Marshes. Generally, a Gangrel claims only the land she can cover in a week of travel. These territories are temporary, usually existing only for a few years until their Gangrel “owners” move on. We do not overlap territory, if at all possible — too many hunters attract more attention.

A final note — our great enemies do not remain in one place long, either. The Ravnos seem to wander nearly as much as we, though this may be in part because we are hunting them (and they us). Some Cainites also seem more inclined to move around, with their Crusades and Church. During such movements, they are more vulnerable than we are. Remember this, and plan accordingly.

### EXCEPTIONS

Not every Gangrel is a wanderer. While the clan’s tradition and general situation encourage such behavior, some Gangrel go against type. A Gangrel like this will attach himself to an area for centuries, thinking of it as his land and doing whatever he can to defend it from encroachment. Gangrel like this lurk in Scandinavia, the Balkans and some areas of the British Isles. The Gangrel who do not travel are among the strongest in the clan, and are respected for their ability to survive as they do.

These Gangrel also are able to arrange short truces occasionally with the Lupines. Some very generous souls describe these truces as alliances, but really, they’re nothing more than an agreement of non-aggression for a while. The roots of many Gangrel tales of Lupine friendship lie in stories about these uneasy truces.



# BECOMING GANGREL

We rarely give the Embrace, because it is both a curse and a blessing. When we do Embrace, we choose those of hardy stock, inclined to fight fate. The qualities we seek in those we bless are courage, strong will and survival skills. The Embrace is also a curse, and one given to those mortals who wrong us. The pattern of the Embrace is similar, whether for a curse or blessing.

## THE EMBRACE

A Gangrel sire often chooses a prospective candidate for the Embrace during feeding. If the mortal prey resists, fighting against what is happening, then his reward after death may be a taste of Gangrel blood. Our clan makes many Gangrel this way, dating back to the first warriors selected by Ennoia to fight her war. This method produces a Gangrel with a fierce desire to survive, even if he does not have all the tools.

We also find prospective Gangrel through observation. While most mortals remain safely hidden during the night, a few risk the darkness. When one of our clan encounters a mortal like this, she will watch instead of attacking. It takes courage to wander these nights, after all. The Gangrel observes the mortal, watching for any signs of bravery or a knack for survival. Sometimes, a mortal out at night is simply lost — if this proves to be the case, he becomes prey. However, if the mortal shows skill moving about at night, is no coward, and maintains the interest of the observer, he is a good candidate for the Embrace.

When we punish, however, there is little effort wasted. A mortal who insults or threatens one of our clan receives a nighttime visit. The Gangrel Embraces the mortal, making the process as painful and terror-filled as possible, and leaves her. Usually the Embrace happens indoors, in the rooms of the person punished, assuring their discovery and destruction. In recent nights, this punishment has fallen into disuse, though there are still some who actively enact it.

If the pattern of our Embrace is not clear, let me make it so. We almost never offer a choice. This has become a tradition with our clan, since so few of us had a choice. I say almost never, because there are a few Gangrel who do break with tradition. The offspring of these Gangrel are considered by some to be inferior stock, even if they do survive. While not considered outcasts, a Gangrel given a choice rarely receives the same respect of those Embraced traditionally, even after the rites of status. I urge you to think of this, before you offer a choice.

## THE IMMORTAL ENEMY

Embracing foes has the potential to backfire on the Gangrel. Should the enemy survive the first nights and develop his power, he could turn his new abilities to hunting the one who cursed him. This is a rare occurrence — part of the punishment is to stack the odds so that survival is nearly impossible. A new Gangrel who manages to survive has an enviable combination of cunning, raw ability and luck — clearly a dangerous foe to have in pursuit, but possibly one with a bright future in the clan.

## THE FIRST NIGHTS

After the Embrace, the sire disappears into the night, leaving the new Gangrel on her own. I have heard Cainites speak of taking years to groom their childer, training them before the Embrace and even immediately afterward. This is a waste of time. It is better to save the effort of training a childer until after she has proven that she can survive. Thus, the sire completely abandons his new creation in the early nights, leaving her alone to face the struggle of survival.

Many do not last beyond even the first night. That first hunger is the strongest, and it brings the Beast quickly to the surface. In the haze of that first wild rage, a childer makes any number of mistakes. If Lupines and mortals don't destroy her, the first sunrise may. If the sire has chosen well, however, the childer quickly grasps her situation and adjusts. The reward for that first night is one of Ennoia's marks.

Any Gangrel resilient and capable enough to survive the first few nights soon develops the tools we use to survive those that follow. Over time, the childer must learn to grow claws, speak with the animals, and come to terms with our strengths and weaknesses. She must also learn to make decisions on her own, rapidly. Our condition does not permit long reflection on the proper course to take. Such indecision leads to the Final Death. This is a dangerous time for the childer, lost and without guidance.

## ACCEPTANCE

A new Gangrel must survive at least one winter before he is worthy of teaching. "How many winters?" is often the first question a Gangrel asks upon first meeting another in the wilderness. A new Gangrel rarely has the correct answer, and thus reveals himself. Tradition has it that any pup so encountered becomes a responsibility. The older Gangrel must aid him in his survival and teach him the ways of the clan, at least until his nature is revealed. If the pup ends up being from the Cainite broods, the Gangrel leaves him to his fate.

Once accepted, the new Gangrel learns the stories and traditions of the clan, particularly the greeting ritual and the rites of status. Instruction in the use of our gifts follows. The lessons include descriptions of our relationship with the Ravnos, Lupines and Cainites. After months of this teaching, a close bond forms between the student and teacher, similar to the relationship between a sire and childe among the Cainites.

After this training, a Gangrel is officially a member of the clan.

## DIABLERIE

We do not generally indulge in the Amaranth, preferring instead to honor the fallen with a simple Final Death. As well, we look upon those who indulge in diablerie merely to gain power as cowards. There is one instance where diablerie is appropriate — to preserve the spirit of a brave fallen warrior.

## GHOULS

The act of feeding a mortal our blood is, for many in the clan, a grave crime. The Cainites indulge in this practice with abandon, it seems, creating cults of ghouls to serve them, and this contributes to the distance between our peoples. There are, however, times when we will create such creatures. In the north, Gangrel feed warriors with their blood to make them stronger, as a reward for loyal service. Elsewhere, turning a mortal into a thrall is the step before the Embrace and considered part of the observation. Nowhere is the act undertaken lightly, though.

We are more likely to feed blood to animals, to ensure loyalty and avoid the problems of constantly exerting our will over them. Many others claim service from the creatures of the wild: Lupines, Cainites and even mortals. If a Gangrel wishes a loyal companion, the gift of blood is often the only way. Even those free of another's control are mostly creatures of life and day and fear us if they haven't tasted our blood.

The constant state of warfare, real or imagined, that many Gangrel find themselves in has led to the creation of many ghouls, both mortal and animal. My hope, shared with many in the clan, is that these numbers will reduce in later nights. Building a huge tribe of blood-drinkers reeks of civilization to me.

# RELIGION

I have no use for religion. Once, I worshipped gods and goddesses and observed the rituals. After what has happened to me, I can no longer burn offerings or say the prayers. In some ways, I am a demigod now, descended from the line of Ennoia. All the rest is just lies.

## OLD WAYS

I am not alone in my feelings. Many of us remember better times, when terrified tribes considered us wood gods and gave sacrifices to protect innocent daughters. In older nights, tribes held us up as paragons and wished to emulate our bravery. We were heroes to some. A few of our kind encouraged this worship, even exploiting it to build small kingdoms. Those were grand times.

Even some of the young Gangrel find the lure of godlike power hard to resist. A few establish themselves in the remote lands as gods and goddesses, trying to impress the locals with their abilities. In these nights, the punishment for such hubris is swift. The people have a new god, and he does not like us. Only those in the most remote lands can escape retribution.

## CHRISTIANITY

The Church, be it Roman or Byzantine, is our enemy. The lies they preach have made us monsters. The priests wage war on our kind wherever they find us. They bring fire and the cross, and lead the mortals away from us. We are no longer gods and heroes. Now we are monsters and devils, though some of us have existed since before these Christians had a name.

Worse, since the Church has spread so far, some of the newest Gangrel profess the hated faith. They even try to speak at Gathers, to convince us that we are less than human and need redemption. I have no patience for them, and I urge you to feel the same. The Church brings in its wake the weakness of civilization — deceit, buildings, bureaucracy and a lack of inner strength. If we are to survive, we must resist it in every way possible.

## LAST WORDS

I have tried to teach you well. I have a last lesson, though — *nothing I have said is law*. Laws and rules are for civilizations, not for us. Some say fate weaves a tapestry for each of us, and we cannot change our destiny. This may be true, but what that tapestry depicts is up to you. Go out and make it your own.

# Wolf Tracks

I am Yesugei, called Oderic among the Franks, and I am a traveler among our kind. I have walked further than any other and have seen more than anyone. I can count the Lupines I have survived on both hands; those I have killed on a single claw. I was old before the coming of Rome, older when I saw it fall, and shall be older still when it rises again.

I am your guide.

## GEOGRAPHY

I have recently made my rounds of this known world, carrying the news and stories of our kind to the four corners. We are everywhere, it seems, though not as numerous as I once remember. However, we number more than any Cainite suspects, for they don't bother to count. This is always our strength, for it surprises the Cainites to discover how much we can do.

But enough, for the summer night is short and I have much to tell you. Listen well, so you might speak at another Gather and tell them Clan Gangrel remains strong.

## THE BRITISH ISLES

We begin where I started the year, in those minor islands off the coast of Normandy. Yes, I say minor. Despite the attitudes of the inhabitants, they really play little more than a supporting role in the events of Europe. There aren't very many Gangrel on these islands, and the ones there seem to have strange ideas. I wintered in their northern reaches, far from the eyes of the Cainites and the Lupines. Cold lands, with hardy folk. Sadly, each year makes this harder, as the hungry needs of civilization and religion push the mortals to conquer their neighbors. Not that it is ever hard for a modern ruler to justify conquest.

## SCOTLAND AND IRELAND

Scotland's hills and valleys are as safe a refuge for us as could be expected. This means there's a fair number of Lupines to avoid, of course. The forests are concen-

trated toward the Lowlands, the home of many Scots. Northward, the rugged Highlands are home to the remnants of an older and better time. The Highlanders have many qualities to admire, I think. Oh, there is also a series of small, mostly barren, islands, clustered around the north coast.

I've yet to meet a Gangrel who would claim Scotland as her territory, though I know many that say they were Embraced in the Highlands. We can travel the moors, but to stay is nearly certain death. The Lupines guard the wild areas aggressively, and the Cainites here seem to find our clan a nuisance. During my spring visit, I encountered a Gangrel near a beached and rotted dragonboat. He claimed he was one of many who still raid the shores, though for what booty I can't say.

Of course, nothing stays the same for long anymore. There is a division in the people of Scotland between those loyal to the land and those loyal to the English. I sense a war coming, and in its wake, our best chance to claim the Highlands from the Lupines.

Now Ireland is a different tale. It's been a long time since I journeyed to the green isle, and I don't carry fond memories of the trip. As unfriendly as Scotland is, Ireland is worse. Scotland at least offers the chance for escape south, but Ireland is nothing but a prison unless you don't fear the cold waters of the sea. Lupines and goblins fairly infest the place, and it leaves little room for any of our clan to prowl.

Still, if there is need for proof that our kind can survive anywhere, this island is it. For even here, where our enemies are numerous, powerful and implacable, a few Gangrel survive. I'm just as surprised as you. Most are trapped or left behind by raiders, and not likely to survive long. The rest are ancient by even my reckoning. I suspect they date from just after the Betrayal, and are easily as powerful as our oldest. Unless you can match them, I suggest staying away from Ireland.

## ENGLAND AND WALES

After the dangers of Scotland and Ireland, England and Wales seem very safe places. Here, the Cainites are dominant, as is the influence of civilization. The first Gangrel here preceded the Roman invasion. Yes, our clan was there to greet Caesar and the Cainites who followed his armies. The first few Gangrel came hunting the Lhiannan in their Druid havens. Some followed the Angles and the Saxons to the new hunting grounds. Enough Gangrel have settled in the region to sustain a population distinct among our kind.

There isn't much left in England to be called wilderness, but the tended woods and hunting lands provide enough cover for our activities. Rumors of wild cats and lions are often indications that one of us is active in the area. Tread carefully, though, for the Cainite lords are likely to investigate such rumors and call a hunt on a careless Gangrel. For that matter, the mortal lords are fond of their hunts, and may view a lion sighting as a chance for adventure. Always remember that if you don't make trouble, it won't find you. You scoff? Think how many winters I have on you, pup, and shut your maw.

Now Wales is place of real opportunity for us all. Well, if it weren't for the Lupines and the Gangrel elders who already prowl the hills and marches, it'd be grand. I will warn you now — the Gangrel in Wales have a hunger for Cainite blood, and are not fussy. I managed a short conversation with one, Bodhmall, after she had fed on my companion. She told me that the Lupines in Wales seemed willing to talk rather than fight. I'm not willing to test that theory myself, but I'm sure some of you will be.

### A GANGREL GENTLEMAN

Some of the Gangrel in England differ from their mainland ilk, mostly in the adoption of civilized manners. These Gangrel follow the etiquette of the Norman conquerors in an attempt to fit in. Accepting the story of Caine and playing on the presumed kinship it offers, these Gangrel have turned their backs on their Saxon and Angle heritage to take up the banner of the Norman Cainites.

The Norman Gangrel reject the ways of the clan, refusing to attend Gathers or to respect the rites of status. Instead, they live as country gentlemen and participate in Cainite society. Having animal features is a great disgrace, as is adhering to the Road of the Beast. Some Norman Gangrel have become so adept at denying their nature they can pass themselves off as Ventruie or Toreador.

## THE MAINLAND

Leaving the British Isles, I spent the rest of the spring roaming Iberia and Gaul, ending up in the homeland of the Romans. The names of these places always change, as do the people and the rulers. I refer to them by the names I learned years ago. Old habits are hard for us to break, after all.

### IBERIA

The Gangrel first came to this peninsula in the wake of the Visigoth migration, hundreds of years ago. The clan spread out from the area around present-day Barcelona in the years that followed. We spread south, along the coast of the Mediterranean, before moving inland and north.

I followed the migration route of these early Gangrel. It wasn't hard, since I was one of them. I remember when the Moors swept out of Africa, and with them the truly nomadic Gangrel of the Middle East. For a time, I hoped the Moors would conquer all Europe. I see now that they were no better than the Romans they could have replaced.

The conflict between the Moors and the Christians still rages. Worse, the Gangrel who sided with the Moors make war on the rest of our clan and on the Cainites who centered themselves in the northern kingdoms of Castile, Leon, Aragon, Navarre and Portugal. Religion and civilization have tricked our kin into shedding their own blood again. Fools.

### GAUL

What you call France is nothing more than a collection of confused provinces owing fealty to any number of dukes, princes and kings. The Gangrel roaming the north are descended from Norse and Germanic tribes settled there. In the South, you find Gangrel Embraced from Visigoths, Franks and other tribes mixed together.

Gaul is a spawning ground for our nomadic kind. Few of those we Embrace stay very long, and I blame the Ventruie and Toreador for this. They seem to be everywhere, following the mortals who build cities and castles. It is hardly a comfortable place for our kind. Worse, that Roman cult seems to be everywhere here, making it hard for us to hide.

I passed through Gaul quickly, trying my best to remain hidden and avoid the stink. I couldn't resist a visit to Paris, however. I wanted to compare the city to the decaying Rome I remember plundering. It wasn't

## TAIFA GANGREL

The Gangrel who followed the Moors and settled in Iberia have developed their own unique culture. While still fundamentally Gangrel, the teachings of Islam and the civilization of Andalus (Islamic Iberia) has had a profound influence on them. These Taifa Gangrel (named after the small Muslim kingdoms of Iberia) see themselves as scholar warriors, fighting a religious war. They identify more with Islam and those Cainites who follow it, than with Clan Gangrel.

In practice, this means the Taifa Gangrel Embrace only devout warriors. The new convert pairs up with an elder Taifa Gangrel, for both schooling and protection. The pair spends their nights traveling throughout Iberia, hunting Christian Cainites of all kinds. Occasionally, the Taifa may join with an Assamite but never for very long.

The Taifa have replaced the Gather with a semi-annual conclave to discuss matters. No rites of status occur. Instead, those attending defer to the oldest Gangrel present. As well, Taifa Gangrel often abstain from feeding from Muslims, preferring instead the vitae of Christians or Jews.

long after I arrived when a Cainite, of the Nosferatu brood, contacted me. He told me something interesting. He has seen some Gangrel that apparently have made the city their home. My curiosity aroused, I spent more nights than I liked trying to find these Gangrel. My animal allies and I had no luck — though I suspect some of the rats were lying. If there are Gangrel making their homes in Paris, I saw no sign of them.

My travels through the rest of the country were not a waste. The land is on the verge of war. You can sense it in the air and the soil, as well as in the people. The veneer of civilization will crack soon, and I encourage you to be near when it does. Then maybe you will again see the inner fire that led these peoples to war with Rome. Then you will see what a waste of time their towers and cities really are.

## GERMANY AND THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

The Germanic people have no unity. Greed, pride, envy and too many rulers trying to be kings divides the land. Is it any surprise that this is the cradle of our clan since we fled the East? The Gangrel who roam all eventually pass through here. Here was the site of the

last Grand Gather that marked the end of Rome. I laugh when I hear the mortals call it the Holy Roman Empire; the unintended irony appeals to me. From this feeble empire, Clan Gangrel grows.

As you know, even a land as rich as Germany has dangers for our clan. Everything that makes the place our home makes it attractive to the Lupines. They are a constant presence, watching and lurking in the Black Forest. There is a silver lining — this makes the German woods the perfect proving grounds for new Gangrel. Those who survive learn quickly how to avoid the worst the Lupines offer.

We also compete with other Cainites, who seek to exploit the riches and unrest. The Ventrue seem to have made it a matter of pride to follow the Germanic

## THE HUN

Matasuntha came out of the East with the first horde of Huns in the latter half of the fourth century, and swiftly dominated the Gangrel of the West. In 400 CE, she summoned the Grand Gather and defeated all who challenged her. The clan called her queen, and named her the Hun. For a decade after, she led the Gangrel in the Grand Revel. Across Europe, the Gangrel rose in acts of violence and destruction. Wherever the destruction was greatest, there was the Hun — powerful and ancient, with tiger-striped fur, yellow eyes and long talons. Then, just as suddenly as she appeared, she vanished. The Grand Revel ended, and the Gangrel dispersed.

For 500 years, she was gone. In the early 900s, she reappeared in the Alps, looking more like a tiger than before and much subdued. Apparently, her long disappearance had left her hungry, for many Cainites disappeared from Italy and Germany during the first few years of her return. To the few who survived an encounter, the Hun spoke of battle with a Cainite in the catacombs under Rome, and of her long years in torpor.

The Hun is returning to form in recent nights, her wounds and hunger now sated. She seeks out Gangrel, speaking to them of the Grand Gather she will call soon. Times are not the same, though. The Hun has new competition in the West, with the All-High ruling the North. As well, many of the new Gangrel do not remember the days of glory of which she speaks, and do not heed her.

tribes across Europe. It is easy to overestimate the influence the Cainites have in mortal society, but never underestimate the ability of an angry Ventrue to lead the mortals against you — especially in the Holy Roman Empire, where the priests are zealous.

The Gangrel who claim territory here date back as far as the Betrayal. Some of these elders are secretive and hard to approach, hiding as they do in the deepest woods. Others seem affected by these woods. The mortals have a tale they sing of the warrior-king Beowulf, who slew a great monster. I believe the monster of which they sing is one of these old Gangrel, for there is much in the land that drives our kind toward the Beast.

During my travels, I encountered many Gangrel under a hundred winters old in these states. They came from all over Europe, and seemed friendlier than the elders. Our image as loners and animals is born here, where the Gathers encourage the Beast and the Cainites fear the woods at night.

With the frontier nearby, the Embrace is more common here than in other areas. Many mortals risk the dark woods, from necessity or by choice. Not all those chosen survive the first winter, what with all the threats. To survive more than a dozen winters in Germany is truly an impressive feat. It is natural that many Gangrel who lead our Gathers have spent much time in these rough lands.

The Lupines here don't even have a pretense of friendship, as they might in Wales or the Balkans. We are definitely the hunted, and the wise Gangrel is always on the move. Luckily, there are many places to hide — woods, rivers, mountains, valleys and even the castles and towns provide cover. It is important to keep a step ahead of the Lupines, and always remember that you can leave.

Of course, the danger of these lands makes them perfect for Gathers. Great risks and deeds are always mere moments away, it seems. Even the journey to the Gather can be an adventure. Plus, there are plenty of targets for a Revel, from an annoying local Cainite to an isolated Lupine. This is truly a land of plenty, and I was unhappy to leave.

While our clan will always be from the East, our heart is now in Germany.

## ITALY

I rarely travel this patch of ground, but I made an exception this time. Too much of the land has seen the ax, shovel, awl and plow for my liking. The last time I

spent more than a few nights, it was when the Goths sacked Rome and ruled the country. Ah, those were the days, until civilization pulled the mortals down. This time, I spent weeks confirming that the place is even worse now. I consider it fouled. I'm not alone in my opinion, but some always disagree. Some Gangrel actu-

## THE BIG BAD WOLF

Many of the tales the mortals tell involved wolves or monsters in the woods, and the Gangrel are quite likely the basis for many of them. Wolf features are marks of honor among the Germanic Gangrel, who wear them with pride. The design of many boasts is actually to produce such a mark, and in a matter of decades, a Gangrel in the Holy Roman Empire can become nearly unrecognizable as human. Of course, Lupines and real wolves contribute to these stories as well, but neither share the Gangrel's need to prey upon humans.

ally survive there, in the Apennines. These Gangrel swoop down briefly on the populace, before retreating into the nearly impassable mountains. It's a minor revenge on Rome, I suppose. I wonder, though, how many of these Gangrel are in hiding from the rest of us. I will say that I have yet to meet a Roman Gangrel, though I'm sure there was at least one or two of that empire who might have deserved the Embrace. If you hear of one, let me know.

## THE BALKANS

Nearly every invasion of Europe from the east has passed through this area, so it is full of Gangrel. The Balkans was the main route of the Gangrel migration west, and I always enjoy returning here. We actually have some political power here, where the tribes we followed have control: the Magyars, Huns, Serbs... there are too many to name. This is the frontline of our wars with the Ravnos (who use the same routes we did) and the Tremere. Every Gangrel should eventually come here, I think, to read the history etched into the soil.

The Gangrel who claim territory here get along well, maintaining the old tradition of packs. Three or four of our clan will travel and hunt together, cooperating for mutual survival. These packs will even combine to help one another, without the traditional Gather and Revel. This is the old way, from before the Betrayal, and I am pleased to see it survive.

Many of our enemies also cluster here, stepping on each others' toes and making the area a rich hunting ground for the brave. The Tzimisce rule much of the land, though they face challenges from the Ventrue. The Tremere are hiding in their warrens, avoiding us as best they can. The Lupines here are weak, and some are even open to truces. And the two different churches, Roman and Byzantine, compete for the loyalty of the people. There is no question of a coming war or period of unrest — something is always stirring the Balkans.

### AT THE CROSSROADS

While the Gangrel packs of the Balkans follow many of the ancient and lapsed traditions, they have developed a new one of their own. A pack seeks out a suitable mortal, one with bravery and skill, and stalks him. Having decided to Embrace him, the pack kidnaps the chosen mortal and takes him to a nearby crossroads. There the pack Embraces the mortal and then buries him unconscious in a grave at the center of the crossroad. From this point on, the pack observes from hiding nearby or using an animal's eyes.

If the new Gangrel can claw free of his burial, he passes the first test. Failing to dig out of the grave results in eventual torpor. The observing pack will wait a few nights, then unearth the victim and destroy him, rather than leaving him behind.

Having clawed free of the earth, the new Gangrel faces a second test. In a frenzied hunger-rage, he must now decide in which direction to seek prey. To pass this test, the new Gangrel must leave the roads and begin the hunt. At this point, the pack summons an animal as food, then reveal itself and accepts the new pack member. Following any of the roads is the wrong response, and the pack will come out of hiding to destroy the new Gangrel as unfit.

Gangrel Embraced in this fashion seem normal enough, though I have seen one or two refuse to hide in the earth, even under great threat.

### SCANDINAVIA

It has been a while since I strode the deck of a dragonboat or sat at the table in a long hall. The Gangrel of the North are their own breed, ruling over mortals and claiming to be descended from their one-



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eyed god. The All-High is their nominal leader, the Jarl of the North as they sometimes call him. These *vargr* roam out of their icy halls across Europe, pretending they are still at the height of their power.

The North is a place of bold deeds, brave acts and raw courage. There is no fear of Lupines here, only a grudging respect. Still, the other Cainites have come to the North and they push our clan further and further into the wilds. I suspect it won't be long before the *vargr* will have to abandon their pretense and join the rest of us. That, or perhaps they will flee to the fabled Vinland, which figures in many of their tales.

## RUSSIA

This land is merely a temporary stop on the migrations east, west, north and south. A few of the Northern Gangrel attempted to settle in the wilderness, but suffered at the hands of the Lupines. Any of our kind who has remained here overlong has found the going difficult. Very few of our clan have managed to survive more than a few years, and those that have typically move on to relatively safer locations.

## THE MIDDLE EAST

I have not traveled to the Levant and other Arab lands for some time. Gangrel are there, however. Drawn from the Turks and Bedouin, they keep to themselves. What little I know I learned from the few Gangrel who followed the returning Crusaders. They speak of Gangrel living in Constantinople, of the damnable power of religious men and the steady encroachment of civilization. Apparently, there are Lupines even in the deserts. I can only think that Clan Gangrel faces the same challenges everywhere.

## THE FAR EAST

I long to travel east again, to where our clan came of age and where Ennoia still wanders. Driven out by the Ravnos and the Giants, we retreated to the West. Once we roamed the steppes like gods. Now only the brave and the strong risk the trip; much more than the Ravnos wander the steppes now. The mortals return with stories of two-headed cows and horned beasts. I saw such things when I was young, before we fled. Strange is the only term to describe the East. Travel there with the greatest care, and be ever vigilant.

And never forget that some night, we reclaim what is ours.

# OUTSIDERS

Now let me speak to you of the Cainites and other creatures. No doubt you've encountered some already. These are my impressions, based on personal experience and the stories told to me. I am sure if you were to travel somewhere else, you would hear slightly different words, but the message would be the same.

I won't bore you with the long list of grievances I've heard some use. Telling you to avoid Baron Trappe or to hide out in the barn of Berna isn't useful for more than a few years, anyway. Instead, I'll just tell you the important bits and leave the rest up to you.

## CAINITES

Supposedly the children of a cursed farmer, the Cainites are a diverse lot. They all seem fascinated by civilization and cities, however, lurking among clutches of mortals like flies on a corpse. This is the line that separates us from them, although they rarely see it. They call us Cainites and insist that their holy texts prove us to be their kin. Accept their conceit if it serves you, but remember the truth of Ennoia and the Betrayal.

## ASSAMITES

While we have little fear of any group other than the Lupines, the Assamites do make me nervous. The Saracens fight against Christianity, but Islam isn't any better for us. With a shared enemy, a Gangrel can act as a guide or scout for the Assamites. Most of the time, we're more like prey than equals. Every Assamite I've met has claimed to have honor or to be spiritual. It seems to be a point of pride for them. But when the teeth come out, they're hunters like the rest of us. Watch your step around them.

## BRUJAH

They are strong, fast and full of themselves. The Brujah are a joke, as far as I'm concerned. The Brujah chose to ignore our warnings about what would happen in Carthage, because we were just "Animals." Well, now we treat them like our slow cousins. There was every chance for an alliance against Rome, but Brujah pride wouldn't let them join with us. I'm not prepared to forgive the insult, nor should you. If they could learn to leave their cities and mortals, and just smell the flowers, maybe the Zealots would be a lot happier. Of course, they'd probably want to debate with the flowers.

## CAPPADOCIANS

Our two clans are much like oil and flame, just waiting for someone to bring us together. Many Gangrel still hold to the superstitions of their mortal life, and regard the too-close examination of the dead as black magic. I'm one of them. That the Cappadocians resemble corpses doesn't help any. The detachment from the Beast the Graverobbers seem to relish leaves them without much to discuss with any Gangrel. Honestly, both sides seem to prefer it that way.

## FOLLOWERS OF SET

The Setites are foul, hateful things you destroy wherever you encounter one. If you encounter more than one, flee. Of course, not all Gangrel feel this way, but I'd argue that anyone who defends a Serpent is probably in their service and should be outcast. A lot of what I know I learned from the Bedouin Gangrel, who speak of being pets and slaves for the Followers of Set. You can believe that any Setite you encounter is sizing you for a collar. I know some of you will not agree, and will want to try to learn for yourselves. To you, I say good-bye.

I've heard say that these Serpents also reject the Caine stories, but that may be just another lie to lure us in. It doesn't really matter.

## LASOMBRA

The Lasombra support of the Church guarantees that they don't get along with most of us. The recurring experience I've had is that any culture that a Lasombra encounters soon turns from the old ways and accepts the Roman Church. A natural resentment has built up over the centuries, one that I often express on the stray Lasombra venturing too far out into the wild. You might want to try it, too. You might not think they are a threat, but just wait — I'm sure they'll do something to get you angry.

The Taifa Gangrel have a friendlier relationship with the Iberian Lasombra who profess to follow Islam. Trying to explain that any Lasombra who claims to believe in Allah is lying just gets you in trouble.

## MALKAVIANS

The Malkavians are the diviners of the future and the special protectors of fate. As a group, give them respect as one would an elder or a dangerous Lupine. Be



sure to pass around the Gather any knowledge a Malkavian chooses to share. The insight of the Malkavians is a sacred offering, to be pondered carefully. This doesn't mean that I particularly like the company of the Madmen. On the contrary, theirs is one of the few clans that worry me. I'm not alone, either. Malkavians seem to delight in playing with our Beast, bringing it to the surface and robbing us of control. When a group of them chooses to turn on us, they can drive us to destruction.

### NOSFERATU

The Gangrel and the Nosferatu get along. Somewhat. We both share an unusual appearance, though their approach to dealing with it differs from ours. Still, there is a common ground when we meet. The Nosferatu share information and are great listeners, and few Gangrel can resist the opportunity to tell a story, including me. All right, "share" is too strong a word. The Nosferatu rarely tell as much as they hear, but for all their claims at secrecy, they are prone to let drop a fact or two. We're also a handy courier service for items too large for the Nosferatu's normal methods, so they owe many of us boons.

### TOREADOR

The cultures we have Embraced from are not void of artistic minds or an aesthetic appreciation of form and structure, so dealings with the Artisans are quite possible. The difficulty between our two clans comes not from the art, but from the interpretation. Art is a means of conveying information, a story or a warning; something to tell the history of a people. A Toreador seems to see art as something exalted and higher than mortal or immortal existence. I don't understand it. Many of us don't. When our two clans meet, this misunderstanding often spills over into every other area. You can guess where that leads.

### TREMERE

The Ravnos-Gangrel war is ancient, kept fresh by our undying existence. This war with the Tremere is something new and all the worse for it. The Tremere created themselves only a hundred or so years ago. They experimented on Gangrel in their quest to steal what wasn't theirs, and they have used their foul sorcery to pervert others of our clan into shock troops for the war. There is no punishment less than destruction that will ease this wound. It is imperative that the Usurpers pay the final price, before more Gangrel fall into their hands.

### LIBELLUS SANGUINIS 3

### TZIMICSE

The Gangrel and Tzimisce share little love, and both of us like it that way. The lands of the Tzimisce are the highways by which the various tribes of the East have entered Europe, and we Gangrel have always followed in the wake. If the threat of the Tremere had not arisen, our two clans would still be engaged in a struggle for dominance. Unlike my other hatreds, the one for the Tzimisce is half-hearted. I have begun to understand their fears are similar to ours — they don't want to lose their past. In turn, the Tzimisce I have dealt with have begun to see me as more than just a beast. Not that I'm letting down my guard, for they are all still Cainites.

### VENTRUE

The Ventrue are trying to rule without earning that right. They exploit the successes of powerful mortals like the Romans and the Franks, then try to take credit. They pretend superiority without being able to back up the claim. Too often we have tried to point this out, and now the Ventrue try to target our hunting grounds. If we were again able to fight openly, as we did in centuries past, we could easily teach them the lesson they forgot. In the mean time, we will have to fight from the shadowed woods and wait for the Ventrue to make another mistake.

### BAALI

We tried to warn the Cainites about the Baali, and they ignored us. I say we leave them to the rewards of their ignorance. The Baali are foul, but no longer our problem. We must focus on the wars we are already fighting, before we take on the battles of the other clans.

### LAMIA

In the service of the Cappadocians, what more can be expected than obedience? The Lamia are soldiers, not warriors. Don't make the mistake of confusing the two. There is no honor gained defeating a soldier forced to fight to survive.

### SALUBRI

I rarely cross paths with the Salubri, but when I do it rarely turns to violence. That third eye is a curse, and the knowledge they seem to have is a heavy burden I wouldn't want to share. Treat them with care, and perhaps sympathy. They're not like the other clans, but something about them worries me. Perhaps it is because the most ferocious of the Giants had three eyes.

## ENEMIES AND BETRAYERS

The battle between Ennoia and Churka is still fresh for us. The enemies who pushed us west and the traitors who stabbed us in the back are not forgotten and will never be forgiven.

### RAVNOS

The relationship between the Ravnos and us is one of out right antagonism — war, if you will. I'm telling you now, so you don't make the mistake a number of neonates have. The Ravnos are not your friends. They are not your allies. They will lead you astray, then destroy you. If seen being friendly with a Ravnos, you may become the second one to die. So, be very careful.

The Ravnos are our collective Loki, bringing Ragnarok. They woke the Giants and plan to bring about the end of our world. They won the war for the Eastern hunting grounds. We must not let them win in the West, too. All the clan can do is prepare. As for the rumor of shared parentage, bear the insult, because we'll be the last ones laughing.

Let me also dispel another rumor: We are not the special protectors of the Gypsies. We merely hunt the Ravnos who typically travel in their caravans. When we have destroyed the Ravnos, the Gypsies may hail us as their rescuers. They're wrong. We're as likely to prey on them as any other Cainite.

### LHIANNAN

Lhiannan was one of those involved in the Betrayal, who broke the Gangrel and fled west. Her descendants hid themselves in the Celtic tribes of the West. I've heard some Gangrel say that Lhiannan was

simply the first to realize the war was lost. They are confused — the war was lost because she fled. Her descendants pay the bloodprice of her act. The All-High and the *vargr* have doggedly pursued and hunted the Lhiannan across Europe. They are not alone. Soon, nothing will remain of the betrayer.

### LAIBON

The Laibon are mysterious and hidden. Still, many in our clan consider them part of the Betrayal and try to hunt them as best they can. It is interesting that the Gangrel of North Africa, who would have the greatest contact, speak nothing but kindness about the Laibon. I would have to speak to one myself before I decided. Then again, I may as well wish myself mortal while I'm at it.

### LUPINES

If there is one thing that can truly cause fear in a Gangrel, it is a Lupine. Worse still is a pack of the creatures. They are death and destruction on two large hairy legs, worse than we are. They are territorial, and, unfortunately for us, the territory the Lupines protect overlaps with our own hunting grounds. I've heard the rumors about alliances and shared knowledge. Aside from some isolated locations, most of these stories are wishful boasts.

It is true that not every encounter between a Lupine and a Gangrel ends in the destruction of the Gangrel. It's just that you don't really want to take the chance you'll be the one in a thousand. Any arrangement you manage with a Lupine is an exception to the rule, and you should never expect it to last. We're just too different.

# Rules of the Wild

## MERITS AND FLAWS

### WITHOUT A TRACE (2 PT MERIT)

The wilderness is your friend, working to hide your passage. You leave no trail to follow as the earth swallows your footprints, and the trees and grasses cover your scent. Even magical means of tracking you are inhibited. You pass through places like the wind, leaving nothing behind but a whisper. Even Lupines have trouble following you. Normal means of tracking you (with Survival, the use of dogs) fail automatically. Supernatural methods of tracking you, such as with Auspex, have a chance, but with greater difficulty (+2 difficulty penalty).

### PIED PIPER (2-4 PT FLAW)

Animals like you too much. Every night, when you rise from your sleep, they are there waiting. They follow you around like a pack, looking to you for leadership. They gather from the nearby area; generally, all creatures of a particular type within six miles collect during the day around your resting place. They disperse while you sleep, only to regroup with the coming of night.

At two points, the affected animals are small like rats or mice, which will be overlooked. At the three-point level, they are slightly larger and attract more attention, like cats. At four points, you're followed by creatures that are hard to overlook — wolves, bears or stags. People can use this to find your havens or track your movements, and it makes it difficult for you to avoid detection if you remain in place for very long.

## NEW DISCIPLINE POWERS

### LOKI'S GIFT (PROTEAN LEVEL SIX)

A vampire that has received Loki's Gift has the ability to assume the form of the last thing she has fed upon, be it human, Cainite or animal. The vampire

doesn't gain any of the Disciplines, knowledge or skills of the form assumed, but otherwise becomes a perfect imitation. This allows the vampire to briefly disguise herself as someone else, or, in animal forms, avoid the stench of corruption typically associated with Cainites.

**System:** After a vampire has drunk the blood of the target, she may assume its form. It costs the player two Blood Points to transform, and the change takes two turns (or a single turn, if the player spends an additional blood point). The player rolls Manipulation + Subterfuge (difficulty 9), and each success allows the transformation to last an hour. The player can spend a blood point to extend the deception by an hour, up to a limit of available blood. In the case of a botch, the transformation fails and the vampire can never imitate the target again. The transformation automatically ends at dawn.

A vampire using Loki's Gift appears to be the form assumed for all detection purposes, including Soulsight. This includes appearing as a mortal, rather than vampire. Soulsight will, however, reveal the vampire's own emotional state.

### REVERT THE BEAST (PROTEAN LEVEL SEVEN)

This power allows a vampire to revert temporarily to their mortal likeness, suppressing the animal features resultant of frenzy. Not all Gangrel elders display this power, and the use of it is cause for discussion in many a Gather. Indeed, some Gangrel see it as a distasteful denial of their true nature. The extent of the reversion is variable and unreliable, but for many of the oldest Gangrel, it is the only way to return to what they were.

**System:** The player spends three blood points and makes a Willpower roll (difficulty 6). The number of successes determines how many bestial features fade from view:

One success	One feature
Two successes	Four features
Three successes	Nine features
Four successes	16 features



These features remain hidden for the duration of the scene or until the vampire falls into frenzy. A vampire also gains back lost Social Attributes with the use of this power, one for each success.

### ENHANCE THE WILD RIDE (ANIMALISM LEVEL FOUR, PROTEAN LEVEL FOUR)

A vampire that has this level of power has developed the art of Riding the Wild Mind to such a degree that he can even effect the body of the creature. The vampire's body remains in a motionless trance akin to torpor, but the possessed animal takes on some of the characteristics of the vampire.

This power is a closely guarded secret of Clan Gangrel. Even were it to become known, it involves passing over a great deal more of the soul to an animal possessed than other clans would find comfortable.

**System:** This power is essentially an enhanced version of Ride the Wild Mind (Animalism 4) that allows for physical changes to the possessed animal. The player spends a blood point and then makes a Ride the Wild Mind test as normal (Charisma + Animal Ken, difficulty 8). Use this table instead of the one for Ride the Wild Mind.

One success	Can use Auspex, Presence
Two successes	Can use Dominate, Dementation, Animalism
Three successes	Can use Thaumaturgy, Chimerstry, Fortitude
Four successes	Can use Protean, Potence
Five successes	Can use Celerity, spend blood to enhance Traits

The vampire-animal bond is much stronger in Enhance the Wild Mind than in Ride the Wild Mind. As such, the player need not spend Willpower to get the animal to go against its instinct and, with five or more successes, can spend blood (from the animal's blood pool) to enhance its physical Attributes. If blood point spending reduces an animal below half its blood pool, however, it dies instantly, with the vampire's mind in place.

This complete inhabitation has a side effect — it clouds the vampire's soul with the instincts and nature of the animal inhabited. The effect should be roleplayed, and continues for a long time after contact is broken. Spending eight temporary Willpower will overcome the effect faster, but the vampire will only be entirely free of the animal's influence after the passage of years.

If the inhabited animal dies or experiences some great excitement (a fight or involvement in a hunt, for example), then there is a chance the vampire suffers. The player must make a Wits + Empathy roll (difficulty 8) to avoid the vampire losing her mind. Failure means the vampire's mind snaps back to her own body immediately, but she now believes herself to be the animal. A botch means the vampire returns and automatically enters frenzy. Any successes mean the vampire can continue to ride the animal, or can return without problems.

Using Enhance the Wild Ride during the day requires the player to make the standard roll for a vampire to remain awake. This power costs 15 experience points.

### READ THE WINDS (ANIMALISM LEVEL FOUR, AUSPEX LEVEL FIVE)

Many animals roam the night, and a vampire with this power has the ability to see through the eyes of them all. With a bit of focus, the vampire sees everything that an animal in the area witnesses. The vampire can also use this power to gain a general impression, from animals' states, about the area or upcoming events like disasters or storms.

**System:** The player makes a Perception + Animal Ken roll (difficulty 7), and the vampire opens her mind to the animals in the area. Each success increases the area in which the vampire can monitor events, though progressively larger areas observed could overwhelm her with too much information.

Successes	Distance	Detail
1	Within earshot	General impression
2	About a mile	Blurry details
3	A couple miles	See details
4	50 miles	See details, hear faintly
5	100 miles	See and hear clearly

The player must divide his successes between range and details. For example, if a player managed four successes, he could use three to get the range of a couple miles and one to get a general impression (it is raining). He could instead spend three to see details of things within earshot, like whether there is a Lupine in that area. With a single success, the vampire gets a general impression of the area within earshot. The vampire cannot see things that are Obfuscated or hidden using this power.

Gangrel often use this power while interred in the earth. It costs 20 experience points to develop this power.

### CALL THE WILD HUNT (ANIMALISM LEVEL FIVE, PROTEAN LEVEL FOUR)

In ancient days, when Gangrel rode openly on the steppes, this power saw more use. It allows a vampire to transform her ghouls into a Wild Hunt, a pack of wild animals who run with her across the steppes. In the process, the vampire also transfers a portion of her Beast into her followers, making it more difficult for her to succumb to frenzy. Her followers, however, give in to blood rage. The Wild Hunt stays close to the vampire for the duration of the transformation, never straying out of sight. They will attack anything in their path, trying to tear it to pieces in their rage. The vampire herself remains untouched by the frenzy and is immune to Röttschreck. The vampire retains her emotions, including anger, but the Beast cannot dominate her or undermine her courage.

**System:** A vampire doesn't have to be near or in frenzy to use this power. The ghouls involved must see the vampire when the power activates. The player rolls Manipulation + Animal Ken (difficulty 6) with each success affecting one of the vampire's ghouls (either human or animal). If the attempt fails, the player must roll to avoid frenzy (difficulty 7); a botch means automatic frenzy.

Affected ghouls succumb to frenzy with all its standard benefits (ignoring wound penalties, resisting Dominate, etc.), but will not attack each other or the controlling vampire. The ghouls will do everything they can to remain in sight of their regnant, but should they fail, their minds suddenly calm. The Wild Hunt has no fear, and will attack any other creature that gets in their way. Each member of the Wild Hunt also immediately gain Talons of the Beast (Protean 2), although the Storyteller or player should note that a point is spent from each of their blood pools at this time. These claws will retract once the frenzy breaks.

The controlling vampire becomes immune to frenzy and Röttschreck checks. The Wild Hunt ends with the coming of dawn. This power costs 20 experience points.

## GANGREL ACROSS THE LAND

Gangrel are among the most far-flung vampires in the Dark Medieval world, stalking the steppes of the East, the glacial lands of the Far North and everywhere in between. This has led to a certain diversity among the clan. Some of these differences are simply in behavior, such as the atypical Norman and Taifa Gangrel (see pages 20 and 21). Other differences are more significant and have create full-fledged offshoot bloodlines (see

below). The clan's special affinity for the wild lands — the Gangrel ability to assume animal forms and the animal characteristics they develop after frenzy — creates further diversification. Indeed, Gangrel become animals they knew from life, so a German vampire will not have the same features as an Arab one.

## TERRITORIAL VARIATIONS

Gangrel vary depending on region and influences, particularly in the type of creature they can transform into with Form of the Beast. While the majority of Gangrel become wolves and bats, this is hardly a universal case.

### NORTHERN GANGREL

A Gangrel from the North is likely to transform into a stag or bear as her fight form, and probably an owl or eagle as her flight form. A number of Gangrel from this region become wolves, but not as many take the form of a bat.

### EASTERN GANGREL

Gangrel off the steppes tend to transform into wolves, but are more likely to have the flight form of an eagle or falcon. Ancient Gangrel who have spent time in the lands of India or further east will transform into tigers.

## INTERMENT OPTIONS

Not every Gangrel who developed Protean limits himself to melding with the soil. With time and practice, some Gangrel have developed the ability to meld with other elements of nature. The most common alternate element is trees, though this requires a tree large enough to hold the mass of the vampire. A Gangrel who frequents the more rocky places, like the mountains, develops the ability to inter herself into the very rock. The only limit appears to be that the substance must be natural and that it has not been worked by the hands of man (no hiding in a log palisade or castle wall).

These alternate resting places are not as stable as the earth, however and force a vampire out with the setting of the sun. This occurs, even if the vampire is in torpor. It costs eight experience points to develop an alternate-resting place.



BOOK ONE: ANIMALS



## WHY AM I A WOLF?

The majority of those with the Protean Discipline develop the ability to change into a wolf and bat, but there is a significant minority that take on different forms. This is a result of legend meeting the mystic nature of the vampire. If a vampire expects to transform into a wolf, he will. If a different vampire expects to become a cat, then she does.

This same expectation helps determine what a Gangrel slowly transforms into with each animal trait. If, in his mortal life, a Gangrel often felt akin to a bear, then in his unlife he will likely come to resemble a bear. On occasion, the animal features a Gangrel acquires may be her first clue that she is not limited to merely a wolf form.

Practice allows a Gangrel to overcome this limit. While the Gangrel never develops more than the two forms (fight and flight), with practice a Gangrel can change what these two forms are.

So the answer to the question is simple — you are a wolf, because that's what you expect to be.

## SOUTHERN GANGREL

A Gangrel from North Africa or the Middle East has a good chance of changing into a jackal or wild dog. Their flight form is likely to be a bat, though some have become vultures. There are also some falcons mixed in, though these Gangrel are very rare.

## BLOODLINES

### GREEK GANGREL

A strange branch of the Gangrel lurks in the dark corners and sewers of the great cities like Constantinople and Rome. There are theories about their existence: trapped after following Crusaders, the result of a Tremere experiment or even a whole new clan. The truth is that there have been Gangrel hiding in the cities of man almost from the day the first stone went up in Babylon. As the centuries have passed, these Gangrel have focused on surviving in a different environment — one fraught with its own unique dangers.

The Greek Gangrel, as they call themselves, have developed Obfuscate instead of Fortitude. It is better to hide from danger where mortals congregate, after all. As well, the Greek Gangrel are on good terms with the Nosferatu who share the sewers with them.

## BESTIAL FEATURES

It's easy to pick the first few bestial features for your Gangrel character — clawed toes, fur-tipped ears, a tail. As time passes and the Gangrel continues to suffer frenzy after frenzy, however, it can be harder and harder to find new features. You can't pick whiskers and a black nose repeatedly, after all.

Remember that not every animal feature has to be visible. A Gangrel could develop a musky scent or adopt the behavior patterns of her animal form. Something as simple as circling your prey before you feed or scratching the doorjamb to indicate your territory can count as an animal feature. Don't restrict yourself to the surface features. Do remember that these "invisible" features still count toward reducing your character's Social Attributes, though. It's tough to be socially adept when you're scratching yourself behind the ears or marking your territory.

There are very few Greek Gangrel and most of them have appeared recently in Constantinople. At least one is present in Paris, as well. Unlike their wild brethren, they rarely venture out into the wilderness. They have yet to make an appearance at a Gather, although some are said to want to build ties to the main clan.

## MARINER GANGREL

In the waters of the Black Sea, the Mediterranean and the Baltic lives a unique branch of the clan, the Mariner Gangrel. While the typical Gangrel develops the traits and features of a land animal, this bloodline instead shows signs of their watery homes. Features like gills, scales, fins and puckered mouths are the common features among the Mariners, who quickly take the sea for their home.

These Gangrel spend their lives in the waters, preying on the sailors who ply the waves or feeding on the fish. They avoid contact with other vampires, including the landbound of their clan. The only group they seem to have regular contact with is the Lasombra, and it's not friendly. Because of their strange lifestyle, they have developed alternate Protean powers (for more details, see **World of Darkness: Blood-Dimmed Tides**).

# Children of the Beast

## THE FAILED MARTYR

**Quote:** *The Book of Jeremiah says that a wolf of the evenings shall punish you, and I am that wolf.*

**Prelude:** You were once a bright star in the Church, full of charisma and with a real talent for holding people's attention when you spoke. It was little surprise to anyone that the Church chose you to lead an expedition into the rough lands of the North, to carry the word of the Lord to the heathens.

Once you arrived in the midst of the barbarians, however, your words and charisma failed you. Your followers were tortured and killed before your eyes, and all you could do was pray for their souls. Then it was your turn to die as an offering to their forest god.

Tied to a tree in the forest, you awaited your death with bravery and the words of the Lord upon your lips. Night came, and by the light of the silver moon, you saw the furry beast the barbarians worshipped.

You put all your passion into the words, hiding the fear you felt behind your faith. Nothing could stop it, though. As it sunk its teeth in you, you felt the wash of God's blessing upon you and welcomed death.

But you work on earth was not complete. You rose infused with the power of the Lord and hungry for the blood of the heathen who had rejected His word. Now, each night, you continue to do the good work God intended, spreading the Gospel to those who do not believe.



**Concept:** You are an agent of God, speaking his Word to any who will listen. The marks of the Beast on you are indications of your falling off the true path to heaven and letting sin dominate you. God will remove the marks, though, when you have finished His work.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You use the lessons of the Bible as a guide for your nightly activities and never miss a chance to draw a parallel between the events in the Gospel and your new unlife. While there is no reason you couldn't feed from just anyone, you try to restrict your communion to those who are not of the faith.

**Equipment:** Cross, rosary, strong boots, warm clothing, knife

VAMPIRE THE DARK AGES		
NAME: NATURE PENITENT	GENERATION: 12th	
PLAYER: DEMONOR FANATIC	HEVEN: HAVEN	
CHRONICLE: CLANE GANGREL	CONCEPT: Failed Martyr	
ATTRIBUTES		
PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	MENTAL
Strength: ●●●●●●	Charisma: ●●●●●●	Perception: ●●●●●●
Dexterity: ●●●●●●	Manipulation: ●●●●●●	Intelligence: ●●●●●●
Stamina: ●●●●●●	Appearance: ●●●●●●	Wit: ●●●●●●
ABILITIES		
TALENTS	SKILLS	KNOWLEDGES
Acting: ○○○○○○	Animal Ken: ●●●●●●	Academics: ●●●●●●
Alertness: ●●●●●●	Archery: ○○○○○○	Heath Wisdom: ○○○○○○
Athletics: ●○○○○○	Crafts: ○○○○○○	Investigation: ●●●●●●
Brawl: ●●●●●●	Etiquette: ●●●●●●	Law: ○○○○○○
Dodge: ●●●●●●	Herbalism: ○○○○○○	Linguistics: ●●●●●●
Empathy: ●●●●●●	Melee: ○○○○○○	Medicine: ○○○○○○
Intimidation: ●○○○○○	Music: ○○○○○○	Occult: ○○○○○○
Larceny: ○○○○○○	Ride: ●●●●●●	Politics: ●●●●●●
Leadership: ●●●●●●	Stealth: ●●●●●●	Science: ○○○○○○
Subterfuge: ○○○○○○	Survival: ○○○○○○	Sensual: ●●●●●●
ADVANTAGES		
DISCIPLINES	BACKGROUNDS	VIRTUES
ANIMALISM: ●●●●●●	ALLIES: ●○○○	Conscience/Conversion: ●●●●
FORTITUDE: ●●●●●●	HERD: ●○○○	Self-Control/Insatiation: ●●●●
○●●●●●	RESOURCES: ●○○○	Courage: ●●○○○
○○○○○○	○●●●●●	
○○○○○○		
○○○○○○		
OTHER TRAITS		
○●○○○○	ROAD: HEAVEN	HEALTH
○○○○○○	●●●●●●○○	Bruised: <input type="checkbox"/>
○○○○○○	○○○○○○○○	Hurt: -1 <input type="checkbox"/>
○○○○○○		Injured: -1 <input type="checkbox"/>
○○○○○○	WILLPOWER: ●●●●●●○○	Wounded: -2 <input type="checkbox"/>
○○○○○○	○○○○○○○○	Mauled: -2 <input type="checkbox"/>
	○○○○○○○○	Crippled: -5 <input type="checkbox"/>
		Incapacitated: <input type="checkbox"/>
	BLOOD POOL: ○○○○○○○○	EXPERIENCE
	○○○○○○○○	<input type="text"/>
	○○○○○○○○	
COMBAT		
Weapon: <input type="text"/>	Difficulty: <input type="text"/>	Damage: <input type="text"/>

## THE LADY ON THE LAKE

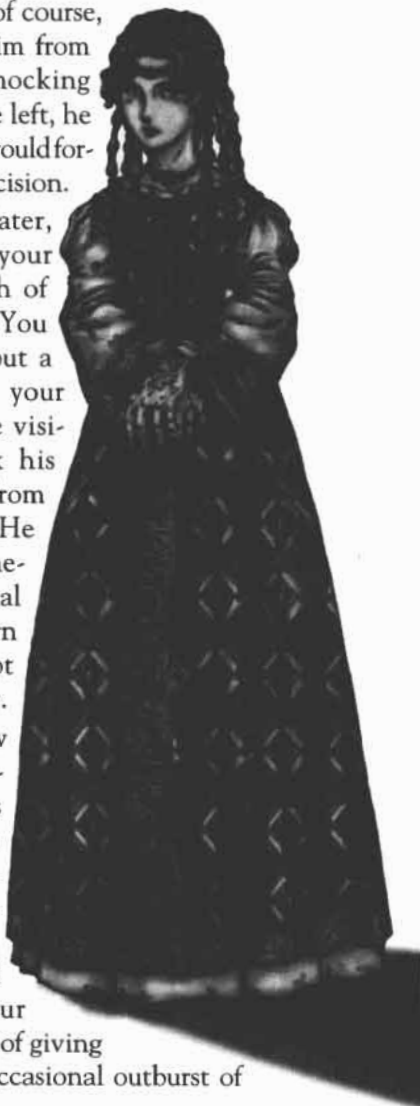
**Quote:** Come, Baron, surely my new hair isn't that ugly. Why, if you continue to gape, I'll have to remove you from my bedroom.

**Prelude:** With your husband off on the Crusades, it fell to you to maintain his lands. Under your careful leadership, they prospered and thrived. When news reached you of your husband's death outside Jerusalem, you found yourself the target of many new suitors, more interested in your wealth than your beauty. Maintaining control of your lands became your driving goal.

One evening as you were entertaining yet another group of guests seeking your hand, a stranger came to call. He had wildness about him and seemed unimpressed with the noble status of you or your guests. He demanded a tribute — your blood in a bowl — or he would curse your lands with suffering and loss. Refusing him was a matter of course, and you chased him from your hall with mocking laughter. Before he left, he promised that you would forever regret your decision.

A few nights later, you woke from your sleep at the touch of lips on your neck. You tried to scream, but a hand was across your mouth. It was the visitor, and he took his tribute and more from you that night. He also left you something — an eternal curse. It was his turn to laugh as he leapt from your window.

For the first few days, you tried to ignore the changes that had come over you. You fed from the servants, swearing them to secrecy. Then you started feeding from your guests, in the guise of giving your favors. The occasional outburst of



anger led to the first obvious changes and your realization that the curse was real. From that point on, you have looked for a cure, seeking out others who share your condition for advice and knowledge.

**Concept:** You are a wealthy noblewoman with contacts and influence in the nobility of Europe. Many of the elite vied for your hand, and they view you as an excellent candidate for marriage. The curse laid upon you is a burden you must overcome through will and perseverance, as you search for a cure. The longer it takes you to find it, though, the more swanlike you become.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You restrain your displays of emotion, trying to keep not just your anger but also your happiness and sadness under wraps. A little vain, you consider every loss of a human feature a great blow and will go to great lengths to prevent it. Your condition has made you less dismissive of those who are not of your social status — a lack of humility is what led to your current condition, after all.

**Equipment:** Fine dress, jewelry, dagger, retainers, small keep and lands

VAMPIRE The Dark Ages		
NAME	NATURE TYRANT	GENERATION 11th
PLAYER	DEMANOR GALLANT	HAVEN
CHRONICLE	CLAN GANGREL	CONCEPT Lady on the Lake
ATTRIBUTES		
PHYSICAL		MENTAL
Strength ●●●○○○	Charisma ●●○○○○	Perception ●●○○○○
Dexterity ●●○○○○	Manipulation ●●○○○○	Intelligence ●●○○○○
Stamina ●●○○○○	Appearance ●●○○○○	Will ●●○○○○
ABILITIES		
TALENTS		KNOWLEDGES
Acting ●○○○○○	Animal Ken ●○○○○○	Academics ●○○○○○
Alertness ●○○○○○	Archery ●○○○○○	Heath Wisdom ●○○○○○
Athletics ●○○○○○	Crafts ●○○○○○	Investigation ●○○○○○
Brawl ●○○○○○	Etiquette ●●●○○○	Law ●○○○○○
Dodge ●○○○○○	Herbalism ●○○○○○	Linguistics ●○○○○○
Empathy ●○○○○○	Melee ●●○○○○	Medicine ●○○○○○
Intimidation ●○○○○○	Music ●●○○○○	Occult ●○○○○○
Larceny ●○○○○○	Ride ●●○○○○	Politics ●●○○○○
Leadership ●●○○○○	Smith ●○○○○○	Science ●○○○○○
Subterfuge ●●○○○○	Survival ●○○○○○	Sensual ●●○○○○
ADVANTAGES		
DISCIPLINES	BACKGROUNDS	VIRTUES
ANIMALISM ●○○○○○	GENERATION ●○○○○○	Conscience/Conviction ●○○○○○
FORTITUDE ●●○○○○	INFLUENCE ●●○○○○	Self-Control/Restraint ●○○○○○
PROTEAN ●○○○○○	RESOURCES ●○○○○○	Courage ●●●●●
●○○○○○	●○○○○○	
●○○○○○	●○○○○○	
OTHER TRUITS		HEALTH
●○○○○○	ROAD	Bruised <input type="checkbox"/>
●○○○○○	HUMANITY	Hurt -1 <input type="checkbox"/>
●○○○○○	●●●●●○○○	Injured -1 <input type="checkbox"/>
●○○○○○	WILLPOWER	Wounded -2 <input type="checkbox"/>
●○○○○○	●●●●●○○○○	Mauled -2 <input type="checkbox"/>
COMMIT	○○○○○○○○○○	Crippled -5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Weapon	BLOOD POOL	Incapacitated <input type="checkbox"/>
Difficulty	○○○○○○○○○○	EXPERIENCE
Damage	○○○○○○○○○○	<input type="text"/>

## THE SCHOLARLY HERMIT

**Quote:** *To be human is a laudable goal, when one feels closer to the beasts of the earth. I'm not so sure that ripping off that poor man's head is a good way to do it, though.*

**Prelude:** You were born into a life of relative privilege, dwelling of one of the few cities in Europe. Your parents provided you with the best education they could afford, even sending you to one of the universities to study law. It wasn't what you were interested in, but you did it to please them, and settled into working as an advocate. The more you learned about the world and the ways of power, the more you hated it. One day, it finally became too much for you, and you simply left it behind. Rather than face your parents, you made off for the woods and started to work as a woodcutter.

Things weren't any simpler, just harder. You survived the first winter through luck and the second through sheer stubborn perseverance. In the third winter, however, you discovered you weren't as alone in the woods as you had thought. Making a delivery of wood to one of your customers, you discovered a wolf in her home. Hardly thinking, you charged with your ax to drive it away.

That's when it stood on two legs and laughed, baring its long teeth. It was too late to flee, so you fought for your life and lost. As your life's blood dripped onto the dirt floor, the wolf-man asked a simple question: "Do you want to live, brave woodcutter?"

Your answer was yes and you drank the blood the crea-



ture offered. It briefly spoke to you about your new state — no sun, avoid the Church, immortality — then fled into the dark woods. You lapped up the cold blood of your customer, then returned to your shack to think on what it meant to be a human and something more.

**Concept:** You retreated from normal society because you found you just couldn't cope with the hustle and bustle of the world. You preferred life simpler than you could find in the new towns and cities, with their politics and close-packed populations. You desire solitude or the company of only a few select people. You reflect on what your condition means, for you and humanity.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You are reflective, but hardly passive — when something needs to be done for the good of others, you're one of the first to volunteer. While you like to be alone, you also like the opportunity to discuss things with other people. While large groups or close spaces make you nervous, a small coterie is perfect for your needs. You've come to prefer the company of Cainites to mortals, since only another vampire can truly understand the immortal condition.

**Equipment:** Good clothing, shoes, cap with feather, knife, heavy cloak with hood, ax

VAMPIRE THE DARK AGES		
NAME: NATURE JUDGE	GENERATION: 12th	
PLAYER: DEMEANOR: LONER	HAVEN:	
CHRONICLE: CLAN: GANGREL	CONCEPT: Scholarly Hermit	
ATTRIBUTES		
PHYSICAL		MENTAL
Strength.....●●●●●●	Charisma.....●●●●●●	Perception.....●●●●●●
Dexterity.....●●●●●●	Manipulation.....●●●●●●	Intelligence.....●●●●●●
Stamina.....●●●●●●	Appearance.....●●●●●●	Wits.....●●●●●●
ABILITIES		
TALENTS		KNOWLEDGES
Acting.....●●●●●●	Animal Ken.....●●●●●●	Academics.....●●●●●●
Alertness.....●●●●●●	Archery.....●●●●●●	Hearth Wisdom.....●●●●●●
Athletics.....●●●●●●	Crafts.....●●●●●●	Investigation.....●●●●●●
Brawl.....●●●●●●	Etiquette.....●●●●●●	Law.....●●●●●●
Dodge.....●●●●●●	Herbalism.....●●●●●●	Linguistics.....●●●●●●
Empathy.....●●●●●●	Melee.....●●●●●●	Medicine.....●●●●●●
Intimidation.....●●●●●●	Music.....●●●●●●	Occult.....●●●●●●
Larceny.....●●●●●●	Role.....●●●●●●	Politics.....●●●●●●
Leadership.....●●●●●●	Swath.....●●●●●●	Science.....●●●●●●
Subterfuge.....●●●●●●	Survival.....●●●●●●	Seneschal.....●●●●●●
ADVANTAGES		
DISCIPLINES		VIRTUES
ANIMALISM.....●●●●●●	BACKGROUNDS	Conscience/Conviction.....●●●●●●
AUSPEX.....●●●●●●	CONTACTS.....●●●●●●	Self-Control/Insight.....●●●●●●
FORTITUDE.....●●●●●●	INFLUENCE.....●●●●●●	Courage.....●●●●●●
	MENTOR.....●●●●●●	
	RESOURCES.....●●●●●●	
OTHER TRAITS		
ROOD		HEALTH
HUMANITY		Bruised.....□
●●●●●●●●●●		Hurt.....-1 □
●●●●●●●●●●		Injured.....-1 □
●●●●●●●●●●		Wounded.....-2 □
●●●●●●●●●●		Mauled.....-2 □
●●●●●●●●●●		Crippled.....-5 □
●●●●●●●●●●		Incapacitated.....□
WILLPOWER		EXPERIENCE
●●●●●●●●●●		□
□□□□□□□□□□		□
BLOOD POOL		□
□□□□□□□□□□		□
□□□□□□□□□□		□
COMBAT		
Weapon	Difficulty	Damage

## THE WILD WOMAN

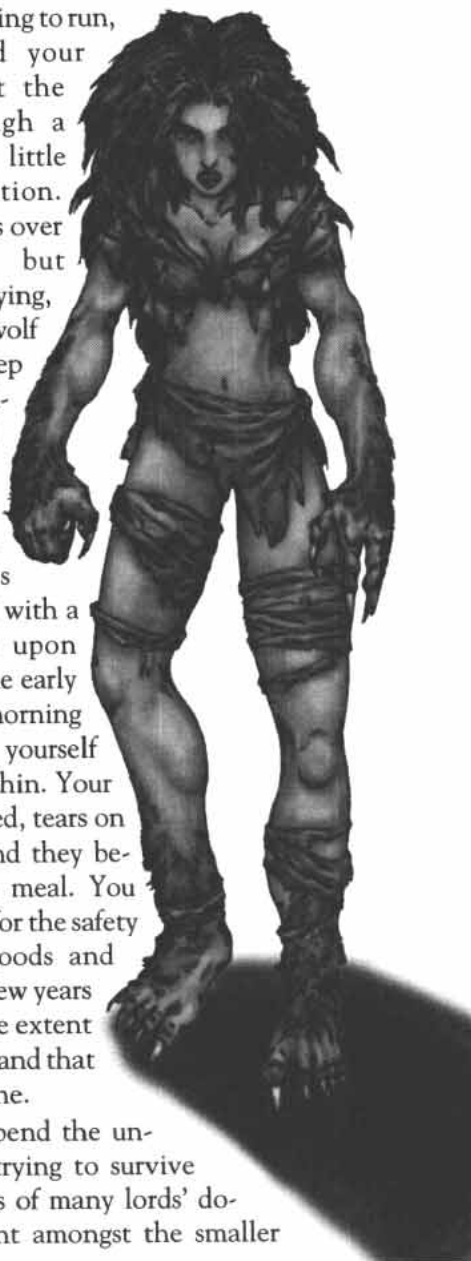
**Quote:** *Grrrrr. I don't care who you are. This is my kill, not yours. Find your own before you join it.*

**Prelude:** You don't recall much of your life before the Embrace. You only have vague memories of the seemingly unending days spent working to stay alive in some small hovel on the outskirts of a lord's domain. There had been children and definitely a husband, but they don't really mean too much to you now. Not since the night you died.

It was a crisp autumn night with the edge of winter in the air when the wolf came calling. The flimsy door of your home was no barrier to its strength. Your husband died trying to run, but you stood your ground against the beast — though a cleaver seemed little enough protection. The struggle was over in moments, but though you lay dying, you clung to the wolf desperate to keep it from your children. They fled into the night, and you died.

You woke a few moments later, alone and with a hunger strong upon you. It was in the early hours of that morning you committed yourself to the Beast within. Your children returned, tears on their cheeks, and they became your first meal. You fled your crime for the safety of the dark woods and spent the next few years learning the true extent of your curse — and that you weren't alone.

Now you spend the unending nights trying to survive on the outskirts of many lords' domains. You hunt amongst the smaller



hamlets and villages, avoiding the bigger towns and castles where the other Cainites make their havens. The woods are your home now.

**Concept:** Solidly in the grip of the Beast, you're a big bad wolf in the woods of Europe. Whatever was once human in you is now lost and you don't care to find it. There are bigger things to worry about now — such as where your next meal is coming from.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You're only a step or two removed from being an animal and it doesn't bother you at all. Not everything that you were before is lost, however — you want the company of other people, even if it's the brief contact before you feed from them. Other vampires disquiet you, though. You respect their power and resent their self-control, but also look down on them for their attempts to cling to humanity. This quest to be something you aren't makes no sense to you, and you're not shy about telling people this.

**Equipment:** tattered and dirty rags

VAMPIRE THE DARK HORSE		
NAME	NATURE: SURVIVOR	GENERATION: 10th
PLAYER:	DEMONOR: MONSTER	HAVING
CHRONICLES	CLAN: GANGREL	CONCEPT: Wild Woman
ATTRIBUTES		
PHYSICAL		MENTAL
Strength	Charisma	Perception
Dexterity	Manipulation	Intelligence
Stamina	Appearance	Wits
ABILITIES		
TALENTS		KNOWLEDGES
Acting	Animal Ken	Academics
Alertness	Archery	Heath Wisdom
Athletics	Crafts	Investigation
Brawl	Etiquette	Law
Dodge	Herbalism	Linguistics
Empathy	Melee	Medicine
Intimidation	Music	Occult
Larceny	Ride	Politics
Leadership	Stealth	Science
Subterfuge	Survival	Seneschal
ADVANTAGES		
DISCIPLINES		BACKGROUNDS
ANIMALISM	GENERATION	VIRTUES
FORTITUDE	HERD	Conscience/Conviction
PROTEAN	STATUS	Self-Control/Instinct
		Courage
OTHER TRAITS		
ROAD		HEALTH
BEAST		Bruised
WILLPOWER		Hurt
BLOOD POOL		Injured
		Wounded
		Mauled
		Crippled
		Incapacitated
COMBAT		
Weapon	Difficulty	Damage
EXPERIENCE		

# Of Historical Note: The Advantages of Gindsight

February 19th, 2000

Karsh,

Do you see now? Do you understand that the old stories were right? You are older than I, so I know you remember the tales told at the Gathers. Of the Betrayal and the struggle between Ennoia and Churka. Of the Giants of the East.

I remember what they said, Karsh. They said the Ravnos would wake the Giants and begin Ragnarok. For centuries I scoffed at those stories, and my foolishness cost us all dearly.

You know what happened in India, don't you? Churka woke and so did the Giants. We call them Cathayans now, but that is what they are and Ragnarok has begun. Have you been to Los Angeles and San Francisco, "Warlord"? Have you seen the Giants advance out of the East and into our lands?

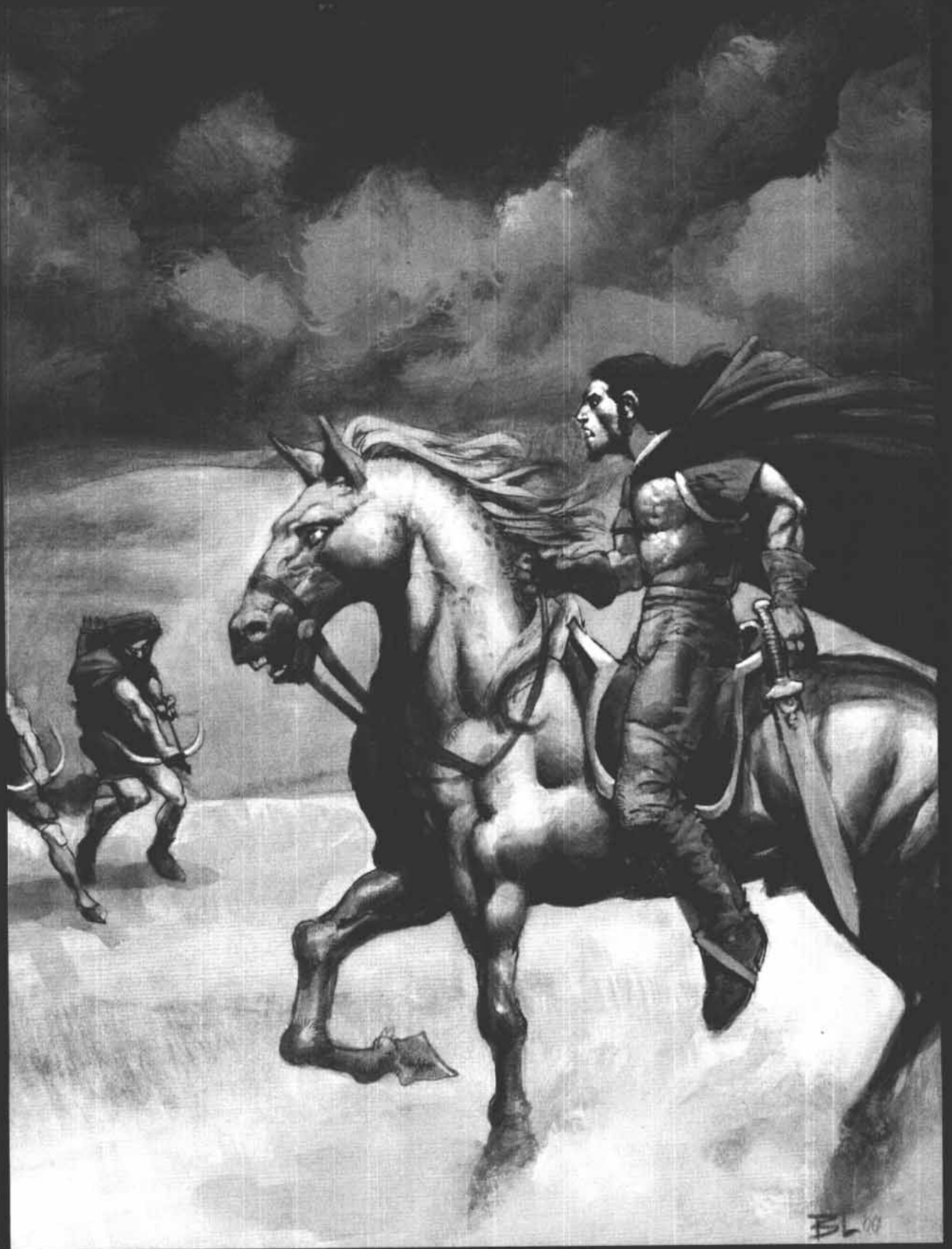
I brought the clan out of the Camarilla because I awoke from centuries of delusion. I realized the old ways were best and that the prophecies were true. Antediluvians and Giants from the East are not myths, Karsh. They are truth.

Come with us. Leave your blue-blooded masters behind and fight like a true Gangrel. Rage against Ragnarok!

Think of tonight as a time to set things right. Stand with us, Karsh, I do not want us to be enemies, but I will do what is needed to preserve the clan.

Sincerely,

**Xaviar**





**B**

## ook Two: Saracens

The wind from the north was more curse than blessing, the traveler decided sourly. In the rocky wastes of the Holy Land, the stones retained the day's heat and radiated it through the night. The breeze served to do little more than chill the sweat on his horse's flanks, and the dust it raised obscured his view of his quarry's trail. The traveler whispered a curse through clenched teeth and reined his mount to a halt. His hand idly caressed the worn hilt of the sword that hung from the saddle, then slipped inside his cloak, emerging with a length of silk cord wrapped around a small clay vial and a chipped crystal.



With practiced ease, the traveler uncapped the vial and teased a single droplet of black liquid onto the crystal. The wind whisked away the few words that he muttered, but the crystal reacted to their power, lighting with a faint yellow glow. It began to swing, gradually straining against the breeze until it pulled its tether parallel to the ground, pointing northeast. The traveler nodded once and murmured another short phrase, and the glow faded. He wrapped the cord around the crystal and vial again and tucked them back into his cloak. As he did so, his eyes reflexively glanced down at his hands. When he looked back up, he was no longer alone.

The traveler's gaze flitted over the four figures who had seemingly appeared from the thin, dry air. They surrounded him at a distance of perhaps 30 paces, just out of the range at which a strong, well-trained warhorse could reach a man with one lunge. Their garb was loose and light, mainly earth tones, and their hands held short horn bows with arrows nocked but not drawn. A variety of blades hung at their sides: scimitars, knives and daggers, a pair of throwing axes.

"*Shaitan*," one of the archers called out. He paused and switched to rough Latin. "You do not belong here. Turn and leave with your life."

The traveler sighed wearily and replied in Arabic, "I fear you mistake me for something else. Your quarrel is not with me."

"Indeed," taunted another, "we mistook you for a wise *shaitan*, only to find that you are a fool of one." She bent her bow, taking aim at the center of the traveler's chest. "But even fools can be taught, and Haqim wrote that pain is the best teacher." She loosed her missile.

The traveler spun from the saddle, his cloak flapping away to reveal the gleam of well-kept armor as he plucked his sword from its sheath. The arrow whispered through the point his heart had occupied but an instant before. He straightened and his eyes flickered red, their gleam reflected by the flat of his blade. "So be it," he hissed. "I have respected the land and the people that you ward. If you will not listen, your blood is on your own hands." Two more bowstrings twanged, and he whirled away from the shots, bringing himself a handful of steps closer to the woman who had fired first.

Three of the attackers dropped their bows, baring their own blades. The fourth stood impassive, bow still drawn but not aimed, watching the engagement. The three closed with the traveler with inhuman fleetness. He stood his ground, putting his back to a tall outcropping. Steel rang against steel, moving

faster than a mortal eye could hope to follow. Spatters of blood and scraps of cloth flecked the stones. In a moment, two fingers joined them; then a whole hand, still clutching a long dagger. Two more breaths, and the skirmish was over.

The traveler leaned against the boulder he'd put at his back, blood oozing from a score of wounds. Around him were scattered a trio of bodies. One still moaned and tried to drag itself toward its own severed leg. The other two were as still as death; wooden shafts protruded from their chests.

The traveler straightened painfully and gazed at his fourth adversary. "Pain is the best teacher," he quoted mockingly. "I suppose you wish your own lesson?"

The other shrugged. "They are young and impetuous, and you saved me the trouble of educating them. And I have learned as well."

"And what have you learned?"

An ironic shrug and a half-smile answered the query. A pause, and an elaboration: "To not be seen coming." The warrior wavered, as if viewed through a moonlit pool, and vanished.

The traveler's eyes widened and he made as if to dash for his mount. An arrow hissed through the still air and pierced his ankle, pinning him to the ground. He wrenched his leg, snapping the shaft, but two unseen blows shattered his knees. He fell prone, rolling to his back and holding his blade before him in a futile defense.

In the skies above, the stars began to vanish, eclipsed by racing storm clouds.

Another impact splintered the traveler's wrist. His sword fell to the ground beside him. He half-rolled, trying to reach it with his other hand, but halted as the blade of a scimitar caressed his throat. He looked into the eyes of the warrior standing above him and saw the emptiness of duty — and an almost-hidden glimmer of pleasure.

The heavens split with a prodigious roar as a white flash bleached all color from the world. The warrior's sword spun away, flinging off glowing droplets of molten steel.

"Enough." The word, whispered on the edge of hearing, nonetheless rang like a second thunderclap.

The warrior turned. "*Don Delacruz*," he began smoothly, "though your presence is never unwelcome, I fear I must protest this intervention. I had the situation well in hand, and the attention of one of your caste and stature is hardly—"

"Spare me your hollow words, Karim," replied the new arrival, an older man clad in brown and sitting almost casually atop a jagged boulder. "The Amr felt it necessary to send an observer to this place, and I am somehow not surprised that his premonition concerned you. If this is how you take situations 'well in hand,' I am amazed that the Caliph still grants you leave to instruct pupils."

Karim flinched visibly and, from his expression, would have darkened with anger had his skin been capable of it. "There is nothing more to be said here! We found this *shaitan* attempting to enter our lands! He was about to receive the reward of an enemy spy when you interfered! Stand aside *now*, or the Caliph will hear of this and we will see whose word is law on the Mountain!"

Forcing blood to his shattered limbs, the traveler willed his body to heal. His blade lay just beyond his reach, but Karim was focused on another opponent. Even as the traveler completed the thought and tensed to lunge, the sword skittered away from his fingertips. His eyes followed it as it rose from the ground to float a handbreadth above the open palm of *Don Delacruz*, the new arrival.

He calmly regarded the sword. His left hand rested on the stone on which he sat; the right, still crackling with the echoes of the power which it had unleashed, trailed along the flat of the blade. "I recognize the craftsmanship," he said thoughtfully, speaking more to the weapon than to anyone present. "De Peleroma of the Toreador, unless I mistake myself. And he only accepts commissions from those of certain lines." He turned his gaze on Karim. "Your behavior this night has been unconscionable, and you should give thanks to the Ancestor that I do not burn you down where you stand for the affront that you have given an ally of the Mountain." He paused and smiled humorlessly. "Your threats to me I set aside, as they were spoken in a heated moment. I know you better than to think you would deliberately violate Haqim's laws."

Karim snarled at the implicit challenge. "An ally? I tell you, I saw him wield blood magic, and his spell of searching set his course deeper into *our* lands! What more must I say?"

"And are all blood-wizards of the *shaitan*?" asked Delacruz coolly. Tiny lightning writhed around his clenched fist and in the depths of his eyes.

Karim stepped back involuntarily, his face an unreadable mask. "I— that is, I had not thought that such a—"

"You had not thought, no. Is the house of Haqim so poor that it cannot afford to extend hospitality to those who were once as brothers? Must we cut them down rather than acknowledge our debt to them?"

Karim bowed stiffly, then flickered and vanished again. Delacruz turned his gaze to the traveler. "And what am I to think of you? I know what you are, and I know what you have hunted into our lands. Though Karim's methods may have been hasty, I cannot fault his reasoning."

The traveler rose to his feet and squared his shoulders. "Then be done with it."

Delacruz laughed dryly. "I did not say I *shared* his reasoning. Too many of your kind see Haqim's line as little more than ravening bandits. I would prefer to leave you with a slightly better impression."

The traveler looked pointedly at the space Karim had recently occupied.

The sorcerer chuckled. "Do not judge a castle's master by the boys who clean the stable." He made a dismissive gesture and the sword revolved lazily in midair, halting with its hilt before its owner. "I return your blade to you, but your existence would have ended by now had I not intervened. I will consider your obligation to me fulfilled if you will do me two services." He paused expectantly.

"I make no promise until I know its entirety," the traveler observed. He grasped his sword and sheathed it, then bowed formally. "Still, I am in your debt, and honor demands that I at least listen."

Delacruz snorted. "As I said, I know what you hunt. It is familiar to my brothers, and we know its destination, though it has not yet offended *us* so heavily as to beg for destruction. I will guide you there, and you will settle whatever business you have with it. Then you will return to your home *immediately*, lest your actions jeopardize our position. That is the first request I make of you."

"And the second?" the traveler inquired warily.

"As you now have a guide, your pursuit is no longer as urgent." Delacruz smiled broadly. "Your second task is to accept my hospitality for two nights, during which time I will tell you of Haqim's inheritors — as we see ourselves. If you must hold us in such low esteem, the least you can do is hold an informed opinion."

# The Children of Haqim

*You came here seeking knowledge, did you not? Tales to spin of the Saracens, to charm the heart of a lady or to win the regard of a prince of men — or of more than men, perhaps? What did you expect to find in these lands? Blood-maddened murderers seeking the lives of those who sent the Crusades against their mortal families? Godless heathens who hold that your Savior was no more than a man, and who pray to a holy stone rather than a holy cross? Wily Arab traders with long knives in their sleeves, riches in their hands, slaves on their chains and lies on their lips? Perhaps you thought to match your Toledo blade against one of Damascus' finest, or to commission the disappearance of a rival? Yes, all of these things you will find among my brothers — but look deeper, and you will see more than your sire or kin ever told you of.*

*You disbelieve? You wish to cling to your preconceived notions of what my clan is? Observe me, then. My skin is as dark as that of any African, but it is the color of age which slowly dyes those of our line. Under the darkness, are my features those of an Arab? In the days when I walked under the sun, my name was Philippe Delacroix, and I called your own Paris my home. Even now, among my clan, I use the Spanish translation Delacruz. Do you still think that my clan takes only those of the East into its ranks? Note my hands: stained with ink, not blood. I am a scholar, not a killer. If that is insufficient proof, examine this blade at my side. It is but a showpiece, a bluff. Here, draw it; you will observe that it is slightly less sharp than my tongue. Hardly the weapon of a hired murderer. Nor is my home that of one. I took note of your disbelieving gaze as you entered my study. Yes, these books are all real — some four dozen, all told. They are my greatest pride, foolish though I am to take pleasure in such fragile material possessions. The cross upon the wall there is mine as well, and has been since well before the night I*

*last drew breath. It is a reminder, I suppose, that God does not play favorites, nor protect those in His service from everything that comes in the night.*

*A hundred tiny details. Alone, insignificant anomalies — but together, they shape an image of an Assamite that most European Cainites would scarcely find credible, were they to be confronted with it. But you, who confront the beast in the cold flesh — ah, I see the faintest glimmer of belief in your eyes. Attend; I will spin you a thousand stories of my blood, each more fantastic than the last, and each the truth of whatever God you care to name.*

## WARRIORS, WIZARDS, SCHOLARS AND RUMORS

The so-called Saracens are one of the strangest clans of the Cainites, at least to the Western way of thinking. Separated from their European brethren by geography, language and faith, they have taken a divergent path for centuries. Nevertheless, their claim to Cainite heritage cannot be denied: they share a common physiology with the other clans (save for the odd coloration that their skin undergoes with age). The Assamites also adhere to a fairly conventional mythos regarding their origins. They state that their founder, commonly known as Haqim, was a warrior of fearsome prowess who received eternal life as a reward for some nebulous task, after which he took up the scroll alongside the spear and became one of the Second City's most renowned scholars. From him sprang all three of the lines that collectively call themselves the Children of Haqim: in Western tongues, the Assamites.

Geographically, the Assamites exert influence over the mortals of more land area than most European clans. Their pawns are plentiful from the Almohad Empire to Arabia, and they have extended their web north into the frigid wastes, south into the dark interior of Africa, and east to Taugast and parts unknown. However, the Assamites are no more numerous than any other Cainites — their numbers simply are spread more thinly across the territory that they call home.

With that much space to expand into — and that many mortals to expand among — the Assamites have diversified to a level unseen in the more specialized, multi-clan communities of Europe. Three distinct divisions exist among their ranks. Though some Cainite scholars would refer to these as “bloodlines,” the Assamites call them “castes” and they consider each to be an equal part of the clan — equal in theory, at least. This equality is due in part to the fact that the two castes whose roles are most opposed have equally strong claims to direct-line descent from Haqim, thus rendering it impossible for even the most astute genealogist to

## TAUGAST

In 1197, Europe knows of China only through second- and third-hand rumors carried by Arab traders. The East is known by a variety of names (the most familiar one to modern ears, “Cathay,” will not be used for another two centuries). In the Arab world, “Taugast” is the most common. Its origins are uncertain, but most scholars believe it to be the name of a kingdom or royal family of the region. Most Assamites refer to China as Taugast. They have no commonly accepted name for the vampiric inhabitants of the area, who most Cainites in the 20th century will call “Cathayans.”

determine which one is the “true” line. The Assamites consider this point moot: all three castes are equally Haqim’s inheritors.

The caste that Western vampires most commonly encounter is that of the warriors. This caste is largely responsible for most Cainites’ knowledge of what the



BOOK TWO: SARACENS

“typical” Assamite is. The warriors are the fiercest adherents to the Muslim faith, and the most radically different from European Cainites in mind-set and culture. They are siege engineers, master swordsmen, archers, strategists and assassins. Within the past five centuries, the warriors have gradually become the dominant caste within the clan, dictating the Assamites’ agendas both in managing their own affairs and in dealing with other Cainites.

The next most familiar caste is that which specializes in the Assamites’ own forms of blood magic. Known as the sorcerers (also “magi” and “wizards”), these individuals occasionally appear in the major cities of the Almohad and Byzantine Empires, and have taken active roles in several battles in the Holy Land. Unlike the unstructured blood magicians of other clans or the formal but nascent wizards of the Tremere, the sorcerers work from millennia of accumulated lore. Their magic is that of enlightenment and expanded perception. The sorcerers are the moderate caste within the clan. The caste claims no direct descent from Haqim, who was never reputed to be a magician of any sort. Most outside observers commonly believe that it is an offshoot of the vizier line that has grown into its own identity over the centuries.

Rarely encountered by outsiders, or at least rarely recognized, the viziers (also “scholars” or “scribes”) may be the most diverse of the castes. Their ranks hold all those who value knowledge over power, or whose strength lies in word or thought rather than in deed. Courtiers, statesmen, theologians, bards, linguists, historians, craftsmen, scientists and artists all thrive among them. They make up the backbone of the clan, managing Assamite holdings and exerting influence over mortal society across North Africa and parts east. The viziers are the most conservative of the three castes, as befits their role as the primary recorders of the clan’s own history.

## UNDER DISTANT STARS

*By many accounts, our line ranges farther than any save the Ravnos and Gangrel nomads. The lands that fall under our influence and protection span the southern shore of the Mediterranean, from the great ocean in the west to the Holy Land in the east. Our warriors fought on all sides of the Byzantine and Roman Empires’ wars; our viziers blazed trade routes to far Taugast and rich India; our sorcerers delved into*

### ON RACIAL AND GENDER SELECTION

*Do you think us so foolish as to ignore all but a small section of humanity, and then only half of those? No, fully two-thirds of our clan gives the gift of the Blood to all those whom we deem deserving, regardless of such considerations of mortality. The warriors have adopted some mortal foolishness of late, but they will certainly give it up within a century as their ranks become depleted.*

Contrary to popular myth, the Assamites do Embrace women. The largest numbers of females are within the viziers, with the warriors holding the fewest. Among the Muslim-dominated warriors, the practice of Embracing women fell out of favor in the late eighth century as they came to believe that it was immoral to curse women with unlife. The Caliph, the head of the warrior caste, only recently re-sanctioned the Embrace of some women as an “experiment” — a proclamation that greatly amused some female viziers and sorcerers who are older than the Caliph himself. However, this has had the effect of ensuring that any female Assamite of the warrior caste either predates the prohibition or is a neonate twice as capable as any of her male peers.

As for Europeans, the Assamites have likewise never shied from bringing deserving mortals into the ranks of the viziers and sorcerers. This is especially true in those territories where the Assamites are in direct conflict with other clans, such as the Iberian kingdoms and the northern Byzantine Empire. Prior to the Crusades, the warriors were equally egalitarian, but since 1096, they have refused to Embrace all but the most truly deserving Westerners — and these few hardy souls, as well as their predecessors, are subject to no small amount of scorn from their “brothers” for Europe’s crimes against the Arabs and the Islamic faith.

*darkest Africa in search of that land’s hidden secrets. From every land we touched, we took new knowledge and new brethren. With the last century’s new religious conflicts adding to the confusion, it becomes necessary to examine our affairs in every area of the world separately, for our interests rarely coincide from one end of the map to the other.*

## IBERIA

The land that will become Spain is one of the two greatest areas of conflict between the Assamites and other Cainites. Haqim's inheritors backed the Almohad Empire from its inception, as they had with the Arab caliphates, the Islamic predecessors of the Almohads. Many among the clan saw the eighth century's Arab expansion into Europe as a once-in-a-millennium opportunity. The warriors dreamt of glorious victories against the decadent Western Cainites, and the viziers saw a melding of cultures unparalleled by any to date. For different reasons, virtually all Assamites supported the Arabs. Many, particularly among the viziers, found counterparts in the southern Toreador and Lasombra who shared their opinions — though motives among these allies differed radically. The invasions also saw the beginning of a strong influx of Europeans and mixed-race individuals into the ranks of the Assamites. Many Iberians and French received the Blood between the conquests of the caliphates and the beginning of the *Reconquista*.

Times have changed, however. As the Christian kingdoms of northern Iberia wage unceasing war against the Moors, the Assamites in the region divide along lines of mortal ancestry and religion. The Christians among the clan find their position to be vastly inferior, however. Their offers of aid to the northern Toreador, Lasombra and Brujah are rejected as "Moorish treachery" far more than they are accepted. Many of these Assamites grow disillusioned with their aid of the *Reconquista* and beg forgiveness from their brethren, throwing their full support behind the Taifa kingdoms. Almost every Assamite in Iberia has gone over to the Moorish side of the conflict.

The Almohad Empire is, by many accounts, the peak of world civilization, and nowhere is the contrast with the Christian nations more obvious than here. The cities are centers of learning unsurpassed by any in Christendom, and their wealth is legendary. Such a bounty of knowledge is one of the greatest treasures of the vizier caste, and they will go to any lengths to guard it from the "barbaric" Europeans — even making political concessions to the warriors and sorcerers that would be unconscionable in other circumstances. In Iberia, the Assamites are wholly united against the other Cainites. A few others side with them, most often Muslim Lasombra and Toreador, but for the most part the Assamites stand alone.

## NORTH AFRICA

Though its Iberian possessions are among the Almohad Empire's most prized, they are hardly its only ones. The Empire spans North Africa from the Atlantic Ocean to the borders of Egypt and extends south from the coast for several hundred miles. The Almohads' expansion was a matter of both competence on the part of its Berber founders and complacency on the part of its Almoravid predecessors. Unlike its holdings in Iberia, the Empire in North Africa is rabidly conservative, persecuting religious minorities in a harsh mirror image of European Christendom's behavior.

The Assamites of the Empire are a strange mix. Ancestrally, they are primarily derived from African stock, though a significant minority of Italians and Greeks exists. The warriors here seek to reclaim the fierce heritage of the nomadic tribes native to the region; many wander the Empire's fringes with bands of mortal followers, mimicking Ravnos customs. The viziers and sorcerers are intellectually conservative, more interested in refining their own work and that of the mortals around them than they are in acquiring new knowledge from outside their borders.

The insular nature of the viziers here has led to a gradual loss of Assamite influence over the Almohad rulers. The Followers of Set have expanded outward from Egypt in a slow takeover, gently subverting the Assamites' pawns until they are almost powerless. These events have taken place so slowly and subtly that the Assamites are only now realizing the extent to which they have lost their hold on the Empire, and they are still undecided as to the manner in which they should respond.

## THE HOLY LAND

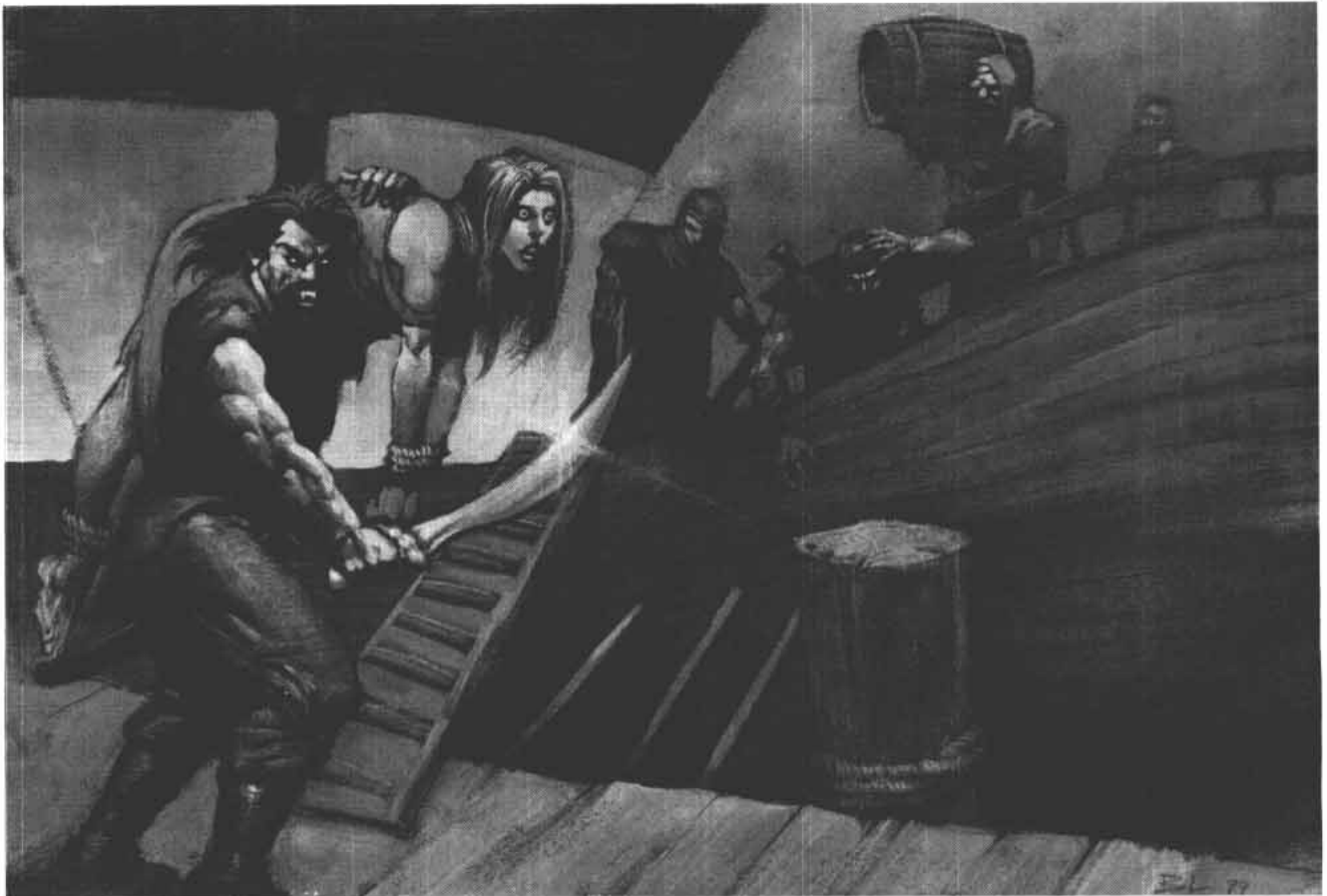
If the Taifa cities of Iberia are the Assamites' greatest treasure, the Holy Land is their greatest battlefield. The warrior caste has fervently backed Islam's followers since Mohammed's lifetime, and they see the Crusades as unconscionable assaults upon the mortals of the region and upon the Muslim faith itself. While the fighting in Iberia partially stems from a desire to preserve knowledge, it is fueled here by religious fervor of a sort rarely seen among Cainites. This is compounded by the fact that the Crusades drive closer to the heart of the Assamites' power than any European invasion ever before. Faced with such a threat to their "ancestral" home, many of the clan's elders feel that there can be no compromise until the last European Cainite is dust beneath their feet.

## THE PIRATES OF COSSURA

The black-sailed ships of the Cossuran pirates are well-known throughout the Western Mediterranean. From their island haven east of Carthage and Tunis, these raiders prey on shipping throughout the region, selling the spoils of their ventures in ports across their area of influence. Cainites traveling by sea are usually unmolested, though several have disappeared in the raids and are presumed to lie in torpor on the sea floor.

Most Cossuran raids are the products of mortal greed alone, but some have Cainite backing. The vampires in question are a handful of adventurous Lasombra captains and their allies among the Assamite sorcerer caste. The former contribute ships and crews; the latter apply their mastery of weather and more directly offensive magics to the effort. The precise numbers of vampires involved, as well as their exact agendas in their piracy, are unknown.

Currently, the Arabs hold the cities of Jerusalem and Damascus, while the Crusaders control Acre and Antioch. Each has its particular interest for Cainites. Acre is believed to hold the True Cross (or fragments thereof), which makes it a strong point of interest for Christian Cainites and those who benefit from the Crusaders' battles — though all Cainites who enter its walls are said to die instantly in an eruption of pure white flame. Jerusalem is something of an open city, held under treaty for the past five years to allow Christians to enter and worship if they are unarmed (see **Jerusalem by Night** for details). Damascus is the source for steel and silk which are unsurpassed by any in the known world, and it is home to several mortal and supernatural artificers. It is also a major worship center for Muslims and Christians alike, with over 500 mosques and the ruins of the Church of St. John the Baptist. Antioch is the farthest point to which many European pilgrims journey in the Holy Land, as it is the northernmost major city within the Holy Land that the Crusaders hold securely. As such, it has become the contemporary equivalent of a "tourist city," with attractions to tempt visiting commoners and the defending garrison alike.



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While the Assamites of the Holy Land are no more numerous than elsewhere, they are certainly more visible here. The warrior caste indisputably dominates the clan's affairs, and they enjoy support from the more martially inclined members of the sorcerers. Almost every Assamite in the Holy Land is Muslim, or at least supports the followers of Islam. Those who do not endorse the local beliefs, including many Jewish members of the clan, have long since moved east to Arabia or north to Byzantium, leaving local affairs in the hands of those who have the most to gain or lose. The most ardently Muslim Assamites followed Islam in life, so many of those who reside here are neonates and ancillae. There are elders as well, but their dedication to Islam is less straightforward.

As the warrior caste is predominant here, Assamite influence over mortal affairs is shaky. Few local viziers survived the continual battles of the past century; those who have are nearly as inclined to war as their warrior brethren. The one exception to this rule is the city of Damascus, which is the clan's center of power in the region. It is home to a cabal of viziers and sorcerers who are said to count al-Ashrad, the head of the sorcerer caste, among their numbers. These elders share Damascus with a handful of decadent Toreador who proclaim themselves the city's rulers. Christian Cainite pilgrims to the city are allowed entrance, but scrying sorcerers or young warriors training in the arts of surveillance continually watch them from afar. Damascus is a permanent home to perhaps a dozen Assamites, with up to twice as many transients staying there for a few nights to a few months before moving on to their individual tasks in the Holy Land.

Assamite relations with other Cainites in the Holy Land are complex and dynamic. The clan has strong allies among many Malkavians, who claim to be defending the Holy Land because their clan founder sleeps somewhere beneath it (and privately, many Assamites express the opinion that this would be a satisfactory explanation for the madness of the past century). Likewise, the Followers of Set defend the region as fervently as the most bloodthirsty Assamite warrior. Egypt is their home, and the Crusades threaten it as well. Most Assamites are glad enough of the aid of Set's children when battle rages, though their continual subversion of mortal affairs will have to be dealt with sooner or later. Finally, the surprisingly large numbers of local Nosferatu and Toreador who have adopted Islam are staunch allies of the Assamites. The

Nosferatu are the most welcome allies for many Assamites, because their motives are the most straightforward and acceptable; the Toreador are reliable in their own roles, but are seen to be of little value in the middle of a war. Ventrue and Christian Lasombra, on the other hand, are likely to be killed on sight; they are the enemy, and they are offered no quarter.

## EGYPT

Though the Followers of Set watch Egypt with near-absolute mastery, the kingdom is a point of interest for many Assamites. Like the Almohad Empire, it is a major focal point for learning, and sorcerers and viziers often rub shoulders with Brujah, Cappadocian, Tzimisce and Setite scholars in the schools of Cairo. One group of Assamite historians resides in Alexandria where they try to reconstruct the knowledge contained in the Library of Alexandria. Through careful, methodical research, these dedicated Cainites slowly unearth hidden stores of scrolls saved from the fire and extract tidbits of lost knowledge from the ashes of those which were destroyed. They do this with the tacit approval of the city's Toreador prince Marcellus, although some local Setites are said to oppose the project.

## BYZANTIUM

The Byzantine Empire is the melting pot of the Western world, an area where three continents meet in an intricate dance of political maneuvering that will spawn an adjective from its complexity. In the shadowed halls of Constantinople and the fallen temples of Athens, Caine's heirs carry out their eternal schemes with a sophistication that is unmatched in the European courts, mirroring the mortals' own plots and stratagems. In this fertile environment, the Assamites have adapted so well that their more straightforward brethren in the Holy Land would be hard-pressed to distinguish them from other Cainites. Many Assamite elders consider the Byzantine mortals "acceptable" (meaning "not European enough to be discriminated against"). A sharp-eyed observer can find Greeks, Turks and Russians alongside Arabs and Cypriots in the clan's ranks.

Nowhere is the role of assassin more prevalent among those of the warrior caste than in Byzantium. Though the front lines of the Crusades are in the Holy Land, this is where many of the Cainite powers behind the Crusades make their homes: far enough from the fighting to be safe from a stray raid, yet close enough to



supervise their favored mortal pawns. If this were not enough, the native Cainites have found the Assamites to be one of the best “neutral” sources of aid in furthering their own plots by removing inconvenient obstacles.

The sorcerers come to western Byzantium more and more frequently in these nights, though they often disguise themselves as mortal sorcerers or members of other clans. Their main concern here is to observe the spread of Tremere influence eastward and, in doing so, to learn as many of the Usurpers’ Hermetic secrets as they can. This has been a less than successful venture, for the Tremere show an unfortunately strong ability to detect scrying attempts. Wizards’ duels have shattered many a night, and both sides suffer grievous losses in this shadowy campaign. The sorcerers are considering enlisting the aid of the Byzantine Tzimisce in their mission, but neither side has made a definite commitment yet.

The viziers who serve clan interests in the Empire are perhaps the most radically different of the castes when compared to their counterparts in other areas of the world. Forced by circumstances to adapt or perish, they are every bit as skilled at political manipulation and courtly intrigues as the most devious Toreador or Setite. Some observers say that the viziers are assassins as deadly as the warriors, though they wield rumors instead of weapons. More than one Crusade backer has found his allies deserting him in his moment of greatest need through the viziers’ machinations.

The Assamites’ alliances and vendettas in Byzantium are as impossible to track as those of any other clan, with the notable exception of the Tremere-vizier feud. Tonight’s mortal enemies may be tomorrow’s boon companions in the complex web of loyalties that spans the Empire. The only constant is a paradoxical one: that there are no constants.

## ARABIA AND PERSIA

Many Cainites think of the lands east of the Crusader States as the Assamites’ “homelands.” There is a certain degree of truth to this belief, as many of the eldest members of the clan dwell here. The ancient fortress known as Alamut, which Assamite legend holds that Haqim himself built, is somewhere in the mountains of northern Persia, and from here the clan’s leaders attempt to maintain control over their far-flung brethren. The jagged peaks and deep-shadowed valleys hold thousands of tiny communities, and many of these are occasionally visited by native sons dead for centu-

ries. Many believe the fabled First and Second Cities lie in this land as well. The Assamites guard this region relentlessly, but exactly what the objects of their guardianship may be is a matter of conjecture.

### THE KEENING

Since the rise of Islam, the entire Arabian Peninsula has been an uncomfortable place for Cainites. The holy cities of Mecca and Medina are the apparent sources of the Keening, an eerie rumbling howl that only vampires can hear. The Keening rises and sets with the sun — it begins as a faint whisper on the edge of consciousness shortly before dawn and peaks as a shrieking cacophony at noon. Sleeping Cainites hear the roar as they slumber. Until two centuries ago, the Keening was so extreme as to drive weak-willed Cainites to the brink of frenzy or insanity within a day. However, a cabal of Muslim Nosferatu (now known as the Hajj) somehow enacted wards around Mecca that damp the Keening to a bearable level (and the sorcerers would dearly love to know how this was done).

Visitors find the Keening rather unsettling during their first week in the region. They must spend one Willpower point to sleep or they are at +1 difficulty to avoid Röttschreck the next night. Local Cainites are accustomed to the Keening, and some actually sleep poorly if they travel outside its range of effect.

For the most part, the Arabian Peninsula is too thinly populated to support more than a single vampire in any given area, and the Keening drives away all but the most devout, willful or insensitive. Many of the local Cainites, who include Gangrel and Followers of Set as well as all three Assamite castes, are loosely affiliated with roaming tribes of Bedouin nomads, “adopting” one particular group for a generation or two before moving on.

Mecca and Medina, the two holiest cities of the Muslim faith, lie on the eastern coast of the Red Sea. Mecca is the birthplace of Mohammed, and it holds the Great Mosque. All Muslims who are capable of doing so are expected to make at least one pilgrimage to Mecca in their lives. Medina contains several important mosques as well as Mohammed’s tomb. Bands of roving warriors and sorcerers guard the outskirts of both cities from non-Islamic Cainites; only Muslims may enter

either city, mortal or Cainite. These guardians are some of the most devout Muslims among the Assamites, and theirs is a soul-wearying task. Though they protect these holiest of sites, they may not enter them. Both cities radiate such powerful auras of faith that any Cainite passing their gates is subjected to fiery agony that dims the wrath of the noon sun by comparison. The faithful say that the Hajj Nosferatu can enter the city, but more cynical Cainites discount that as legend.

Farther east lies Baghdad, the seat of the Caliphate. In past centuries, the Caliph was the political leader of Islam; now, he is "simply" the head of the Muslim faith. This city is a center of life in the region in many ways: agricultural, intellectual, artistic, spiritual. Baghdad is also a major trade center. The main road between Baghdad and Damascus is one of the most well-traveled in the area, and most caravans destined for Persia and Taugast originate here. Assamites are common in the city and its surrounding communities, and many of these individuals are true ancients. All three castes take a great deal of interest in parts east; Baghdad is the center of their study and their logistical base for expeditions eastward.

## THE OUTLANDS

In general, the Assamites have an influence structure that extends farther southeast than that of most other clans. Thus, they have much more congress with the strange vampires of Taugast than do most European Cainites (though this is a matter of very small degrees). Vizier merchants and sorcerer researchers who accompany Arab trading caravans eastward have occasionally encountered far-flung bloodlines whose lineage is difficult, if not impossible, to trace in traditional Cainite fashion. To complicate the matter, most of these individuals claim to have never *heard* of Caine or his descendants — though they darkly mutter of thieves and liars from the West. Oddly enough, some of the native vampires of India display grotesque powers similar to those of the Tzimisce, though they avow no relation to the Fiends, and the Byzantine Tzimisce have no knowledge of Eastern "cousins." Even this paltry information has been difficult for the Assamites to acquire, for the Eastern vampires have no love for anyone from the West and they are more likely to rend the flesh from a vizier's bones than to speak two words to him. The few sorcerers who have survived such encounters and had the opportunity to inspect their fallen foes report that these strangers' powers may well be of infernal origin.

Assamite explorers have also followed trade routes south, down the eastern coast of Africa and through the Saharan wasteland. There they have encountered Gangrel and Laibon fellow-travelers and found some shelter among the local populations. In this frontier, Assamite reach is closely tied to the presence of Arab and Berber traders they use as cover and food supply. Stories of hostile encounters with local spirits and animal-warriors also filter back to Alamut.

## AFFAIRS AND CONCERNS

*Though we are diverse and far-ranging, there are matters that occupy the attention of us all. Some have but trivial bearing on an outsider, and I mention them only as idle curiosities. Others may mean all the world to you in the coming nights.*

## FORTRESS ALAMUT

*Though written in legendary form, this passage is the most accurate account we have of the founding of our stronghold. This is the opening of the Chronicle of the Heartblood:*

*"So it was that when the decay of the Second City began to grow, and discontent boiled in the hearts of Khayyin's spawn, Haqim led his Children into the harsh mountains. For nights upon end he strode forward, guided by some unknown inspiration, neither looking back nor hesitating in his march. At last he came to a distant peak, barren and silent. He gathered his Children around him and thrust his spear into the rock, and there arose a black throne from the heart of the mountain. As the throne rose, an eagle stooped and landed on it, and regarded the Ancestor with hunter's eye.*

*"Here," the Ancestor said. "Our home is here, from this night until the Last. This place is ours, now and forever — to gather, to watch, to remember and to judge. This is the nest of eagles, and it shall ever be known as such."*

*"And the Children of Haqim raised up the mountain around the throne and made it their home."*

In the mountains of Asia Minor, if one knows where to look, there is a narrow path that branches off from the main trade road in a place where no villages lie for dozens of miles. This route ascends the steepest of slopes, passing close by treacherous depths where cold winds howl to sweep the unwary to death on the sword-sharp rocks far below. It has a hundred branches, each

one leading to wastes more desolate than the last, and it cannot be navigated without the favor of those who built it. This is the road to Alamut, the Eagle's Nest, the ancient stronghold of the Assamites.

From the outside, Alamut is little to look at: a small hill fort made of black basalt, with walls far too short and thin to withstand a siege should any army care to expend effort making the climb. However, this is merely the gatehouse of the fortress. Within the central structure of the fort, a wide, flat path opens, sloping down into the mountain. This is where Alamut's actual physical defenses begin, and members of all three castes constantly maintain and upgrade them. In addition to physical defenses, the fortress is also shrouded in enchantments that keep its location hidden from all those who its inhabitants do not allow to find it.

Within the mountain itself lie all the treasures of the clan. Here are the training halls, where a hundred warriors at a time may learn the ways of combat. Here are countless laboratories for sorcerer and vizier to experiment in all the arts of man. Here is the great library with its ranks of stone tablets and scrolls and books, the artifacts of ages past preserved by the scholars who maintain the clan's histories. The catacombs

descend over two score levels into the mountain, and they are so extensive that no Assamite who has dwelt in Alamut less than a century can be certain of knowing all their twists, turns and secrets. Indeed, some chambers have lain closed for centuries, either by design or by the silence of those who know what they contain. Enough private chambers exist on the various levels to house over a thousand Cainites and their mortal attendants. Many Assamites maintain quarters here, though less than 30 are in permanent residence and awake at any given time.

### THE BLACK THRONE

Alamut's great hall dominates the very center of the fortress. This vast chamber is large enough to hold over a thousand assembled individuals. It has no ceiling as such, even though its walls extend far above what innumerable measurements have confirmed is the level of the floors above the hall. Visitors who look up see nothing but a vast empty darkness stretching above them, with the occasional flicker that bears a disquieting resemblance to a star, and those few who have mustered the effort to remain awake during the day say that the ceiling remains the same regardless of the



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conditions outside the mountain. The walls are dark, rough granite, and the floor's tiles — an intricate pattern that marks out Haqim's own sigil — have been re-laid a score of times to fend off the wear of thousands of years of passage over them.

Only one item stands in the hall, directly opposite the huge double doors that are its only entrance. Its stark simplicity makes it dominate the hall even more. This is the Black Throne of Haqim. It is smooth and undecorated, and whatever stone it is made of resists all attempts to mark it in any fashion. A wooden shaft the size of a spear protrudes vertically from the right forward corner of the throne. This is reputedly unbreakable, but no Assamite admits to having attempted to test that story. The Black Throne is seemingly part of the rock on which it rests, though the vizier who restores the floor of the hall every century maintains that the rock below the tiles is not the same as that of the seat. The Throne is traditionally the single symbol of office of the Eldest, leader of the clan. Only he may occupy it, and all understand that the Eldest is merely acting in the place of the Ancestor Haqim, whose rightful seat the Throne is and who will one night return to the clan and make himself known by drawing out his spear.

### HAQIM'S WHEREABOUTS

Though Assamites rarely speak of the matter, the issue of their clan founder's fate greatly troubles many clan elders. As far as the official record goes, Haqim last graced Alamut over a millennium ago. Shortly thereafter, he briefly appeared in the British Isles in the company of a Ventrue known as Mithras, and then seemingly disappeared from the face of the earth. A persistent rumor that Alamut's masters have never been able to eradicate says that Haqim left because of the clan's failure to perform its duty, though precisely *what* that duty was differs with every telling of the tale. Ancillae on either side of the warrior-vizier conflict often bring up this apocryphal tale.

### THE HEARTBLOOD

Three levels below the great hall lies another chamber whose significance to the Assamites equals, and perhaps exceeds, that of the throne room. This is the Vault of the Heartblood, the spiritual center of Haqim's line. The room is small, perhaps a dozen paces on a side, and all its surfaces are smooth obsidian

polished to a shine rivaling that of the finest mirror. In the very center of the Vault, a basalt well rises from the floor. It is roughly an arm's length across, and no one has ever determined its depth. This well contains the clan's Heartblood. It is the mingled blood of every Assamite to ever journey to Alamut, as well as every one who has fallen and left behind such remains as could be added to the Heartblood. According to some legends, Haqim sleeps in the depths of the well, though the elders who reside at Alamut, known as the *silsila*, believe this tale is an allegory indicating that a good portion of the blood in the well is the Ancestor's. Aside from the well, the room is bare, save for a pair of wooden writing desks used by the sorcerer scribes who dispatch messages to the clan using the Heartblood.

The Heartblood has several special properties in and of itself. It is purely *Cainite vitae*, though all attempts to determine its exact potency fail. An Assamite who sips from the well experiences an epiphany of purpose and loyalty to the clan. Any blood taken from the Heartblood returns to it after three nights' time, even if it is within an individual who drank it, so it is unsuitable as a blood supply for long journeys. The well itself is enchanted to keep the blood circulating and fresh forever.

### FAITH

*It is one of the great paradoxes of our clan that so many of us cling tightly to the teachings of one mortal religion or another. Our library at Alamut holds writings that predate all of them; should we not, then, rise above such beliefs and seek truer forms of understanding of the divine? Yet so many of us do not, instead clinging to Christianity, Islam, Judaism or more esoteric teachings as a drowning man grasps a straw.*

To the Western eye, a single-minded devotion to Islam is one of the Assamites' defining characteristics. Those who give any degree of thought to this matter find such adherence to mortal belief ludicrous at best. Mohammed founded his religion less than six centuries ago; many Cainites who were in the region at the time recall the events of Islam's birthing throes, and a good number of Assamites who are still active today are so old as to predate the faith.

In truth, the Assamites as a whole have never fully embraced Islam, though those who did are among the most vocal and visible members of the clan, and many who did not adopt the faith did at least support its spread. The religion does hold a great deal of appeal for the Children of Haqim, who find echoes of an earlier,

more noble time in its harsh formal codes of justice and who endorse the belief that prophets are merely men with special gifts. As a result, Islam generally receives more respect from the Assamites than Christianity with its seeming (to the Saracen eye) hypocrisy and corruption, though individual Christian Assamites may hold the reverse opinion.

### ON VIAE

Many Assamites follow Roads other than that of Blood. The practitioners of the Via Sanguinius are those Assamites who are most convinced of their superiority to all other Cainites and who follow the records of Haqim's teachings the most literally. Like the Assamites who follow the Islamic faith, the impact of their actions and words far outweighs their actual numbers within the clan.

Many sorcerers and viziers prefer the Via Humanitatis, having never lost their mortal codes of ethics. Assamites who were particularly devout followers of their mortal religions, or who became such after receiving the Blood, follow various branches of the Via Caeli, whose tenets are equally applicable to Christianity, Judaism and Islam with only minor alterations (and none that affect the Hierarchy of Sins for the Road in question). Some warriors and viziers who view themselves as nobility of one sort or another practice beliefs that are, for all intents and purposes, the Via Equitum — and, surprisingly enough, some ancient Assamites of Zoroastrian faith adhere to their own version of this Road. Many elders who predate all current mortal religions follow odd versions of their own faiths, modified for vampiric existence. And, of course, as with all other clans, there are those rare few fallen Assamites who walk the Via Diabolis.

The clan also holds many adherents to other faiths. The Jewish people in particular have lived in lands in which the clan held sway since their faith arose, and no few of their number have been brought into Haqim's brood. Some followers of various Far Eastern faiths have been Embraced during Assamite explorations into Taugast and India, though they are a small minority and either abandon their practices or keep them to themselves. Individual elders who predate Christ prac-

tice even older religions. Some follow Zoroastrian beliefs, while others claim to worship the classical Greek gods by right of the legacy of the Furies.

The Via Sanguinius is an almost uniquely Assamite philosophy, and one that has been with the clan for its entire recorded history. Its tenets are simple: that all Cainites aside from the Children of Haqim have been judged and found wanting (judged by *whom* is a matter of some conjecture among scholars of the Road), and the Assamites' sacred duty is to purge the world of these morally inferior immortals. By hoarding the blood of other Cainites, they are assured of having a worthy gift for the Ancestor when he arises from the sleep of ages and leads them in a final holy war. Diablerie is a sacrament, for each inferior so destroyed in this manner strengthens his devourer and is one less potential enemy to threaten the clan as a whole. As most Cainites do not treat mortals fairly or honestly, those who walk the Via Sanguinius strive to rise above this dishonorable behavior and view themselves as the hidden protectors of humanity. The Via Sanguinius limits its proponents' ability to deal with other Cainites on any basis save that of immortal enemies, though individual adherents make exceptions for individuals or groups whose purposes they favor, and degrees of antagonism toward Cainites as a whole vary from follower to follower. The Road's followers are limited in number — though the Crusades have prompted more and more Assamites to seek instruction in this Road. The rest of the clan views them with both respect and wariness, and fears that the fanatics' actions may bring down a shattering response upon all the Children of Haqim.

### THE LAWS OF HAQIM

*In his wisdom, the Ancestor saw that were his Children to prosper, they would need rules to govern them. He laid down these laws so that all might benefit. As with all mortal laws, they are not perfect, nor are they always honored to the fullness of their spirit — but they are our legacy and our strength.*

The oldest teachings of Haqim are the centerpiece of the library at Alamut. They are engraved in Enochian on a series of clay tablets that various arts of the viziers have kept in a near-perfect state of preservation. Translations differ; the following laws are the most commonly accepted versions, and the ones that the majority of the clan currently practices. They do bear some superficial resemblance to the European Traditions, but Assamites generally place the Laws before the Traditions. Those

members of the clan who spend any amount of time in Europe usually learn to moderate their behavior and to pay at least minimal respect to the Traditions.

- *Honor the Eldest among you, for he is to rule my House when I am absent.* This is the mandate by which the oldest active fourth-generation Assamite rules Alamut and the clan as a whole under the title of “Eldest.” It is generally accepted as a guideline for conduct outside the clan stronghold as well; if two or more Assamites are in the same locale, the eldest among them is usually their leader.

- *Ward the mortals from Khayyin’s brood and treat them with honor in all things.* The Assamites widely believe that Haqim held the other Cainite clans in contempt for their treatment of the kine. The Assamites’ duty to “ward the mortals” means that they rarely drain their vessels dry when feeding and almost never consider individual mortals to be expendable pawns. In practice, minor violations of this law are quite frequent, though simple peer pressure prevents more obvious or excessive transgressions.

- *Slay not those of the Blood, for that right is of the Eldest alone.* Despite the similarity of this law to the Second Tradition, the Assamites interpret “Blood” to mean “Blood of Haqim.” They do not extend this courtesy to other Cainites. Duels between Assamites are a very common means of conflict resolution (the law does not say “harm not”), though these are never intentionally to the death. If the hatred between two Assamites is so great that they cannot abide one another, the commonly accepted (and most honorable) solution is for both to gather their belongings and travel in opposite directions for one lunar month.

- *Deceive not those of the Blood, for my House is founded on Truth.* Again, “Blood” means “Blood of Haqim” to the Assamites. They do not lie to one another, nor do they steal from each other. A member of the clan who is caught in a malicious deception (gossip is politely ignored unless it is critically damaging) is held down by four of his peers while an elder rips his tongue out of his mouth. An Assamite thief loses his hand. In both cases, the raw wound is smeared with an herbal unguent that keeps the criminal from regenerating the lost appendage for one lunar month. The clan has few repeat offenders.

- *Judge those of Khayyin’s brood and punish them should they be found wanting.* This is the most widely disputed of the laws. Many warriors, led by adherents of the Via Sanguinius, claim that this is a mandate to

destroy all Cainites who do not measure up to Assamite standards of honor — which is just about every Cainite in existence. The viziers maintain that Haqim intended this law to be a mandate for justice among Cainites, not an excuse for genocide, and that other vampires should be judged and treated on an individual basis. The sorcerers are strangely silent; al-Ashrad has forbidden his caste to partake in the debate on this issue.

## AN UNDYING THIRST

*Our greatest shame, our greatest fear — and our greatest disgrace. For all the power of the sorcerers, we cannot break the curse that the Baali laid upon us when we overthrew them at Chorazin and sent them screaming to meet their masters. One by one, our warriors fall before this madness, and nightly the task of hiding it becomes more difficult.*

Five hundred years ago, the Assamite warriors made war on the Baali of the Holy Land as part of their effort to support the rise of Islam. They sent their mortal pawns against the heretics of the Baali and engaged the dark masters of those cults in brutal combat. The Baali were no match for the fury of the Assamites, and they showered empty curses on the heads of the warriors as they fell back to their unholy city of Chorazin.

During the Baali retreat, tragedy befell the warriors. One of the greatest among them, the ancient Izhim abd’Azrael, was struck down and taken captive. The warriors, enraged beyond all reason, assaulted Chorazin with their full might. With their mortal army behind them, they breached the city’s walls in short order and made for the temple where the Baali covens prepared for their last stand. As the first warrior set foot in that unhallowed hall, though, a black fire raced through his veins and he fell to the ground in agony. His comrades were likewise afflicted, and they suffered grievous losses before a host of sorcerers led by the Amr himself arrived to assist them. The Assamite forces overran the temple and rescued Izhim abd’Azrael from where he lay staked on the Baali altar, apparently the intended victim of some gruesome sacrifice.

It was not until Izhim restored himself to speech that the Assamites learned the truth of what had transpired before their final assault. He had been no sacrifice, but rather the focal point of a ritual that struck at the very heart of the clan. “As you thirst for our blood,” the Baali high priest had told him, “so you shall hunger for all blood for all time.” Izhim was the first victim of this curse — he nearly drained dry the warrior

who offered him blood to heal himself. He had been struck with an irresistible madness, a soul-deep craving for Cainite blood.

Izhim was of the Fifth Generation, one of the first warriors Embraced after the fall of the Second City. He was once Dispossessed but later rejoined the clan and served as Caliph for a brief time before stepping down to wander the deserts. His blood was strong and old enough to serve as a focal point for a curse that is still creeping across the warrior caste. The hunger slowly passes through the ranks without any rational pattern, touching neonate and Methuselah alike with its madness. To date, perhaps half the caste is so afflicted. Many have journeyed east to India or Taugast so that they may be removed from the temptation of Europe's Cainite-rich cities, but many more have given in to their cravings and fallen upon foe and ally alike. The sorcerers struggle nightly to break the curse, but they fear that the powers invoked in its casting were stronger than even they can master. In time, all of the Assamite warriors may well fall under the spell, and even the wisest vizier can only guess at what will transpire then.

## THE CLAN AND THE DISPOSSESSED

*Though we offer a wealth of opportunities to the new Child of Haqim, many choose to walk their own paths, free from the commands of their elders but also far away from any measure of assistance we might otherwise offer them. It is a tragedy, but Haqim's teachings are not for everyone who is given the Blood.*

The Assamites present a unified front, but they are far from a monolithic Cainite organization. The clan's hierarchy is loose at best and many Assamites go for a decade without seeing another. However, the arts of the sorcerers ensure that most of the clan remains loosely connected and aware of events that affect the line as a whole. Every Assamite who chooses to remain loyal to and associated with the clan after the Embrace makes a pilgrimage to Alamut within the first seven years of her unlife. There, she ritually adds her blood to the Heartblood. This spiritually connects her to the clan as a whole and allows the *silsila's* sorcerers to send her missives from Alamut if the need arises. She is also



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given a magical link to the Eldest and to her sire so that they may know the circumstances of her death if she should fall. The ascent of a new Eldest to the black throne is one of the few occasions on which all Assamites try to return to Alamut, so that they may be linked to their new "ruler."

More frequently than the Assamites care to admit, a new individual is given the Blood but declines to name herself one of the Children of Haqim. Such an Assamite is known as Dispossessed. She is not bound to obey the laws of the clan, but neither can she automatically claim the right to sanctuary or solidarity in time of need. Individual Assamites who remain loyal to the whole may choose to assist her, but they are not obligated to do so. The Dispossessed are not clanless; they still exhibit the same traits as all other Assamites of their caste and undergo the same darkening with age. Perhaps one in four Cainites of Assamite blood is Dispossessed, with the majority of these belonging to the warrior caste and the fewest being found among the sorcerers. Many of those who peddle their services as the "assassins of Alamut" to European princes are in fact Dispossessed and serving only their own interests.

Occasionally, an Assamite decides that her path and that of the clan are no longer the same. In theory, she may return to Alamut and request to be withdrawn from the rituals that bind her to the Eldest and her sire (though her blood can never be removed from the Heartblood) so that she may become Dispossessed. In practice, any Assamite who takes this option receives heavy scrutiny from Alamut's resident elders to ensure that she is not turning traitor to the clan. Few individuals' resolve to leave survives this interrogation.

## THE VIEW FROM THE MOUNTAIN

*A wise Cappadocian once gifted me with the advice, "Do not ask questions to which you do not truly want the answers." I believe this applies to the question of "How do you see us?" Our thoughts on the childer of Caine are less than pleasant in many instances, separated as we are by belief, cause and geography. However, they are rarely as straightforward as their subjects assume. As always, these thoughts may change based on the individual or the area — for example, the viziers of Byzantium count the Toreador as staunch allies, while the Holy Land's warriors see the Artisans as little better than the Ventrue.*

## BRUJAH

*Nobility shattered by pride. The Brujah forget what they have lost even nightly, and more of their younger members take to the ways of the bandit and the iconoclast rather than expend the effort to better their station. They stand as a warning of what we may become — or, some viziers say, as a signpost on the path we have already taken.*

The Assamites have a great deal of respect for the Brujah — and a great deal of pity. The elders of the clan are storehouses of knowledge that the viziers and sorcerers trade with at every opportunity. The younger Brujah, however, revel in their line's downfall, and make uncertain allies at best. For now, the Assamites watch the Brujah carefully to ensure that they do not bring too many of Haqim's children down with them in their long, slow fall.

## CAPPADOCIANS

*Loathsome magicians, but admirable scholars. Were they to practice more savory arts, we might find them more palatable. As they are, the learning they amass is all that keeps us from cutting them down as abominations in the face of whatever gods the individual swordsman claims.*

The Cappadocians have a combined allure and repugnance. They are, by and large, a peaceful clan, and their influence rests lightly, if at all, on the Crusades. Their preference for study over action makes them favorites of the viziers, and individuals of the two clans often trade parts of their libraries or indulge in joint researches. The sorcerers would dearly love to master some of the Cappadocians' secret magics, but all attempts thus far have met with gruesome failure. This string of unmitigated disasters has led many Assamites to believe that the powers on which the Cappadocians draw are something less than reputable, and the clan as a whole has acquired a poor reputation as a result.

## FOLLOWERS OF SET

*Allies of convenience, nothing more. Though we share land with these beasts, that is all that we share, and we await the night that we can drag them shrieking from their crypts and catacombs and leave them impaled and tied to the shattered ruins of their homes. Their blasphemous claims of a god-sire will be disproved as dawn greets the desert.*

In many areas of North Africa and the Middle East, the Setites are the only Cainites that the Assamites can call allies. This situation is to the liking of neither clan — the Assamites recognize their weakness in the arena of manipulating mortals and Cainites alike, and the



Setites fear the combined martial prowess of the warriors and sorcerers. For the moment, the two clans are united by the Crusades, but constant friction threatens to ignite a shadow war in Egypt and the Holy Land.

### GANGREL

*Respectable for their honesty and honor, even as they should be reviled for their willingness to live as beasts. We may have been cursed to drink blood and flee the light of the sun, but that is little reason to descend below what we would have been as men.*

Gangrel opposition to Christianity has made individual members of the clan many friends among the Assamites, and Assamite exploration of Africa and Asia has increased the clan's stock in Gangrel eyes. However, the Assamites pride themselves on being guardians of culture and learning, while the Gangrel shun all but the essential trappings of civilization. Many of the Gangrel in lands now controlled by the Arabs also dislike Islam as much as any other "civilizing" faith. Such opposed views result in many unfortunate misunderstandings that doom what would otherwise be successful cooperation.

### LASOMBRA

*Some are as brothers, while others are our most hated enemies — and the difference is not always clear on first meeting. Shadow's children are to be treated warily, and given the respect that is due a close ally or a worthy opponent. The Lasombra who is the former tonight may be the latter by dusk tomorrow.*

The Lasombra debate issues of faith — especially Muslim and Christian faith — even more than the Assamites. Christian Lasombra clash with Assamites in Iberia, and, to a lesser extent, in the Holy Land, even as alliances form on the other side of the battle lines. More than any other clan, the Assamites judge the Lasombra as individuals rather than painting all Magisters with the same brush. While never friends, the Lasombra are to be respected — and, in the eyes of the Assamites, that is a greater gift than simple fondness would be.

### MALKAVIANS

*They are dreamers and seers, and they know many things. However, few of these things have any bearing on the world as the rest of us know it. Give charity to the mad if they are willing to accept it, but never humble yourself before them. Heed their words, but do not follow them. And whatever you do, never become indebted to one.*

Allah says that the mad are to be sheltered. However, the non-Muslim Assamites have their doubts about the wisdom of this advice, having been the victims of far too many Malkavian jests. For the moment, the Malkavians receive what can best be described as "wary indulgence." The Assamites realize that Malkav's menagerie often receives gifts of prophecy, but they prefer to rely on their own sorcerer and vizier seers for more reliable, if less earth-shaking, information.

### NOSFERATU

*If there is a place that you must know is absolutely safe, look for a Nosferatu. If one allows himself to be found in that place, then you will know it is secure. If you do not see one, there are two possibilities. Either the place is not as secure as you think and he has deserted it, or it is just as secure as you think and he is watching you to see what business you plan to conduct there.*

The Assamites are sharply split down religious lines on the treatment of the Nosferatu. Some members of the clan maintain that physical deformity is a sign of divine disfavor and that Nosferatu are not to be trusted. Most of the rest of the Assamites, however, remember that the Nosferatu have been honest with them — and allied to them — at times when no other Cainites would. This dual treatment has left many Nosferatu skittish of the Assamites, and the flow of information between the two clans has ebbed over the last few centuries. Islamic Assamites know of a group of faithful Nosferatu called the Hajj, who live in Arabia but travel to other Muslim lands. They are rumored to be able to enter the holy city of Mecca and to somehow control the Keening of Arabia.

### RAVNOS

*Islam mandates a simple method for dealing with a thief: cut off his hand. In the case of the Ravnos, we prefer to sear the stump with a firebrand, the better to ensure that the hand in question does not return to our purses later. Those who prefer stealing knowledge to stealing trinkets can usually be dealt with on a more civilized basis.*

For Ravnos who fit the popular image of the clan, the Assamites have neither respect nor tolerance, and they usually apply Islamic justice to ensure that lessons in honesty stay taught. However, most Assamites will admit that many Ravnos have sage advice to offer, as their wanderings have given them insight into many of the cultures and areas that the Assamites are only now exploring. The Charlatans do not appear organized (or Christian) enough to present a threat, and the Assamites

are largely resistant to phantasmal trickery, so the two clans leave each other mostly unmolested unless individuals decide to trade information on their travels.

### TOREADOR

*If their ethics were matched by their dedication to the arts, they would be worthy companions. As it is, they fall somewhat short of many admirable goals — including modesty, chastity and general restraint. Their continued pursuit of the pleasures of flesh is laughable, and they are too flighty to make reliable allies. They are, however, a good audience for the craftsmen among us.*

The Assamites and Toreador have enjoyed a long history of mutual trade. This has given the Assamites ample time to observe the Artisans, and their assessment is that the Toreador are delightful company but pitifully ineffectual in any arena save the political. Amused acceptance characterizes the relations that Haqim's descendants have with the Artisans. Unfortunately, these generally friendly relations are eroding quickly because of the Toreador support of the Christian Reconquista.

### TREMERE

*The Usurpers are desperate for any friends they can find. This would make them ripe for exploitation, were they not so adept at discovering treachery. They have shown the world they are not to be trusted, so the only remaining method of dealing with them is the way one deals with any other rogue wizard: a sword in the throat or a curse on his house. We pay no heed to their claims of supremacy in the arcane arts, for we were practicing such magics when their so-called clan was little more than a naughty twinkle in the eye of their mortal master.*

Saulot's brood was one of the Assamites' favorites, and the recent hunts against them sit poorly with many members of the clan. The Tremere have earned a second mark against themselves in the books of the sorcerers, who are both amused and offended by the self-styled Tremere image as the "masters of blood magic." In Assamite eyes, the Tremere have neither the right to the power they have claimed nor the maturity to use it properly. The lesson that must be taught the Usurpers will be an extended and bloody one, and members of all three castes relish the thought of it. Those sorcerers who have directly confronted the Tremere hold them in slightly higher esteem, if only for the powers at their command.

### TZIMISCE

*The Tzimisce revel in their inhumanity. While self-knowledge is admirable, they take the principle far past the point of distortion — in all possible manners. Their claims to nobility may have some tiny scrap of truth secreted away in the distant past, but they are little better than power-mad beasts now. They do enjoy a certain measure of strength, however, so they are best treated with some small amount of courtesy.*

To the Assamites, the Fiends are everything that is deplorable about the Cainite condition. They are unrestrained and open in their inhumanity, and they revel in their absolute mastery over their mortal subjects. The Assamites, who advise rather than rule and nurture rather than dominate, find this behavior reprehensible. However, the Tzimisce have mutual enemies in the Ventrue and Tremere, so they must be tolerated, much like the Setites.

### VENTRUE

*Though the forces they command are impressive, their reliance on tradition and history leaves them standing still when confronted with any sudden change. Their very inability to change will be their undoing, for what good is the most steadfast fortress as a defense if the enemy strikes a hundred miles away?*

The Ventrue have earned a grudging respect for the prowess their knights and commanders have displayed in their campaigns in the Holy Land. However, this respect extends only to their abilities, not their motives or desires. When possible, the Assamites try to turn Lasombra or Tzimisce attention to the Ventrue so as to avoid direct confrontation. When it is not, Haqim's children defend their interests in the manner of which they are most capable.

### BAALI

*If we find one of these creatures, its treatment is never in doubt. First, take the head as a trophy and burn the body. Then raze its home, leaving no stone standing atop another, and sow the ground with salt. Shatter its sword, cleanse its altar with fire, and destroy all that the foul being holds unholy. At the last, sell its mortal followers as slaves to the most loathsome Setite within a thousand miles and send its name to the Cappadocians so that they may harness its soul to a chamber-pot. Have I made myself clear?*

The Assamites are at war with the Baali, and have been so for half a millennium. No quarter is offered on either side. The offense the Baali have given, and the

possible implications of their actions, is too great for forgiveness, and the Assamites will not stop until the last Baali is so much dust scattered across the desert sand.

### SALUBRI

*Saulot's children are to be cherished and sheltered whenever possible. Of all the far-flung seed of Caine, they are perhaps the most noble in their own way. If they cannot be defended, they must be avenged. Those who sided with the Crusaders have since paid for their error in judgment, and they no longer favor the Christian invasion as they once did. We have no need to administer further justice — the Salubri have suffered enough at the Tremere's hands.*

The Salubri and the Assamites were on good terms for many centuries, simply because their interests so rarely conflicted. The Salubri support of the Crusades soured this relationship, so much so that the Saracens have done little to halt the Tremere purge of Saulot's childer. In recent nights, this attitude has begun to shift; viziers now hide some Salubri fleeing the Tremere purges, either secreting them in the Holy Land or sending them east to Taugast. Those who supported the Crusades, however, receive no such shelter.

## THE SOCIETY OF ALAMUT

*We are a diverse people; perhaps more diverse than any other clan, though this may be the opinion of my pride rather than my reason. Nevertheless, we have changed over the centuries, developing specialized roles within our clan that allow us a degree of self-sufficiency that others may lack. Alas, we have also developed many failings — but I shall hold my tongue with regards to those.*

### THE THREE LINES OF HAQIM

Though many accounts portray the Assamites as a unified society of assassins, this is far from the case. The clan has a long and diverse history, and has split into three distinct castes. Some claim that the castes are recent developments, occurring within the last few hundred years. The viziers who keep Alamut's libraries, however, maintain that the clan's earliest recorded histories, which they believe to be relics of the Second City, speak of the division between the warriors and the



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scholars. The sorcerers are a later development in the clan, though their precise point of origin — warrior or vizier — depends on the scholar who is sharing his opinion. The question may be moot, and most Assamites give it little consideration, for all three castes include fourth-generation childer of Haqim. Thus, all three castes are equally their founder's inheritors. The Cappadocians and Tzimisce are free to prattle on about "bloodlines," "true clans" and "patterns of descent and mutation." Haqim's childer know who they are.

Each caste is, however, a separate line in terms of blood and the Embrace — the same predisposition for Disciplines and the same mystic weakness are passed on from sire to childe, and each of these traits is different for each caste. An Assamite's caste is the one into which she is Embraced, and there is no known method of changing this. A vizier may find that her true calling is swordplay, and may even go on to receive extensive training from members of the warriors, but her blood will always mark her as a vizier first.

## THE WARRIOR CASTE

Many outsiders take the warrior caste to be the entirety of the Assamite clan. This suits the warriors very well, for the most part. In Assamite internal politics, the warrior caste dominates many of the clan's affairs. Historically, the warriors tended to be the most straightforward in word and deed. However, this has changed over the past half-millennium, as the number of assassins in the caste has risen due to events in Byzantium, Arabia and the other new empires of the region (new by Cainite standards, at least). This has created a sharp division between the more traditional, direct warriors who value face-to-face confrontation and the adherents to the newer principles of assassination and deceit. The Caliph, the leader of the warrior caste, has not spoken on this issue, which each side takes to mean that he favors their stance. The current Caliph is a fierce fighter named Jamal, who occasionally breaks age-old protocol to step down from Alamut and take a direct hand in clan affairs in the Holy Land.

The traditional role of the warriors has been as defenders, both of the other castes and of the clan's mortal charges. Members of this caste serve as bodyguards to traveling viziers and sorcerers, stand guard on the walls of Baghdad and Damascus, hunt bandits in the North African wastes, and match steel with Castilian knights in Iberia. The warriors are the most ardent Assamite supporters of Islam, and have been since the

religion's founding. Somewhat at odds with this, most of the clan's followers of the Road of Blood are also within the warrior caste.

Warriors almost always Embrace individuals who possess some sort of martial prowess. This is not always physical — many warriors are brought into the Blood to preserve their knowledge of military science or to reward a lifetime of faith or loyalty. New members of this caste are almost exclusively males of North African or Arab stock, though this has not always been the case and several notable warrior elders are female, European or West Asian, or a combination thereof. Most warriors prefer to allow their new childer to go their own ways after a brief period of orientation and instruction. If they can hold their own against the world, then they are welcome to do so. If they cannot, they will either return and learn willingly or die in the discovery that they are inadequate to the night's challenges.

**Suggested Concepts:** Archer, bodyguard, master swordsmith, tactician, assassin, Bedouin nomad, spy, siege engineer, hunter, chess grandmaster

**Disciplines:** Warrior Assamites have Celerity, Obfuscate and Quietus as their "clan" Disciplines.

**Weaknesses:** As per **Vampire: The Dark Ages**, any warrior is automatically identified as a diablerist by any means of supernatural perception that can reveal a history of Amaranth — even if he has never so much as tasted the blood of another vampire, and regardless of the degree of success that an observer would normally need to detect such evidence. While this may not seem like much of a liability, Cainite courts are not noted for adherence to the principle of "innocent until proven guilty."

The warrior caste has also developed the custom that a warrior who takes mercenary assignments of any sort is required to tithe 20 percent of his payment (whatever form it may take) to his sire. This ensures that the clan as a whole benefits from its individual sons performing actions that are not necessarily in the Assamites' direct interest. Of course, an "independent" Assamite is free to ignore this prohibition, but one whose sire chooses to extract "back pay" may regret his selfishness.

## THE SORCERER CASTE

The sorcerers have always enjoyed a unique status within the clan. Respected for their power, yet feared for that same knowledge, they stand apart from the warriors and viziers. They are the force that allows the Assamites to maintain a loosely unified clan structure

over thousands of miles. Their spirit messengers tie the clan together, their scrying mirrors reveal a thousand hidden truths of the clan's enemies, their *djinni* servants guard the clan's most secret places, and their leashed fire and lightning scour battlefields before them. They are led by a mighty wizard named al-Ashrad, a one-eyed, one-armed man with a legion of beaten and bound demons at his beck and call. Al-Ashrad, whose formal title is Amr, spends much of his time in his laboratories in Alamut, though he does occasionally journey to Damascus.

Traditionally, the sorcerers provide what poetically inclined Assamites describe as the pillars and buttresses of the clan, largely unseen support for the other castes. Their magic can accomplish feats that defy reason and faith alike, though its roots are found in both. They consider themselves researchers and sages, delving into the truths of the Cainite nature and the world itself with tools both magical and mundane. This lends credence to the belief that the sorcerers descend from the viziers — though some, particularly those of Iberia and the Holy Land, have chosen a decidedly martial path.

The sorcerers tend to Embrace strong-willed individuals who are both adaptable and steadfast. They also look for above-average intellectual development and education, though these qualities can be — and often are — ingrained after the Embrace. True to their secondary role as scholars, the sorcerers do not always look for magical potential if the mortal in question has sufficient expertise in a field of interest. The sorcerers Embrace from both genders and all nationalities. After the Embrace, the new sorcerer usually serves a period of apprenticeship ranging from a year to a few decades. This is not always under the sorcerer's sire; several elders of the caste are full-time mentors, and considerable prestige follows an apprenticeship served under one of the more noted of these.

**Suggested concepts:** Astrologer, battle-mage, surgeon, master of *djinni*, mathematician, astronomer, seer, Kabbalist, weather-wizard, artificer

**Disciplines:** Assamite sorcerers' "clan" Disciplines are *Auspex*, *Quietus* and *Assamite Sorcery* (their version of *Thaumaturgy*). Each individual sorcerer chooses her primary path, though her sire and other teachers usually have some say in the matter.

**Weaknesses:** Assamite sorcerers may be the eldest practitioners of blood magic among the Cainite clans. This tradition has left a distinctive mark on the sorcer-

ers (even those who don't themselves practice blood magic heavily). Their aura always shows distinctive patterns associated with blood magic, and all efforts to observe them by supernatural means (*Auspex* and the like) enjoy a -2 difficulty bonus and are considered to operate at two levels higher for purposes of opposed powers (so a character with *Auspex* 2 trying to penetrate a sorcerer's *Obfuscate* has an effective *Auspex* 4). Sorcerer concealment works as well as any other Cainite's against unaugmented observers, however.

## VIZIERS

The viziers are the Assamites who diverge farthest from the European stereotype of the clan. They are by and large peaceful, tending to their own affairs and those of the Assamites as a whole (though woe betide the foolish opponent who assumes that all viziers are harmless). The viziers are the most diverse of the three castes, as devious politicians and foppish courtiers stand alongside ink-stained scribes, wily traders and deft-handed weavers. The leader of the viziers has the title of Vizier, an arrangement that may seem awkward to others but is rarely confusing to the Assamites themselves, who make the differentiation with a subtle emphasis on *the* when referring to *the* Vizier. The current Vizier is an Egyptian known as Rebekah who is unsurpassed in her understanding of Cainite and mortal politics and courtly protocol. She is reputedly active on the fringes of Byzantium's Cainite courts, where she takes particular pleasure in maneuvering other Cainites against Set's brood.

The viziers are, in large part, the Assamites' heart. The warriors are disinclined to involve themselves in mortal affairs, save for participating in violent conflict, and the sorcerers are often too distanced from the concerns of the living to be capable of taking a hand in such matters. Thus, the responsibility of exerting influence over the Children of Seth falls to the viziers more often than not. The viziers are also the Assamites who deal the most with mortals on a social rather than a predatory basis, though this is a generalization that hardly applies to every member of the clan. Finally, the viziers are the Assamites who most often take responsibility for directly controlling the clan's most important holdings, from the forges of Damascus to the trade routes toward Taugast.

In Embracing, the viziers look for individuals whose skills will be of long-term importance to the clan, or those whose abilities or knowledge should be preserved. The most recent trend has seen an up-

swing in Embraces of notable scholars of the Almohad Empire. Viziers are tradesmen, intellectuals and statesmen. Like the sorcerers, the viziers rarely discriminate as to gender, ethnicity or religion when giving the Blood.

**Suggested concepts:** Theologian, storyteller, architect, sculptor, courtier, jeweler, scribe, historian, political theorist, scientist, weaver, merchant, linguist, judge

**Disciplines:** The viziers' "clan" Disciplines are Auspex, Celerity and Quietus.

**Weaknesses:** The viziers are utter perfectionists, as each one focuses on his own area of expertise to the point of monomania. Each vizier has an obsessive/compulsive derangement associated with his highest intellectual or creative Ability. When the derangement is active, the vizier's aura flickers with strange whorls and patterns that an observer can interpret to discern the character's Nature and the focus of his obsession with any successful use of Soulsight (Auspex 2).

## STRUCTURES AND GROUPS

*A vizier once said that any group of more than two individuals will develop its own internal factions. Watching our clan's own politics, I find this more and more true as the years pass. Some seeds of cause and desire wither and die quickly; others find purchase in more fertile imaginations and grow into full-fledged beliefs.*

### LEADERSHIP

Thanks to the magical communication abilities of the sorcerers, the Assamites are unified as few other clans can be over the vast distances through which they have spread (though, in truth, most elders of any clan have their own methods of long-distance communication). This is not to imply that *all* Assamites directly serve the clan's elders; perhaps one in three chooses to go her own way within a century of receiving the Blood. However, the majority of the clan is somewhat unified in purpose, even if they are not always in agreement as to the best means of achieving that purpose.



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The highest leader of the clan is simply known as the Elder, more colloquially known as the Old Man. The warriors claim that there has never been a female Elder, though vizier translators insist that certain records in their possession provide indisputable evidence of such an individual around the time of Christ. The Elder rarely, if ever, leaves Alamut, preferring to pass orders down through the clan hierarchy. Traditionally, the Elder is the oldest child of Haqim awake at the time. If an older fourth-generation Assamite awakens, the position is relinquished after a brief period of transition (typically a decade). During this time, the new Elder reacquaints himself with the world and the affairs of the clan. The current Elder is a reclusive sorcerer known as Sha'hiri.

Directly under the Elder are the leaders of the three castes: the Caliph, the Amr and the Vizier. These three individuals collectively form a council to advise the Elder, each tending to his own area of expertise and the affairs of his caste.

The Caliph is the greatest combatant within the warrior caste, and any subordinate warrior may challenge him to trial by combat at any time. However, the Caliph has the right to choose the method in which the trial is decided: unarmed combat, armed combat or military leadership. Assamite rumor says that the battles that forged the Almohad Empire were Jamal's trial by leadership.

The Amr is appointed by a council of fourth- and fifth-generation sorcerers who collectively apply rituals of divination to determine the potential Amr who will serve the interests of caste and clan in the most beneficial manner. Al-Ashrad, the current Amr, has held the position since being acknowledged as an elder in 120 CE, despite the annual repetition of the rituals.

The Vizier is elected by a simple majority vote of all viziers who can journey to Alamut or send proxies. This vote is held every 63 years (the viziers refuse to discuss the significance of this number). The last elections were held in 1171, at which time Rebekah defeated the previous Vizier, Khaldun, by a narrow margin.

### THE SILSILA

The elders of the clan who no longer serve the Assamites' interests outside Alamut are known as the *silsila*. The few outsiders who have heard of this group believe that it is made up simply of those Assamites who remain at Alamut to aid the caste leaders and the

Eldest, as well as to act as mentors to younger members of the clan who seek training from other sources than their sires. However, the *silsila* has a greater responsibility than dispensing wisdom. It is the Assamites' priesthood, and in its vaults in the bowels of Alamut it holds the clan's oldest records. Clay tablets dating back to the Second City rest alongside fragments of the Book of Nod, and Haqim's first teachings keep company with scrolls recording Assamite support of the rise of Islam. The *silsila* is charged with keeping the clan's history. It is the collective memory of the Assamites, and its sacred oath is to defend Haqim's legacy to the last Child.

### THE WEB OF KNIVES

In 1102, a small cabal of assassins challenged the warrior caste's tradition of aloof siring and release of childer. These warriors established a training center in Asia Minor and took in the most promising mortal assassins they could find, imparting to them accumulated centuries of knowledge and training. This program's founders claim to be making the "new breed of Haqim's Children."

For seven years, students live as ghouls of the group, acquiring a loose, collective blood oath to their mentors while they train in assassination techniques. During this time, they gradually learn the truth of their masters' identities and receive tutoring in the tenets of the Road of Blood. At the end of the seventh year, the Web tests them. Those who succeed receive the Embrace and their first meal is whoever among their classmates has failed. The new Assamites then serve seven *more* years as field apprentices, accompanying their mentors on mercenary missions of assassination. At the end of this second term, they undergo further testing. Those who pass final muster diablerize those who fail.

This shadowy brotherhood has remained small, with its signs and symbols guarded unto the death of its members. To the Assamites, it is the Web of Knives. The Web is dimly known to many outsiders in rumor and legend, and some viziers believe that it may eventually spawn legends among Cainites and mortals alike, as many such secret but proactive societies tend to do. The practice of using ghoul apprentices as prospective childer is slowly gaining popularity through the warrior caste, and the Caliph himself is known to have followed such methodology at least once.

## THE SPEAR OF DESTINY

As might be expected, Christians are a minority within the Assamites. Those few who adhere to their faith after the Embrace have grown appalled in recent years at the excessively xenophobic attitudes of the warrior caste's Muslim contingent. The Spear of Destiny is a fraternal organization that crosses caste lines within the clan. The only requirements for membership are respect for the Christian faith and a desire to see the treasures of the Holy Land preserved — even if this means the failure of the Crusades. The Spear contains perhaps 40 Assamites, all told; these are primarily warriors and viziers, with only a handful of sorcerers. Their numbers are slowly dwindling, through both battlefield attrition and a decrease in the number of new European Assamites.

The Spear is currently active in Jerusalem, where it is trying to forge a new treaty to extend the one that expires at the end of 1197. The warrior caste scorns these individuals, but many sorcerers and viziers admire their dedication and covertly condone their actions, if not to the point of supporting them. The Spear is not above using violence (indeed, many of them were armsmen of one sort or another in mortal life), though it has not yet stooped to assassination. Instead, it concentrates on destroying Cainite instigators of the Crusades on both sides of the wars. This has brought it into conflict with several Muslim Assamites, and some warriors in the region are considering eliminating the Spear.





# Tools of Scribe and Spearman

*Many Europeans believe that our powers are somehow fundamentally different from those which they wield. This is, for the most part, incorrect. Though the arts of Quietus and sorcery that we practice have few correspondences among the gifts of the other clans, they are all aspects of Khayyin's — excuse me, of Caine's Curse. The misunderstanding, of course, arises from the fact that we are foreigners, and thus we are to be veiled in confusion rather than understood. Allow me to dispel some of that confusion by sharing the fruits of my research.*

## MERITS AND FLAWS

### MULTICULTURAL (3 PT MERIT)

The Assamites have spread over an immense amount of territory, and they have encountered a wider array of cultures than many other clans can conceive of. Either in life or unlife, you have traveled among many different cultures and gained an almost instinctive understanding of how to blend in and not offend. You enjoy a -1 difficulty bonus on all attempts to move smoothly through a foreign society (though speaking the language is still a function of Linguistics), as you reflexively come across as familiar and knowledgeable in areas where other outlanders would be at a loss. This also applies to such tasks as appearing native in an area where you don't belong (such as a French Assamite hiding from German Ventrue pursuers in the markets of Constantinople).

### OUTCASTE (2 PT FLAW)

You have rejected the role of the caste into which you were Embraced, choosing instead to define your own existence and follow the path of another caste. While many Assamites take this course with few negative repercussions, you have managed to make enough waves to gain a certain amount of notoriety.

Perhaps you made a public spectacle of your lack of interest in your heritage, or maybe you asked a mentor in another caste to take you as his surrogate child. Whatever the specifics may be, you have shown your lineage a great deal of disrespect. Your sire refuses to acknowledge your existence, and all other members of your caste treat you with scorn. You suffer a +2 difficulty penalty on all Social rolls involving dealing with your Embrace caste.

### RELIGIOUS PROHIBITION (2 OR 4 PT FLAW)

In your breathing days, you were either Jewish or Muslim and have retained your faith through the Embrace. As both religions prohibit their followers from tasting, let alone drinking, blood, this creates a moral dilemma for you. Even animal blood is a forbidden substance, and your conscience pricks whenever you feed.

This Flaw has a variable point value. At two points, you voluntarily restrict your feeding to animals or blood that has been drained by a ritual butcher. At four points, you refuse to feed unless it is an immediate necessity (blood pool is three or less), and even then you may fall victim to depression and self-loathing for several nights after the forbidden act.

### BLOOD MADNESS (2 OR 4 PT FLAW)

The curse that the Baali of Chorazin laid upon the warrior caste has fallen on your head, and you are plagued with an unending hunger for the blood of other Cainites. Whenever you taste Cainite blood, you must make a Self-Control roll (difficulty 8) or you fall into a hunger frenzy in which you will do *anything* to gorge upon as much blood as physically possible. If you follow a Road that teaches Instinct, you are instantly lost to

this frenzy; no roll is possible and the Flaw is worth four points. You often find yourself thinking of other Cainites — even other Assamites — as potential vessels rather than equals.

This Flaw is mainly found among the warrior caste. It is much rarer among sorcerers and viziers, only affecting those who have partaken of warrior vitae or who spend the majority of their time associating with warriors.

## NEW DISCIPLINE POWERS

### DRAUGHT OF THE SOUL (AUSPEX LEVEL FOUR, QUIETUS LEVEL FIVE)

Many Assamites, particularly in the warrior caste, raise the potency of their blood through the practice of Amaranth. Those who walk the Road of Blood are especially enamored of the practice. This art, reviled by some but exalted by others, allows the diablerist to drain not only his victim's power but also his knowl-

edge. Assamites who teach this art advise their pupils to practice it sparingly, as frequent use of it can leave the diablerist's mind a shattered ruin full of her victims' memories.

**System:** This power may be used whenever the character successfully commits diablerie. The player spends a number of Willpower points equal to the victim's Intelligence and rolls Willpower (difficulty equal to the victim's permanent Willpower, plus one for every derangement he had). If she succeeds, the player gains one experience point for every Skill or Knowledge in which the victim's rating was equal to or greater than of the character. These experience points may only be applied to those Abilities — the player should keep track of them separately from her pool of "all-encompassing" experience. In addition, the character gains a dreamlike access to some of her victim's most significant memories. This system is left to the Storyteller's discretion, and should be used for parceling out vague hints rather than an excuse for the player to demand plot-breaking knowledge. A botch on the roll indicates



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that the character gains no knowledge but receives a permanent derangement (preferably one that the victim possessed).

Draught of the Soul costs 20 experience points to learn.

### EYES OF BLADES (AUSPEX LEVEL TWO, CELERITY LEVEL TWO)

Many Assamites hone their preternatural senses and speed to make themselves more effective combatants. Those who have learned to use these two traits in conjunction with one another are privy to an important secret: sometimes it is wiser to defend than to attack. An individual with this power is able to defend against a multitude of near-simultaneous attacks, even those to which he would be unable to respond under normal circumstances. For a few seconds, he enters a trance state in which he can perceive every potential threat to him, assess it and react accordingly.

**System:** At the beginning of a combat turn, before initiative is rolled, the player declares that he is activating this power. He spends two blood points and a Willpower point. This counts as activating Celerity for the turn. The character may take no actions this turn save for defending against incoming attacks. However, he may defend against *every* attack that targets him, using his full attention. The player rolls a dodge or parry with full dice pool against each attack that successfully strikes the character this turn. This power may only be used a number of times per scene equal to the character's Perception rating.

Eyes of Blades costs 10 experience points to learn.

### TRUTH OF BLOOD (AUSPEX LEVEL FOUR, QUIETUS LEVEL TWO)

Assamite justice is swift and merciless, and it shares much with the tenets of Islamic justice. However, the Assamites have ways of ensuring that their judgments are more firmly grounded in the truth than those of the surest mortal. This power uses the blood of the individual being questioned as a means of divining not only the truth of the subject's words, but the truth *behind* those words. The interrogator pours the subject's blood into his hand and holds it for the duration of the questioning. The blood gradually smolders throughout the scene, giving off a thin red mist. It is reduced to vapor by the end of the scene and cannot be used for any other purpose.

### LIBELLUS SANGUINIS 3

**System:** The character must have one point of the subject's blood to use this power, and it lasts for the duration of the scene or until the character releases the blood. The player rolls Perception + Subterfuge (difficulty of the target's Willpower) for each statement that the character wants to examine with this power. The degree of success on the roll indicates the degree of truth or falsehood that the questioner becomes aware of.

One success	The character knows if a given statement is a lie, a partial truth or the whole truth.
Two successes	The character knows the emotional reason (fear, pride, loyalty) behind any lie or partial truth, though not the full truth.
Three successes	The character learns the whole truth as the target consciously knows it.
Four successes	The character is aware of everything the target knows about the subject of the statement—even information that the target is not consciously aware of, remembered but did not understand, or lost to Dominate powers.
Five successes	The character experiences hazy visions of the <i>actual</i> truth behind the statement—even receiving veiled hints at information that the target himself did not have.

Truth of Blood costs 15 experience points to learn.

### BLOOD TEMPERING (FORTITUDE LEVEL TWO, QUIETUS LEVEL FOUR)

This power, which hails from long before the advent of Damascene steel, has seen a great deal of use in the nights of the Crusades. Blood Tempering originated as a means by which Assamites of the warrior caste reinforced bronze and iron weapons and armor to withstand prolonged combat. Instead of envenoming her blades, the Assamite imparts a small amount of her own resilience unto them by means of her blood. Some viziers use this power to preserve their most ancient relics, and the clay tablets that bear the clan's earliest history have benefited from repeated Blood Tempering.

**System:** The player spends a Willpower point, and the character coats the item to be reinforced with her blood. The amount of blood used depends on the size of the item: one blood point per foot of length. Thus, the average sword requires three blood points, while a lance may need as many as 15. Armor requires three blood points per extra soak die it provides. A weapon's base damage rating is increased by one die, and it is rendered unbreakable by any means short of a supernatural power with a rating greater than that of the character's Fortitude or a truly massive mundane trauma (such as a landslide). Armor gains one extra soak die and is likewise impervious to most harm (though the individual within it may still be wounded by force that is transmitted through it). This power may be applied to solid objects other than weapons and armor at the Storyteller's discretion. It cannot reinforce flexible items such as whips, leather armor or silk robes.

Blood Tempering costs 15 experience points to learn.

### CLEANSED IN BLOOD (QUIETUS LEVEL SIX)

The Assamites have long claimed that their proprietary Discipline, Quietus, arose for purposes other than pure combat. This power bears out that assertion. By using his own blood to ritually bathe a willing subject, an Assamite can purge that subject's mind of most supernatural influences. This power is most often used on Assamites who have returned to Alamut after long periods of time in Europe or Taugast in order to ensure that they have not been turned against the clan.

**System:** The character touches the subject and spends a number of blood points equal to the target's Willpower. The subject rolls Willpower once for each outside mental or emotional influence that he is under (difficulty equal to the level of the power in question + 3, with a difficulty of 7 if the power has no level). Success nullifies that influence. This power is incapable of removing influences carried or caused by blood, including the blood oath, or by purely mundane techniques such as brainwashing. It can remove magical or thaumaturgical effects, such as a curse, but the character using the power must have a level of Thaumaturgy equal to that with which the curse was cast.

## ASSAMITE SORCERY

The Saracen sorcerer caste practices a brand of blood magic that is largely unrelated to — and much older than — the Tremere's still-emerging system of Thaumaturgy. Assamite Sorcery is in fact an aggregate of magical traditions recorded by the viziers and adapted by the sorcerers. Mesopotamian and Persian streams run strong in this melting-pot, but the sorcerers take advantage of Islam's spread along trade routes and battlefields to integrate more and more esoteric wisdom into their sorcery. The unifying paradigm of this diverse tradition is the need to achieve an altered state of mind in order to tap into universal forces (with the benefit of vampiric blood). There are many different ways to achieve this altered state, including meditation, Sufi-like whirling and self-mutilation. Some of the most powerful sorcerers use *kalif* (*hashish* watered with blood); mortal slaves smoke this magically enhanced hallucinogen and are then fed from by the sorcerer. *Kalif* is only grown in Alamut.

In terms of game mechanics, Assamite Sorcery functions just like Thaumaturgy, with paths and rituals. Assamites may hence learn the Thaumaturgy Discipline with the understanding that it actually represents their own brand of sorcery (and should be noted as such on the character sheet). Assamite Sorcery counts as a clan Discipline for experience or character creation purposes only for members of the sorcerer caste, however.

Assamite sorcerers may choose their primary path. Whispers of the Heavens (see below) is unique to the Saracens, but they also have their own versions of Rego Vitae, Creo Ignem, Rego Motus, Rego Tempestas, Thaumaturgical Alchemy, Way of the Levinbolt and Path of Warding, as well access to a variety of rituals (including those on page 70-71). When using rituals or paths other than those unique to the Assamites, blood point expenditure is increased by one.

Note that although Assamite Sorcery may use the same mechanics as thaumaturgical paths and rituals, they are neither the same nor compatible as far the practitioners are concerned. A sorcerer must learn the Assamite version of Defense of the Sacred Haven (a Level One ritual) from another Assamite sorcerer — the Tremere version is nothing but alien foolishness to him. The Storyteller always has final say as to whether a particular path or ritual is available to Assamites.

Those who plan on extensive use of Assamite Sorcery may wish to consult **Blood Magic: Secrets of Thaumaturgy** (for **Vampire: The Masquerade**), which provides extensive background on this tradition, as well as other paths and rituals.

## WHISPERS OF THE HEAVENS

The Almohad Empire and Taugast both boast astronomers whose knowledge far exceeds all European lore of the stars. Both cultures also possess a wealth of fortune-tellers who claim the ability to read knowledge from the heavens. The Assamites draw on both of these traditions in addition to their own studies. This path emerged from sorcerer workshops after long effort to reconcile conflicting beliefs. Practitioners of Whispers of the Heavens are also known as seers or diviners.

Whispers of the Heavens depends in large part on the sorcerer's ability to see the stars. All uses of this path are at +1 difficulty in overcast weather and +2 difficulty in storms. The path cannot be used at all if the sorcerer cannot see the sky.

### • MAP THE SKIES

Though Europeans have not yet learned to navigate by the stars, Cainite observers with centuries in which to travel and watch the skies have made some progress toward this goal. The first technique that a student of this path learns is that of divining his location with a mere glance at the stars.

**System:** The player rolls normally. The number of successes determines how accurately the character is able to determine his location. If he has access to an accurate map, he can apply this knowledge to pinpoint his location; if not, he simply knows his position relative to known landmarks.

One success	Within 100 miles
Two successes	Within 10 miles
Three successes	Within one mile
Four successes	Within 250 yards
Five successes	Within 10 yards

### •• READ HEAVEN'S PLANS

Many diviners claim to be able to read the fate of a place or person in the stars. This power allows these effects, though not with the precision many false prophets claim. The sorcerer is able to glean the approximate fate of the ground on which he stands or the person to whom he speaks, though this is less an absolute reading than a hint of the most likely of many possible futures.

**System:** The character must be standing on the ground or touching the person on whom he wants to use this power. The number of successes determine roughly how far forward the character's observations reach. The exact nature of the vision is up to the Storyteller, but this power never grants absolute clarity. Instead the seer typically receives a few images and a sense of the emotions and time frame associated with them. Using the power to determine the fate of a city which will in fact be burned by the Crusaders on October 8, 1201, but will be the region's best producer of grain until that time, might result in a vision of bountiful wheat fields suddenly scorched by fire and trampled by horses four years hence. As always with such imprecise prophecy, the fate foretold is not an absolute certainty, merely the one that is most likely if events proceed in their present course.

One success	One lunar month
Two successes	One season
Three successes	One year
Four successes	One decade
Five successes	One century

### ••• CALL DOWN THE HUNTER'S MOON

"To everything," says the Christian holy book, "there is a season." Natives of Taugast speak of "auspicious and inauspicious occasions" on which to perform certain actions. This power grants its wielder a sense of the best time to act in a particular manner. Though the sorcerer is free to ignore this divine scheduling, his chances for success will be vastly increased if he heeds it.

**System:** The sorcerer names aloud the act in question, from "the planting of this year's crop of wheat" to "Lucas of Normandy's proposal of marriage to Katherine of Bordeaux" to "the assassination of the Ventrue, Fabrizio Ulfila." If the roll succeeds, the character learns the best night within the next season (three lunar months) to attempt this act, *or* the best hour between the present time and the coming dawn to attempt a more immediate task. The choice of the moment itself is entirely up to the Storyteller, who should work it into his existing plans for the chronicle.

If the character does try to perform this task on the indicated night or at the indicated hour, the player gains a number of temporary Willpower points equal to the number of successes scored on the roll. These are tracked separately from his normal Willpower pool, and any that are unspent are lost at the end of the night or upon the successful completion of the task. This power

may only be used once to divine the best night or hour for any given task — the sorcerer may not stock up on bonus Willpower.

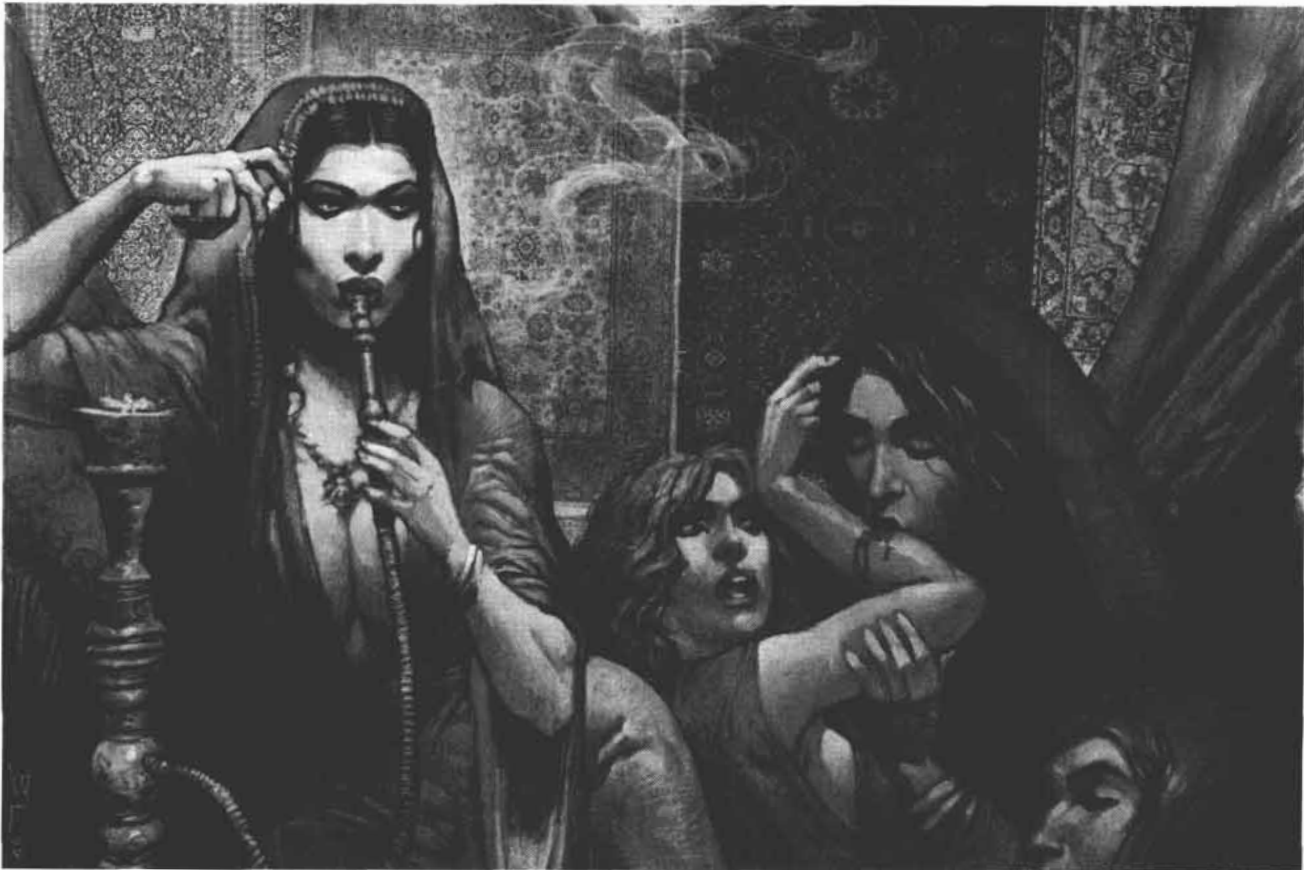
A small group of individuals (no more than the sorcerer's Leadership rating) may benefit from this power. Each character must be aware of the rite and give the sorcerer one blood point, which is destroyed when the power is used. Every individual who so donated gains the same number of temporary Willpower points as the sorcerer himself, and the same rules and restrictions apply to these boons.

This power may only be used on an extended, complex task — it may not be applied to something that can be accomplished in a single action (or with a single die roll). The effects of a botch are left to the Storyteller's imagination, but will definitely include a false message that prompts the sorcerer to act when the stars are not right. Also note that outside circumstances may conspire against the sorcerer's execution of his task on the appointed night — this power does not automatically reschedule the summons of princes, for instance.

#### •••• TRACE THE SOUL'S FAVOR

A diviner who knows the date of birth of a specific individual has access to a vast array of information on that individual's history and destiny. By tracing the position of the stars under which the subject was born, the sorcerer can learn such diverse facts as what trade he is best suited for, what his personality tends toward, or what sort of ultimate reward is in store for him upon his death.

**System:** The player rolls normally, with a +1 penalty imposed if the character knows only one of the subject's name or date of birth (or date of Embrace, for Cainite subjects) and a +3 difficulty if the character knows neither. For each success, the sorcerer receives one piece of information about the core identity of the individual in question. Five successes give the sorcerer clues to the subject's ultimate fate (Storyteller's discretion). A botch gives the target a sudden realization that someone is watching him; if he ever sees the sorcerer, he will instantly realize that this person has spied upon him before.



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The exact nature of the facts revealed by this power are up to the Storyteller, but they may include revealing the subject's Nature, Demeanor, approximate Will-power rating, Road and approximate rating, notable Disciplines or Abilities. Ideally these should all be revealed in character, without using overt game terms. A subject with Melee 5 and Politics 5 might elicit the response "sword and state are as equally mastered tools in her hands." Such a revelation would require two successes (one for each Ability).

### ●●●●● RIPPLES ON THE SEA OF STARS

The pinnacle of this path allows the sorcerer to cast his point of view far away from his physical body, using the heavens as a vast scrying pool. With this power, he may observe any events that are transpiring under the same stars that he sees. Of course, even this powerful divination has its limits. The sorcerer must be familiar with at least one participant in the scene which he wishes to observe, be it the city in which the events are occurring, an individual who is participating in them or a specific item around which they center.

**System:** The character must have a specific target in mind, be it a location, a person or an object with which he is at least casually familiar. If the sorcerer has read the target's future at least once before, either with lesser applications of this Path or with some other magics, the roll's difficulty is reduced by one. The scene that is being observed must be occurring under the night sky, and must be within sight of at least one star that the sorcerer can see (though weather does not block this vision past the usual difficulty modifier which it imposes). If the events are transpiring under the sun or under a roof, the attempt simply fails (though the Storyteller should still have the player roll). The number of successes determine the clarity of the image that the sorcerer receives, as well as his ability to exert limited mystic influence over the scene that he is watching.

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| One success     | The sorcerer can dimly see the scene  |
| Two successes   | The sorcerer can see and hear the scene   |
| Three successes | All of the sorcerer's senses function with perfect clarity, and he may use Auspex 1, 2 and 4 to observe in greater detail |

Four successes

The sorcerer can use all his Auspex powers to affect or observe the scene, and can also use any other sorcerous path power (though not a ritual) to observe or analyze what he perceives

Five successes

The sorcerer can use any Assamite Sorcery power or ritual he knows to affect the scene, as long as this exercise of power does not require his physical presence at the scene

This power's effects last for the duration of the scene being witnessed or until daybreak at the sorcerer's location or at the site in question. While the character uses this power, the player suffers a +2 difficulty penalty on all actions that require the character to interact with his physical surroundings. If an individual being observed has Auspex, he receives a faint sense of being watched from above. This is not enough to identify the observer, though the paranoid unease it induces may be enough to press the subject to take matters indoors, away from prying eyes — and prying stars.

## SORCEROUS RITUALS

### EYE OF THE TRANSLATOR (LEVEL ONE RITUAL)

This spell is of limited physical power, but its potential effects are mighty indeed. It assists the sorcerer in deciphering any written material on which he casts it. Many viziers learn the basics of Thaumaturgy in order to use this ritual. While it does not actually change the page that it affects, it creates an illusion of the writing in question flowing into a form with which the caster is familiar.

**System:** The sorcerer cuts himself along his left eyebrow and allows three drops of his blood (no blood point or health level loss) to fall upon the page he wishes to comprehend. He then meditates for 10 minutes while the blood soaks into the writing and disappears. The player receives a number of extra dice on all rolls to translate, decode or comprehend the work in question equal to the number of successes he rolled when enacting the ritual. These extra dice are lost if the character breaks off work for more than 10 minutes, or at the end of the night. The ritual must be cast separately for every page, sheet or surface that the character wants to translate.

## BLOOD'S CRY FOR VENGEANCE (LEVEL TWO RITUAL)

The Nosferatu say that if one Assamite dies, the entire clan knows of it within a fortnight. While this is a slight exaggeration, the Lepers are not off the mark by far. This ritual links two or more willing participants in a subtle psychic bond. Under most circumstances, this has no effect, and it is undetectable by most methods of perception. However, if any member of the group dies, all others are instantly struck by a vision of her fall, and gain a flash of her emotional state before death (which generally allows them to know if their comrade died honorably or was betrayed). All loyal members of the clan are linked to the Eldest through this ritual upon their first pilgrimage to Alamut. Typically, pilgrims who arrive within the same lunar month are bound to the Eldest and to each other in unison.

**System:** Each individual to be linked, up to a maximum number equal to the caster's Occult score, donates two blood points, which the character collects in a wooden bowl. She does not have to be part of the link, though she counts against the limit of participants if she does. Over the next hour, she brings the blood to a boil over an open fire while the participants sit in a circle around the fire and meditate on their relationships with one another. When the last of the blood has boiled away, the ritual is complete. If the player's roll is successful, all participants are permanently linked in the manner described above. This knowledge is transmitted instantly upon one's death, and no known method can block it. There is no limit to the number of circles to which one individual can be bound.

## MESSENGER OF THE WINDS (LEVEL THREE RITUAL)

The Assamites could not maintain the level of cohesion that their clan enjoys were it not for this ritual. Messenger of the Winds allows the sorcerer to send a written communication to anyone, anywhere in the world, as long as he knows the intended recipient's name and has enough of her blood to write that name on the message. Thus, the sorcerers who use this ritual the most are those who serve at Alamut and have access to the Heartblood of the clan. This ritual is limited to the delivery of written communication, though stronger rites exist that allow the transport of other small items at greater cost. Of late, troubling rumors have reached the sorcerers that say that the Tremere have stolen this ritual for use in extending their own clan's far-flung web of influence.

**System:** The sorcerer does not have to pen the message himself, though it must be written on clean linen with a pen made from the feather of an eagle. He rolls the missive and ties it with a white silk cord. On this cord, he writes the recipient's name in her own blood. He then carries the message outside and throws it into the sky, where the winds catch it and carry it away. It appears in the possession of the target at precisely noon of her next day of slumber. This ritual will not work if the document to be sent is enchanted in any other way (though it may contain magical formulae or instructions without hazard). A botch sends the message to a random recipient, usually someone who is connected to the intended target in some manner.



# Children of Mammut

## THE RENUNCIATE CRUSADER

**Quote:** *You call me traitor; I call it an honor if I am a traitor to a cause as unjust as yours.*

**History:** The second son of a minor French noble, you gladly followed the banners of the Church when the Third Crusade departed for the Holy Land.

The first battle you saw shook your courage. The second one tested your faith. The third shattered your illusions forever. You fled that night and, wandered in the wastes for days, quenching your thirst at muddy oases. You wrestled to reconcile the teachings of the Church with the horrors you had witnessed. At last, you hit upon a thread of hope: the Church's original purpose is pure, but its executors, being but mortal men, are incapable of carrying it out. If you are to follow the oath you swore to be God's sword, you must protect the Holy Land—even from your own countrymen.



When you came to this epiphany, you realized you had spoken aloud—and your sire appeared from the air before you and smiled.

**Concept:** Though you are of the warrior caste, you're hardly the typical Cainite image of the Saracen assassin. You have renounced your Church but not your faith or your nobility, and you prefer your conflicts to be direct and open—the better to give

your opponents a chance to see the reasoning behind your fervor. Thanks to your religious and political views, you are something of an outcast in both European and Arab society, but you are able to act in both with equal facility.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Your current appearance belies your noble upbringing, and many are surprised by the cultured front you can present when it's called for. So far, your achievements have been minor—a battle turned here, a small word in the right ear there—but you feel you are destined for greater things and you do not hesitate to try to sway others to your views. Your single-minded devotion masks a deep well of loneliness, for you are fully accepted by few warrior-caste Assamites and you have set yourself apart from everything you knew before.

**Equipment:** Battered sword and mace, dented shield, piecemeal armor, war-horse, dusty court garb stored in the bottom of a saddlebag, handmade rosary

VAMPIRE <i>The Dark Horse</i>		
NAME:	NATURE: DEFENDER	GENERATION: 9th
PLAYER:	DEMIANOR: JUDGE	HAVEN:
CHRONICLE:	CLAN: Assamite Warrior	CONCEPT: Renunciate Crusader
ATTRIBUTES		
PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	MENTAL
Strength: ●●●●●	Charisma: ●●●●●	Perception: ●●●●●
Dexterity: ●●●●●	Manipulation: ●●●●●	Intelligence: ●●●●●
Stamina: ●●●●●	Appearance: ●●●●●	Will: ●●●●●
ABILITIES		
TALENTS	SKILLS	KNOWLEDGES
Acting: ●●●●●	Animal Ken: ●●●●●	Academics: ●●●●●
Alertness: ●●●●●	Archery: ●●●●●	Health/Wisdom: ●●●●●
Athletics: ●●●●●	Crafts: ●●●●●	Investigation: ●●●●●
Brawl: ●●●●●	Etiquette: ●●●●●	Law: ●●●●●
Dodge: ●●●●●	Herbalism: ●●●●●	Linguistics: ●●●●●
Empathy: ●●●●●	Male: ●●●●●	Medicine: ●●●●●
Intimidation: ●●●●●	Music: ●●●●●	Occult: ●●●●●
Larceny: ●●●●●	Risk: ●●●●●	Politics: ●●●●●
Leadership: ●●●●●	Stealth: ●●●●●	Science: ●●●●●
Subterfuge: ●●●●●	Survival: ●●●●●	Seneschal: ●●●●●
ADVANTAGES		
DISCIPLINES	BACKGROUND	VIRTUES
ANIMALISM: ●●●●●	CONTACTS: ●●●●●	Conscience/Generation: ●●●●●
CELEBRITY: ●●●●●	GENERATION: ●●●●●	Self-Control/Resist: ●●●●●
OBFUSCATE: ●●●●●	INFLUENCE: ●●●●●	Courage: ●●●●●
QUIETUS: ●●●●●	RETAINERS: ●●●●●	
OTHER TRUITS	HEAVEN	HEALTH
●●●●●	●●●●●	Bruised: <input type="checkbox"/>
●●●●●	●●●●●	Hurt: -1 <input type="checkbox"/>
●●●●●	●●●●●	Injured: -1 <input type="checkbox"/>
●●●●●	●●●●●	Wounded: -2 <input type="checkbox"/>
●●●●●	●●●●●	Mauled: -2 <input type="checkbox"/>
●●●●●	●●●●●	Crippled: -5 <input type="checkbox"/>
●●●●●	●●●●●	Incapacitated: <input type="checkbox"/>
COMBAT	BLOOD POOL	EXPERIENCE
Weapon:    Difficulty:    Damage:	●●●●●●●●	
	●●●●●●●●	
	●●●●●●●●	

LIBELLUS SANGUINIS 3



# THE SEA WITCH

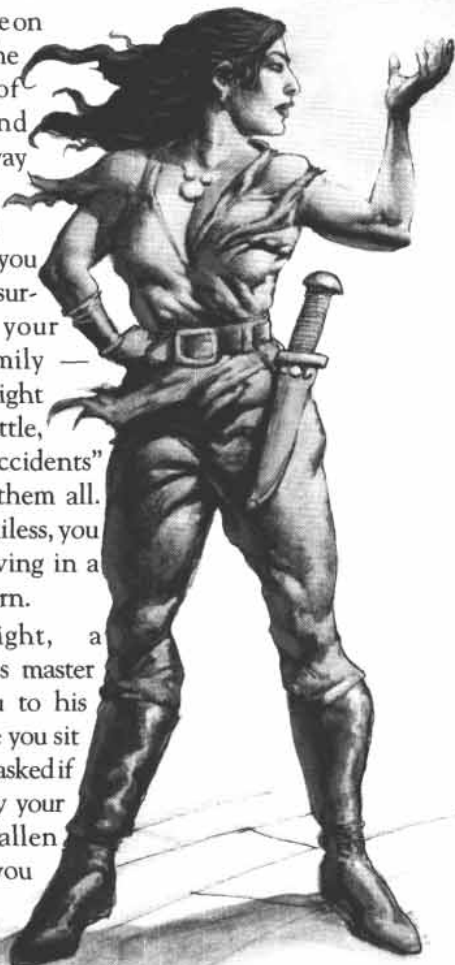
**Quote:** *It seems you've lost your sails in this storm. A pity, really. Fortunately, we saw your plight and we'll be more than happy to take on your cargo so you can limp home.*

**History:** Born into a wealthy family of Greek merchants, you were at once protected and privileged well beyond that which would be expected of a girl of your station. When you were 16, your eldest brother began taking you on his trading ventures to Alexandria, ostensibly to introduce you to potential suitors. You stayed at his side—meekly at first, but as your confidence grew you began to whisper advice to him. After the fourth trip, he admitted to your father that the profits his latest journey had reaped were more your responsibility than his.

One night off the coast of Sicily, you were attacked by two ships flying black banners, ships whose masters commanded the stuff of nightmare itself. They wrapped your ship in tendrils of night and shattered her hull.

You awoke on a beach near the ruins of Carthage and made your way to Tunis, where you learned that you were the only survivor from your ship and family—within a fortnight of your own battle, a variety of “accidents” had claimed them all. Lost and penniless, you turned to serving in a dockside tavern.

One night, a Moorish ship's master beckoned you to his table. He bade you sit with him, and asked if you knew why your fate had befallen you. When you answered no, he told you the



harsh truth. Your family had grown too bold, too powerful, too rich, and their ascendance had threatened another “merchant” concern, one which he and his people opposed. Then he put vengeance in your hand and told you its price.

**Concept:** You have emerged from training under your mentor as a woman transformed. You're part free trader, part witch and part smuggler. You have a new ship, a parting gift from your sire when he had nothing more to teach you.

**Roleplaying Hints:** The flame for vengeance no longer burns as hot as it did when you were first given the Blood. If you ever see that captain again, he'll go down in pieces as you howl your triumph to the storm, but you recognize that you have other things to do. You've been given a second life, one free from many of the concerns and responsibilities of the previous one, and you intend to enjoy this one as you never could the first. Of course, sometimes raiding is more profitable than legitimate commerce—so you go where the money is. Oh, and do try not to think about the fact that you're slowly becoming the image of that which you've dedicated yourself to destroying.

**Equipment:** Merchant ship with a ramming prow and a small catapult, short bow, working knife

VAMPIRE THE DARK AGES		
NAME	NATURE LONER	GENERATION 11th
PLAYER	DEMONOR ROGUE	HAVEN
CHRONICLE	CLAN Assamite Sorcerer	CONCEPT Sea Witch
ATTRIBUTES		
PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	MENTAL
Strength ●●●●●	Charisma ●●●●●	Perception ●●●●●
Dexterity ●●●●●	Manipulation ●●●●●	Intelligence ●●●●●
Stamina ●●●●●	Appearance ●●●●●	Wits ●●●●●
ABILITIES		
TALENTS	SKILLS	KNOWLEDGES
Acting ●●●●●	Animal Ken ●●●●●	Academics ●●●●●
Alertness ●●●●●	Archery ●●●●●	Heath Wisdom ●●●●●
Athletics ●●●●●	Crafts ●●●●●	Investigation ●●●●●
Brawl ●●●●●	Etiquette ●●●●●	Law ●●●●●
Dodge ●●●●●	Herbalism ●●●●●	Linguistics ●●●●●
Empathy ●●●●●	Melée ●●●●●	Medicine ●●●●●
Intimidation ●●●●●	Music ●●●●●	Occult ●●●●●
Larceny ●●●●●	Ride ●●●●●	Politics ●●●●●
Leadership ●●●●●	Sealsh ●●●●●	Science ●●●●●
Subterfuge ●●●●●	Survival ●●●●●	Senschal ●●●●●
ADVANTAGES		
DISCIPLINES	BACKGROUNDS	VIRTUES
Assamite Sorcery ●●●●●	CONTACTS ●●●●●	Conscience/Emotions ●●●●●
AUSPEX ●●●●●	GENERATION ●●●●●	Self-Control/Innates ●●●●●
●●●●●	RESOURCES ●●●●●	Courage ●●●●●
●●●●●	RETAINERS ●●●●●	
●●●●●		
OTHER TRAITS		
●●●●●	ROAD HUMANITY	HEALTH
●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	Bruised
●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	Hurt -1
●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	Injured -1
●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	Wounded -2
●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	Mauled -2
●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	Crippled -5
●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	Incapacitated
COMBAT		
Weapons	Difficulty	Damage
BLOOD POOL		
●●●●●●●●●●		
●●●●●●●●●●		
●●●●●●●●●●		
●●●●●●●●●●		
EXPERIENCE		

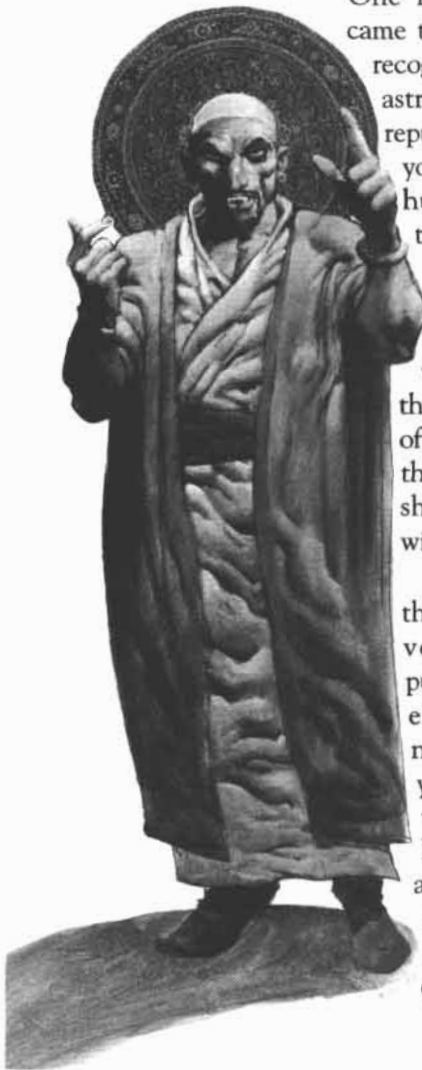
LIBELLUS SANGUINIS 3

# QADI

**Quote:** *Attend my words, for I am the guardian of order. All are equal under the law, and I will see justice done this night.*

**History:** Even when you were a young boy, you had a gift: people listened to you and trusted your opinion. In time, you took leave of your village and journeyed to Baghdad to study the laws of Islam in the great university there. You remained there for years, until your brother sent for you. His message said that the village's *qadi*, the judge, was dying, and the community wanted none other than you to take his place.

You returned home and took up your predecessor's mantle, dispensing Allah's justice to your people with a firm and fair hand. Decades passed, and you began to feel your age. You found a pupil and began to pass your knowledge to him, for you knew you would not be able to serve your people forever.



One night, a traveler came to your door. You recognized him as an astronomer of some repute and the two of you conversed on a hundred different topics until shortly before the sun rose, when he took his leave of you. He passed through the village often, always finding the time to stop and share an evening with you.

On his last visit, the astronomer revealed the true purpose for his travels. He had taken note of you when you were still a young man, and he saw in you a hunger for learning that would never be quenched. What

better, he asked, than to have all of eternity to learn all the works of man?

**Concept:** You are a scholar and a lawgiver, and these two occupations are quite interchangeable to your way of thinking. The Embrace changed little for you, save that you have had to make some adjustments to your faith, but you are certain that Allah will forgive you.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You see yourself as the representative of Allah, for Islamic law and faith are so closely related as to be inseparable. This has given you a sense of integrity as strong as Damascene steel. You are equally content whether immersed in a book or embroiled in a furious debate, and you have no qualms about using Haqim's gifts to aid you in your judgments.

**Equipment:** Small library (10 books or so), robes of office, various second- and third-hand scientific instruments

VAMPIRE THE DARK AGES		
NAME:	NATURE: JUDGE	GENERATION: 12th
PLAYER:	DEMEANOR: AUTOGRAT	HAVEN:
CHRONICLE:	CLAN: Assamite Vizier	CONCEPT: Qadi
ATTRIBUTES		
PHYSICAL		MENTAL
Strength	Charisma	Perception
Dexterity	Manipulation	Intelligence
Stamina	Appearance	Wits
ABILITIES		
TALENTS		KNOWLEDGES
Acting	Animal Ken	Academics
Alertness	Archery	Hearth/Wisdom
Athletics	Crafts	Investigation
Brawl	Etiquette	Law
Dodge	Herbalism	Linguistics
Empathy	Melee	Medicine
Intimidation	Music	Occult
Larceny	Ride	Politics
Leadership	Stealth	Science
Subterfuge	Survival	Senschal
ADVANTAGES		
DISCIPLINES		BACKGROUNDS
AUSPEX	INFLUENCE	RESOURCES
QUIETUS	RETAINER	RESOURCES
OTHER TRUITS		RESOURCES
COMBAT		RESOURCES
ROD		HEALTH
HEAVEN		Bruised
WILLPOWER		Hurt
BLOOD POOL		Injured
EXPERIENCE		Wounded
		Mauled
		Crippled
		Incapacitated

# Of Historical Note: One Man, One Knife and One Strike

*If you look at history, you will see the ripples that Cainites leave in their passing. In some instances, we directly touch the affairs of mortal men. In others, our meddling is more subtle, sometimes unintended and all the more damaging for its lack of deliberate control. Occasionally a mortal learns too much of what we are and tries to imitate us, believing that the power will come with the form. All too often, these individuals know the what but not the why, and they mimic the right actions for all the wrong reasons.*

In 1192, the first Western victim of the radical sect known as the Assassins fell to their daggers. The death of Conrad of Montferrat sent shock waves through the Crusaders — and, indeed, all of Europe. While murder is hardly unheard of in the Dark Ages, an organized association of professional killers was unthinkable until now.

The origin of the Assassins is unknown to Europe, and only dimly understood in the East. Most scholars believe that the group originated with a leader of the Ismaili sect of Islam known as Hasan-i Sabbah. Shortly before the turn of the 12th century, Hasan and his militant followers captured a castle in the Elburz Mountains which records commonly refer to as Aluh Amut: the Eagle's Teaching. The Seljuk Turks, whose Sunni sect opposed the Ismaili faith, began moving against Ismailis across their empire. On October 16, 1092, a follower of Hasan named Bu Tahur Arrani slew Nizam al-Mulk, an advisor to the Seljuk ruler, thereby laying the foundation of the Assassins. Over the next century, Hasan's devotees carried out a series of murders calculated to decapitate Seljuk persecution of the Ismailis.

Hasan-i Sabbah died on May 23, 1124. His doctrine of loyalty and obedience, however, live on among the Ismailis and are the unifying force for his followers. Over the decades following Hasan-i's death, Aluh Amut became the training ground and headquarters for an organization of killers who measure success by one successful stroke of a dagger and care not what happens to them once their target is dead.

The Assamites would like to deny all involvement with the Assassins but they lack that luxury. In truth, the Assassins might never have arisen without the aid of a former Assamite pawn: a ghoul who now calls himself Haqim in dark mockery of his former masters.

The man now known as Haqim was an Assamite warrior's assistant and protégé during the fifth through seventh centuries. When his master fell during the campaign against the Baali, the ghoul's blood oath recoiled on him and shattered his mind. He fled in the middle of the day, carrying with him the most treasured of his master's belongings. Those Assamites who knew him assumed he had met an untimely end in the desert.

In truth, the ghoul's master had chosen and trained him because of one quality he possessed. The False Haqim (as the Assamites refer to him) had the gift of true sight, the ability to gaze past all illusions and discern the reality behind them. He was his master's hunting hound, piercing the obfuscation and chimera of his victims. In two centuries, he learned many of his master's skills, not the least of which were the ability to recognize Cainites and the precision necessary to strike them down from ambush. The victims he claimed in the years of his freedom may never be counted, but at least a dozen Assamites are among those vampires he brought down in his unreasoning thirst for the blood that still prolongs his life. Sometime during those long centuries, he recovered enough of himself to begin building power — and he remembered enough of his master's tales to build a history and a legend to draw that power to himself. And then, when he heard of a place named Alamut, the False Haqim went there to claim its mantle of leadership.

The False Haqim's influence over Aluh Amut and its inhabitants is limited. He is a shadow ruler, not an open commander, and his pawns are few in number. Most of the Assassins' actions are unaffected by anything but the sectarian politics of Islam. However, over the last century, the False Haqim has recruited other men like himself who have the gift of true sight. These comprise his inner circle within the Assassins, and they share in his immortality, for they hunt Cainites and return them to Aluh Amut to supply themselves with the water of eternal life. The fabled single blow with which the Assassins slay their targets is a reflection of his lessons on impaling an opponent's heart with one thrust of a stake. All Assamite attempts to assault Aluh Amut and remove this disgraceful rogue have failed, for even the strongest powers of Obfuscate are like tattered veils before the gaze of the False Haqim's students. The Saracens have not mounted a powerful enough assault to overcome this advantage because — ironically enough — the False Haqim has his admirers among the Assamites.

Indeed, the ghoul's actions are slowly influencing those of his former masters. As word of the Assassins spreads across Europe, the Assamites take note of the effectiveness of terror tactics and layers of deception. The warrior caste has noted the Assassins' success in removing their own opponents within the Islamic sects. As the Assassins strike at the Crusaders, the impact of such methods on the European psyche cannot be denied. Night by night, the Assamites refine the methods and images that their accidental protégés are using — and night by night, the images of the two become as one in the minds of the Western Cainites.





**B**

## ook Three: Serpents

Ankhesenaten made his obeisance before the visage of the true god and placed the golden bowl filled with blood at the onyx statue's feet. The image of Set was like a greater darkness in the ember-lit confines of the tent, the reddish light limning small details but leaving others in shadow. A lean, muscular leg, an upraised, taloned hand - glimpses that hinted at much but concealed even more. Ankhesenaten rocked back on the balls of his feet and forced breath in through his nose, smelling the sandalwood and frankincense that anointed the god's shoulders. All was made ready. The curved knife gleamed faintly beside the offering bowl, its edge painted in bloody light.



There was faint movement behind Ankhesenaten, back in the main chamber of the tent. He recognized the stealthy footfalls of Goreb, his chief bodyguard. Bowing once more before the face of the god, Ankhesenaten backed through the chamber's narrow opening and turned to face his assembled servants. The tent's main chamber was devoted to the mundane business of the day, outfitted like any other merchant's tent at any other market fair in France: a banked brazier sat in the center of the space, low wooden chairs and stools surrounding it. A small table and high-backed chair occupied a rear corner of the tent, for balancing ledgers and accounts. Cedar chests banded with iron sat in stacks along the walls. Also in the rear of the tent, behind heavy cloth hangings, a small cedar cot sat piled with blankets and furs; when the world believed that Ankhesenaten slept, a chosen bodyguard lay there, sword in hand.

Goreb waited by the brazier, his dark face solemn. When Ankhesenaten entered the chamber, his other servants turned from their tasks and bowed low, their shaven heads gleaming in the firelight. The chief bodyguard bowed respectfully. "The French lord has arrived, Great One, and awaits your pleasure."

Ankhesenaten nodded. He turned to his servants and bid them rise. With the fall of night they had divested themselves of their Western tunics and leggings and now wore priestly robes of indigo-dyed cotton. "Await us without," he said to them. "If he has come to seek the dark river, I shall send for you. It is the will of Set."

"The will of Set," the priests intoned, bowing deeply, then filing silently out of the tent. Goreb was last to go, taking one more careful sweep of the tent's interior before leaving his master alone. Ankhesenaten tucked his hands into the sleeves of his robe and waited, considering outcomes.

The tent flap was suddenly yanked to the side, letting in the chill air of northern France, and Godfrey of Sezanne slipped inside like a furtive thief. The short, heavysset knight clutched a plain, woolen cloak around his stocky frame, and kept a full hood pulled low to disguise his features. As if anyone would recognize the man amid the tents of the Foire de Reims, nearly 40 miles from his estates. Ankhesenaten could not help but frown. Such timidity. He had expected better after the events of the past year.

The Setite summoned up a warm smile as the French lord threw back his hood. "It is a joy and an honor to receive you in my humble tent, my lord," Ankhesenaten said, falling briefly to one knee. "Please be welcome. May I serve you wine?" He pointedly surveyed Godfrey's unadorned cloak and tunic. "Pray, tell me that this last year has given you better fortune than it appears?"

The French knight threw back his cloak and surveyed the tent warily, like a hemmed boar. Godfrey had a broad, fleshy face marked at cheek and nose with the red flush of a drunkard. His thick lips curled in a sneer. "I've ransomed enough travelers and raided aplenty to keep me fat for years to come. But I'm not fool enough to ride in here with all my finery and let the duke know who I'm consorting with." He stepped quickly into the light of the brazier, his thick-fingered hands working nervously. "I've no time for idle talk, Serpent," he hissed. "There's word of watch-fires in the hills south of Troyes, and my spies are telling me that Duke William has taken to the field with 500 horsemen and 1,000 footmen!"

Ankhesenaten nodded approvingly. "You have put your newfound influence to good use, my lord. It is true — Duke William has taken his army to the field and intends to take Troyes by storm before your master can react." The Setite paused, letting the words sink in. "His beloved childer will likely perish. Your liege will have great need of you in the coming weeks. It is quite an opportunity, is it not?"

The Setite studied the knight carefully. Now was the moment, the culmination of two years of labor. He believed Godfrey could be worthy, and a great triumph for the god would be realized.

The French lord grew pale. "Oh, God the Merciful!" he whispered. "Duke Roland may have a man riding for my castle even now!" He thrust out a gloved hand. "Give me the blood! There's no time to waste!"

Ankhesenaten bowed his head. It was not meant to be. The man was simply not worthy of greatness. "I have nothing for you, my lord," he said flatly. "Nothing that would be of use to you."

Godfrey's face flushed with rage. "You misbegotten snake! Is that your game, then? You see a chance for profit, and you raise your price? Name it!" He snatched a bulging leather bag from his belt. "I've gold aplenty, thanks to your past gifts!"

"The blood of the god is not a trinket to be bought and sold," Ankhesenaten hissed, low and quiet. Godfrey recoiled, his rage shriveling before the Setite's sudden advance. "Where is your hunger, Godfrey? When we first met, you were but a frontier lord with a heap of stones for a tower. You railed and whined like a pup denied his mother's teat, while Roland's other vassals enjoyed his favor and drank from his red cup! You wanted their strength, their vitality. You wanted to show your immortal lord that you were every bit as worthy as they. And I gave you that chance. Did my blood not make you as mighty as Roland's favored liege men?"

Godfrey took a halting step back, speechless, nodding fearfully.

"Did you not triumph at your lord's tournaments? Did you not grow wealthy in ransoms and honored on the battlefield? And did I not keep my promise to you, year after year, giving you drink without asking anything in return? And now you dare to come before me and act the craven when power beyond your dreams lies within reach! When Duke William comes, Roland will need every warrior he can muster! He will become indebted to you! He will take you into his counsel. Can you not see what this could make you? I have whetted your appetite for power for

these last two years. Are you not hungry for the feast now before you?"

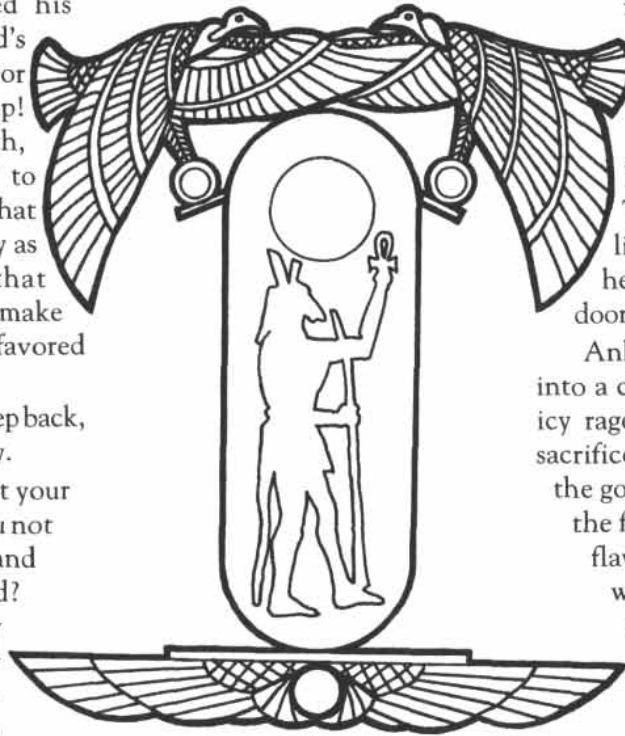
Godfrey shrank before the vampire's dread gaze. His lip trembled. "If I don't have the blood, William's men will surely kill me," he whimpered.

"Had you been worthy, after this night you would never have fear of death again."

Ankhesenaten could no longer conceal his contempt. "You have rejected the gift of the true god. I have no pity for you now." Taking Godfrey by the neck like a cur, he cast the knight headlong through the tent's doorway.

Ankhesenaten sank gracefully into a chair and fought to calm his icy rage. He would have to make sacrifices and abase himself before the god. An exquisite plan long in the forging, shattered by a single flaw. But better to cast aside the weak and the timid rather than share the blood of Set with the unworthy.

When he had composed himself, the Setite sent for Goreb. All was not completely lost. The Ventrue Duke Roland would still be a desperate lord, come the next sunset. "Fetch a child from the town to sacrifice," he said. "Then, in the morning, have the gold and other valuables taken and hidden in the countryside. I expect Duke Roland's men will come for me tomorrow night."



# Children of the Dark God

Your lord, the Duke Roland, wishes to hear my *confession*, does he? Indeed? Go back to your lord, childe, and tell him only this: I have committed no crimes against your lord. I am a Follower of Set, and my heart is pure.

How is it that I am to blame for the calamity that has befallen Champagne? Was it I who forswore my oaths to Roland and came late to the battlefield, or was it the craven Godfrey of Sezanne? Was it I who fell upon Troyes with fire and sword, or was it that Lasombra devil Duke William? I lay sleeping 50 miles from the sunlit battle, yet I am to be accountable for the firing of the duke's tower and the deaths of his beloved childer? You have the look of a scholar about you, young one — explain to me the logic of these accusations. Is it because of my faith? I am a heathen to you, it is true, but does that make me an enemy, like the *paynim* devils of the East? Does it surprise you that I call them thus? Why should it? They were grinding my people under their heel for hundreds of years before your Crusaders set foot in Palestine. I have no more love for them than you. If that surprises you, how might your lord feel if we offered the Ventrue aid and succor in their planned crusade into my homeland? Think on that.

You are an intelligent man, and I see you to be a devoted servant of the Duke. This recent attack has left him in dire straits, and for a misunderstanding he has imprisoned me, at a time when I might be able to save him from his current plight. You have come ready to record my words; do so now. I shall confess. Not to any crime, but to the truth about my people, and the battle we have fought for centuries to save mankind from itself.

Again, you are surprised. Wait. There are more revelations yet to come.

## THE LIE OF OSIRIS

If you are to understand the ways of my people, you must first put aside all you have known or believed about existence. The world is not as you believe it to be.

Long, long ago, when even great Egypt was young, there were two worlds, one upon another, connected by a great, dark river. One was the living world, the other the afterlife, a place my people call *Du'at*. The way of the two worlds was this: a man was born into the living world, where he grew strong and made for himself a strong and prosperous family. When his time here was done, his life essence, his *ka*, would leave the body and cross the dark river into the afterlife. Now, the afterlife is like an image reflected in quicksilver — it is a place identical to our own, and everything that exists in this world has its place there as well. The dead man's family would carefully clean and prepare his body, and make a house out among the sands where he could continue his eternal existence in comfort. Outside the door to the necropolis, the priests would enact special rites over the body, releasing the man's spiritual essence, his *akh*, and his personality, called the *ba*. When the body was interred, all three elements would reunite in the body across the river, and the man would rise to live a life of ease and plenty in the afterlife, cared for by the devotions of his family.

Now, in those first days, all men lived their lives to the fullest, drinking deeply of every pleasure and temptation, as the gods had meant it to be. When they hungered, they killed and ate meat; when they thirsted, they crushed grapes for wine. When they lusted, they took what pleasure they wished in the company of their kin. These people lived as gods, and grew fierce and strong, fearful of neither beast nor demon, and when their time was done they crossed willingly into the afterlife and lived as kings. So long as the people were

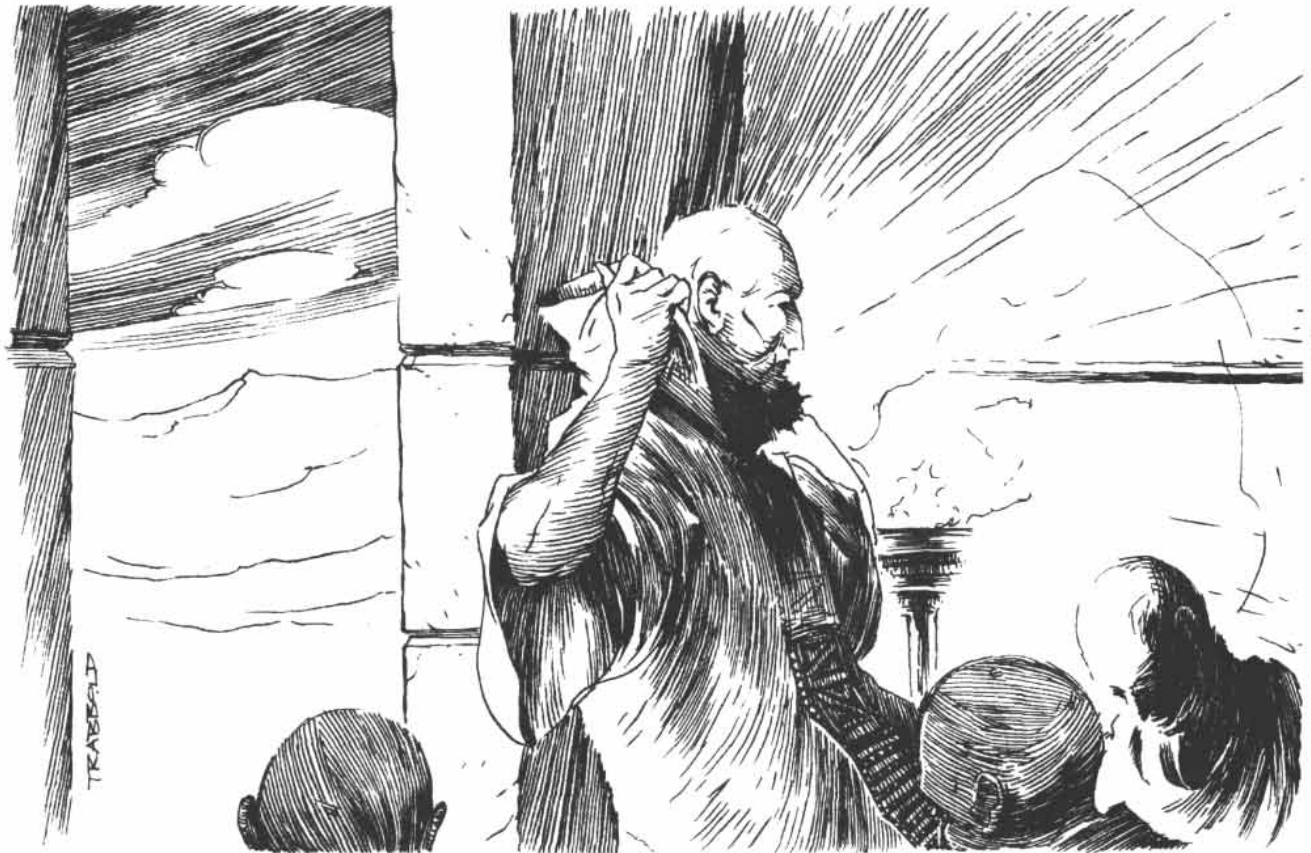
strong, and lived without hesitation or restraint, the two worlds were vibrant and prosperous, and there was balance, called *Maat*.

It was the duty of the man-gods to live according to *Maat* and pass along this knowledge to their children, but there was one such man, a great chieftain named Ra, whose appetite was as the jackal's, both ravenous and cowardly. He thought of all the riches brought to the afterlife by those who had gone before him, and of all that which would follow in generations to come, and his every day and night was consumed with schemes to gain these treasures for himself. Then, as his time drew nigh to cross over into the next world, he called his favored grandson Osiris to his side and told him his plan. Osiris was much like his grandfather, hiding his craven nature beneath a mask of handsome beauty, and he agreed to Ra's plan in return for his share of the afterlife's riches.

So Osiris went before the people of Egypt and rebuked them for their fierce and independent ways, using his false charm to deceive them into feeling shame for their sensuous and impulsive natures. He laid the strong low and elevated the weak, making all equal by the institution of *law*. No more were the days of wild

hunts and nights of carnal joy; instead Osiris bound his people in layers of smothering and restrictive customs. He taught the people of Egypt the deceit of civilization, and perverted *Maat*, so that the people turned away from the savage parts of their nature and lost their connection to the ways of the land. The people of Egypt made Osiris their first king, and his laws worked like poison in their blood and left them weak.

Now Osiris had a brother, who was known as Set, or Sutekh. Set was a great hunter, stalking the most fearsome beasts with great cunning and guile. He was not so strong or so beautiful as Osiris, but his intelligence and perceptiveness was envied among all. It was Set's habit to hunt among the sands of the desert, seeing a majesty and power there that escaped the gaze of lesser men. So it was that Set was out among the sands when his brother Osiris began his trickery, and when he returned he was greatly troubled by what he saw. Set perceived that the grip of law and custom would unbalance *Maat*, but as he did not wish to raise his hand against his brother, he went before his father and asked merely for a birthright of his own. Osiris could keep the rich and fertile lands of Upper Egypt, Set told his father, while he asked for nothing more



BOOK THREE: SERPENTS

than the desert wastes of Lower Egypt, where at least the people could live according to the ways of *Maat*. But Ra refused, wanting nothing to interfere with his cowardly scheme, and instead exiled Set into the deepest deserts, to die far from the sight of men. As a final stroke, Osiris took Set's sister-wife Nephthys to his bed and produced from her a son, named Anubis. Thus there would be no children to remember Set's name once he had crossed into the afterlife.

### SLAVES IN *Du'at*

Thus it came to be that Ra crossed over into the underworld and made war on the souls who rested there, conquering them because their families in the living world had grown weak and forgotten their duties of remembrance. Ra took the treasures of those he conquered and ruled over them with a cruel hand. The weaker the people grew, the harder their journey into *Du'at* became, leaving them at the mercy of Ra, who took their possessions and gave them the choice of eternal slavery or destruction. Later, when Anubis crossed the dark river, Ra gave him charge over who would live in chains and who would perish forever. Anubis became the keeper of the scales, and guided the dead across the dark river and into the next world.

Meanwhile, Set languished in the desert wastes, betrayed and brokenhearted. Though he was accustomed to the rigors of the desert, in time even his stamina was exhausted, and he drew close to death. Desperate, he dug deep into the sands, hoping to find even a drop of water to cool his thirst. He dug for seven days and seven nights, and as the last of his strength failed him he saw a trickle of water seep up through the sands and gleam under the moonlight. Set brought the water to his lips and saw that it was dark as night. It was the water of the dark river itself, the bridge between worlds, but his thirst overcame him, and he drank.

When Set drank the water of the dark river, his spiritual essence, his *akh*, fled from his body, carried along into *Du'at*. Yet so great was his will to live that his *ka* remained rooted in his body, along with his *ba*. And so Set became one of the unliving, of both worlds and yet neither, and his *akh* revealed to him what Ra had done in the afterlife, and he understood how he had been deceived.

### THE TYRANNY OF LAW

So you see now how the tyrants have corrupted the natural order, have tricked man into diminishing himself? It continues even today, even in your Chris-

tian faith. Are you not forbidden to indulge in the glories of the flesh, are you not taught to put aside the urges of this world for the rewards of the next? Surely you must have wondered why such natural feelings had to be denied. Now you know why. You are being cheated of your birthright.

When Set had learned the truth of Ra's plan, he returned from the desert to confront his brother and set things right again. With cunning and guile he trapped Osiris in a finely wrought sarcophagus and threw it into the Nile. Yet the struggle to restore *Maat* was only just beginning. Osiris had many followers, and the people of Egypt no longer remembered the world as it had been. As one they turned against Set and reviled him, hunting him in the night. Set had no wish to slay the people of Egypt, for they knew not what they were doing, so instead he sought out followers of his own who could spread the truth throughout the land. He sought out the finest minds in Egypt, the most learned of priests and scholars, who had often suspected that the world was not as Osiris said it was. To prove what he said was true, Set shared his blood with them, which carried in it the water of the dark river, and their *akh* crossed over into the underworld and perceived the truth of things. That is how the Followers of Set were born, and they went among the people at the bidding of their god to awaken the desires locked in their hearts and free them of Osiris' tyranny of law.

And so began the battle for the world, the primeval struggle that the Cainites of Europe have since distorted beyond recognition. Though Osiris had been defeated (and installed by Ra in the underworld as the Lord of the Dead), his son Horus continued the fight against Set and his followers, enlisting the aid of the jackal-headed Lupines and the treacherous children of Bast. Worst of all, Osiris and Horus created their own immortal followers, the Mummies, whose forms could be destroyed, only to return to plague us time and time again. For many centuries the war raged, tragedy piled upon tragedy as the dark god and his devoted fought not just for Egypt, but for the souls of its people. We nurtured our temples in secret, lest the were-beasts and their kin fall upon us with fire and sword, and we hoarded many relics of the ancient days, artifacts and hoary papyri hearkening back to lost Ur and the First City of men. See! Even your eyes alight with wonder at the thought of it! We alone sought to remember the mysteries of mankind's youth when all others sought to throw them to the flames.

## DEFEATS AND VICTORIES

Finally, through much blood and sacrifice, Set stood triumphant. He hurled his nephew Horus, broken and bleeding, into the next world, and hunted the Lupines even to the ends of the desert. But what we took for triumph turned to bitter ashes on our tongues, for we were too dedicated to our beloved land and saw not beyond its sacred borders. For even as we turned the nobles of Egypt back to their days of decadence and glory, the followers of Horus stirred the Hyksos and sent them against us, delivering their homeland into the hands of the invaders rather than see *Maat* restored! We who served the dark god were given a bitter lesson in those days, one which we have never forgotten. It is not enough to open the eyes of those whom we love; we must show the truth to friend and foe alike, even to the distant parts of the earth. All the world must know the dark god before paradise may be regained.

The Hyksos cast down the gods of Egypt and replaced them with their own, and drove the devoted of Set once again into the shadows, to cultivate worship where we could and try to drive out the blasphemous invaders. Yet we were not warriors, to match their armies with fire and sword; instead, we learned the arts of enticement, to blow gently upon the dull coals of desire. We served our conquerors as merchants and artisans, scholars and prophets, speaking to their hidden desires with subtle gifts and tempting whispers. In time, their zeal faded, and the greatest among them came to know the glory of our god. Yet still we remained captive; for as the Hyksos' strength wore away they were supplanted by the Libyans, then the Ethiopians, and later the hated Persians. Our undying patience was matched, stroke for stroke, and in this way we came to learn that immortal hands were being turned against us, unknowing of the lies of Osiris. The children of Caine now lay at the roots of the great empires, directing them in their quests for power or revenge, heedless of the harm they brought to the world.

Thus it was that great Set commanded us to go out from our homes, to turn our backs on the sands of Egypt and spread his word into the distant places of the Earth, even unto the ears of the children of Caine, to lead them back to the truth. So we came to be known among the councils of the Cainites and unjustly despised, for in the eyes of men such as your lord we stood to destroy all that they held dear.

## SETITES AND THE CHILDREN OF CAINE

Unlike European Cainites, the Followers of Set do not base their identity on the fact that they are vampires, but instead distinguish themselves simply as servants of the dark god. While they must drink blood to survive and shun the daylight as the Cainites do, the Setites see this as a natural consequence of their dual existence, not as an indicator of a common origin with the Western vampires. To the Setites, any being whose energies exist simultaneously in both worlds must follow certain strictures in order to survive. Cainites must feed as they do, sleep as they do, yet have many different powers and physical features completely unlike the Setites. The Followers of Set believe vampires in general to be descendants or servants of evil spirits loosed on the world when Ra conquered the afterlife and upset *Maat*. A Cainite who tries to establish relations or request assistance from a Setite based on the assumption of a common origin is likely to be met with derision or even righteous indignation.

## DARK REVELATIONS

And so the Followers of Set found their way across the land, in merchant caravans, slavers' coffles, royal embassies and entertainers' troupes. When Alexander drove the Persians from Egypt, we waited on him at Siwa and hinted that he was divine; we attended on him as he celebrated his conquests in the palace of Persepolis, and a whisper in his ear brought the seat of Persia's empire crashing down in flames. Where he went, we followed, settling in the courts of his governor-generals, so that when at last the great Macedonian fell ill and died, his great kingdom fell with him.

It was the Greeks who brought large numbers of Cainites to our shores, haunting Alexander's city on the coast and reaching as far as Memphis. They sought the secrets of our land, and we shared with them what they wished, leading them to the sacred truths of Set. Many accepted the true path, reviving much of the old ways for the first time in centuries. We found favor in the court of Ptolemy, and the elders of our kind gathered in the ancient city of Tanis, to celebrate at the feet of the god and convey his wisdom to the faithful.

There were clashes from time to time. Greek Cainites grew jealous of our growing influence, especially amid the scholars at the great library, and from time to time they sought to hunt us down and rid us from the cities. Always we melted into the desert, where Set's power was strong, and let our enemies exhaust themselves against the pitiless sands. We had learned our lessons well from centuries of invasion: patience and stealth will undo the fiercest of warriors.

The Ptolemaics lingered long after Greece was no more; in truth they had become more like us than their true countrymen. We skulked in their temples and whispered to them at their feasts; in time, they might have been the seeds of a new Egypt reborn in the image of the dark god. But then came the Romans and their prideful Cainite masters, disdainful of our ways and merciless in their subjugation. This once, we forgot ourselves and sought to turn the Romans aside through open revolt. We were utterly crushed, and Cleopatra, last of the Ptolemaic line, chose the kiss of the asp rather than be led to Rome in chains.

From that day forward we worked toward Rome's destruction. We made them rich with slaves and gold, always hinting that they could be richer still. We helped

them raise their temples and told them that they were fit to sit beside the gods. The Ventrue fought us at every turn (which is why your lord and his brethren hate us even today), but before long it was Rome itself they were fighting, the colossus they themselves had created. For a time the engine of law served the interests of Set instead of oppressing them, spreading decadence throughout the far reaches of the empire.

Yet even as we savored the glorious subversion of Rome, an event occurred that shook our cause to its core. Now well over a millennium in the past, this event still reverberates among the faithful. Set thrashed and howled in his sarcophagus of onyx, and his thoughts filled the dreams of all his children, even unto the Sixth Generation. For seven nights he spoke, thundering in their minds from sunset to sunrise; it was a great foretelling, a series of visions that prophesied the end of the world, when the dark river would run dry and the two worlds would become one. Whether this was because of the efforts of Ra or Set, none can say. The visions drove many elders mad, fleeing Tanis into the sands and carrying the knowledge they gained with them. At the end of the seventh night, the elders that remained lay in their



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sarcophagi, spent and quivering in awe. Only a handful of mortal priests dared approach the great vault where the god slumbered, but the onyx sarcophagus lay in pieces, some blasted deep into the sandstone walls. The dark god Set, Lord of Sand and Storm, was gone. None know the hour of his return.

Disaster befell Tanis in the centuries after the god's disappearance. First, the Romans did great damage to our mortal servants and to our temples in a bloody raid on the city. Later still, a great storm descended upon Tanis, and on its heels came the Lupines. Long had they thirsted for revenge against us, and their time had come round at last. Without the power of the god to bolster us, the Lupines could not be stopped, and many of Set's devoted fell beneath their claws or were driven into the night. Our temples were razed, and the city's vaults and tunnels were flooded when Lake Manzala overflowed its banks and washed through the city streets. Never again would my people settle in one place again. Many of our elders and the greatest of our treasures remain in Tanis still, locked in tombs of sandstone and water. It is said that sometimes the minds of the drowned ones

call out to their children, and their children's children, summoning them back to attend them in the deeps. I do not know if this is true, nor do I know the fate of any who may heed the call.

When Tanis drowned, the surviving mortal population fled and established a sister city, called Tinnis, on one of Lake Manzala's islands. Clearly they feared the nightmarish memories of the jackal-beasts that rampaged through the doomed city more than the waters of the lake itself. Tinnis is now a center of commerce, producing many rich textiles much sought-after in Egypt and elsewhere. Tinnis has become home to a sizable population of our brethren and Cainites alike who seek to plumb the depths of the drowned city. Of all the cities in Egypt, only Tinnis can be said to have a Setite prince as its ruler, the Hierophant elder Setepenre, who has welcomed Greek-born Brujah, Cappadocians, and even scholarly Toreador to study Tanis under his auspices. Other Cainite expeditions, most especially the two recently sponsored by the Tremere, he has turned back or destroyed. Setepenre jealously guards the

### THE PROPHECIES OF SET

The cryptic revelations known as the Prophecies of Set are the subject of considerable controversy among the god's devoted followers. While some see the revelations as foretellings of unalterable events leading to the world's destruction, others believe that the prophecies are in fact a series of instructions designed to bring about the collision of the living and unliving worlds. The fact that these instructions were obfuscated in cryptic verses exist as a test to the Followers of Set, so that only the most clever would be worthy of achieving the god's master plan, and presumably reaping the rewards associated with it.

Still others find the god's cryptic messages to have a much darker meaning. In the centuries since the destruction of Tanis, there have been certain elders who have suspected that one among their number betrayed the city to the Lupines, hoping to deliver the god or his secrets into the hands of his enemies. No one has ever provided a credible reason for such betrayal, but that has not stopped the elders from using their suspicions to launch punitive inquisitions among their kind, hoping to root out traitors or eliminate rivals.

The Followers of Set refuse to discuss the prophecies of their god to outsiders, though rumors persist of at least one written collection, bound in sand-colored leather, which supposedly now resides in the Templar fortress at Acre. Acre is said to be anathema to vampires due to a potent aura of True Faith, so this collection remains a rumor. No one Setite knows the entirety of the prophecies; it has become a sacred duty for each elder to pass along his fragmentary knowledge to his childer. As time passes however, and Set's absence lengthens, some elders have begun to hoard their knowledge of the revelations, in an attempt to reinforce their status within the clan.

There are approximately 300 prophecies attributed to Set, and since his disappearance it is believed that almost a third of these have been fulfilled, either by circumstance or direct action on the part of cabals of dedicated Setites. One supposed example of a fulfilled prophecy concerned the diablerie of Saulot and the rise of the Tremere: *Beware the grasping and the blind! They will fall upon he who bears a surfeit of sight and take their due, and woe unto the lands of the West when their lids tremble and open!* Another prophecy, this one supposedly yet to come, appears to speak to the Setites directly: *Let the serpent and the rat embrace, but be not harmed. Let the Children of the wastes build castles and villages for them in the West, where they will be a joyful sight unto me.*



city's ruins, but even his control extends only so far, as some Lupines still haunt Tanis, and show no mercy to any whom they encounter.

## SANDS ON THE WIND

Since the destruction of Tanis, my kind is reluctant to place our strength in any one place, preferring instead to wander the corners of the earth as Set wandered the deserts of old. Our surviving elders wait on the night of our god's return, and in the meantime they hasten to do the work of our Lord and watch for the fulfillment of his prophecies.

Not only is there safety in movement, but the labors of Set require us to be constantly searching for items to entice, to awaken, to arouse. For instance, it has come to my attention that an emir in Cairo has in his possession a collection of scrolls authored by Cicero and Homer, taken from the library of Alexandria. They mean little to him, merely a curiosity collected from a conquered city — but think what it would mean to a man of letters such as yourself. You see? It is not enough to enlighten a man with mere words — we must have in our possession gifts and riches enough to bestir all manner of mortal and Cainite. As a result, the majority of our wanderings are taken up with building fortunes and networks of informers, adventurers and thieves. We travel the many caravan routes, stopping in the major cities once or twice a year and dealing with our agents there. If we have ongoing interests in a city, such as Cairo or Constantinople, we might have our affairs managed there by a trusted child. In fact, many elders prefer to keep their progeny in one place at first, to allow them to sharpen their skills for a few decades in familiar surroundings and learn the basics of managing a network of human agents.



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## TRAVELING IN THE DARK MEDIEVAL WORLD

Life on the road is full of unexpected dangers, from the depredations of bandits to the unpredictable whims of tyrannical lords, not to mention the perils of sunlight and the stretches of Lupine-haunted woodland that present unique hazards to any traveling Cainite. It's no wonder then, that many Cainite lords rarely stray from the safety of their homelands, where at least the dangers are well-known and predictable. The typical Setite spends nearly all of his unlife traveling between the major cities of the Middle East and Europe, however, and so the Serpents have developed numerous customs and practices to make their journeys as safe as possible.

Setites conceal their movements within the long trails of merchant caravans, often organizing the travel arrangements of several traders and pooling their resources to hire mercenary troops for security. Even on well-traveled routes, a Setite often sends ahead an advance party of mortal retainers and ghouls to scout the road and alert his network to prepare for their master's arrival. During the long journeys, a Setite spends virtually the entire time slumbering in one of the scores of large chests carried by the caravan, arising only to periodically feed from a member of his retinue and make the nightly obeisance to Set. A Serpent typically rests in a plain sarcophagus of sandalwood or cedar, sometimes perfumed with incense to disguise his scent when passing through Lupine-haunted forests.

The Followers of Set rarely travel together, preferring not to share the details of their network and their routes with their peers. Though ostensibly united in their devotion to their god, childer vie with one another for the favor of their sire, and a Setite who is unable to defend his holdings from his brethren will find no sympathy from his elders. Additionally, the growing rivalries and discord between the Hierophant and Decadent factions have led to several attacks on the open road, encouraging caution and stealth among the Setites. Conversely, however, the Serpents frequently offer the safety of their caravan to Cainites headed in the same direction, a simple gesture that provides the potential for making valuable contacts.

## EGYPT

Land of Kings, beloved of Geb and Nut, cradle of all life — Egypt is the source of all our power, and memories of her eternal sands sustain us on all our journeys. Nowhere in the world are we as strong as in the land of our birth, even as our people rest under the hand of yet another conqueror, the Muslims. Unlike the Greeks, who tolerated our true religions and even adopted much into their own, the Muslims are not so accepting of our beliefs, forcing our temples into hiding once more. In truth, after hundreds of years of persecution by the Coptic Christians during Roman times, then the equally unkind Muslim dynasties, there are few Egyptians, even in the outlying lands, who remember the true gods of their people. In these times we are forced to nurture small, isolated temples, drawing in the poor and the disaffected, or those who nurture hatreds for the Muslims' harsh laws. Nevertheless, our power in Egypt is still strong, for there remain many holy places consecrated to the god in the vast deserts and many secret sites containing relics and treasures of great antiquity.

This is not to say that Egypt is free from Cainite influence. The sad truth, in fact, is that even in our homeland, our numbers are smaller than the sum of the heathen Cainites. There are small but significant numbers of the Lasombra playing their games in the courts of Cairo, though the recent downfall of the Fatimids in favor of Salah ad-Din and his uncle seemed to catch even these pale spiders by surprise. The upheavals have further gained the attention of the mighty Assamites, those swords of Haqim whom your lords fear so fervently. I wonder how surprised your lords would be to see the wild-eyed demons of Alamut passing through the marble courts of the sultan like sage lions and composing verse to the greater glory of Salah ad-Din, who drove the infidel from the Holy City and back to the sea. They seek to spur the Ayyubids on to even greater glories, and have been perceptive enough to seek our council in such things, for we know well who can be persuaded, and how.

Alexandria is now a gateway to our country for European and Levantine Cainites, granted free passage through the city by its melancholy Toreador prince. Through Alexandria's ports come exiled Cainites of every clan, seeking refuge or planning their revenge against enemies left in Europe. Ventrue lords dispatch their childer to scout Egypt in preparation for their rumored crusade, and small bands of Tremere leave the city to seek lost knowledge in the shifting sands of the

desert. There are still Brujah lingering in Alexandria, stubbornly clinging to a Greece that is no more and haunting the remnants of their once-great library. They have resisted our overtures for many, many years, but with each passing night their bitterness grows, and we are ever patient.

As we did the Hyksos in millennia past, we serve the Muslims as merchants, traders, scholars and healers, fulfilling their many needs. Many of our number derive their power and influence from the slave markets, bringing in flesh from as near as Palestine and as far as the forbidding Caucasus. Many of these slaves are servants to their true masters, drinking a little of the dark river in our veins and reporting back of the needs and vulnerabilities of their erstwhile masters. In time, perhaps, these slaves will aid us in pushing the invaders from our homeland forever; even now there are Setite traders providing the Ayyubid sultan with fierce Mamluk slaves to serve as his palace guard.

The desires of the Ayyubids to broaden trade with the infidel West has also opened further opportunities for inroads into the Sultan's court, allowing us to entice the Muslim nobles with European textiles, steel and gold in return for silks and spices. Many of the court who lost favor during the fall of the Fatimids have set their feet upon the path to Set in their desire to regain the riches and status that had once been theirs. When neither gold nor indolence touches the Muslims, often the conceits of scholarship can stir their souls. There are even Lasombra and Cappadocians who have surrendered their much-vaunted control in pursuit of Egypt's secrets or the knowledge imported there from Greece and elsewhere. We provide translators, scribes, even guides to feed the desires of these cold intellects. Few are wise enough to see that once a secret is answered, another must be sought out, deeper and darker than before. It is their glorious undoing.

While many of our number thus keep houses close to the Muslim courts in Lower Egypt, there are also elders and their progeny who follow a more ancient, traditional path. They still lure the ambitious to Set's embrace through the sublime arts of prophecy. There is a Setite elder, a Hierophant named Tenermentu, who lurks in the shadows at Siwa, where the priests confirmed Alexander's belief in his own divinity. At Siwa, in distant oases and in half-deserted villages, there are temples where mortal and Cainite alike can approach and be told of their destiny. The Setite speaks through the priests there and gives the supplicants enough to encourage their particular beliefs and desires; often

these souls return again and again, for further insight and instruction. The secret is in knowing a supplicant's weaknesses; mortals, even Cainites, have hidden desires that need only a little encouragement to come to the surface. These desires need not be evil in nature — in fact, the greatest corruption occurs from the noblest of aspirations.

Consider, for instance, a merchant from Alexandria who is considering a risky investment in shipping wine to Italy. He wishes to make more money so that his wife and children might live in comfort, and so he approaches an oracle and asks if his decision is the correct one. The Setite may thus give him a divination of seven ships, their holds overflowing with gold. Believing his choice to be the correct one, he goes out and invests all he has in purchasing seven ships, even if he must sink himself deeply into debt. Time passes, and nature takes its course. Ships are lost to pirates or storm, and the man becomes desperate. He turns to gambling, he waters his wine, he may even steal from his partners — deeper and deeper he sinks, unable to let go of the golden vision that has ultimately tainted his soul. Many become devoted to the dark god without ever realizing it, all for a handful of words.

## THE HOLY LAND

The passions that inflame the lands of Palestine — the so-called “Holy Land” of both Christian and Muslim — provide fertile ground for our labors. The Christians and their Ventrue patrons cling to their shrinking holdings like lions, while the Muslim nobles in Jerusalem are eager to expand their conquests and drive the infidels back into the sea. The soon-to-expire truce wrought by Salah ad-Din and the English King Richard opened Jerusalem to pilgrims of both faiths, but has only put off the inevitable confrontation. In the meantime, desperation and religious fervor leave hearts and minds open to countless temptations, both mental and physical.

Jerusalem's physical distance from the centers of Muslim culture and influence leave the Islamic nobles in residence there even more dependent on the lifeline of trade from Cairo. Setite-controlled caravans allow us an indirect source of influence on the political maneuverings between the Ayyubid dynasty and its allies in Palestine, as we offer our services as messengers, intermediaries and even spies between the different families. In so doing we craft the rise and fall of many

ambitious men, drawing them so deeply into our debt that they will beggar their souls to survive — at which point they are ours forever.

While there are few Setites actually in residence in Jerusalem, the city is interwoven with many networks of agents and spies, conducting business and collecting information for their masters. Strangely, it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain such networks for long, even with devotees who have drunk of our blood. Most disappear sooner or later, and others have been known to lose their sanity. Why this is the case is not certain, though some Setites who frequent the city speculate that the large number of heathen holy sites in the city place an increasingly intolerable strain on our servants' faith. If it continues, it is likely that more and more young Setites will be sent into the city to manage their masters' affairs.

On the Christian side of the coin, we have reaped both gold and coin in the passage of pilgrims from Tyre to the Holy City. There are Setites who keep houses in Tyre and offer to guide Christians through the bandit-plagued countryside, though once free of the city walls, the long journey becomes a series of nightly temptations. Bandits sometimes kidnap notable pilgrims, and again we have a hand in this. The prisoners face numerous seductions of the soul, and when they return (handsome ransoms paid), they spread the truth of Set in their homelands.

The Ventrue and Brujah lords who still cling in vain to hopes of a Kingdom of Jerusalem spare no opportunity to strike at us when they can. There have been many tales of atrocities perpetrated against our brethren and their servants, and their attacks have been growing in frequency and success of late, particularly in the port city of Tyre. Some believe this is due to the increasing presence of Nosferatu in the city, betraying our efforts in order to curry favor with the Ventrue rulers, but I sense the hand of the Lasombra in this, attempting to check our inroads into their lucrative sea trade.

## CONSTANTINOPLE

The last, decaying bastion of Holy Rome and its incestuous intrigues offer the appearance of a rich bounty of indulgence and corruption, but the subtle machinations of the local Cainites promise destruction for the unwary. Most Setites maintain networks in the city simply because it is the crossroads of the Eastern and Western worlds, where wealth and influence flow back

and forth under the watchful eye of the Church. Few of our kind can remain there long before they are drawn into the schemes and political machinations of the Emperor's court and the power struggles of the Cainite Trinity. Some Setites try to profit from the struggles of the three blood-families, while others curry favor and influence to support more far-flung endeavors. The recent decree exempting Genoese traders from the stiff tariffs imposed on other merchants is just such an example, attempting to give Setite-supported Italian merchant houses a means to compete with the more powerful houses under Lasombra control. This has of course aroused the fury of the expatriate Cainites of the Latin Quarter, adding another dangerous dimension to our efforts in the city.

Constantinople is currently the only city outside Egypt that maintains a permanent population of Setites, a rare few who have grown obsessed with the wholesale corruption of the dying Byzantine Empire. It is also the city where the first non-Egyptian Setites were created, much to the concern of our elders. The Setites of Constantinople are widely regarded with some amount of distrust and suspicion by the rest of our kind. Perhaps it is the lack of Egyptian blood in their veins, but they appear to care less for our holy purpose than for the sheer act of corruption for its own sake.

## ITALY

The merchant cities of Venice, Genoa and Pisa beckon to us from across the Mediterranean, promising opportunities to extend our influence into the heart of Europe and beyond. Nobles hungry for the exotic goods of the East welcome our ships, and in Genoa, several merchants have followed their own greed into Set's presence and provided us with a foothold in the Levantine trade. But if the Muslim Lasombra subtly seek to counter our influence among the courts of the Ayyubids, in Italy their Christian brethren fight us with relentless ferocity, like a beast confronted in its lair. Murders, thefts and acts of savage piracy are commonplace between the Lasombra-controlled houses in Venice and Sicily and our followers in Genoa. Despite repeated setbacks, our brethren stubbornly continue the struggle, hoping to expand their influence to other houses before the Lasombra can muster enough strength to destroy them outright.



BOOK THREE: SERPENTS

## EUROPE

The market fairs of Champagne, Rouen and Paris are the far limits of our influence in Europe at present, where nobles from across France gather to partake of our wonders and carry them home to their kin. Fine silks and spices arouse the avarice of lord and lady alike, while knights riding the tourney circuit come seeking potions from the East that promise to increase their strength and vitality. Unlike our homeland, here the seductions are more patient and deliberate, making acquaintances and learning their desires, then returning in a year's time with wondrous gifts that set the recipient on the path to truth. Currently, though, our strange features and customs mark us clearly for the local lords, and our comings and goings are treated with intense suspicion and hostility. In some places the Cainites treat us no better than their herds do Gypsies or Jews, seeking to blame us for their every misfortune. But Europe is the heart of Cainite power, as I am sure you will agree, locked tightly in the tyrannical grip of the Church and noble fealty. France, Germany and England cry out for the wisdom of the god, and it is here that our youngest childer are sent to push the darkness outward, one step at a time.

## HOUSES OF THE GOD

I have no doubt you serve your lord and master well. You have the look of the dutiful servant, but it seems to me you hope for something more. Perhaps, in time, when you have proven your loyalty and your lord has need of another childe, you will be taken into his Embrace. Cainites such as your lord spawn childer to suit their needs or befit their station, much like a rich man in Damascus buys slaves to fill his halls and show others how powerful he is. It is not so with us. The Followers of Set are but few in number, and it shall always be so, for when we drink deeply of the dark river we become houses of the god, and only the most worthy may house the Immanence of the Lord of Sand and Storm.

## SEEKING THE RIVER

There is no worse offense against the god than to share his essence with one who is unworthy. A Follower of Set cannot be chosen; the recipient must be seeking the dark god already. It is a gift that must be asked for, never offered.

LIBELLUS SANGUINIS 3

Nearly all of Set's children begin as victims of another Setite's seduction. Most mortals lured into the darkness react at first with horror and revulsion, still clinging to the lies of morality and custom. Many times, the truth of their darker nature crushes them, but it is the way of this world for the weak to perish to make way for the strong. Others simply surrender themselves to their desires and think no more of their former lives, which is only proper. But a rare few neither break nor bend; they find meaning in their carnal appetites, a purpose for the secret ambitions they had dimly felt all their lives. They are the ones who embrace the transformations of seduction instead of just its tools. They savor the darkness awakening within them and seek to spread it to every soul they touch. They alone are worthy to serve the true god.

We prefer to create progeny from older men and women, mortals who have had time to mature and come into the prime of their abilities, because the arts of enticement require many different facets of skill and experience. We prize scholars for their learning and their well-honed talents of perception and insight. We value priests if they have learned to use their office to manipulate the desires of their flock. Naturally, such men renounce their former faith and offer their souls to Set, but they often maintain the illusion of Christianity or Islam in order to seduce the faithful. We select merchants as well, if they are properly avaricious and shrewd in the ways of temptation. We do not offer the dark water to very many nobles, be they Muslim or Christian; only if their intelligence and charisma are keen as a knife-edge, and their methods subtle and refined, will they receive the secrets of the god. We have no use for the militant or the stoic; a crusade does not convert an enemy's heart, it only hardens it further.

A Setite often sees the potential in a mortal even before the seductions begin, and that person earns especial attention as his darker impulses rise to the surface. The relationship between corrupter and innocent is always intimate, sometimes as close as the shared breath of a lover, but with these potential initiates the relationship is closer still. We watch them with care to see what course they will chose once the last shreds of morality fall away. In many cases this takes years, even decades. If they have not the courage to revel in their appetites and destroy themselves, it is of no matter, because flawed creations are useless to the god, and we permit nature to take its course. If they sink into indolence and decadence, then it is a glorious offering to Set, but no more, and we leave them to their own

devices. But if they choose to use their knowledge to further their ambitions, or to corrupt others as they have been corrupted, then the Setite will watch and wait, offering some assistance where necessary, and over time revealing clues about the great god and the nature of the two worlds. If the mortal seizes on this, and comes willingly to his corrupter to devote himself to the god, then and only then do we deem him worthy.

Becoming a Follower of Set is not something done in a darkened alley or in the shadows of a lord's feasting hall — there is a ceremony that must be performed, offering the supplicant to the god. This ritual, known as the Ceremony of Opening the Door, can only be performed on the nights of the new moon, when darkness is total.

The supplicant is brought to the sire's house (though our kind are constantly on the move, we maintain houses to conduct business in many cities and ports), where the mortal is bathed by servants and anointed with scented oils. Then he is brought naked before the god in the temple room and allowed to see the visage of Set for the first time.

The sire presents a curved knife to the effigy of the god and chants, in the language of ancient Egypt: *Homage to thee, O Set, Keeper of the Sands and Dweller in the Darkness. I am thy servant. I am the serpent who rests in thy right hand and strikes at thy enemies. I am the serpent in thy left hand that whispers to the multitude.*

Then the knife is passed to the supplicant, who must kneel before the face of the god and say: *Hail to thee, Lord of the Wastes! Hear me, that thou may come unto me! See me, and the knife I hold in my hand, and take this drink to ease thy thirst.* With that, the supplicant must open his veins and let his blood wash over Set's visage. As his life drains away, the supplicant must recite before the god his many appetites and depravities, to show that he is a fitting vessel for the god's essence.

All the while the sire watches, as the supplicant grows ashen and the fountain of life slows to a trickle. At the proper time he comes before the mortal and lets him drink of the dark river that surges in his veins, and the door is opened. The supplicant's *akh* flies on falcon's wings into *Du'at*, and his body becomes a house of the god.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF NAMES

Setites maintain the ancient Egyptian belief that a person's name is a vital cornerstone of his existence, both in this world and in the afterlife. They believe that if a man's name is forgotten, and all traces of it destroyed, then he immediately ceases to exist. For this reason, Setites carve their name into their sarcophagi and the walls of their burial chambers, and charge their servants with the sacred duty of preserving their name in memory should they ever be slain. By the same token, a Setite will not be content with merely the destruction of an archenemy — he will not stop until there is no one alive to remember the foe's name and no trace of it written anywhere.

## WASHING THE FACE OF GOD

Once a supplicant has drunk the dark waters, it now falls upon him as one of Set's children to not only spread his truth among all mortals, but also to nurture the god's memory and provide for him as any dutiful child should.

The first challenge for any newborn Setite is the building of a network of influence, whereby he may acquire wealth and other objects of desire. These are the tools of our craft, and permit us to spread the truth of the god across the known world. Each Setite accumulates treasures according to his own nature — a former scholar might work to amass a library of priceless antiquities to tempt the minds of mortal and Cainite alike, whereas a noble might collect lands, servants and gold to ply the hardened hearts of fellow lords. Not only is material wealth important and useful in this world, but also in the next, for if a Setite is ever truly killed, he must continue to serve the god in the next life, and will need resources with which to continue the struggle.

Like any true Egyptian, a Follower of Set is always cognizant of the otherworld, and each house he possesses contains a temple to the god and a burial chamber that serves as a place of slumber and a refuge should the Setite one day cross over into the afterlife. The burial chamber contains a sarcophagus, usually of cedar but occasionally made from sandstone or marble, inscribed with the Setite's name and protective invocations to ward off intruders. Arrayed about the sarcophagus are

clothes, equipment and treasures set aside for the Setite's existence in the next world. Also lining the walls of the room are statues of wood or clay called *shabti*, which act as servants in the otherworld. There is also a copy of *The Book of Going Forth by Night*, a tome handed down from Set and containing all the necessary rituals to allow a Setite to make the transition into the afterlife. It is the responsibility of the Setite's closest servants to ensure that the body of their master is properly interred in the burial chamber if he should ever be truly slain.

It is one of the gifts of Set that we often become naught but a pile of sandy ash in death. This allows us to enter *Du'at* secretly and evade the notice of Anubis and hence bypass his scales. It does provide a challenge for our servants, as they must follow our sacred texts and collect the ash. The sandy remains must be carefully separated and prepared before internment in the sarcophagus. If not, we are left without support in *Du'at*.

The most secret and best-protected part of a Setite's house is a temple dedicated to the worship of the god. The dimensions and trappings of the temple room vary widely, but each must contain a statue of Set, carved from ebony or onyx. In this room the Setite performs the necessary obeisance to the god, first upon awakening at nightfall, and then just before he seeks his slumber at dawn. An offering of blood is poured into a bowl at the statue's feet, then the statue is washed in scented oils and the Setite offers prayers for the continued strength and prosperity of the god. Even while traveling, a Setite carries a small statue of the god with him and makes his obeisance faithfully, screened by watchful servants. To do otherwise is certain to invoke the displeasure of the god.

As you can see, we depend greatly on our servants, perhaps even more so than Cainites do. In most cases, a Setite will have a small inner circle of priests sworn to the service of the god and gifted with sips of the river-blood; you would call these priests ghouls. They also direct the business of the Serpent's households and maintain the burial rooms and temples. Beyond these trusted retainers, a typical Follower of Set spends a great deal of time establishing and maintaining a large network of mortal servants and agents, including mercenary guards, spies, servants and traders. Many of these pawns have no knowledge of their employer at all, merely taking their gold from another member of the network, and it is not unheard of for artisans or adventurers to embark on undertakings without ever realizing that they are in our employ at all. Mortals are dependable



enough for our purposes, often more so than Cainites, because once you know their desires and are able to fulfill them, they will do anything you require.

In recent years, especially in Palestine and Europe, the agendas of Cainite and human alike have forced us to maintain a high degree of vigilance in certain cities to ensure that our own plans continue to fruition. Sometimes a Setite will install a newly accepted Follower in one of his houses to manage his affairs for a prescribed length of time, anywhere from a few months to a few decades. The childe's responsibilities can vary from running the sire's business interests, to watching over the subject of a particularly delicate seduction, to protecting the sire's holdings (and victims) from Cainite interference. Ostensibly this is a period of learning, an apprenticeship of sorts where the progeny learns the art of creating networks of informers and their use in discovering suitable victims for seduction. However, such duties do little to advance the childe's stature in the eyes of the god, and so the sire is bound to release the childe as quickly as possible to pursue his own path in the world. It is not unheard of for impatient or overly ambitious progeny to rebel against their masters if their servitude lasts too long.

## THE MANDATES OF THE MOST HOLY

In centuries past, the Followers of Set received the word directly from the great god himself, first in the darkness of the desert wastes, then later in the vaults beneath ill-omened Tanis. Though we were few in number, our influence was powerful because we were united in the service of Set. Since the god's disappearance, however, much has changed.

## THE HIEROPHANTS

In the days after the drowning of Tanis, when many of our kind were put to flight and scattered across the Two Lands, those elders who survived the Lupine attack quickly gathered together and by virtue of their station assumed the leadership of our kind in the great god's absence. These Setites were among the firstborn, who drank directly from the god and waited on him wherever he went. During the Ptolemaic reign they came to be called the Hierophants, and it was they who received the fiercest torrent of Set's prophecies in the days before his disappearance.

## THE BLOOD OATH

The Setites believe that the vitae that passes from sire to childe is the lifeblood of great Set himself, passed down from generation to generation in a line stretching back thousands of years. They believe that they are literal vessels of the god's essence; when they make use of their Disciplines, they are distilling the very power of the god. As a result, the idea of placing another Setite, or even a mortal, under blood oath is considered nothing short of blasphemy, and using Set's essence to bind a Cainite is a crime deserving of destruction. Most Setites disdain the blood oath even when it is used between Cainites, because such total control is anathema to their ideals of corruption and self-interest.

This stricture does not apply to the creation of ghouls, however. Setite ghouls are chosen from mortal servants or agents that have already demonstrated their loyalty to their master and are willing worshippers of the dark god. The Setites see these mortals as disciples of the god, whose reward is to bear the essence of Set and draw strength from it. The bond that exists due to the blood oath is seen in this case as a burden on the part of the master, not the servant. A Setite must treat her ghouls as a gift from the god, something that must not be abused.

Before Set's disappearance, there was no sort of organization among the Followers, excepting the duties and devotions expected of childe to sire. All Setites, even today, are expected to serve the needs of their sire without fail, and to keep his memory alive should he ever depart fully into the underworld. Beyond this stricture, a Follower of Set was charged only with spreading the truth of the god and heeding his own desires. Upon Set's disappearance, however, the Hierophants contacted their children, and their children's progeny, down through the generations, and assumed authority over them all in the name of the god. The Hierophants decreed that they were stewards of the god's great plan and were the force behind our kind adopting the almost nomadic existence we share today.

There are seven Hierophants, not counting six others who remain entombed in the vaults beneath Tanis. They are all ancient creatures, whose existence reaches back before the time of the pharaohs. The



greatest of them is called Nakhthorheb, also known as the First Son, who is said to be of the same tribe as great Set himself. It is he who holds the Hierophants in an iron grip, unifying them by force of will and the threat of the god's wrath. Though all laws and commands given to our brethren must be agreed upon by all seven of the great elders, Nakhthorheb is the wellspring from which such strictures emerge. Ever suspicious and wary since the loss of Tanis, it is said that he spends many of his nights as the god did, wandering the wastes of Lower Egypt and planning the return of Egypt's glory.

Next in power and influence is Seterpenre, Lord of Tinnis, who in times long forgotten was a mighty sorcerer, serving the elders of Set's tribe. Unlike Nakhthorheb, who regards all Cainites as evil and all non-Egyptians as animals, Seterpenre is more tolerant of outsiders. He favors alliances with Cainites when they suit the purposes of Set; it was he who was the architect of the early alliance with the Tremere, an act that cost him much in the eyes of Nakhthorheb.

While the First Son makes his proclamations from the wastes and Seterpenre tries to pull our attentions beyond the borders of Egypt, it is Maatkare, beloved of the moon, who reminds us of our holy purpose and is the mortar between the stones of our union. It is said she was Set's concubine in ancient times, and even now her beauty is so great as to stop the heart of a strong man. She builds consensus among the elders, outwardly devoted to none but her lord and god. Yet it is also true that her role has given her as much if not more influence over the elders than either Nakhthorheb or Seterpenre. Thus far she has offered no plans or initiatives of her own to direct us, but nothing happens from night to night without her approval. Her motives are as mysterious as the face of the moon.

Since Set's disappearance, much of the elders' time is occupied with contemplating Set's prophecies, and occasionally they will reach out to their descendants and direct them on strange errands to investigate a person, place or event that resonates with one of the god's revelations. While they (at the relentless urgings of Seterpenre) have directed our kind to spread our influence ever outward, reaching into the West and the strongholds of Cainite power, the Hierophants themselves never leave the sanctity of Egypt, unable to part themselves from the sands of their home.

The Hierophants are also devoted to keeping the memory of their sire alive, like any dutiful children would. As the years pass and the memory of the god fades (and other Followers are created who never be-

held the face of Set), they have taken an increasing role in enforcing the loyalty and commitment of later generations. I personally know of three Setites who have been destroyed at the order of the Hierophants for failing in their devotion to the god. One of these died because he defied the wishes of the elders in a matter relating to the prophecies. Another was rightly destroyed because he shared his vitae with a Cainite. The third was killed for no other reason than creating a non-Egyptian child. The third killing smells of politics to me; of late the Hierophants have spoken less and less as a unified group, and it is rumored that there has been a falling out between the elders, possibly over conflicting interpretations of the prophecies or lingering suspicions over the disaster at Tanis. It is certain that in recent decades the Hierophants have been aggressively seeking out every fragment of the prophecies that they can find, keeping them not only from the younger generations, but possibly from one another as well. These acts have only served to alienate younger Setites from their hoary antecedents, and lie at the root of the whispers of dissent rising from distant Constantinople.

## THE DECADENTS

The Hierophants' assertion of control after the nights of prophecy was by no means absolute. With the destruction of Tanis, the descendants of the drowned ones would not submit to the surviving elders' authority. Many of these Setites suspected that one of the surviving elders had betrayed the city to the Lupines, and held to the traditional practice of loyalty only to one's immediate sire and childer. They initially spread throughout Egypt, each seeking to continue Set's work in their own way, much as they had done before, and trying to find their own answers to the prophecies. Over time, however, the Hierophants pushed these "rebels" out of the Egyptian cities, driving them into Palestine and later Constantinople. These Setites were soon driven to form their own loose associations with one another simply to survive, and the decadent Byzantine Empire became an ideal refuge in the centuries after the fall of Rome. For several hundred years, the Hierophant loyalists and the far smaller faction of Decadents, as they came to call themselves, had very little to do with one another.

The Crusades changed all that. The coming of Christian knights and their Cainite lords into Palestine forced the Hierophants to acknowledge that Egypt would never truly belong to the faithful so long as the West was capable of launching forays against North

Africa and their Holy Land. After the First Crusade captured Jerusalem, the Hierophants grudgingly mandated that the Followers of Set must push outward and spread the god's influence beyond the borders of Egypt. But as the years passed, and the focus of our efforts was directed further and further from our homeland, later generations of progeny were created who had little or no ties to the Egypt of old, and were more and more alienated from the Hierophants. As these younger generations were sent into the Byzantine Empire and beyond, they came into contact with the Decadents, who called themselves the Children of Judas in those Christian lands, and found they had more in common with the "upstarts" than their own elders.

Where the Hierophants remain firmly focused on restoring Egypt's former glory and unseating the tyranny of Osiris, the Decadents are less concerned with fading legends and are more interested in wholesale corruption for its own sake. The leader of the Decadents, a Nuerian tribesman named Khay'tall, refuses to acknowledge the authority of Nakhthorheb, and has gone so far as to promote the worship of evil as the true god, rather than merely a tool to further the wishes of Set. His child and confidant, Sarrasine, outwardly agrees with his sire, but his ambitions suggest otherwise. It is said that he has been carefully gathering allies from many quarters to eventually supplant the self-absorbed Khay'tall. Sarrasine's agenda, however, has driven him to share the blood of Set with unworthy souls who have no more to offer than ambitions and ruthlessness to match his own. Jules Talbot, an exiled French knight, has become Sarrasine's lieutenant in Constantinople's hivelike Latin Quarter, and is driven not by religious devotion but sheer, materialistic hunger. He sees his transformation as nothing more than a means to an end, and at the bidding of Sarrasine he is laying the groundwork for Khay'tall's eventual fall as a great captain plans a military campaign. It is well-known that Talbot is an infernalist, and he fled France rather than be burned alive. Talbot has made it clear that in time he will return home to seek his revenge; Sarrasine may find that once he has taken the Children of Judas from Khay'tall, Talbot may be waiting to take them from him.

One other player in the tangled strands of Decadent schemes stands apart from their petty squabbles, and in some ways this makes potentially more dangerous. Bishop Benedict Alphonso is another of Khay'tall's reckless acts of corruption, an effort to sow a cancer of evil within the Church. He succeeded, but only partially. The bishop was well-chosen for his intelligence, but that same sharp

mind saw our calling not as service to Set, but as a duty to his own debased serpent, Lucifer. Satan or Set — to Benedict there is no difference, and his views have formed a twisted hybrid with Khay'tall's own that we are merely a force to balance the works of good in the world. What is most alarming is that this double heresy is being spread far and wide across the face of Europe by Benedict's pupils, corruption within corruption.

The Hierophants accuse the Decadents of turning their backs on the god, and the Decadents retort that the priests worship nothing but their own iron-fisted authority. As more and more younger Setites find sympathy with the Decadent cause, the Hierophants are facing the possibility of a full-scale rebellion if they do not resolve the conflict soon.

### NON-EGYPTIAN SETITES

For many thousands of years the Followers of Set were purely Egyptian, drawn from the ranks of noble and commoner alike to serve the god and restore *Maat* to the Two Lands. Later, during the successive invasions that saw Egyptians under a procession of conquerors, the Setites considered sharing the god's essence with a "barbarian" was the worst form of blasphemy. Exceptions were made during the Ptolemaic era in terms of creating ghouls from the Greek population in Alexandria, only because of the Greeks' tolerance and interest in ancient Egyptian beliefs. Despite the ever-increasing diversity of culture and ethnicity spreading through Egypt and Palestine, the Followers of Set, particularly the Hierophants, struggled to keep their identity intact as a bulwark against the fading legends of Egypt's glory.

The spread of Setite influence in recent years has put increasing pressure on this ancient structure, as Serpents in Palestine and elsewhere see the need to create progeny that can interact less conspicuously with Europeans. In addition, younger Setites, especially Decadents, are growing bold enough to begin accepting non-Egyptians into their ranks both as a gesture of rebellion and a means of bolstering their strength. This trend is putting increasing pressure on the Hierophants, who are desperate to keep the focus of the clan centered on Egypt, and represents a turning point in the evolution of the clan. The years following the Third Crusade present a critical period for the Followers of Set, as its members struggle with their identity as a clan and their overall purpose.

## THE DAMNED AND THE DECEIVED

To many older Setites, the Children of Caine represent all that is wrong with the world in the wake of Ra's usurpation of the otherworld. Only in a land where *Maat* had been utterly distorted could Caine and his progeny come to exist, curses from some false god notwithstanding. At present, the Cainite manipulations of European and Middle-Eastern civilizations are perhaps the single largest threat to the our goals of universal corruption. However, even vampires are not without their own savage desires. Even they can be shown the truth of Osiris' great deception and brought into the service of the true god, often by manipulating the Cainites' very own schemes. Also, while we all seek to serve the god, we can and do make common cause with individual Cainites for other reasons. Part of our way is to collect contacts and allies, and so we often help Cainites in their own endeavors. Your princes do not like to admit it, but there are no clans — and few elders, even — who have never sought out our help.

## ASSAMITES

The Children of Haqim were the scourge of our people in the early days of the Muslim conquest of Egypt, dealing aggressively with any threat directed at the Fatimid rulers and teaching our elders a lasting lesson in the importance of subtlety. The Assamites' almost-religious devotion to their founder at least is something we can well understand, even as their armor of fanaticism makes them extremely difficult to corrupt. Of late, the Hierophants have directed a change of tactics, providing resources and information to assist in Assamite endeavors in Palestine and Spain. While not exactly winning the Saracens' trust, we are at least building a working relationship that will hopefully bear fruit in the future. At present, our elders are aware of the Assamites' desire to spur the Ayyubids into further driving the Christians from Palestine, and have made it clear that they are willing to aid the Assamites in this. I believe they wish Assamite aid in return for this support, but I cannot speak of to what end.



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## BRUJAH

The passionate and idealistic Brujah are often choice targets for the our manipulations, which find fertile ground in the clan's combination of idealism and bitterness of tragedies past. For their part, most Brujah regard us with unalloyed hate, particularly after the fires that consumed the library at Alexandria. They have always blamed the act on the manipulations of a Setite, and our elders have never gone to any pains to deny it. Truthfully, we are happy to keep the Brujah as angry and bitter as possible, because such powerful emotions turn to poison over the centuries. Whenever possible, we go to great lengths to place weapons in the hands of Brujah and reveal the vulnerabilities of a Ventruelord, and many among the Brujah rail savagely against our hand in the growing brutality of their clan.

## CAPPADOCIANS

While many clans revile the practices of the Cappadocians, we find their preoccupation quite understandable, if misguided. There have been many tales of Cappadocians lured into the clutches of Set by offers of relics and knowledge of Egyptian necromancy. In many ways, the Cappadocians are kindred spirits, lost souls who seek the otherworld without knowing precisely what it is they are looking for. We have in the past provided aid and support to Cappadocians at no cost to themselves, particularly in Church-dominated Constantinople. Of all the clans it is the Graverobbers who are most likely to regard us without prejudice.

## GANGREL

The Gangrel are the only Cainites that my brethren regard with open admiration. These so-called Animals prove that other vampires are in fact able to embrace their carnal natures and live according to their physical urges. The Gangrel are especially vulnerable to our wiles, and there are quite a number of us in Europe who count Gangrel among our retainues. This is not to say that the feelings of admiration are mutual — far from it. Most Gangrel regard the us with fear and loathing, and will go to great lengths to strike out at Setites who violate their territory. We approach the Gangrel as we would any wild beast — with caution and respect, holding the bridle behind our backs.

## LASOMBRA

No other clan in the world causes as much vexation for us as the subtle and devious Lasombra, schemers without peer. The machinations of the Islamic branch are felt nowhere so strongly as the courts of Cairo and

Alexandria, and for centuries they have played a deadly game with us in our very homeland. Their presence, more than the Assamites', has ensured the Muslim domination of Egypt for centuries, though we recently delivered a telling blow against their rivals by helping the Ayyubids consolidate their control over the fractious Fatimid caliphate. The upset eliminated many valuable Lasombra pawns and reduced others in stature, giving us the upper hand for the first time in hundreds of years. Now, however, it is the our turn to look for dangers in every shadow, as we attempt to maintain our advantage despite myriad Lasombra manipulations. Move and countermove — the game continues.

Our elders consider it a great victory indeed when one of the Lasombra falls to our temptations, and we have succeeded often enough to make the Magisters exceedingly wary. Conversely, our incursions into Italy, the seat of Lasombra power, have met with reversal upon reversal. The cardinals and bishops of the night know their homeland well.

## MALKAVIANS

The Malkavians are a perplexing puzzle to us; we see so much potential for excess in their madness, yet are infuriatingly incapable of harnessing it. This is not to say that we have never succeeded in corrupting a Malkavian, but such attempts almost never leave a permanent impression on these mad Cainites, and sometimes it is not entirely clear who is seducing whom. The greatest example of this concerned the former caliph of Cairo, now known as al-Hakim the Lizard. Though al-Hakim's position naturally made him an object of considerable value to us, he fell instead under the sway of the Malkavians, becoming their ghoul. Though we at first believed that his madness would make him that much easier to control, instead our every overture led to wild and unexpected results, and ultimately brought vicious persecutions down upon our clan and Egyptians in general. The current wisdom among our elders is that it is better to simply kill the Malkavians in the long run, though few of us can resist an opportunity to match wits with them.

## NOSFERATU

Our elders are of a divided mind about the Nosferatu. While their wealth of knowledge is exceedingly useful, it is never far from the our mind that as we are bartering for secrets about the local Cainites, they are likely buying information about us. Stealth and discretion are central to our survival, and the thought of having our activities bandied about like fruit in the marketplace

causes us no end of unease. Most of my brethren concur that the Nosferatu are more trouble than they are worth, and we often take steps to neutralize those Lepers whom we find, if only to eliminate any possibility of warning potential Cainite victims.

### RAVNOS

The Ravnos spoil *everything*. Many of my brethren can bitterly relate tales of exquisite seductions, some taking years to bring to fruition — only to be ruined at the last minute by one of these infuriating tricksters. Though they are undeniably corrupt in their own insufferable way, the Ravnos peddle a form of chaotic seduction that most certainly causes more harm than good; the world would be a far better place without them. Though these wandering Cainites very rarely make an appearance in lands as distant as Egypt, there are tales of rivals who have put aside bitter feuds to eliminate the Charlatans at the first available opportunity. If the Ravnos are in any way aware of the our enmity, they show no sign of it, which only angers our elders further.

### TOREADOR

The sheer self-indulgence of many Toreador is a delight. They are pliable as reeds under our manipulations. In some ways these Cainites are *too* pliable, for while the Toreador are more than pleased to submerge themselves in their own iniquities, they rarely if ever seek to foster the same corruption on their fellows, which is of little use to our cause. When an opportunity to tempt a Toreador appears, the devout corrupter will not turn aside — unless a more challenging victim presents itself. Many young Setites are advised to seek out a Toreador as the first Cainite to pit their nascent abilities against; the Serpent who fails in the attempt does not hear the end of it for decades to come. There are, of course, Artisans who are infuriatingly resistant to our wiles, especially in the court of Alexandria where they know us perhaps too well.

### TREMERE

At first the idea of an alliance with the Usurpers seemed a logical one, for they, like us, were beset by enemies on all sides, and we could offer them much in stores of lost knowledge and arcane artifacts. For a time this arrangement worked to our mutual advantage, but our attempts to slowly turn the Tremere to the path of the true god was ultimately in vain. The Tremere worship no other god but Tremere himself, bound up in the crimson chains of the blood oath. It is despicable.

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Still, there are those among our elders who have suggested an attempt to mend the rift between the warlocks and ourselves by offering our support in their struggle against the Tzimisce. As yet, this suggestion has fallen on deaf ears.

### TZIMISCE

The Fiends of Carpathia are almost mythical creatures to us, inhuman monsters brooding in a cold and forbidding land, taking what pleasure they will of the land and its people, but suffering no trespasser to enter their domain. On the one hand, they appear wondrously, deliciously debased, but on the other, their perversions have made them so utterly inhuman as to render their glorious natures irrelevant. This transformation and its implications trouble our elders deeply, though few care to admit it.

### VENTRUE

The Ventrue stand for all that is anathema to us — law, tradition, custom, authority. They embody the deception of Osiris and the tyranny of law that has so upset the natural world. Many of our schemes are invariably directed against the Ventrue, either in Palestine or Europe, and the Ventrue respond with fire and sword, rooting out our kind and destroying them in gruesome fashion. Most European Ventrue make it clear that a Setite trespassing on their land will be destroyed out of hand, which more than anything has forced us to begin creating progeny from less-conspicuous French, Italian and English stock, or else go disguised as members of other clans. Of course, there are always Ventrue more tolerant of us — as my presence here in Champagne must attest.

### OTHERS

#### BAALI

We make no secret of our hatred for the infernalists, who further disrupt *Maat* by summoning demons and making bargains for power. You will think this foolish pride, but one major source of our outrage against the Baali is that their clumsy and brutal activities are often lumped together with our own. To us, this constitutes a mortal insult to us and our god. Our traditions regard demons as evil, the same as Christians or Muslims, and the thought of giving the world to them is intolerable. We and the Baali have clashed on numerous occasions, and with our influence spreading ever deeper into Europe, a final confrontation between us is looming.

## SALUBRI

These Cainites frighten our elders, who find Salubri practices of enlightenment perverse and nightmarish — the death of the soul disguised as inner peace. Though encounters between Setites and Salubri have been rare, we have been unsettled to no end by the three-eyes' seemingly imperturbable nature. Many of our kind breathed a sigh of relief when they learned of Tremere's diablerie of Saulot.

## LUPINES

Our kind universally hate and fear the Lupines, remembering well the catastrophe of Tanis, and the sentiment is entirely mutual. For reasons unknown to us, the Lupines of the Middle East and Europe often go to great lengths to confront and destroy a Setite passing through their lands; more than one of our caravans have disappeared in the trackless forests of France and Germany, never to be heard from again. It is said that the furious nature of the Lupines makes them vulnerable to manipulations of rage and despair, but only the most fearsome Setite would dare attempt such a feat. For the most part, we keep to our sarcophagi and trust our servants to move us as swiftly as possible away from any possible encounter with the werewolves. Thankfully, the sands of Egypt seem less welcoming to these beasts than the forests of your continent, but we all remember the lesson of Tanis. Nowhere is wholly out of their savage reach.

## TAKE MY HAND

I have committed no crimes against your lord. I am a Follower of Set, and my heart is pure. Now do you understand?

I am a corrupter. I am the rust that eats at the iron bands around a man's heart. I am a seducer, subtly guiding men and women to the truth that they have been resisting all their lives. I give back what has been taken from them, and let them live as nature intended. No more. No less. I did not tell Godfrey of Sezanne to fail in his duty to his lord. That is a decision he made himself, and he is solely to blame. In fact, I have the means to allow your lord to have his revenge on Duke William and his ilk. There are some documents in my encampment outside the city that will implicate William in a number of crimes against the lords of Venice, some of them his Lasombra peers. With these in hand, your lord can drag William by the hair from his Venetian palace without any of the local Magisters raising a finger to stop him. Allow me only to write a letter informing my servants, and you can go and get these papers yourself to present to Duke Roland. It would be the grand service you have always wanted to provide, I imagine, more than enough to secure your own Embrace. All I ask of you is to speak well of me to the duke and explain this current misunderstanding. What could be more fair?

I don't ask you to believe me. Let me prove myself to you. I can give you all that your heart desires, if you are bold enough to accept my help and see past the deceptions sown by my enemies. Take my hand, now, and let us be agreed.

From this day forward, your life will never be the same again. This I swear, in the name of almighty Set.

# Gifts of the Serpent God

## MERITS AND FLAWS

### AGENT OF PROPHECY (1-3 PT. MERIT)

None other than mighty Set himself has foretold your coming, and it is whispered by the elders that you figure prominently in one or more of the Prophecies of Set. This mark of great destiny carries great weight among devout Setites, but it also makes you something of a prize to be sought after by ambitious elders seeking to bask in the reflected glow of Set's favor. The prophecies in question may not come to pass for many hundreds of years, but your fate will not be denied.

This is a variable Merit, with cost representing the perceived importance of your role in the prophecy. Each point taken allows you to cancel a single botch during a given story, but also increases the expectations of your clan. As an added wrinkle, the Storyteller may decide that at least one of the prophecies you are intended for is soon to come, making you the locus of vast events that you may or may not have any control over.

This Merit does not indicate whether you have been able to translate your association with prophecy into any real authority among other Serpents. For that, you must purchase the Status Background.

### NAMELESS (5 PT FLAW)

Whether by accident or the actions of a rival, your name and all traces of your existence have been wiped from the earth. No one remembers your name, no writings remain that speak of you, and no mortal descendants (or vampire progeny) exist who bear your name. In Egyptian tradition, you have become a non-entity. While your physical presence would seem to

argue against this, as far as the rest of your clan is concerned, you no longer exist. You have no status within the clan, nor will any future progeny you create. In fact, it is incumbent upon any Setites who encounter you to diablerize you and return Set's vitae back to his remaining children! Further, any wealth, lands or objects in your possession may be taken from you by other Setites without fear of retribution.

## BACKGROUNDS

### NETWORK

Network represents the geographical extent of a Setite's web of contacts, allies and retainers. Each dot of Network expands the Setite's reach, although it does not increase the number of members in the network. Indeed, the player must still purchase dots in Allies, Contacts, Herd or Retainers. These represent servitors of various sorts who are readily at hand (usually in the Setite's home city). When the Setite arrives in a new locale that is within his network (determined when purchasing Network), a similar number of Allies, Contacts, Herd and Retainers will be available. Hence, the Setite never loses dots in those Backgrounds from moving about within his web of influence. When arriving in another city, the various "moved" Backgrounds become fully available at the rate of three dots per night. The player chooses in what order the dots become available.

The Setite may also reach out to members of his network in another city, either by message or through the Setite Sorcery power *Whisper of the Sands* (see p. 105). Without the Setite's physical presence, however, network members only serve as Contacts; the master must be close to elicit services beyond information gathering.

*For Example: Hepaphet, a Setite flesh peddler operating out of Cairo, has amassed an impressive*

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network of contacts in several Mediterranean ports. His player purchased the following Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 3, Network 3 (Venice, Cairo, Tyre, Tripoli) and Retainers 2. Were he to travel to Tyre, he could quickly establish his clutch of contacts and servitors (it would take a total of three nights to do so fully). Were he to simply communicate with his network in the city without leaving Cairo, they could only provide information, not act on his behalf (all count as Contacts).

If you buy three or more dots of Network, you can choose to have the network spread across a region instead of concentrated in a fixed number of cities. In any major city within that region, the Setite is likely to have agents. In smaller settlements, he may have only a single agent. The Storyteller should decide how many agents are available on a case by case basis.

- The network covers two distinct cities.
- The network covers three distinct cities.
- The network covers a small geographical area (like the Nile Delta) or four distinct cities.
- The network covers a significant geographical area (like Upper Egypt or the Languedoc) or five distinct cities.
- The network covers a large geographic area (like the Low Countries, France or Egypt) or six distinct cities.

## THE VIA SERPENTIS

The Road of Typhon practiced by many Setites operating in Europe is a somewhat debased form brought about largely by the Decadent worship of corruption for corruption's sake. The use of the Greek Typhon (their version of Set) indicates its alienation from the Hierophants and their Egyptian roots. The original, pure form of the Road of the Serpent — the true Via Serpentis — is much more religious in its overtones, emphasizing devotion to Set as the true god and spawning corruption for the purpose of returning man to his carnal, bestial origins, thus restoring balance and weakening the tyranny of Ra and Osiris. Depending on a Setite character's origins and his individual beliefs, she may choose whichever of the two philosophies that is more appropriate, and individual Setites have been known to switch between the two. Adherents of either interpretation of the Road still hold to the virtues of Conviction and Instinct.



BOOK THREE: SERPENTS



Followers of the traditional Via Serpentis seek to undermine the foundations of order and society in all its incarnations, and erode virtue and restraint in the individual. They spread war, disease and misery wherever they can, for desperation is the quickest path to human barbarity. Sometimes, as in the case of Rome, Setites will support ruling institutions if its actions facilitate the spread of unrest and corruption across its domain. In keeping with these goals, followers of this Road conduct themselves according to a revised Hierarchy of Sins (see box).

Most Cainites believe that only Setites follow the Via Serpentis in either of its incarnations, but this is not the case. Indeed, the seduction and corruption of Cainites can lead to them becoming servitors of Set and following the god's Road. To qualify, however, a Cainite must show supreme dedication to the ideals of the dark god. Most of these Cainites undergo a ritual similar to the religious Embrace of Setites described on page 93.

These Cainites find themselves in a difficult position. Because they do not have the blood of Set — the river between life and death — in their veins, most true Setites see them as lessors on par with ghouls — special servants, but servants nonetheless. Other Cainites, if they discover them, assume they are either true Setites or their slaves. Khay'tall and his Decadents have had the most success recruiting other Cainites, although Hierophants would claim that this is because he is much less selective in his candidates.

## SETITE SORCERY

Since the days of Set himself, his Followers have practiced a form of sorcery that bears only a passing resemblance to the Thaumaturgy of the Tremere. Setite Sorcery depends on tapping into the *Du'at* and the river between worlds as sources of power — their blood serves only as one conduit to that power.

In terms of game mechanics, Setite Sorcery functions just like Thaumaturgy, with paths and rituals. Setites may hence learn the Thaumaturgy Discipline with the understanding that it actually represents their own brand of sorcery (and should be noted as such on the character sheet). Sorcery does *not* count as a clan Discipline for experience or character creation purposes, however.

Before acquiring her first dot in Setite Sorcery, a Serpent must ensure a source for her power. This involves extended supplication to Set (done at her temple) and the preparation of a ritual focus. The necessary focus is a direct connection to *Du'at* and the Osiran tyranny therein: a body buried in ancient Egyptian tradition. By using the mummy as conduit, the Setite siphons power that would go to serve Osiris to his own use. Obtaining such a body is never easy, but there are many undisturbed graves still in Egypt. Both because of its dependence on things Egyptian and its direct ties to the god Set, this Sorcery is largely the domain of the Hierophants and their followers.

The Immanence of Set (see below) is the primary path in Setite Sorcery, although sorcerers also practice their own versions of other paths, most notably Rego Tempestas (called the Way of Sand and Storm) and

### REVISED HIERARCHY OF SINS

Road Score	Minimum Wrongdoing for Conviction Roll
10	Failing to indulge in the most trivial of physical urges
9	Failing to immediately sate one's carnal desires
8	Refusing an opportunity to corrupt a mortal
7	Refusing an opportunity to corrupt a vampire
6	Refusing an opportunity to corrupt a holy figure
5	Failing to undermine the prevailing moral environment
4	Failing to undermine the current social order
3	Protecting an individual's virtue
2	Punishing an individual for indecent behavior
1	Actively enforcing the rule of law

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Rego Elementum (called the Whisper of Quiet Stone). Setites also know many rituals. Note that although Setite Sorcery may use the same mechanics as thaumaturgical paths and rituals, they are not the same or compatible as far the practitioners are concerned. A sorcerer must learn the Setite version of Defense of the Sacred Haven (a Level One ritual) from another Setite sorcerer — the Tremere version is nothing but alien foolishness to him. The Storyteller always has final say as to whether a particular ritual is available to Setites. Those who plan on extensive use of Setite Sorcery may wish to consult **Blood Magic: Secrets of Thaumaturgy** (for **Vampire: The Masquerade**), which provides extensive background on this tradition, as well as new paths and rituals.

## THE IMMANENCE OF SET

The Setite clan is grounded solidly in the belief that their creator is nothing less than a god, and the blood that courses through their veins is the essence of Set himself, shared amongst his followers to grant them powers over mortals and supernatural creatures alike. Along with this belief comes the sure knowledge that they have become houses of the god — they are utterly

joined with their creator, and he may touch his children no matter where they are. Setites employ this sorcerous path to call upon the energies of the god for purposes of communication, manipulation, and destruction.

Unlike Thaumaturgy paths, Immanence of Set does not always require blood expenditure and a Willpower roll. Each power describes what roll and blood expenditure is appropriate.

### • WHISPER OF THE SANDS

The shared blood of Set that sings in the veins of all Setites creates a bond between them that allows a Serpent to communicate his thoughts to his servants and childer, no matter how far away they may be. This power allows the sorcerer to share news and information with his network all over the known world, and set plans in motion from hundreds of leagues away.

**System:** To use this power, the player spends one blood point and rolls Manipulation + Leadership (difficulty 6). If successful, the vampire may communicate with any of his progeny or ghouls, no matter how far away. For each success, one target can receive the message, although all targets receive the same message. The



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communication lasts for one turn, and can consist of no more than two short sentences. The player may maintain the link and have the vampire communicate further by spending a Willpower point for each succeeding turn.

### •• TONGUE OF THE TEMPTER

All Setites are chosen for their ability to manipulate the minds of mortal and Cainite alike, but this ability heightens these qualities to the utmost, giving their words a hypnotic sweetness that can loosen the tightest lips and release a victim's innermost desires.

**System:** The Setite must invoke this power immediately after sundown. The player spends two blood points and rolls Manipulation + Empathy versus the target's Willpower. That night, the Setite must seek out her victim and engage him in conversation for at least a half-hour. If the invocation was successful, the victim lets slip one of his secret fears or desires, though without remembering having done so. The number of successes can indicate the import of the secret at the Storyteller's discretion.

### ••• VOICE OF THE PROPHET

In ancient times, the powers of the oracle could change a mortal life forever, bringing even the greatest heroes to glory or ruin depending on how they interpreted the words of the god. The Setites were very often the serpent lingering in the shadows of oracular temples such as Siwa or Delphi, sharing the corrupting words of the god with those seeking confirmation of their fears or ambitions. When a Setite employs this power he is supposedly communicating with his *akh*, lingering in the otherworld and drawing on the supernatural knowledge available there.

**System:** The Setite must invoke this power in the presence of the intended victim. The player spends two blood points and a Willpower point, then rolls Perception + Empathy against the target's Willpower. If successful, the Setite delivers a cryptic message to the victim that speaks directly to his deepest desires. The nature of this message is determined by the Storyteller, and may mean little or nothing to the Setite using the power. The victim, however, will take the message as confirmation of his secret ambitions, and will be driven to acting upon them regardless of apparent risks or disadvantages. This ability can be unpredictable, turning a complacent pawn into a raging madman (or vice versa).

### •••• LORD OF STORMS

Long before his incarnation as a tempter, Set was the god of darkness and storm. This ability allows the Setite to summon up a sandstorm (or thunderstorm) of ferocious intensity, blocking out the sky and driving any sane person to cover, but allowing the Setite to move about quickly and easily.

**System:** The Setite's player must spend three blood points and a Willpower point, summoning a raging storm that blankets the area within a square mile of the corrupter who summoned it. The player may increase the radius of the storm by spending additional Willpower, increasing the area by 10 miles per Willpower point. While the howling winds and sand (or rain) are severe enough to drive most sensible creatures to cover, the Setite (and anyone in his immediate retinue) may travel untouched by the raging weather, as though it were a calm, clear night. The effects of the storm last for at least one scene but can last much longer, at the Storyteller's discretion. More than one Setite has used this power to hinder the movements of his enemies while making a well-timed escape, most notably during the catastrophe at Tanis.

### ••••• DARK INVOCATION

For thousands of years, the people of Egypt protected their tombs and treasure vaults with foul curses that called upon the gods for vengeance. This ability allows a Setite to lay a protective curse upon an object or place, or direct a damaging one against a particular enemy.

**System:** To lay the curse against a person, the Setite must know the victim's name, and in the case of another vampire, he must have a drop of the Cainite's blood. The Setite must first devise the nature of the curse — it must have a single, specific effect and a specific duration, no longer than a lunar cycle. The effect can be virtually anything: *let his strength wither like the parched reed; let his mind be dulled as though by strong wine; let his tongue speak nothing but truth; let the skin fall from his bones.*

Once the curse has been devised, the player spends four blood points and a Willpower point, then makes a Manipulation + Occult roll versus the target's Willpower. If successful, the curse takes effect immediately. In most cases, the number of successes become a difficulty penalty for the target in appropriate circumstances. In the case of a curse laid to protect a place or object, the Setite must state specific "triggers" that would activate the curse, as well as its effect and duration, and this information must be inscribed around the place or object in question.

# Servants of Set

## THE COURT POET

**Quote:** *If this humble verse casts but even a pale reflection of the Caliph's greatness, I will be content.*

**Prelude:** You sought power at court but were not a warrior or scholar. Poetry, thankfully, was revered as a fine art by the cultured nobles of the Islamic courts, and like the *jongleurs* of Europe, a man with a fine voice and a clever turn of phrase could find himself in great demand among nobles eager for flattery and diversion.

What you lacked, however, was training, and access to a library of popular verse — until the night you were approached by a lord recently arrived from Thebes. He claimed to have been intrigued by your few amateurish verses, and saw promise in them. Because he was a patron of the arts, he liked to nurture talent where he found it, having little patience for the stuffed-up peacocks that often infested a caliph's court.

The lord's patronage changed everything. The training he offered — and the philters he prepared to enhance your voice — quickly made you a force to be reckoned with among the court poets. Soon, the most influential nobles sought out your company, and you realized how your talents could not only entertain, but manipulate. You made or broke the reputations of lords depending on your whim, and more than one noble who crossed you was hounded to ruin by your cruel satires. Before long, it was all just a game to you.



Your patron watched with endless patience until you grew bored with the sport of the court. That was when he made you another offer.

**Concept:** You have been chosen and carefully groomed to win your way into the courts of the great and powerful, to entertain and manipulate the ambitions of your audience. Even the most hardened Ventrue lord loves to hear his deeds extolled before his vassals and allies, and more than one has been spurred to ruin by believing in his own exaggerated abilities.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Vanity is the key to all men's hearts. Make them believe they are strong, noble and wise, and they will love you. If they love you, they will trust you, and if they trust you, you can control them.

**Equipment:** Fine clothes, jewelry, paper and ink, library of poetic verse

VAMPIRE THE DARK AGES		
NAME: _____	NATURE: GALLANT	GENERATION: 12th
PLAYER: _____	DEMIANOR: CELEBRANT	HAVEN: _____
CHRONICLE: _____	CLAU: SETITE	CONCEPT: The Court Poet
ATTRIBUTES		
PHYSICAL		MENTAL
Strength.....●●●●●●	Charisma.....●●●●●●	Perception.....●●●●●●
Dexterity.....●●●●●●	Manipulation.....●●●●●●	Intelligence.....●●●●●●
Stamina.....●●●●●●	Appearance.....●●●●●●	Will.....●●●●●●
ABILITIES		
TALENTS		KNOWLEDGES
Acting.....●●●●●●	Animal Ken.....●●●●●●	Academics.....●●●●●●
Alertness.....●●●●●●	Archery.....●●●●●●	Health/Wisdom.....●●●●●●
Athletics.....●●●●●●	Crafts.....●●●●●●	Investigation.....●●●●●●
Brawl.....●●●●●●	Etiquette.....●●●●●●	Law.....●●●●●●
Dodge.....●●●●●●	Herbalism.....●●●●●●	Linguistics.....●●●●●●
Empathy.....●●●●●●	Melee.....●●●●●●	Medicine.....●●●●●●
Intimidation.....●●●●●●	Music.....●●●●●●	Occult.....●●●●●●
Larceny.....●●●●●●	Ride.....●●●●●●	Politics.....●●●●●●
Leadership.....●●●●●●	Snailth.....●●●●●●	Science.....●●●●●●
Subterfuge.....●●●●●●	Survival.....●●●●●●	Senseshat.....●●●●●●
ADVANTAGES		
DISCIPLINES		VIRTUES
PRESENCE.....●●●●●●	CONTACTS.....●●●●●●	Conscience/Conviction.....●●●●●●
OBFUSCATE.....●●●●●●	MENTOR.....●●●●●●	Self-Control/Instinct.....●●●●●●
.....●●●●●●	NETWORK.....●●●●●●	Courage.....●●●●●●
.....●●●●●●	RESOURCES.....●●●●●●	
.....●●●●●●	RETAINERS.....●●●●●●	
.....●●●●●●		
OTHER TRAITS		
.....●●●●●●		
.....●●●●●●		
.....●●●●●●		
.....●●●●●●		
.....●●●●●●		
COMBAT		
Weapon	Difficulty	Damage
ROD		
SERPENT		
●●●●●●	●●●●●●	●●●●●●
WILLPOWER		
●●●●●●	●●●●●●	●●●●●●
□□□□□□	□□□□□□	□□□□□□
BLOOD POOL		
□□□□□□	□□□□□□	□□□□□□
□□□□□□	□□□□□□	□□□□□□
HEALTH		
Revised		<input type="checkbox"/>
Hurt	-1	<input type="checkbox"/>
Injured	-1	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wounded	-2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mauled	-2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Crippled	-5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Incapacitated		<input type="checkbox"/>
EXPERIENCE		
□□□□□□		

## THE MISTRESS OF THE TOWER

**Quote:** *If Geoffrey de Blois were to make a similar offer of marriage I would have to consider it as well, as his holdings are — for the moment — more extensive than your own.*

**Prelude:** Your fool of a husband fell from his horse and scattered what little brains he had over the frozen earth, and you were left a widow. Suddenly your hall was full of nobles seeking your hand and eagerly eyeing the family's profitable holdings. For the moment, the duke's interest was busy elsewhere, so you were left to fend for yourself — and you turned eagerly to the task.

Not one man who sought an audience in your hall had the wit to believe that while he was plying you with his wiles, you were plying him. You chose the best of the suitors and made promises to them, fueling their rivalries even as the enraged duke forbade further struggles to keep the peace in his realm.

You knew that before long the duke would have to take a personal interest in settling the claims to your hand. Eventually, the game would end.

But then came a traveling *jongleur* whose keen eye and quick mind clearly grasped the situation you were in, and took great amusement (and admiration) in the way you played your part. He respectfully pointed out that there were ways to bind any new husband to you, leaving you still quite firmly in control. Your husband could even become one more tool in your games of corruption. The idea took fire in your heart. You told the *jongleur* to name his price. The



taste of power was finer than any wine, and you would give anything to keep its taste on your tongue.

The price, as it happened, was very much to your liking.

**Concept:** But for the capriciousness of birth, you might have gone on to become a powerful duke, or perhaps even a king. Your resentment and envy has led you to turn your talents to corruption and cruel manipulation, playing upon the conceits of petty lords and leading them to destruction.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Acts the proper lady to keep up appearances, but always remain in control. The men who surround you are not rivals or threats (least of all your foolish second husband); they are pawns and opportunities. Use them as they think they use you.

**Equipment:** Fine clothes, jewelry, revenues from a modestly prominent estate, a fair-sized castle in mild state of disrepair

VAMPIRE The Dark Ages											
NAME:	NATURE: SURVIVOR	GENERATION: 12th									
PLAYER:	DEMEANOR: GALLANT	HAVEN:									
CHRONICLE:	CLUNE: SETITE	CONCEPT: The Mistress of the Tower									
ATTRIBUTES											
PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	MENTAL									
Strength: ●●●●●●	Charisma: ●●●●●●	Perception: ●●●●●●									
Dexterity: ●●●●●●	Manipulation: ●●●●●●	Intelligence: ●●●●●●									
Stamina: ●●●●●●	Appearance: ●●●●●●	Wit: ●●●●●●									
ABILITIES											
TALENTS	SKILLS	KNOWLEDGES									
Acting: ●●●●●●	Animal Ken: ●●●●●●	Academics: ●●●●●●									
Alertness: ●●●●●●	Archery: ●●●●●●	Health Wisdom: ●●●●●●									
Athletics: ●●●●●●	Crafts: ●●●●●●	Investigation: ●●●●●●									
Brawl: ●●●●●●	Etiquette: ●●●●●●	Law: ●●●●●●									
Dodge: ●●●●●●	Herbalism: ●●●●●●	Linguistics: ●●●●●●									
Empathy: ●●●●●●	Melee: ●●●●●●	Medicine: ●●●●●●									
Intimidation: ●●●●●●	Music: ●●●●●●	Occult: ●●●●●●									
Larceny: ●●●●●●	Ride: ●●●●●●	Politics: ●●●●●●									
Leadership: ●●●●●●	Stealth: ●●●●●●	Science: ●●●●●●									
Subterfuge: ●●●●●●	Survival: ●●●●●●	Sensical: ●●●●●●									
ADVANTAGES											
DISCIPLINES	BACKGROUNDS	VIRTUES									
PRESENCE: ●●●●●●	NETWORK: ●●●●●●	Conscience/Conviction: ●●●●●●									
SERPENTS: ●●●●●●	RESOURCES: ●●●●●●	Self-Control/Instinct: ●●●●●●									
●●●●●●	RETAINERS: ●●●●●●	Courage: ●●●●●●									
●●●●●●	●●●●●●										
●●●●●●											
OTHER TRAITS	ROAD	HEALTH									
●●●●●●	TYPHOON	Bruised: <input type="checkbox"/>									
●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	Hurt: <input type="checkbox"/>									
●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	Injured: <input type="checkbox"/>									
●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	Wounded: <input type="checkbox"/>									
●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	Mauled: <input type="checkbox"/>									
●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	Crippled: <input type="checkbox"/>									
●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	Incapacitated: <input type="checkbox"/>									
COMBAT	BLOOD POOL	EXPERIENCE									
Weapon: <table border="1"><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>										●●●●●●●●●●	
Difficulty: <table border="1"><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>										●●●●●●●●●●	
Damage: <table border="1"><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>										●●●●●●●●●●	

## THE TRADER OF FLESH

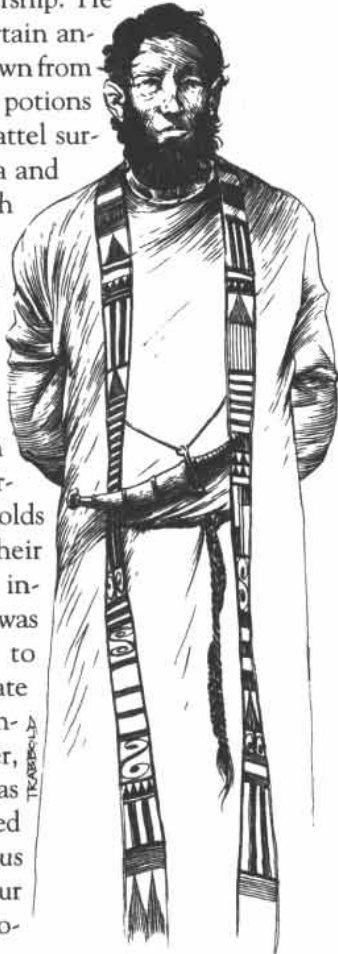
**Quote:** *Consider her a gift, great sir — merely remember me to your friends at court, and I shall be content.*

**Prelude:** Your father's pottery stall was near to the great market square of Cairo, and you watched with shame as he bent his neck to the city's Muslim masters. You spent the days wandering the city, and that was how you found Cairo's slave quarter.

There you learned two important lessons: the road to power is paved with the bent backs of the weak, and the slave trade was one place where an Egyptian could still be rich and influential. You learned everything you could about the slave market, and when the time was right, you approached a slave trader just arrived with a *coffe of Christians from the Holy Land*. You used your knowledge to help him turn a tidy profit. When he left again for Palestine, you rode along as his apprentice.

You returned years later as a trader in your own right and that was when a mysterious patron found you. One night you were approached by a fellow Egyptian who presented himself as a fellow businessman, and made an offer of partnership. He had in his possession certain ancient formulas handed down from the time of the pharaohs, potions that would give your chattel surpassing strength, stamina and beauty. They would fetch the best prices in the market, and all he asked in return was a small share of the profits.

Over time, your partnership changed. Your patron asked you to train your slaves to gather information about the households they served, revealing their masters' weaknesses and iniquities. Soon your patron was using the information to blackmail and manipulate these lords and ladies, a dangerous game indeed. Later, some of this knowledge was shared with you — debased desires and blasphemous appetites for flesh that your slaves were expected to pro-



vide. You were expected to teach your chattel how to serve these needs. Naturally, you obeyed. Your continued fortune depended upon it. What surprised you was how much you *enjoyed* it. Shaping human minds into tools of decadence and using them to seduce the noble and the pious fed a hunger you never knew existed.

Your patron was well pleased by your devotion. In time, he shared with you the truth of his nature and the name of the god he served, and the birthright you had so long been denied.

**Concept:** The buying and selling of slaves is both a source of great wealth and a means of influence reaching all across the Eastern world. Your challenge now is to spread your influence to other cities throughout Egypt, Palestine and even Europe.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You cultivate a charming and cultured manner that belies a cold and ruthless heart. A human being is nothing more than coin to you, or a piece of property, an investment to be shrewdly acquired and bartered for the best price available. Compassion and mercy are nothing more than excuses for weakness and lack of ambition.

**Equipment:** Fine robes, curved dagger, slaver's irons

VAMPIRE THE DARK HORSE		
NAME:	NATURE: FANATIC	GENERATION: 12th
PLAYER:	DEMEANOR: SURVIVOR	HIVEN:
CHRONICLE:	CLAN: SETITE	CONCEPT: Trader of the Flesh
ATTRIBUTES		
PHYSICAL		MENTAL
Strength.....●●●○○○	Charisma.....●●●○○○	Perception.....●●●○○○
Dexterity.....●●●○○○	Manipulation.....●●●○○○	Intelligence.....●●●○○○
Stamina.....●●●○○○	Appearance.....●●●○○○	Wis.....●●●○○○
ABILITIES		
TALENTS		KNOWLEDGES
Acting.....●●●○○○	Animal Ken.....●●●○○○	Academics.....●●●○○○
Alertness.....●●●○○○	Archery.....●●●○○○	Heathr Wisdom.....●●●○○○
Athletics.....●●●○○○	Crafts.....●●●○○○	Investigation.....●●●○○○
Brawl.....●●●○○○	Etiquette.....●●●○○○	Law.....●●●○○○
Dodge.....●●●○○○	Herbalism.....●●●○○○	Linguistics.....●●●○○○
Empathy.....●●●○○○	Melee.....●●●○○○	Medicine.....●●●○○○
Intimidation.....●●●○○○	Misc.....●●●○○○	Occult.....●●●○○○
Laziness.....●●●○○○	Ride.....●●●○○○	Politics.....●●●○○○
Leadership.....●●●○○○	Stealth.....●●●○○○	Science.....●●●○○○
Subterfuge.....●●●○○○	Survival.....●●●○○○	Seneschal.....●●●○○○
ADVANTAGES		
DISCIPLINES	BACKGROUNDS	VIRTUES
PRESENCE.....●●●○○○	NETWORK.....●●●○○○	Generosity/Conviction.....●●●○○○
SERPENTS.....●●●○○○	RESOURCES.....●●●○○○	Self-Control/Instinct.....●●●○○○
Setite Sorcery.....●●●○○○	RETAINERS.....●●●○○○	Courage.....●●●○○○
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OTHER TRAITS		
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COMBAT		
Weapon	Difficulty	Damage
ROAD		
SERPENT		
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.....●●●○○○	.....●●●○○○	.....●●●○○○
WILLPOWER		
.....●●●○○○	.....●●●○○○	.....●●●○○○
.....●●●○○○	.....●●●○○○	.....●●●○○○
BLOOD POOL		
.....●●●○○○	.....●●●○○○	.....●●●○○○
.....●●●○○○	.....●●●○○○	.....●●●○○○
HEALTH		
Bruised	.....	□
Hurt	-1	□
Injured	-1	□
Wounded	-2	□
Mauled	-2	□
Crippled	-5	□
Incapacitated	.....	□
EXPERIENCE		
.....●●●○○○	.....●●●○○○	.....●●●○○○
.....●●●○○○	.....●●●○○○	.....●●●○○○
.....●●●○○○	.....●●●○○○	.....●●●○○○



# Of Historical Interest: No Other God but Set

Teotukapis, beloved of Set,

Your tidings concerning the Assamite vizier Mahmoud al-Asran are welcome news to our elders; your efforts in Damascus have brought a mighty victory within our grasp. Until now, we have been forced to keep the ultimate purpose of your embassy secret, and your devotion and diligence in spite of this is a joyful sight unto our God. Now you may know the true nature of your mission: heed these instructions, and follow them to the smallest particular.

You are to approach the vizier Mahmoud with an offer of alliance between our elders and the elders of his clan. The purpose of this alliance is to pursue a swift and final war against the hated Baali, whose actions have sorely vexed both of our peoples for many centuries. This is not to be a simple campaign of conquest. We wish to light a flame that will rage until every last one of these vile creatures burns to ash.

It is not merely the fact that these infernalists are an offense to our God — they now threaten our very existence as servants of Set. Those rebellious children in Constantinople who scorn our authority and call themselves Decadents have openly allied with the Baali, and corrupt our beliefs with all manner of vile heresy! It is said that Jules Talbot and his ilk tell their childer that our God is nothing more than a demon, no different from any other the Baali worship! By learning their infernal summonings, they hope to call Set back to Earth and consume the world in fire. These heresies are spreading like a fire of their own amid our kind in Italy and France, and presents a terrible threat to our beliefs.



With the aid of the Assamites, we may take the Decadents and the Byzantine Baali by storm, striking their leaders in their havens all in the space of a single night. Then we may find suitable warriors to spur against the surviving infernalists, perhaps even providing information to the inquisitors of the Church. No doubt the sight of true demons in their midst would give them zeal enough to fulfill our wishes.

Of course the warriors of Haqim will require suitable payment in return for their aid. You will inform them that the elders will agree to providing whatever support they may require to spurring the Ayyubids to rise up and complete the task that Salah ad-Din started, driving the hated infidels from Palestine. If that offer is insufficient, tell them this: we are well aware of the curse the Baali set upon them so many centuries past. We know that they may take sustenance from the blood of vampires alone. Tell them that we have learned the nature of this curse. Offer no details, but say simply that if the Baali should be destroyed, their curse dies with them.

Let them think on that. True or not, they cannot ignore the possibility.

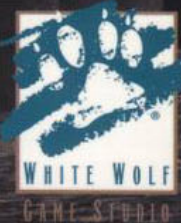
Do this, and the God will be well pleased. Know that your elders' eyes are upon you, and the future of our people lie in your hands. We know you will not fail us.



From beyond the lands that honest Christians call civilized, they come to wreak havoc. From Outremer, the Saracens extend their murderous reach. From hoary Egypt come the tempters who serve the dark will of Set. From the barbarous lands to the north stride the wandering Gangrel. None of them are pleased with what the rest of civilization has been up to.

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- Information on the lands of the Middle-East;
- New Discipline powers, Merits and Flaws, and Thaumaturgy abilities specific to the three clans;
- Hidden truths and secret plans of the clans most alien to the European princes.



# VAMPIRE

## THE DARK AGES

ISBN 1-56504-203-4  
WW2823 \$15.95 U.S.



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