

C L A N B O O K :

# Assamite





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BY CLAYTON OLIVER

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## SPECIAL THANKS, DRAGONCON EDITION

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**Brian "Steak-and-Rumtastic" Glass**, for opening the whole absurd affair with the drunkest birthday ever and my still-drunkest booth shift ever.

## EEEEEW

The swampy booze-slick behind the bar that saturated the carpet and still reeks to high heaven.

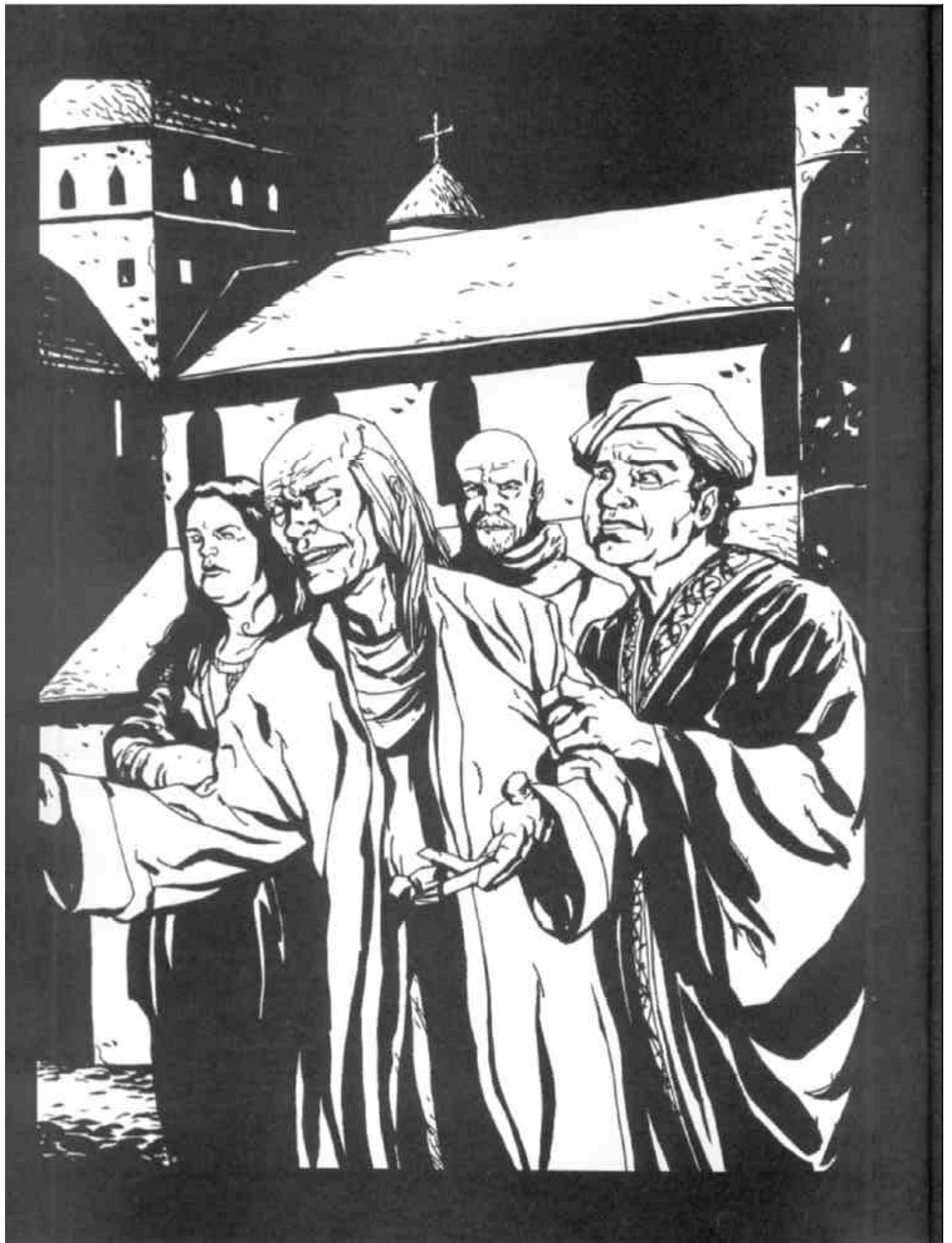
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IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD, 1496...

# Whereas

we, the Elders and Kindred of the Clans Ventrue, Tremere, Toreador, Nosferatu, Gangrel, Brujah and Malkavian, gathered together in Brotherhood and Mutual Faith and hereinafter known as the Camarilla, being the True and only Rightful Heirs of the Estate of Caine, do desire an end to the Unlawful and Diableristic Practices of the Rebels hereinafter known as the Clan Assamite;

# And whereas

the said Clan Assamite does desire that the said Camarilla shall hold back its Hand from the Full and Ultimate Extinction of the Clan Assamite:

# Therefore

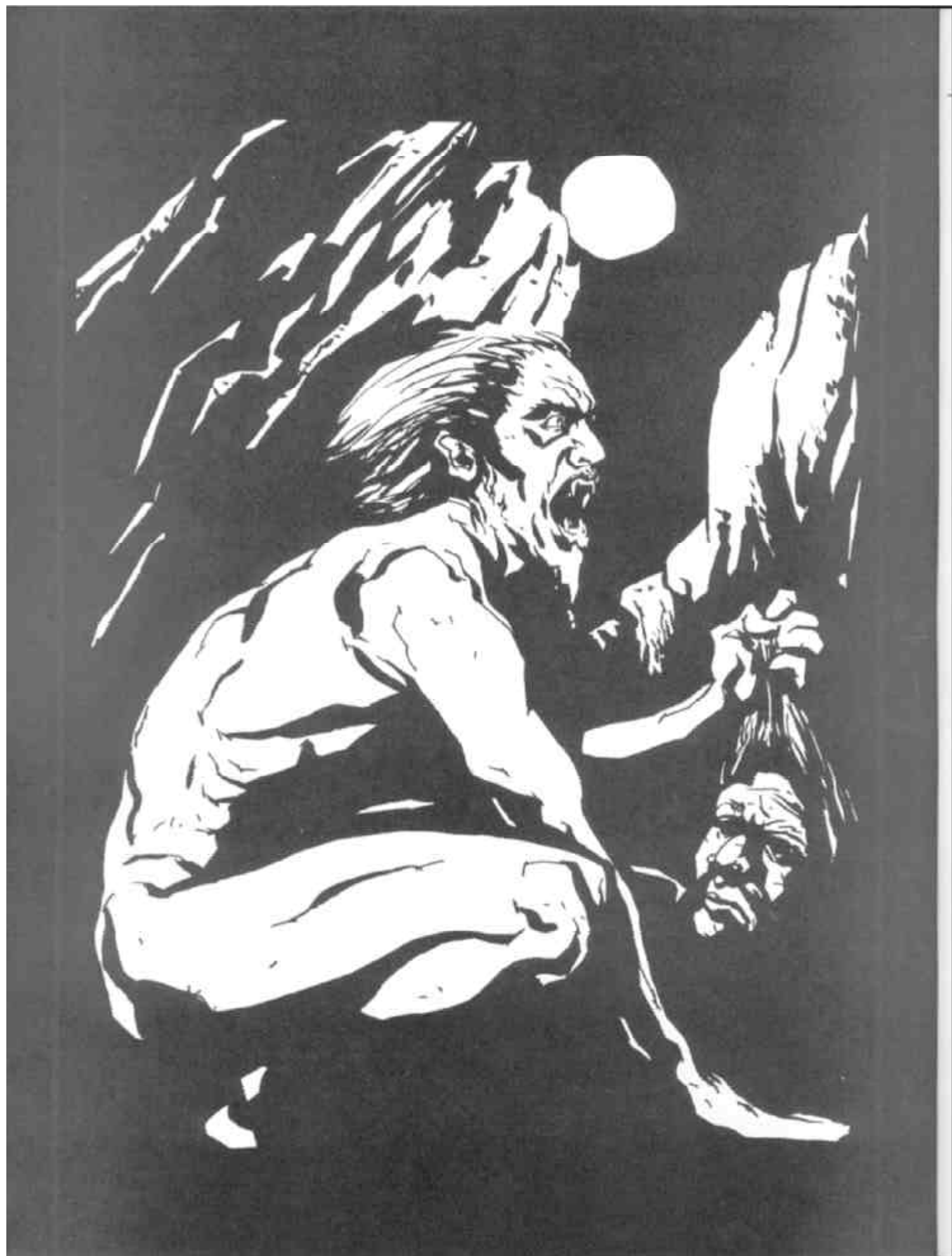
be it agreed between all Parties signed and witnessed hereunto that the following Articles shall stand as binding between all the Parties and their Progeny and Servitors, from this date perpetually...

...The Clan Assamite shall refrain from taking the Blood of other Kindred, and as surety of this provision shall submit themselves to a ritual to be administered by the Elders of the Clan Tremere, whereby Kindred Blood shall be made poisonous to them...

...The Clan Assamite shall remain peacefully in the territory ceded to them by the Camarilla, which they have historically claimed as their own. They shall seek no expansion of this territory, nor shall they permit any unrest of mortals within their territory to spread to other areas. They shall not travel, either singly or in groups, outside this territory, nor shall they have Retainers or Servitors of any kind travel outside this territory on their behalf. The Princes of the Camarilla have the perpetual right to call a Blood Hunt against any Assamite or Assamites within their fiefs, and need give no other reason for such a Blood Hunt beyond membership of the Assamite bloodline...

...The defenses of the castle of Alamut shall be dismantled to the point where the castle can no longer withstand a siege or other attack by the forces of the Camarilla. The Clan Assamite shall permit observers from the Camarilla to verify compliance with this provision. Further, any re-fortification of Alamut, or any attempt to establish a fortification elsewhere, shall be in breach of this treaty, and a worldwide Blood Hunt may be called against those committing the breach...

...The Camarilla undertakes to cease all action against the Clan Assamite, and not to violate the border<sup>2</sup> of its agreed territory without the sanction of a full Convocation of the Camarilla. The Clans of the Camarilla agree among themselves that they shall no longer seek to employ members of the Clan Assamite as hired assassins, and that those violating this provision shall forfeit the protection of their Clans and may be subject to a Blood Hunt. The Clan Assamite undertakes to cease any and all activity of its members as assassins for hire...





# CHAPTER ONE: HOW QUICKLY WE FORGOT

*The truth shall set you free.*  
— motto of the United States' Central Intelligence Agency

*By way of deception, thou shalt do war.*  
— motto of Israel's Institute for Intelligence and Special Tasks (Mossad)

From the Chronicle of the Heartsblood, the second chapter of the Book of the Final Nights; appearing almost identically in the Parables of Blood.

... and so it came to pass that in those nights the House of Haqim was broken by a great war. The hiss of whispered lies and the clamor of battle filled the halls of the Mountain. Brother set upon brother, and the Children washed their spears in the Heartsblood, and the foremost casualty of those battles was Truth.

Or perhaps not.

I set down this history of the Children of Haqim at the request of al-Ashrad, former Amr and now Eldest-in-Exile. Although my hands are more familiar with blade and blood than with pen and ink, I attempt to render Truth as best I am able. Perhaps in this small service I may atone for my shortcomings of faith and loyalty.

This work, I am informed, is the first chronicle of the Children of Haqim to be freely released from the chambers of Alamut in more than a millennium. It may be expected, then, to contradict conventional wisdom regarding the Children, particularly as the Camanilla holds it. It is to that

august body (which the Eldest-in-Exile informs me will be my most likely audience) and the rest of Caine's inheritors that I say this:

Everything you know about us is a lie.

It was an easy one to believe, was it not? Hundreds, even thousands of bloodthirsty — literally — Arab assassins. Contract killers slaying vampires for the greater glory of Caine and Haqim, or "Assam" as you may mispronounce his name. Yes, the rest of the Cainite world believed it — clung to it, even, as the safest, simplest explanation of actions whose true motives their grandsires had forgotten. It was a good lie. It kept the Children safe for hundreds of years while they tried to find themselves again.

The problem with telling a good lie is that the liar may become so caught up in it that she loses sight of the truth, and she starts to believe the lie herself. The Children hid their history so well that they took their own deception as reality. In doing so, they forgot the soul of what they were made to be.

No longer.

We began in a manner similar to this....



In the early nights of the First City, there was a man. In his mortal days, he was a great warrior. Had there been enough warriors in those times for armies to exist, he might have been a great general, but he contented himself with being one of the most talented war-party leaders his homeland had ever seen. In time, however, his desire for bloodshed faded, as it usually does in warriors who have actually seen war. He dedicated himself to scholarship, and excelled at it, learning to write and to speak the language of the dead. Eventually, his renown spread far enough to attract the attention of one Cainite's children, who decided to preserve the stone of his soul for eternity.

The warrior-turned-scholar wandered for a time under the new veil of night — perhaps a month, perhaps centuries. Eventually, he sought the company of his own kind and made his haven in the Second City, though he never truly settled there. Over the years, he gave the Blood to a handful of craftsmen and academicians whose skill and knowledge he admired, and his brood quietly prospered.

When his brothers and sister and cousins quarreled, this Cainite always remained neutral. He had seen war's face, and he knew the folly of spilling blood for the sake of pride. No matter who offered him alliance, his response was always the same: "Not this night."

This is not to say the Cainite had no confidants among his contemporaries. He nurtured the artisans of the Second City alongside his sister, the one who would be known as the mother of the Clan of the Blossom. He debated the nature of life and the mysteries of death with his cousin, who would come to know death in a more intimate manner than any of them could imagine in those nights. He spoke of philosophy with the brothers who would be known as the Serpent and the Sage. And some nights, when the wanderer whose children would bear the face of the Beast turned away from the walls of the Second City and loped into the wastelands, this Cainite ran at her side. It was this last of his cousins who named him the Hunter in a private jest — for of all the prey that the varied ancients sought, this child's was the most elusive of all: Truth.

One night, the Hunter's siblings came to his house to beg a service of him. This filled the Hunter's heart with despair and weariness, for they had never before sought him out in unison, and he knew that no good could come of it. Nevertheless, because they were his brothers and sisters and cousins, he bade them enter and made them welcome.

With little preamble, they began their plea to him. "We have noticed," said the Blossom, "that some of our children have overstepped their bounds. They run wild among the mortals. Madness is in their eyes, and chaos and misery in their wake."

The Hunter nodded sadly. "I have noticed this too, and it pains me that my nieces and nephews act in such a fashion, spreading terror among the children of Seth and proclaiming themselves gods. But what can I and mine do about such savagery?"

"This city has need of a voice without bias," said the Seer. "We would ask you to bring us such a voice. Create a second family, so that they may be our judges, and you may sit at their head and keep order among us all."

"But why do you ask me to do such a thing?" asked the Hunter. "While it is true that I was a warrior in my youth, I have forsaken the spear for the scroll, and I no longer wish to shed more blood than I must to survive."

"We ask you to take this responsibility," answered the Sculptor of Souls, "because you do not wish it. Therefore, you will not abuse the power that it brings. We can trust none of ourselves, nor our own children. But you have always remained the aloof one among us, favoring none over another, and we believe you will continue to do so. And we know you will do this because it is needful."

So the Hunter — the Judge — agreed. He went forth and gathered a second family, a family of other judges. And over the centuries, the burden of responsibility wore heavily upon him.

Even in his own house, he could find no peace. Much as he tried to bring agreement between his two families, he could not. His first family, the gentle artisans and wise scholars, viewed the judges as headstrong, arrogant upstarts. The judges, for their part, saw the first family as effete cowards. The Hunter disappeared for weeks on end, leaving his house in the care of a different one of his children each time. As the decades went by, these absences grew longer and the time he spent in the Second City grew shorter.

The final straw, as it were, came one night in the middle of a petty dispute, the details of which have been lost to history. No one agrees even upon the disputants of the issue. The only facts that all accounts concur on are these: After centuries of arguments, the Hunter's patience finally broke. One of his children came to him with an argument that he considered so petty, so pointless, that it became the focal point for all his anger with his own lineage. He lost his temper with both his families and stormed out of his house, never to be seen again.

And the final provocation, by chance, came from a member of the first family — the scholars.

So the judges took this final sign of disfavor as a mandate that they were to take up leadership of the house.

And so it was. And so it has been ever since.

Ever since Haqim left us.

I have translated that story from the original, which is inscribed on a clay tablet that the Eldest-in-Exile has generously lent me for this project. He informs me that it was inscribed some two centuries before the birth of the Christian Martyr-God. While it should not be taken in a completely literal sense — the time scale, for instance, seems vastly incorrect — the core narrative is factual. As it suggests, the Children of Haqim were not always the band of lusty killers that most observers now think we are. Ours is a story of a fall to rival that of [Brujah], a lie greater than that told by Melkhet, and a leader with a vision to rival that of Saulot. Or so the historians of Alamut would have us believe.

Over the centuries, I have been introduced to varying accounts of our origins. For the sake of simplicity, I have attempted to compile a prehistory that adheres most closely to that with which my intended audience is familiar. Other possibilities will receive separate examination out of academic interest....

## THE FIRST NIGHTS

We know our clan founder better than many clans know theirs, both from the memories of those who met him and through his own writings. Haqim was not his real name, for he knew the power inherent in such things, but it was the moniker he chose for himself after he received the Blood, and it is the same name by which we still refer to him tonight.

In his mortal life, Haqim was a warrior and a hunter, a member of one of the myriad nomadic tribes that followed the migrations of animal herds across the Fertile Crescent and into Asia and Northern Africa. He was highly skilled, but, by his own admission, he was far from the best among his peers, and he believed that his sire chose to Embrace him more for his strength of will than for any quality of skill or appearance. Accounts differ as to the identity of the second-generation Cainite who sired Haqim, but several records refer to Arikel, the presumed founder of the Toreador line, as Haqim's "sister," which would make En'esh, or Enoch, the most likely candidate.

Until the destruction of the First City, Haqim served as one of its most steadfast defenders. Although Caine's children were mighty individually, the wealth of the city of Enoch was such that almost all of its neighbors made an attempt, at one time or another, to raid its walls. In some cases, this was from greed; more often, it was out of desperation to end the city's predation of the surrounding areas. All too often, Haqim and his siblings bathed their tongues and their spears in the blood of mortals whose only offense was hunger.

## THE SECOND CITY

After the destruction of the First City, Haqim wandered for some time. His later writings suggest that he had already grown weary of his undying condition and the state of affairs that preceded Enoch's fall. Haqim never stated outright that he knew of his siblings' plans to slay their sires, but he strongly implied that he was aware of the possibility and wanted no part of it. Instead, he chose to distance himself from the conflict. Though he knew he could not avoid it entirely, he insulated himself from it whenever possible.

*This neutrality characterized Haqim's relations with Caine throughout their loose association. I find considerable interest in the fact that his Children are the only Great Clan (I do not count the Tremere, nor the Giovanni, as Great Clans) that does not possess a blood-borne disability that can be traced to a curse or condemnation from Caine. Perhaps our collective father never incurred his own grandsire's wrath.*

*Then again, perhaps Caine was just more subtly displeased with Haqim than he was with the Nosferatu progenitor. The Children have fallen quite suitably.*

Some time during his wandering, Haqim created his first child. This individual's name is lost to history, but the *Parables of Blood* state that he was a scribe and a primitive astronomer whom the Ancestor saved from being stoned for heresy. This set the trend for many of Haqim's later Embraces: innovators and intellectuals whose vision equaled their knowledge of their chosen crafts.

By the time Haqim learned of the founding of the Second City, its walls had already been in place for a century or more. He quietly observed his siblings' progress for decades before deciding to join them. One night, he simply appeared at the gates of the city with a dozen followers and politely requested entry. His brother Malkav was the first to welcome him, giving Haqim a home before the rest of the Third Generation was aware of the newcomer's arrival. After such a display of hospitality, the other Antediluvians were forced to accept Haqim in order to save face.

The seeds of the War of Ages were sown well before Haqim established residence in the Second City. Knowing that his childer would become near-defenseless pawns in any such conflict, he quickly made a statement of neutrality. While this pleased none of his siblings, all of whom had hoped to recruit him as an ally or a dupe, it also ensured that Haqim and his Children were less likely to incite the ire of a third-generation Cainite for any given action. This led them into a sort of political

equilibrium where they were largely ignored and left free to pursue their individual crafts and studies.

## JUSTICE

Neutrality is, in and of itself, a statement of political belief, at least in the Jyhad. As the Cainites of the Fourth and Fifth Generations of the Second City grew increasingly heady with their godlike power, their conflicts became less subtle than those of their sires, and the city's mortals were all too often caught in the middle of these disputes. The Third Generation attempted to rein in their children, as they were justifiably concerned about attracting the attention of Caine, but widespread peace was next to impossible due to the lack of trust between the Antediluvians. Only one among their number had earned their distrust to an equal extent: the one who had set himself apart from their squabbles.

The Antediluvians reached a rough consensus and confronted Haqim in his own haven one night. Their proposal was simple: None of them trusted any of the others enough to allow that individual to have any sort of power over them. However, if their childer were allowed to continue on their present course, Caine's

wrath would certainly come down on the city as a whole. Thus, some sort of authority must evolve in the Second City that could protect the Children of Seth — the mortals — from the excesses of any given vampire without such actions being seen as a move in the nascent Jyhad. Haqim had set himself apart; thus, he and his brood were the best of a set of bad choices.

Haqim protested his siblings' request, as they knew he would. Eventually, it was Saulot who brought forth the one argument that would convince his cousin. The service Haqim was being asked to render was not for the Cainites of the Second City but for the mortals. Haqim relented. The next night, he left the city and vanished for a year. When he returned, he brought with him a dozen more followers, the first of the Second City's judges.

The judges grew to prominence in the Second City over the following decades. Under Haqim's leadership, they quashed the first stirrings of the War of Ages and restored order to a land whose mortal inhabitants had come to fear their rulers. For a time, it seemed that the Second City knew peace. However, threats both internal and external had merely learned to hide themselves better.





## THE CONFLICTS WITH THE ADVERSARY

Approximately two centuries after Haqim established the judges, a cult of demon-venerating vampires appeared on the borders of the territory claimed by the Second City. Several decades of strikes and counterstrikes gradually mounted toward outright war between the mortal attachés of the two powers. Haqim, still charged with keeping order within the city, noted a gradual increase in certain blasphemous acts that could only be attributed to these wicked Cainites or their sympathizers within the various vampiric families. However, the infernalists used a form of blood magic that Haqim's judges had little means of countering. Although Saulot claimed his holy warriors were capable of piercing and nullifying such demonic sorcery, Haqim had little trust left for the cousin who had all but forced him into the position of law-keeper.

Haqim left the city again. When he returned, this time after three years, he had only three followers—but all three were once mortal wizards who had weathered the curse of unlife. These sorcerers were the first publicly acknowledged blood magicians of the Second City. Serving alongside the judges yet studying with the scholars, they seemed to be the middle ground between Haqim's two sets of Children.

*The important distinction here lies in the phrase "publicly acknowledged."*

The need for strength forced Haqim's sorcerers to expand their ranks quickly. The skills of the initial trio revealed the extent of infernal influence within the Second City, and the demon-worshippers and their allies reacted like cornered wolves. A series of skirmishes decimated the judges and left two of the three sorcerers as dust in the streets. The survivor became an unwilling and uncomfortable liaison between the judges and the Salubri warriors until he could sire and train more blood magicians. During the next decade, Haqim brought a score more mortal wizards into the night, as well as undertaking several personal projects, one of which would not come to light for centuries.

The Children of Haqim and the Salubri slowly scoured the demon tribes, known as the Baali, from the Second City, using both patient investigation and ruthlessly overwhelming force. Within a century, the last known Baali sympathizer had been fed to the sacred purifying fires. The sorcerers stood down from their hunting and began to fully explore the power of Cainite vitae as the heart of their arts, each one adapting his own mortal techniques to his new condition. A few

continued to work with the judges, but most dedicated themselves to research.

*It was during this time that the three lines of Haqim became distinctly separate. This divergence continues to the present night. Initially, the choice belonged to Haqim as to a given child's or grandchild's future as much as any other factor. Those who showed intellectual promise, he encouraged to join his scholarly offspring. Those of a more martial bent received subtle (or not so subtle) guidance toward association with the judges. The sorcerers were a breed apart, even then, but were still indisputably children of Haqim as well. The castes' individual Discipline affinities developed during this time, though they were almost certainly different from those that exist in the modern nights. Haqim most likely instructed all of his children in the art now known as Zuielus, which has undergone several radical shifts in purpose and method during its history. The art of Auspex once saw much more common practice among the clan than it does now, perhaps even as a universal talent.*

*Early records and recollections do indicate that some of the "caste weaknesses," as the younger generations term them, arose during this time as well. The most likely explanation for the three lines' divergent liabilities, barring the traditional "Caine cursed us" of which some other clans seem so fond, is that they stem from Haqim himself. He was an individual of immense will and focus, even when compared to those among his contemporaries with whom I am acquainted. If Haqim had a fatal flaw, it was monomania. All too often, he focused on one passion or duty to the exclusion of all else. This defining trait carried itself through the Blood, marking his first line with that aspect of his personality.*

*That first brood eventually became the vizier caste. In the beginning, their weakness barely merited notice. Certainly, it was no more debilitating than those of other Cainites were. However, once Haqim's first children had seen a dozen mortal lifetimes come and go, their single-minded pursuit of their own particular crafts and studies ceased to become routines and became imperatives. Indeed, some have supposedly destroyed themselves when denied access to the tools of their assorted trades. While few modern viziers descend to those depths of madness, all fixate on the tasks by which they define their unlives. Perhaps this serves them as some sort of moral touchstone — I have seen comparatively few viziers descend into frenzy, and no few of those were unlearned and directionless before their Embraces.*

*The judges, by comparison, embodied Haqim's young mortal days — in truth, they were always predisposed to violence to some degree or another, even before their province shifted from justice to conflict. Second City justice*



was, to borrow a phrase from the Christians, biblical. Violent mutilation was common, as was outright destruction, most often by the rising sun. Other punishments involved the ritual taking of a portion of the offender's blood as a reminder that his continued existence was only at the sufferance of his elders — in whose names, at least in theory, the judges acted. One fragmentary writing indicates that the first act of diablerie was the result of a judge's lapse of control while administering such a punishment to a child of Arikel named Amarantha.

Regardless of whether that account is accurate, the warriors struggled with a certain thirst for Cainite vitae from their earliest nights — though it did not reach its present strength until the Long Night, and not without external assistance. However, the warriors have always been falsely marked as diablerists. The eldest judges can recall nights when a newly Embraced warrior's soul was almost entirely black, with only the faintest traces of his heart's stivings visible, and his skin darkened to match within a matter of years. Some say that Haqim himself was responsible for visibly marking the judges in this fashion as a means by which all residents of the Second City could easily identify one of their number (though this does not explain why members of the other castes also darken with age).

The sorcerers are a matter unto themselves. In some ways, they were the middle ground between the judges and the vipers. For every one who chose to walk the path of blade and flame, another devoted himself to peaceful studies. Yet they shared the characteristics of neither "parent" group. Rather, they developed their own distinct "appearance," standing out so strongly to the mystically inclined eye that all but the most powerful magics of concealment had no use to them and all could identify them as blood magicians with but a glance. This, too, may have been Haqim's doing, for in the nights of the Second City the memory of the Baali (and of other blood wizards who bent their talents for ill) made many Cainites suspicious. By marking "his" sorcerers so distinctly that none could doubt what they were, and by stunting their ability to conceal their presence, Haqim would have ensured that all could know an individual to be of his brood and thus know that sorcerer's agenda. On the other hand, this manifestation may have been spontaneous, brought on by the sheer power of the sorcerers' early experimentation, much as a forge glows with waste heat long after the smith banks the fires.

## PEACE

For nearly half a millennium, the Second City enjoyed as much of a golden age as was possible for such a concentration of powerful, self-righteous beings. Members of the Fourth and Fifth Generations began to leave during this time, establishing their own domains across the region. Most of the Children of

Haqim chose to stay within the confines of the Second City: the judges to fulfil their duty, and the scholars to remain close to their mentor.

Haqim took to wandering again, often leaving for up to a decade to pursue his own agendas. In his absence, the eldest of his childer who was in the city usually assumed leadership of the households. This gradually became a semiformal honor and position, and the head of Haqim's estate came to be called the Eldest. Haqim himself gave his tacit acceptance by saying nothing against it.

## THE SECOND BAALI CONFLICT

And then, without warning, a border city died. A few battered survivors escaped the pyre of Charizel and returned to the Second City with news of their Kindred lord's destruction. They told harrowing tales of pillars of flame, of spears of sunlight that struck down Cainites as they walked in the streets at midnight, of pits that opened in the earth to swallow temples and homes — and of the architects of this horror.

They called themselves Baali.

The reaction among the Antediluvians was largely one of disbelief and suspicion. Had Saulot's warriors and Haqim's judges not crushed the infernalists centuries ago, broken their power and sent their scattered survivors howling into the night? Was the honey-voiced satan not sent, broken, into the sea? Surely this was some treachery, another stroke in the Jyhad. Accusations flew, each aggrieved party accusing his rivals of engineering the city's destruction and planting tales of Baali magicians and demon lords to awaken the old fears.

Quietly, Haqim and Saulot sheltered the forgotten mortal survivors of the massacre and listened. Gradually, they became convinced that Charizel had been a sacrifice, the centerpiece of a ritual whose ultimate objective remained undetermined. Haqim favored further investigation; Saulot demanded action. Within a fortnight, the mightiest of the Salubri warriors rode forth, bent on stamping out the infestation before it could spread.

The story of their fate is well recorded and need not be dwelt upon in this account.

Haqim's broods prepared for battle as best they were able, gathering what allies they had among the other Cainites and taking the then-unprecedented step of arming their ghouls with ensorcelled weapons. Rather than attempt to defend the walls of the Second City itself, they mustered their forces in the ruins of a village some four nights' travel away from the walls, along the most likely route of approach for the Baali.



"Most likely," in this case, was a poor estimation. The judges and sorcerers were in the process of fortifying the place they had chosen for their stand when a ghoulish messenger arrived, near death from exhaustion and a dozen wounds. He carried word that the Second City was under assault from the opposite direction. The Baali, it seemed, paid little heed to conventional methods of travel when they had the wings of demons to speed them on their way.

The Eldest, a judge named Mancheaka, led the Children and their allies and servants on a rapid overland march, determined to reinforce the City before it fell. Near dawn, as the column prepared to take shelter from the sun in a network of caverns, their outriders were obliterated by a storm of spears and flame. The main body of the force came under attack moments later. Mancheaka and her brood met Final Death holding off the attackers, but their actions bought the survivors time to take shelter in the caves.

As the remaining judges and their comrades regrouped in the sheltering darkness, they began to assemble what little knowledge they had about their situation. Several had glimpsed familiar faces among the attackers, members of the broods of Saulot, Ventrue

and Lasombra who had been thought to be close allies of the Children. Mancheaka's forces, it seemed, had been operating under false information for weeks — Baali sympathizers had deftly tricked the judges into stripping away many of the city's most potent defenders.

The day and night that followed were nearly the end of the judges and sorcerers. The Baali and their demon lackeys hounded the Children of Haqim through the caverns. To their credit, the judges' spears took many of their enemies, and the arts of the sorcerers bound and slew with desperate strength, but the weight of numbers and the momentum of the attack lay with the Baali.

Near dawn of the second night, the last remaining sorcerers gathered in the most defensible of the caverns. As they prepared their wards for the coming assault, the stone beneath their feet began to tremble. A ferocious screaming arose, as if the Baali had mustered the very legions of the infernal to sweep the Children of Haqim from the world. The judges braced their spears; the sorcerers gathered their energies.

Then blood began to flow into the cavern. Only a trickle at first, a few drops seeping down through the



tunnels, gradually becoming a steady flow that left the surviving Children ankle-deep in cooling crimson.

Then footfalls: light, almost noiseless, slow, as if those of a child tentatively making its way down the steep passages.

Then a tiny figure, blackened and charred, its eyes burned from its skull, emerged into the flickering light of the single torch that a ghoul had managed to keep burning. "Haqim sends me," it whispered, "I am ur-Shulgi. And I am of the Blood."

Over the next century, the Children of Haqim were at the forefront of the wars against the infernalists, pushing them back to their pits and sealing the mouths of hell. The Baali never fully recovered from their massacre in the caverns — they would not be a significant threat for millennia. The Children rebuilt slowly, carefully, as Haqim watched from afar and allowed his heirs to craft their own legacy.

*The traditional accounts of the battles against the Baali seem to be grossly exaggerated, depicting epic conflicts on a scale that the mortal population of the time, let alone the Cainite population, simply could not have supported. However, enough similar stories have been passed down to imply that there is some degree of truth to them. The most common version among the Children is the one given here. Note the constant emphasis on the noble sacrifices made by Haqim's brood, establishing them as the long-suffering saviors of the other Cainites. No doubt each clan has its own such tragedies.*

## DIASPORA

The Baali infested the Second City thrice more over the course of the conflict, though never with as much strength as they had in those first desperate nights. By the time the threat was contained to Haqim and Saulot's satisfaction, the lands around the city were barren and blackened from Baali curses, sorcerous flame and the marching feet of the world's first armies. Gradually, the heirs of Caine abandoned their nest, striking out for the fabled lands that lay beyond the borders.

Haqim had grown heart-weary during the wars. He rarely took direct action, though circumstances forced him to take the field several times. Much of his time was spent nurturing the scholars and training the judges. The sorcerers he left to the prodigy ur-Shulgi and a necromancer whose name is lost to history.

While the battles against the Baali unfolded, the judges found themselves performing their original duties less and less. The children of Caine had little call for the pursuit of one of their number who fed improperly when a village had just been massacred as a blood sacrifice and scarcely a need to find a hidden infernalist when a dozen were battering down the gates. Haqim taught his clan the ways of battle reluctantly, for he had not enjoyed the oldest craft since early in his sunlit life,

but he couldn't sacrifice his Children through his own failure to prepare them. Gradually, the judges became warriors, in fact if not in name.





As the broods of the other Ancients abandoned the Second City, Haqim grew disheartened with his duty. He had accepted the responsibility of administering justice to his peers and their descendants, but they seemed no longer willing to accept his performance of the task that they had set for him. Some ignored him. Some openly rejected him. Most gradually abandoned the hollow shell of the city to which he and his Children had twice served as shields and spears. He quietly consulted with his closest advisors then vanished into the wilderness for a year.

When the Ancestor returned, he gathered his Children and spoke to them. His words, though marred through repeated translations, are still with us tonight, and have formed the basis for many of our line's acts across the centuries:

*Just as the Children of Night acknowledge the duty of a leader to lead, they also acknowledge the duty of his followers to accept his rule. Just as the Children of the Beast acknowledge the need for a hunter to hunt, so too do they acknowledge the duty of the prey to be hunted. Yet our cousins reject their duty to submit to our justice, though they themselves cried out for us to render justice unto them.*

*Some among them have said that our time is past, that there is no further need for us, that the city is dead and all would do well to abandon it before its final collapse. A grain of truth grows in this — we have tended to the threats without at the expense of vigilance within. But the fault is not our own, in large part, for that lies with those who would play their games of scepter, sword and lily with the mortals as their tokens. Have we further need for judgement simply because our kind has outgrown a single city. There will be other cities.*

*The crisis that confronts us tonight is one of duty. We know ours; our cousins made it plain in nights long past. And though they may scorn us, our charter of justice has never been revoked. We, then, must seek new ways in which to administer it, as the methods that we have pursued in the past are no longer the best tools for that trade.*

*They tell us that the city is dying. We shall leave it to its death throes, then. We will go forth into the war-torn lands, the deserts, the mountains, the harsh, barren places that no others would claim as their domain. There, we will preserve the memory of these nights against the ravages of time. We will watch, and we will study, and we will wait. And when the need for our justice once again becomes so great that we cannot stand idly by and watch our cousins' acts, we will come forth, and memory will be our spear.*

*The Ancestor's disdain for the political machinations of the Jihad remains strong in the clan even tonight. As a whole, the Children of Haqim hold themselves apart from the political squabbles of other Cainites. This is due in part*

*to geography, at least before the advent of mechanized transportation, but mainly to a subtle sense of superiority. The Children like to feel that they have no need to resort to politics to achieve their aims. This is not to say that no member of the line is incapable of subtlety — indeed, many viziers have achieved great success in the political arena — but rather that the clan culture, such as it is, is predisposed toward more direct solutions.*

*Of course, this political isolation has also had its drawbacks. Absence from the intrigues of the Damned means lack of enemies, but also of allies. Perhaps, had we been more in touch with our European brethren, we would not have been at odds with them during the Long Night, and we would never have had isolation imposed on us by the Tremere. Immortal memories breed immortal grudges, and offenses committed during the Anarch Revolt are still fresh for some of those with whom we seek sanctuary. Furthermore, there is the matter of political experience. We are new to the halls of power into which we seek to insinuate ourselves, and there is much we have yet to learn about the Camarilla and the Sabbat alike.*

#### DEPARTURE

Briefly thereafter, the Children of Haqim vanished from the Second City forever. A tiny handful of dissenters broke from the main body of the clan, rejecting Haqim's proclamation of isolation in favor of remaining in contact with the greater body of the Cainite population, such as it was. Most of these were scholars and artisans who felt that a hermit's existence would be unduly confining to their works. Among their more loyal brethren, these individuals became known as "dispossessed" for their rejection of their heritage. Haqim himself made no move to stop them, perhaps believing that enforcing his will would create more problems than it solved.

All accounts of the clan's exodus from the Second City speak of the journey as a night-unendurable trial. Haqim left the city in the height of summer, and the need for shelter from the sun meant that nearly a third of each night was spent breaking down and re-erecting camp. Many Children went to their Final Deaths as a result of sunlight piercing improperly light-proofed tents. The journey proved no less harsh for the mortal servants who followed Haqim into self-imposed exile, for the journey led through scorched and lifeless lands that had borne the brunt of the Buali conflicts. Water was difficult to come by, food was even more scarce, and vitae was all but unobtainable outside the caravan itself. By the time the travelers reached the foothills of the mountains that were Haqim's destination, fewer than 50 Children and perhaps eight score mortal servants





remained, and most of the latter's livestock had been slaughtered for sustenance.

The ascent into the mountains was equally dangerous, but for different reasons. The mortals of the region had never fallen under the sovereignty of the Second City, but they had heard stories from refugees of the Baali clashes. They had no particular desire to accept masters other than themselves. Moreover, they had encountered several broken survivors of the Baali, and they knew how to fight the unliving.

#### THE EAGLE'S NEST

The following account of Alamut's founding is generally taken as literal truth. However, it raises several questions, not the least of which pertains to the apparent stone-shaping powers displayed by the Ancestor. Such talent is unknown among the Cainites — except among one lesser bloodline, which did not come into existence until seven or eight millennia after these events.

*It is my personal belief that the "literally accepted" account is incorrect. My research indicates, albeit inconclusively, that Haqim did not create Alamut — he merely discovered it, perhaps by breaking an existing magical*

*concealment of some sort. However, I should emphasize that this is strictly an educated guess.*

As Haqim's mortal and Cainite followers moved deeper into the mountains, their supply situation became progressively more desperate. Haqim was well aware that those who remained were loyal unto (or, in some cases, past) death, but loyalty was no substitute for sustenance and shelter. The travelers had no option but to keep moving — the territory through which they passed was too infertile to support any sort of settlement.

On the night of the winter solstice, Haqim halted the exodus shortly after moonrise. He spoke one word: "Here." He thrust his spear into the stone at his feet. The mountain itself trembled, throwing all save Haqim himself to the ground. When they arose, they beheld a great throne of polished black stone, with the shaft of Haqim's spear protruding from the place where the right hand of an occupant of the throne would rest. Haqim faced the throne with hands outstretched, as if communing with it or the mountain from which it had sprung.

With a cry, a black-feathered eagle swooped out of the sky, spread its wings to alight on the left arm of the throne and regarded Haqim with gleaming eyes. Then, as if reaching some sort of decision, it flew to Haqim's shoulder. The

Ancestor turned to his Children and said, "Here. 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 heart penetrated by the spear, the nest of eagles, and it shall ever be known as such."

With a gesture, Haqim sank into the ground along with the throne. As his followers rushed forward, they found the mouth of a cave, sloping downward in a long, wide ramp, far too regular to be natural. Upon entering the cave, they discovered a vast network of caverns and passageways whose arrangement mimicked exactly that of Haqim's palace in the Second City.

In the cavern that corresponded to the great hall of the palace, the explorers found Haqim, seated upon the throne, head bowed. His expression appeared pained and weary, as if he had just fought a great battle. Blood trickled from a dozen livid wounds. As Haqim's eldest child entered the cavern, the eagle launched itself from Haqim's shoulder with a shriek. All eyes turned to follow it as it soared upward — toward the dark, open sky that somehow hung over the chamber despite the hundreds of feet of rock that should have been there.

Haqim sighed and raised his head, then stood, grasping his spear for support. "Here," he repeated, and none could find reason or will to contest his decision.

Since that night, the Eagle's Nest — Alamut — has been the spiritual and physical home of the Children of Haqim. A thousand stories exist about the Mountain and the marvels contained within it, and a fraction of them may even be true. But Alamut does exist, and it remains our heart even tonight. Although many of us may never again see its silent halls, it is a defining aspect of our clan. How many others can boast a home, albeit broken and barred, in these Final Nights?

## SILENCE

For several thousand years after the Children settled at Alamut, little of note happened. While this may seem like a coy dismissal of our affairs at the dawn of Western civilization, the truth is that even Alamut's Great Library contains years of crop records and trivial reminiscences but virtually nothing of meaning to the casual scholar of history. All three castes gradually rebuilt their strength, granting the Blood to worthy mortals of Southwest Asia and North Africa, and these hardy people became the clan's herds — and wards. Few mortals worshipped the Children as gods-on-Earth as they had in the Second City (a state of affairs that required no few elders to make adjustments to their self-images), but many clan members established themselves as regional lords or protectors of favored tribes. Some of

their names still ring down the halls of history, albeit in forms that few of the original bearers would recognize.

During this time, the castes settled into the roles familiar to the modern observer. The viziers took it upon themselves to act as shepherds of Seth's inheritors, walking among the mortals and sharing in their achievements, laying the foundations for future growth much as other Cainites were doing in the West. The sorcerers withdrew to a certain extent, clustering around Haqim and Alamut and pursuing their individual studies of blood magic, though they often sought out specific learned mortals for knowledge that they could not acquire elsewhere. The judges, now almost fully turned warriors, served as the spear and shield of the Children, warding their brethren's endeavors from the interference of others.

*This is a vastly oversimplified and idealized account, but this can be excused to a certain extent, as few exist who truly remember those nights. While the Children did nurture the mortals of the region to a certain extent, their efforts were no more noble or altruistic than those of any other clan. Any intelligent group that depends on a single food source will encourage that food source's growth in order to expand its own population. Haqim's brood was no different.*

In time, the Children spread forth from the Mountain and returned to the once-fertile lands that had finally recovered from the Second City's death throes. In these green valleys, they found thriving mortal populations greater than any they had seen in the barren wastes. And they found the forerunners of other Cainite populations, too, expanding outward from the wildernesses into which they had fled.

The expansion of the [13] great clans from the Second City had left the area that would become the Middle East with large Cainite populations of the Children of Haqim and the Followers of Set. The views of these two parties on religion, vampiric existence and the proper treatment of mortals were often diametrically opposed. Small conflicts erupted throughout the region, encouraged by Cainite strife. While most Serpents were wise enough to behave diplomatically and submissively (or at least maintain low profiles) in order to coexist peacefully with the Children, many maneuvered their mortal pawns into striking at clan holdings and herds.

The Children rarely responded in kind, because Haqim encouraged his followers to make the distinction between a master and his unwitting proxies. He had little stomach for wholesale butchery of innocents. Thousands of years before mortals coined the term "assassin," many warriors were already learning to strike from ambush, stalking those Cainites who fancied themselves puppet-masters.

Slowly, the techniques of the judges found new applications as the tools of hunters.

Setites were the most commonly encountered Cainites of the region during this time, but they were far from the only ones. Members of every clan sporadically appeared in the lands that Caine's inheritors called home, seeking knowledge or drawn back by some primordial call. The Children rendered judgement unto these visitors as individuals, despite pressure from some Second City-era elders to unilaterally condemn those who betrayed or abandoned Haqim. Those who failed to meet the judges' standards of acceptable conduct and morality either saw their final sunrises or fled howling to their European brethren, depending on the severity of their offenses and the temperament of the individual warrior. These latter survivors spread tales of the "fear-some black-skinned demons of the East," spreading the roots of a legacy of fear that lasts to the modern nights.

Scions of nearly every clan settled along the southern and eastern coasts of the Mediterranean and spread inland during this time. The Children did not allow these scattered groups to establish domain so much as they were unable to prevent it. No matter how diligent the warriors were in enforcing what they saw as their borders, they were incapable of being everywhere at once. By the time many Cainite "intruders" were discovered, the price of expelling them exceeded the cost of tactfully ignoring them. The Toreador, Nosferatu and Lasombra were the most common, followed by the Brujah and the tribes of Ashur, but every Cainite line had some presence in the area by the time of the pharaohs.

This left the Children pinned in place. Western Asia was the domain of the Tzimisce, who enforced their sovereignty with ruthless enthusiasm and earthy sorcery. Equally strong and aggressive Kindred prevented expansion northeast. The south and east were the homes of other horrors that had little love for Cainites, and the few Children who limped back to Alamut after attempting to move in these directions reported that such Moon-Beasts and Wild Ones had no desire to share their lands and no fears regarding open conflict should Haqim choose to press the matter. The Setites stymied western movement and, beyond them, the other clans had claimed many havens.

This inability to move in any direction frustrated those elements in the clan who nurtured dreams of empire. New herds and domains were limited by the rate at which the mortals could reproduce rather than by the speed at which the frontiers of the Children's territory could expand. Precious resources became the subjects of power grabs that any modern Camarilla prince would

recognize in an instant. The Children adapted all too well to this mode of conflict.

Haqim was less than pleased with this development. He left the First City to remove himself from the Jyhad; he left the Second City to remove his brood from it. The strife between his childer reminded him of the behavior of the other clans. He nursed a quiet fear that he had recreated the Jyhad in microcosm by isolating the three castes from their brethren. This fear manifested itself in a growing restlessness, and the Ancestor left Alamut for up to a decade at a time. During these absences, he left the Black Throne in the hands of his eldest childer present on the night of his departure, much as he had done in the Second City.

The final straw fell during the Peloponnesian War. Two centuries earlier, a cabal of viziers had taken up residence in Athens, entranced by that city's centers of worship and learning. A similar group of warriors had entered Sparta at the sufferance of the city's Ventrue prince at approximately the same time. When Corinth convinced Sparta's elders to enter the Peloponnesian War against Athens, both groups quickly took direct hands in the conflict in order to ensure victory for "their" mortals.

In 413 B.C., when the Spartans destroyed the Athenian fleet, the Athenian Children of Haqim sent emissaries to Alamut to plead for Haqim's favor and to gather allies among the warrior caste to support their cause. Upon hearing of this, the Spartan warriors sent their own representatives. The delegations arrived at the Mountain on the same night and fighting broke out among their mortal entourages. By the time the *silsila* had restored order, every Greek was dead and five Children lay among the fallen.

Haqim flew into a towering fury, nearly destroying the Great Hall in his wrath. Once he had regained the power of speech, he summoned the survivors before him. In a shattering tirade, he denounced both groups, the web of European Cainite intrigue in which they had allowed themselves to become ensnared. Then he denounced all of his Children for succumbing to the lure of the Jyhad.

"I gave you the opportunity to rise above the petty treacheries at which Caine's lesser childer play," Haqim raged, "and you ever prove yourselves unworthy of that opportunity. I am as dutiful a father to my own Children as any mortal child could ever ask of his sire, and you repay me by fighting among yourselves like starved wolves, then scampering to me to beg for my aid when the tide turns against you. Jackals, all! You sought my favor, but you have earned only my contempt. I will not save you from yourselves. Until I draw my spear from the



Black Throne again, you have no sire, and I have no Children. Alamut is no longer my house, for you have left me no peace here." So saying, he strode forth from the Mountain, striking down the one childe who dared beg his forgiveness.

All three castes quickly asserted that Haqim's words had not applied to them, and that they should therefore claim the clan's legacy. The warriors' argument was that the Athenian viziers had provoked Haqim by being the first to seek his aid in a conflict that was obviously not theirs. The viziers countered that the warriors had been the first to strike directly at other Children. The sorcerers held that they had not been involved in the conflict and thus had done nothing to incur Haqim's wrath.

In the end, the warriors triumphed, less through diplomacy than via intimidation and a willingness to spill more vitae. The sorcerers might have been able to win the night, had they so desired, but the moderate Amr of the time counseled neutrality. In exchange for their withdrawal from the conflict, the sorcerers gained certain concessions, the greatest of which was the viziers' continued survival as a caste. The struggle left the scholars bloodied and battered, but the sorcerers forced the warriors to concede their opponents' continued value to the Children as a whole.

Haqim appeared to the clan about once a century after that incident, acting as occasional guardian or advisor but never leading. He never commented on the state of affairs within the Children — or, at least, those to whom he spoke kept the conversations to themselves. He last visited Alamut in 68 B.C., staying in the Great Library for close to six months before departing. Those present at the time noted that the Ancestor seemed disturbed, even openly frightful, and that he spent an inordinate amount of time reviewing the clan's earliest records. He left the Mountain on the night before the first Roman troops marched into Asia Minor to begin Rome's annexation of Syria and Palestine.

*I should note that, with regard to dates, I have taken a minor liberty in editing this history. Most non-Western Children of Haqim adhere to the Muslim calendar, not the Christian one. This system of dating begins its count in A.D. 622, the year in which Mohammed led his followers forth from Mecca in the journey now known as the "Hijra." For the sake of the intended audience, which largely reckons its dates by the Christian calendar, I have made appropriate transpositions.*

The Ancestor appeared to the Children twice more after that. The first time was in Antioch a century later. Haqim entered the city with little fanfare (or as little as was possible for a being of his power) and inquired into the researches of the sorcerers who dwelt there. The

second was in the period between A.D. 117 and A.D. 120, during which he made a score of stops on a journey that took him westward from the Holy Land. In early 121, a party of mercenary warriors met Haqim in the British Isles, apparently while he was involved in an extended philosophical discussion with the Ventrue elder known as Mithras. Shortly thereafter, the Ancestor vanished. All subsequent attempts to locate him have failed.

## NIGHTMARES OF EMPIRE

The rise of Western civilization brought the Children of Haqim into close contact with the rest of the Cainite world again. During the time of the Greek city-states and the height of Persian dominance, few clans other than the Brujah, Ravnos, Setites and the Tzimisce had enjoyed more than sporadic encounters with the Children. However, as Rome expanded and, later, as Byzantium rose, those kingdoms' Cainite parasites moved with them, struggling in vain to control the first mortal institutions that were more complex than they could comprehend.

### THE ROMAN ERA

The Children of Haqim never had an extensive role in the Roman empire's life or death. Scattered members of all three castes moved through Roman society, particularly in the eastern and southern regions of the empire, and no few warriors found mercenary employment as bodyguards or household troop commanders for wealthy Ventrue and Malkavians.

In truth, prior to the fall of Carthage, the Children as a whole paid little attention to Rome. It was no more than a distant rumbling on the horizon of history, and Iran, Egypt, Aram and other parties disputed lands closer to home. With these disputes came various Cainite claimants — and other forces as well.

After the Third Punic War, however, the Children could no longer ignore the power that had all but annihilated the North African branch of the clan. The elders of Alamut examined Rome, and at that empire's heart they saw a festering web of Cainite influence that spoke of greater threats yet to arise. For their part, Rome's own Cainite inhabitants remembered the swords that had aided the Brujah cause during the long wars in Carthage, and their rising strength washed away any fear they might have otherwise had of the Children. Rome needed little urging to turn its acquisitive eyes eastward. By the middle of the second century B.C.,



Macedonia and Thrace were under Roman dominion. Another century, and Bithynia and Syria followed suit, putting Rome's knife at the throat of the East.

Rome was never a place of particular interest for the Children, but the Parthian empire was. Arising in Iran a century before Rome's ascent began, Parthia spread through the Mesopotamian region in the wake of the crumbling Seleucid dynasty. Many Children encouraged the Parthian expansion, save for those who had maintained close ties to the Seleucids. Some saw Parthia as a rich ground on which to sate their particular hungers, whether for vitae, battle or learning, while others simply welcomed an end to the chaotic infighting that surrounded their homes. Following the destruction of Carthage and the subsequent Roman expansion west, Parthia quickly became all too significant to the Children as the force holding the Roman Cainites at bay. All three castes devoted themselves to reinforcing the mortals who could fend off their undead adversaries.

*Some of those few Children who held to the Jewish faith post-Embrace became active against Rome at least a century earlier than their brethren of different faiths. The soil of Palestine reportedly still holds several torpid elders of our clan who fell during the revolt there — and the ashes of several more elders of other clans who fell to their fangs and blades.*

By the middle of the second century A.D., events surrounding Rome had forced the Children to coexist with other Cainites or perish. Egypt, Syria, Armenia and other outlying lands were now under Roman control. Ventrue, Toreador, Malkavians and others came to the lands of the Children. In the Cainite courts of Alexandria, Damascus and other great cities, the castes emulated the European political dance, trading favors and secrets in search of leverage and power. The Parthians and their superb cavalry held the Romans at bay, but the eastern coast of the Mediterranean was now home to far more undead, and the bloody flower of the Jihad slowly blossomed again.

#### CARTHAGE

Although few outside that clan acknowledge it in the modern nights, the Brujah fever-dream that was Carthage was home to no few of Haqim's childer. Our clan was the second most numerous there after the city's Cainite fathers. However, a few Brujah elders who still remember Carthage recall our presence there as a unified one. Nothing could have been farther from the truth.

In the outset, Carthage was a trade center and the heart of Phoenicia. Several viziers with mercantile interests entered into partnerships or competition with like-minded Brujah. As Brujah dominance of the city



grew and their vision of an Elysian kingdom to rival the Second City took shape, Carthage attracted attention from the warriors and sorcerers who knew their history well enough to recall their castes' original charters. Surely this Carthage could not be the paradise that their brethren's accounts portrayed it to be, they said, for they knew all too well the excesses that open existence among mortals brought. Had Haqim not formed their lines to combat such decadence?

And yet, when the first warriors who wished to be judges again arrived in Carthage, the Brujah greeted them with open arms and bade them stay for as long as they liked. The truth, at least in the beginning, was with the tales that filtered back to Alamut. Carthage was indeed a city wherein mortals and Cainites mingled freely, each doing his share to further the city's greatness. The Children stayed, suspicious at first but gradually coming to share the Brujah ideals. In time, they became so complacent that they forgot the suspicions that had brought them there.

No two accounts agree on the exact point at which the Carthaginian Children discarded their heritage and joined the Baali's rites that the most decadent of the Brujah conducted. At some point between the First and Second Punic Wars, however, a visiting warrior discovered this treachery when his childe, flushed with the excitement of the forbidden, invited him to partake of the blood of a childe sacrifice. He cut his way out of the city and fled to Alamut, his steps dogged every inch of the way by a pack of maddened traitors and their allies and debauched servants. The initial response was swift and bloody, as a cabal of sorcerers turned the revenants back upon their masters, some of whom had remained behind in Carthage.

By the end of the Second Punic War, warriors and sorcerers cautiously crept into Carthage, guided by the remaining viziers who had not succumbed to the city's madness. In a city so filled with Cainites, they could easily disguise their intentions and, in some cases, conceal their presence for months or even years. When Rome landed its finishing blow in 146 B.C., the loyal Children silently struck at their decadent, vitae-bloated brethren, crippling their support of the Carthaginian Brujah at a time when the city's masters needed every ally.

Unfortunately for the Children who were within the city, the Roman forces cared nothing for hidden allies (or even enemies of their enemies). Only a ragged handful of survivors escaped Carthage's fall. The Ventruue and Malkavians and their allies cut down the rest along with every other Cainite within the walls. We could not forgive the Romans, for they knew, and they did nothing to spare those of our blood who stood to assist them.

Nor could we forgive them the deaths of those Children who stood with Carthage, for, misguided though they may have been, they were our brethren, and it was our place to punish them.

*When I first visited Carthage, it promised to spring forth as the fulfillment of an ages-old dream. When I last saw it, it had flowered into a nightmare unsurpassed in history. The city is best forgotten.*

## BYZANTIUM

The western portion of the Roman empire crumbled by the end of the fifth century, eaten from within by civil war and from without by barbarian invasions. In the East, however, the city of Byzantium formed the core for a continuation of the empire.

A sharp division arose within the Children of Haqim. Most of the clan felt that Byzantium was the mortal kingdom that would unite the world as Rome had failed to do. As such, it would forever remain a power that others would be forced to ally with or oppose — there could be no middle ground. The division arose from differing views on such a power's treatment. Some Children felt that the long centuries of isolation were a thing of the past, that it was time to coexist with other Cainites, that Byzantine expansion was as inevitable as the sunrise and it was best to be safely ensconced in a political haven when that dawn came. Others believed that as long as Persia and Arabia remained strong, Alamut and its surrounding lands would be free of the threat of the other clans — the Children should devote all their resources to the opposition of Byzantium.

This division never came to open bloodshed, but it drove a wedge of mistrust through the clan's heart. Those Children who supported the Byzantine courts sneered at their Eastern brethren, considering them staid and incapable of change. Those who kept to the Eastern nations found their Western counterparts mercurial, rebellious and untrustworthy.

## THE LONG TWILIGHT

Kings came and went, and Europe fell whimpering into the Dark Ages as Rome thrashed itself to death. Byzantium hung on longer than the West, but in time it passed as well. In our homelands, the Children nurtured the cultures of the Persians and the Arabs. Some brave souls, hungry for new domain, rode with the expeditions that went south and east, tentatively probing along the burgeoning trade routes, searching for any signs of the threats we had found there before. In time, we met the natives of Taugast and India and, though we were never comrades, some among us learned how to

avoid offending them. This did not lend itself to heavy expansion, but a steady trickle of knowledge and respect began to flow both ways.

Many European military actions during this time relied heavily on mercenaries, and Cainite practices mirrored those of the mortals. Members of all castes, though most commonly warriors, found acceptance in the Western courts as hired swords or court advisors. The warrior caste's practice of a tithe to one's sire of any such earnings arose during this period. Caste apocrypha attributes it to the Caliph of the time, the Ethiopian spearmaster Mohara. Mohara, upon learning that all four of his childer intended to take a blood-contract with a widely distrusted Lasombra prince, said in disgust, "If you must sell yourselves so cheaply, the least you can do is send me a portion of the gold you will earn, that I may be compensated in some small measure for the curse of undeath that you whore for no good cause." Mohara's childer took his sarcasm at face value and sent him a fifth of their earnings every year. Other warriors, seeing the Caliph's own progeny doing this, began to curry favor with their own sires and superiors by tithing in a similar manner.

Aside from such endeavors, Europe was largely an unwelcoming, even hostile, place during these centuries. The rise of Christendom brought suspicion of *paynim* and "pagan outlanders," and many of the Children were of mortal stock that stood out in Germany or France (though the Iberian Peninsula was more welcoming of swarthy non-Christians).

The East, by comparison, was a more comfortable home, though by no means a paradise. The rise of the Sassanids in Persia brought with it a centralized militant government that stirred the cold hearts of many warriors. However, between the fourth and sixth centuries, the Arabian Peninsula fell into its own Dark Age as trade routes declined. The peace between Persian and Byzantium deprived the Arabian economy of the constant enrichment from the nearby war. In an odd compromise, the viziers and the warriors both stoked the fires of acquisitiveness in both kingdoms, contributing to the renewed outbreak of conflict in the sixth century.

## THE PROPHET

In the late sixth century, a mortal was born who forever shaped the destiny of his homeland. His name was Mohammed. In the year 609, God spoke to him through the angel Gabriel. By his death on June 8, 632, he had achieved what no Western prophet before him had: He conquered his own holy land and achieved

military, political *and* religious power within his own lifetime.

He also conquered the souls of the Children of Haqim.

The Children had watched Jesus come and go some six centuries earlier with disinterest. Judaism was strong in those who had held it before receiving the Blood, but it attracted few new converts. The Zoroastrian and Mithraic religions were dying or dead among the mortals and in decline among the Kindred. But the Prophet was the best of all that the Children cherished among the mortals. He was strong, yet humble when it was required of him. He never claimed to be more than a mortal man, nor expected to become anything more. His Allah was harsh yet merciful, and he was a proponent of ideals toward which many of Haqim's childer strove. Islam's message was not to be forced upon those who did not choose to follow it, for the Qur'an stated, "There is no compulsion in religion."

In early Islamic justice, the warriors (and, to a lesser extent, the sorcerers) saw echoes of the laws that Haqim had created them to enforce. The source of the rumor is untraceable tonight, but as Mohammed's influence rose, a whisper passed through the halls of Alamut that Islam was Haqim's will, that with its appearance came the clan's last chance to redeem itself in the eyes of the Ancestor. And so the Children, now five centuries without their sire, clutched at this faint hope and took it upon themselves to shield Mohammed's inheritors and to take his faith as their own.

*Islam captivated many of the Children, but it never achieved the "clan religion" status that some ascribed to it. In addition to the other mortal faiths practiced by clan members, it had to contend with the memory of Haqim, who many remembered as something nigh unto their personal deity. For every member of the clan who adopted Islam, two turned away from it. Furthermore, several of the tenets of Islam contradict the Path of Blood. Allah the Merciful does not promote genocide. In this, the misconceptions of the Western mortals are often shared by their Cainite counterparts.*

*I can personally state with absolute certainty that Haqim had nothing to do with Mohammed's religion, though he might have approved of it in an abstract sense.*

## THIRST

In 636, the Arabs seized Palestine and Syria from the Byzantine empire. Warriors of the Children rode with them, for the infernal tribes had once more reared their heads in the Holy Land. It was our duty to strike them down before they could poison the well from which the word of Allah flowed.





The initial campaigns went well, scattering the Baali's mortal pawns and forcing the masters themselves into a panicked retreat to their unholy city of Chorazin. During the rout, several parties of warriors ranged well ahead of the Arab armies. One of these bands was somehow captured, and the venerators of demons took that small band of warriors to Chorazin with them.

The Children mounted a rescue attempt, but Chorazin's defenses held back the massed might of every warrior who could take that bloody field. The Caliph sent to Alamut for assistance from the sorcerers, and the Amr responded that he and his forces would move to assist the warriors with all possible haste.

With the sorcerers less than a night away, the wall of Chorazin fell. The warriors and their mortal troops stormed through the breach, cutting a relentless swath to the city's temples where the blood cult cowered. As the assault on the temples began, however, the host of the Adversary unleashed their final strike. The warriors clawed at themselves as black fire struck at them from the ground. They howled with an unquenchable thirst.

Seeking vitae, they tore into their own troops, who fled at this betrayal.

Al-Ashrad and his forces arrived as the enemy surged forth from the temple in a counterattack. The sorcerers unleashed their magics, binding and banishing demons and incinerating the Baali even as they strove to dispel the madness that had struck the warriors.

As Chorazin burned, the combined strength of the Children of Haqim overwhelmed the last defenders of the temple. Inside, they found but one survivor of those who the Baali had taken prisoner. He gasped out a fearful tale, one that few gave credence for months to come. The Baali had said to him, "As you thirst for our blood, so shall you hunger for all blood for all time." Then they had used the captured warriors as a focus for a curse that intensified their ancient craving a thousandfold.

Neonate and Methuselah alike fell prey to a dreadful hunger that could be satisfied only by the vitae of other Cainites. As the curse spread across the caste, the sorcerers and viziers searched in vain for a way to break it. By the end of the 14th century, the entire warrior caste and no few sorcerers and viziers were afflicted.



## INVASION

From the distance of centuries, it is easy to acknowledge that the Jyhad had little or nothing to do with the Crusades. Population pressure produced too many European minor nobles with nothing to do but plot against, and occasionally kill, each other. Fearing wars that would devastate the territories in which it held sway, the Church chose to direct that aggression and acquisitiveness elsewhere. The Holy Land was a logical target, held by infidels and nonbelievers who openly rejected Christ's divinity. The knights who rode forth to reclaim Jerusalem would be in the moral right, and the wealth they plundered would flow into both their own coffers and those of the archbishops who urged them on. Any Cainite involvement in the endeavor was purely an afterthought as European elders turned their own gazes toward Palestine.

From the perspective of those who stood in the path of the first Crusaders in the twilight of the 11th century, the invasion from the West was nothing less than the opening stroke of an unprecedented maneuver in the Jyhad calculated to erase the Children of Haqim from the world forever. The Christian minority of the clan may have attempted to reason or negotiate, but their pleas vanished in the din of battle. Many escaped to Iberia, only to be caught up in the Reconquista a century later.

*The Children of Haqim were far from the only Cainite defenders of the Holy Land, though few are willing to make such an admission even tonight. Many Bosombra were of Muslim faith, as were a fair number of Nosferatu, Gangrel, Tzimisce and Toreador who called the Holy Land home. In the bitterest of ironies, the Followers of Set became some of our most valued (though never trusted) allies as they defended their own holdings.*

Our herds and wards rushed to engage the Europeans in battle, and we could do no less. All three castes joined together in a unified effort not seen in centuries, striking against the Cainite nobility who came with the Crusaders as best they were able. Two and a half centuries of war melted away all facets of the clan that were not essential to survival, forging a blade ready to be plunged into the collective heart of the Western Kindred. In parallel with the successes of the mortal Assassins, many warriors gave up open confrontation in favor of stealth, guile and a knife in the dark. While adherents to more traditional forms of honor spat upon these treacherous tactics, the new breed of warriors maintained that their own honor was in the service to the Haqim and to their mortal wards; the form of the act was not as important as its ultimate results. This debate continues to the present night and will most likely remain unresolved as long as two warriors still walk the earth.

*In truth, the fabled "unity" among the Children only manifested in times of desperation, such as the fall of Jerusalem. Infighting during this time was the bloodiest seen since Haqim's departure from Alamut as varying factions of the clan vied for ascendance and the right to guide resistance against the Crusades.*

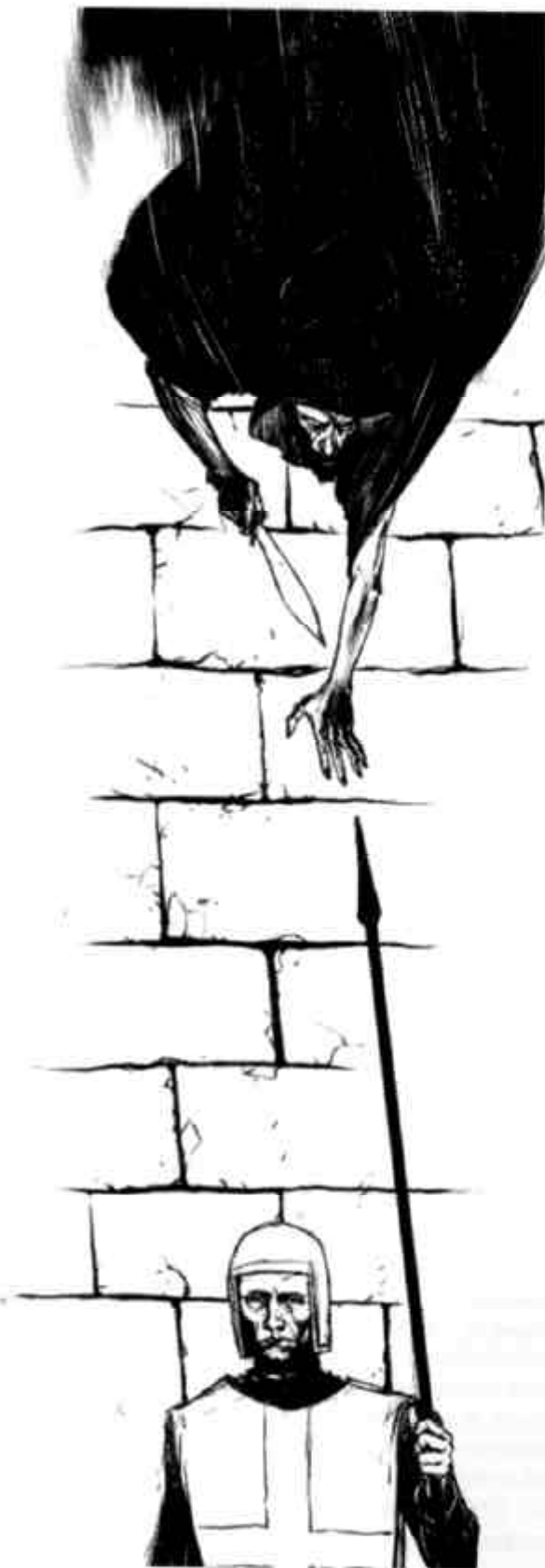
The bloodthirst levied upon the warrior caste by the Baali mounted in strength during these centuries. By the time of the Fourth Crusade, over half the warrior caste thirsted for Cainite vitae nightly. In another century, not a single warrior was unafflicted. As the thirst grew, so too did the warriors' aggression, and even the combined influence of the sorcerers and the viziers was not enough to restrain them.

## IVORY TOWERS AND CRIMSON BLADES

In the distant wake of the Crusades, the terrible nights that some call the Burning Times came to Europe. The Inquisition never really touched the Holy Land, nor did it extend into the Ottoman Empire or parts farther east. While we licked our wounds and cast our eyes west, the European elders sacrificed their childer for the hope of another night's survival. Too many of those intended victims survived and fled east, preferring to take their chances with the dread Saracens than with their sires' betrayals and the Church's flame-lit crosses. As the Setites gave them shelter for a price and the younger Tzimisce and cagey Ventrue gathered them as allies, we listened to them and saw opportunity. The elders who had set their minions upon our havens were weakened and in disarray. Justice was long overdue. When the Anarch Revolt came, we were ready. Our own warriors surged forth into Europe, lending their own steel and fangs to the tide of rage.

The terror our warriors spread in their wake was hugely disproportionate to their actual numbers, or even to the number of elders they slew. Their greatest contribution to the Anarch Revolt was not blades, but rather lessons. A modern mortal government would recognize them as military advisors or agents provocateur. In torch-lit caves and shadowed basements, the greatest hunters of the Web of Knives and the surest swordsmen of Alamut taught the scattered childer of Europe how to lay low their elders.

To be sure, we did not restrain our own thirsts during this time. The Prince of Hamburg still tells the tale of the Night of Ashes, when we slew every Cainite in Berlin, allowing only him to escape with his unlife so that he might tell the tale. Similar stories are now institutional



memories in the Camarilla and the Sabbat alike, lessons as to why we cannot be reasoned with or dealt with fairly. And we reveled in the terror that preceded us like the first cold raindrops of a summer storm.

## CORNERSTONES

As the Anarch Movement rampaged across the Western world, Europe's elders feared (rightly) for their unives. Fear is a motivational tool unlike any other, though its results are rarely those desired by the group wielding it. In this case, fear led to organization. A small band of elders convinced themselves that solidarity was the answer to their woes. By forming some kind of "great brotherhood of all Cainites," they could provide the anarchs a cause greater and more enduring than their hasty movement — oh, yes, and enforce Caine's First Tradition in order to ensure that the Inquisition never rose against all Cainites again. Needless to say, the Children of Haqim were not impressed, nor were we invited to lend our hands to laying this ivory tower's foundations.

*The Camarilla issued a token invitation to the Children of Haqim so that, later, they could truthfully claim to have done so. The Ventrue elder Hardestadt then allowed the emissary's travel plans to fall into the hands of a member of the Web of Knives, who summarily slew the unfortunate neonate and consumed her heart's blood. The invitation never reached Alamut... and it is doubtful that many Children would have wished to accept it in any event.*

## THE GREAT LIE

The Camarilla grew rapidly as its founders convinced more and more anarchs to come in from the cold. This enraged many Children operating in Europe who saw their erstwhile allies deserting them for the promise of sanctuary that they could have earned for themselves anyway if they had possessed the strength to continue their fight. They turned their attention to this Camarilla with a fury born of betrayal.

The Great Lie began simply enough, its seed cast onto fertile ground by the Tremere Etrius, who sought a way to reason with us in order to stop our attacks. One of his younger subordinates commented that he had heard tales of peaceful Assamites who dwelt far to the east, to which Etrius responded, "But that is the heart of the matter. Though some tell tales of peaceful Saracens, I have never seen one with these eyes. They may exist in some fever dream, but I place my own faith in the evidence that their knives and fangs present. They are killers, nothing more, and anything else they might have been died long ago, presumably by their own hands."

The warriors heard reports of similar statements from across Europe. Their pride swelled. Their strength

and accomplishments were so great as to erase the very memory of the viziers and the sorcerers from the minds of the other clans. In a thousand subtle ways, they fueled these impressions: a chance remark here, the silencing of a too-vocal vizier there. Memories were all too willing to fade when confronted with an apparently unified threat.

By 1486, the Camarilla believed in the Assamite threat enough to declare its first and last Blood Hunt against an entire clan.

### THE BLOOD-WITCHES' CURSE

The Convention of Thorns ended the Anarch Revolt in 1493. As the anarch threat ebbed, the Camarilla shifted its attention almost exclusively to us. The fall of Granada the year before stripped us of our last Moorish allies in Europe, and French Toreador and Ventrue marched with Charles VIII to burn us out of Italy the year after. Gradually, the concerted might of seven clans forced our warriors out of Europe. The few remaining European viziers and sorcerers fell as well, victims of their own heritage as Tremere blood magic guided the pogrom.

In late 1495, sentries found a lone Nosferatu wandering the slopes of the Mountain, bewildered and disoriented by Alamut's array of concealing magics but somehow there nonetheless. He was quickly brought to the *du'at* council. His memories were mined and then plundered (rumor has it that he rests in torpor in the haven of one of Haqim's followers to this night), but he had done his damage. If one Camarilla Cainite could find Alamut, others might as well, and that could not be allowed to happen. In order to render justice later, we had to submit to injustice for a time. The Eldest reluctantly sued for peace. Many Children saw the result, 1496's Treaty of Tyre, as a token capitulation that only need be heeded as long as it was a convenient sop for Camarilla paranoia.

Then the Tremere laid their curse. In the space of a week, every one of the Children found himself wracked by numbing agony and, upon awakening, was incapable of imbibing the vitae of a member of any other clan — or even one of the clanless — without risking torpor or Final Death. The result was shock and terror. How had the blood-witches managed such a feat? A curse levied upon an entire line was outside the realm of even the mightiest sorcerers — even that which the demon-worshippers enacted so long ago had been fueled by the spite of the Adversary himself.

The Children demanded a response, and the *du'at* council found the Eldest guilty of leading the Children to humiliation. In a solemn ceremony under the cloud-

shrouded ceiling of the Great Hall, he stepped down from the Black Throne. In his last act, the Eldest charged the Caliph, Jamal, to redeem the Children for his failure. Then Jamal stripped the Eldest of the Blood and ascended to the Black Throne. Our centuries of disgrace had begun.

*The saga of the Assamite antitribu began within a fortnight of Jamal's assumption of the Black Throne. Several ancient warriors felt that to accept the Tremere curse was the height of cowardice and that such quiet acceptance was a stain upon the clan's honor — regardless of the fact that the sorcerers had yet to identify the means by which the Tremere had found the power to enact their witchery.*

*Several of the sorcerers supporting these warriors believed they had found a means by which the Tremere spell might be broken. On their word, those so-called Unconquered set forth from Alamut to journey to the hell-city where the informants had cursed their line. Although the Basili were little but a distant memory by now, the sorcerers believed that the place from which that curse had sprung might yield clues to the breaking of this new one.*

*The effort did not go as anticipated. While the sorcerers were able to reawaken one of the cursed altars and strip the power of the Tremere blood from their own small band, they also awakened something else that had lain buried beneath Chorazin for nearly a millennium. No two survivors of that night tell the same tale of the bloodstorm that came after, but at its end, every vizier and sorcerer who had ridden with the Unconquered was destroyed, the secret of their success lost with them. The eldest surviving warrior, Ighim abd Agraal, led his tattered followers forth from the ruins of that blighted city in search of a new home. In time, they joined the nascent Sabbat, accepting the name "Assamite antitribu" and the chance to kill Cainites of the Camarilla.*

### THE MARCH OF "PROGRESS"

In the centuries that followed, the Children ventured forth cautiously from the East. Most of those who came forth were warriors, their bloodthirst now tempered by Tremere magic. Few other Children left the Middle East, the better to lend credence to the deception that was still in place. Few Camarilla Cainites so much as suspected the existence of the viziers or the sorcerers — which, so far as Jamal was concerned, was all to the best.

The New World held no particular imperative for us, but some of our warriors set forth for foreign shores



in search of a cure for the curse or an opportunity to leave behind its stinging disgrace. The North American colonies were too inhospitable for most of us, save for those Unconquered who found themselves on American shores. However, the native peoples of Aztlan were a different matter. Members of all three castes settled in the jungle cities, glutting themselves in savage blood rites and marveling at the wondrous achievements of those cultures. Some of those pioneers, or their descendants, still remain in the great cities of Mexico and Brazil and in lofty ruins in the Andes.

Closer to home, the struggle against the curse fared ill. A mortal generation after the Treaty of Tyre, the Tzimisce took the opportunity of the Ottoman Empire's invasion of Europe to strike at the Camarilla. We were more than eager to lend our own skills to the effort, which culminated in 1529 with a yearlong siege of Vienna itself. Our sorcerers flocked to the Turkish forces, eager to test their magics against those of the Tremere. In the end, Austria proved equal to the challenge, but for every one of the Children who fell, the ashes of two Warlocks brightened the sunrise. A second siege in 1683 fared no better, and Ottoman power declined with their losses.

While the other clans expanded into the New World, we turned our attentions west and south. With the British colonization of India, the forces that had opposed our movement in that direction suddenly vanished. We cautiously extended our strength, careful to not reveal ourselves to the British Ventrue of the area. The broods of several ancient Ravnos lent their support to us, granting substantial domains in exchange for the aid of our knives against the Europeans. In time, the vast cities of Bombay and Calcutta became homes to us as well. Many Children found peace — or at least serenity — in the teachings of the Buddha, and the thousand gods of the Hindus whispered to us of mysteries unrevealed.

Throughout the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, we were largely observers at the wayside of Cainite history. The Camarilla came to regard us as toothless and harmless, an emasculated curiosity — but one still useful, as Alamut's records of mercenary contracts prove. Many warriors found chances to kill Camarilla Cainites after all — in the employ of other Camarilla members. Vitae came to be the standard currency by which one could buy our services, explained as a religious devotion to Haqim. The Camarilla laughed at our foolish devotion to a nonexistent creature of legend and paid freely in coin they thought we could not spend. Few, if any, ever suspected our other uses for their blood. In his search for a cure to the curse, the Amr had struck upon



the ritual he named the Renewal of the Soul, by which a sorcerer of sufficient strength could condense the essence of a sufficient quantity of vitae and confer a sort of false diablerie upon the beneficiary. The sorcerers demanded little for this service, save a quantity of vitae equal to that required by the ritual; this payment flowed into their laboratories, where it fueled the continuing battle against the curse.

*Material samples also make for highly effective political leverage.*

## THE CENTURY OF BLOOD

In the span of a mortal generation, the world burned and bled twice. The first time, our warriors wept for the death of honor at the hands of hollow-cheeked boys with eyes of glass and spears of lead. The second time, they embraced the storm of metal as it swept across North Africa. Germany was no friend to us, but the lessons they taught gave us hope. Stripped of strength after the Great War but arising to shake the foundations of the world again in thirty years, the Third Reich was a shining example to us of the renewal we could achieve. Among the lies, misdirection and propaganda, we watched. We should have paid more attention to the rot at its heart rather than the gleam and thunder of its hands. History repeats itself.

We learned from the Allies, too — the first nights of the Special Air Service and the blood-price the Rangers paid on the cliffs at Normandy, the thin gray lines of starving men in the Russian factories and fields, the desperate, secret struggle of the French Resistance. From these, we learned the strength that can be born of desperation, and we finally understood the Camarilla.


And when the war in the Pacific ended in a sky-searing fireball and the howl of a maddened sun, it was the viziers' and sorcerers' turn to weep. The mortals had learned to chain the lightning, and we knew from nights of antiquity that the world bleeds in threes.

The Great War was a war for the viziers, with the mad pace of innovation outstripping the art of the battlefield. The Second World War was a war for the warriors, as the mortals gained the knowledge to use their newfound weapons to greatest effect. When the world bleeds again, it will be a war for the sorcerers, and that blood will feed upon their magic.

## “PEACE”

After the fires had died and the ashes had cooled and the dead had been sunk in the earth, the mortals re-drew the lines on their maps. They wreathed Europe in cement and wire, broke Germany's back (but left Austria to itself), placed America on a pedestal and





partitioned the Middle East based on some Western madness. And in the process they partitioned us, for we clung more tightly to our mortality than we cared to admit. The Leopards of Zion, recurring martyrs for the Jewish faith, rose again to defend Israel from other Cainites, and we bade them fortune. India drew in on itself, looked at its past, found the future there, and began to quietly build. We watched and marveled that such strength could grow unnoticed. The Arabs battered on a diet of oil and turned the deserts green. We learned anew the power that comes with wealth.

It is having learned these bitter lessons that the Children of Haqim face each new night. The sorcerers' war looms, replacing crushed herbs and graven symbols with wands of fire that cut across the sky and horned imps who lie and connive in their staterooms. Even the Children of Haqim themselves are not exempt — the great Schism that divides us into sects and cults of personality have no lesser toll than the wars of nations or the bloody theaters of the "Kindred's" grandest Jyhads.

It is a sad legacy, true... but is it one of failure? Or of victory at crippling cost? We shall tell before we greet too many new nights.

#### SO HOW MANY ASSASSINS ARE THERE, ANYWAY?

The number of warrior-caste Assamites who actually worked as contract assassins prior to the Schism (see Chapter Two) is indeterminate. Of these, perhaps half are warriors, and only half of those are actual combat specialists of one type or another.

The numbers dwindle further when one considers how many of those actual warriors are *not* assassins, either by skill or temperament. When all is said and done, perhaps a few score Assamites worked as fulltime assassins immediately prior to the Breaking and the Schism, and maybe twice that number apocryphally sought occasional employment to supplement their other pursuits. However, the Ventrue records maintained by the Inner Council on unsanctioned Camarilla contracting list over 2000 names of Assamites hired for assassination since the Treaty of Tyre. Either the estimates are frightfully incorrect, or the Assamites often used alternate identities to confuse their benefactors, or other parties *claiming* to be Assamites executed some of those contracts....







## CHAPTER TWO: PRAYERS TO BROKEN STONE

*Hard pressed on my right. My center is yielding. Impossible to maneuver. Situation excellent. I am attacking.*

— Ferdinand Foch at the Battle of the Marne

Until the last nights of the 20th century, the Assamites were an impenetrable mystery to the rest of the Cainite world, all sharp steel and thinly veiled threats. Recent events, however, have brought to light aspects of the clan that few had previously considered possible, let alone likely. While the clan's contract assassins and their ilk are no less formidable, they are far from being the only Assamites. The clan has a unique tripartite structure that few outsiders have knowingly glimpsed in the past millennium. This odd "family tree" has its roots in the Second City and has remained relatively stable into the modern nights.

Scholars of Cainite history and physiology disagree on the reasons by which the Assamites' caste structure has survived over the centuries. The most well-known theory, proposed by noted Malkavian Dr. Douglas Netchurch, has to do with evolutionary pressure. During the millennium or so after the fall of the Second City, many Assamites settled in the Middle East, an area of the world that other clans largely scorned. This gave the clan's main population a degree of isolation unknown to the vampires

of Europe, who had to contend with members of close to a dozen other clans for territory and social position.

By comparison, the Assamites had relatively few neighbors to fill the various niches that inevitably develop in Kindred society: the Followers of Set, who were more competitors than allies, and a scattered few Nosferatu, Toreador, Gangrel and Trimisce, all of whom tended to their own affairs. Lacking competition for certain roles, the clan thus maintained its separation of duties over the millennia rather than becoming specialized to one particular mode of existence. The viziers tended to the mortal herds, the judges (now the warriors) tended to the clan's defense, and the sorcerers pursued their secrets. This division of labor allowed the Assamites to succeed on their own where a clan priding itself on its specialization, such as the noble Ventrue or the socialite Toreador, would have failed. Some Cainite scholars believe that the clan's own internal caste system evolved parallel to those employed by the mortal cultures of the region.

Needless to say, this theory meets with considerable opposition, particularly from Cainites who consider them-

### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

This book refers to the Assamites by several names, seemingly interchangeably. To avoid arguments over Old Clan Assamites and True Children of Haqim and the like, we'll just come out and say it:

The Assamites are the same thing as the Children of Haqim (or the Sons of Haqim, the Daughters of Haqim, or Haqim's Children). All three castes (warriors, viziers, and sorcerers) are equally Assamites. Assamites of all political affiliations or lack thereof (loyalists, schismatics, *antimibu* and dispossessed) are equally Assamites, too.

So why all the different names?

The difference between "Assamites" and "Children of Haqim" is a matter of linguistics and perspective. The clan has always referred to itself as the Children of Haqim (or various permutations on that name). The Assamite name probably came into being a few centuries before the Crusades due to other Cainites mishearing or mispronouncing "Children of Haqim" in Arabic. The only members of the clan who refer to themselves as Assamites are either speaking to non-Assamites or never received an extended introduction to their Cainite culture from a Child of Haqim sire. Among their siblings, all Children of Haqim refer to themselves by that name or a variation of it, never by the outsiders' term for them.

For the purposes of this book, the two names are interchangeable. However, we usually refer to the clan as "Assamites" when taking a neutral perspective and "Children of Haqim" when discussing matters from the clan's own point of view.

elves to have escaped the social roles under which their respective clans labor. Some of its most vocal proponents are Ravnos and Gangrel, who, unsurprisingly, favor the idea of Cainite adaptation to new challenges, and several Caitiff, who use it to support their claims that uniqueness is to a vampire's benefit. Strangely, no Assamites are known to have spoken on the issue. Perhaps this is not so surprising when one considers the matter from the clan's own self-reliant perspective. The Children of Haqim simply *are* — though in the Final Nights, even this long-held tenet wears thin.

### WHERE THE ASSAMITES ARE TONIGHT

With the coming of the Final Nights, the Assamite clan is in a state of flux. Recent developments have shattered the Cainite world's preconceived notions of what Assamites are, and many of the clan's own long-held beliefs are in disarray. As much as a third of the Assamite population has petitioned for membership in, or at least a

truce with, the Camarilla, while another third seems to have redoubled its efforts to wipe every other vampire from the face of the planet. The only certainty where Haqim's childer are concerned is that their current state of upheaval will shake the foundations of Kindred society — as, indeed, it already has.

## CLAN STRUCTURE

Although organizing vampires is much like herding predatory beasts, the Assamites maintained for millennia a hierarchy unsurpassed by any clan save the Tremere (and some would claim that the Warlocks cheated by coming into the vampiric world with an organization already in place). This structure has broken down under the strain of recent events, but both of the clan's major factions maintain enough of it that it is still worthy of examination.

As a qualifier, the "rule" of Alamut is far from absolute, even given the potency of the elders who reside there. Many Assamites have received enough instruction and trust from their sires and comrades that they feel a certain bond of loyalty to the clan. Even if they don't personally place too much belief in whatever version of history they've received, the reception they garner from other Cainites tends to be harsh enough that clanmates look like the best option for companionship, and association tends to lead to common agendas despite efforts to remain independent. Just as many, however, shrug and ignore their "superiors" when they hear about the latest edicts from the Mountain. Ironically enough, ur-Shulgi's efforts to unify the clan may be doing so in a most unplanned manner, as more and more of these nearly dispossessed individuals receive news of recent events and seek shelter with one faction or another.

## METHODS

The elders of the Assamite clan use several methods to keep their underlings at least loosely connected and vaguely focused. The first is blood magic, without which rapid long-distance communication was impossible until the modern era. With a devoted caste of sorcerers, the leaders at Alamut were always able to disseminate information and instructions to the clan within a few nights — an invaluable tool for keeping subordinates reminded of their duties. With the advent of radio and later developments, scrying and sending became somewhat obsolete, though Assamite sorcery is still less prone to interception than a cellular phone conversation.

An equally important, and much more subtle, method of maintaining focus is a sense of superiority. Most Assamites who have the opportunity for lengthy conversations with other clan members at least know Haqim's Laws and the basics of their line's history. The traditional emphasis on



this story has always been, "We were asked to stand in judgement, and the other clans walked off and left us, so they have no right to complain if we still do it." The implication here is that, because the other clans' founders asked Haqim to create the judges, all the Antediluvians approve of the Assamites' actions — and Caine never stepped in to stop it. That's a powerful argument for continuing to judge and punish other Kindred, even if those other Kindred themselves don't want to be judged and punished. Brainwashing and propaganda don't even have to be overt — the best coercion is that which has a grain of truth at its heart.

Finally, many Assamites have an "us or them" mentality that only a few other Kindred groups can match. History shows many reasons for the Assamites and the rest of Caine's descendants to have an adversarial relationship, and some fault undoubtedly lies with both sides. Of course, most Assamites won't admit that their clan was in the wrong *all that much* — after all, it was the fault of the Camarilla or the Setites or the Ravnos or the convenient scapegoat of the night. All blame aside, though, the clan has always been aware that a fellow Assamite is several orders of magnitude more likely to be predisposed (or at least neutral) toward her than any other vampire. In the modern nights, though, this is no longer a certainty or even a strong possibility.

Very few Assamites use the blood bond to command loyalty from their childer. Most of the clan views the bond as a shameful form of punishment, "suitable for goats and liars," only to be used when a neonate has repeatedly demonstrated that he is not to be trusted with free will. The relative rarity of Dominate and Presence in the clan make use of these measures similarly scarce. However, "scarce" is not "unheard of."

## HAQIM

The clan hierarchy begins, of course, with the Cainite from whom his descendants take their collective name: Haqim, the Assamite Antediluvian. Unlike those of many clan founders, Haqim's name — and even his appearance — are well-documented (though no one believes that Haqim is the name he bore at birth). His last recorded appearance was in A.D. 121 in the British Isles, though the clan catalogues at least one "Haqim sighting" a decade. Over the centuries since, several high-ranking clan members claim to have received direct communication from him, ur-Shulgi being only the latest.

In theory, the Children of Haqim are still one family, with Haqim as their patriarch. In practice, Haqim is far more myth than reality to most modern members of the clan. Regardless of illuminations and original copies of writings, the Ancestor just isn't real to those whose grandsires never even met him. On the other hand, many active members of his brood claim

personal acquaintanceship with Haqim — al-Ashrad and ur-Shulgi among them — enough that any neonate who has both the curiosity and the courage can hear several firsthand accounts of him.


With the exception of the tales told by members of the ultraconservative Web of Knives and other Path of Blood hard-liners, most accounts portray Haqim as a man who had grown weary of conflict well before he settled in the Second City. He caught the attention of a member of the Second Generation for his dedication, strength of will and uncompromising code of ethics. An academic by nature if not by skill, he only reluctantly accepted the mantle of authority that his fellow members of the Third Generation thrust upon him. However, once he bent to their will, he was determined to carry out their requests to the best of his ability. Some Kindred scholars theorize that this determination extended to a "whether they want it or not" mentality, and certainly some of Haqim's recorded actions bear this out. The most noteworthy example of him asserting his authority to the fullest possible extent was the formation of the sorcerer caste as demon-hunters, directly defying Saulot's protestations that the Salubri warriors needed neither competition nor assistance.

Haqim's relations with the other Antediluvians has been characterized in legend as tense, a likely state of affairs considering that the other Ancients gave him what amounted to a charter to freely enforce his own code of civility on their descendants. Several of his writings speak well of the Brujah, Gangrel and Ravnos founders, and on one half-translated tablet he seems to express his regret that he and Saulot never repaired their kinship after the conflicts that involved infernal cults. He had little respect for the founders of the Nosferatu and Toreador clans, and granted a wary regard to the Ventrue progenitor.

Toward his own descendants, Haqim was as harsh as he was to other Cainites. However, only the most extreme accounts speak of him as an unfair master. He rewarded success well and only punished failure when it came as a result of laziness or foolishness. If he had a fatal flaw, it was a lack of patience. Many of his long disappearances over the millennia seem to stem from frustration with squabbling among his childer. His current absence is alarmingly long, even by immortal standards, though some believe that he has already returned to the clan, watching and evaluating them nightly. This theory has adherents on all sides of the Schism that plagues the clan.

## THE ELDEST

The office of Eldest began in the Second City as an unofficial honor. When Haqim left for his frequent journeys, he would place one of his childer in charge of the affairs of his home. After the Children of Haqim founded Alamut, the position became a formal one. The Eldest (colloquially known as "the Old Man" even during the



two occasions when a female held the position) was the oldest child of Haqim interested in directing the clan in the Ancestor's absence. During those times when no fourth-generation Child was available to take the Black Throne, the *du'at* chose one of their number as Eldest, with the two council members who did not become Eldest choosing the Eldest's replacement. The Eldest can be deposed by a unanimous challenge from all three *du'at* members, though this has happened only once in the clan's recorded history.

As defined, the Eldest is the supreme leader of the Assamites, answerable only to Haqim. Throughout the centuries, though, most have recognized the impossibility of exerting "control" over all their "subjects." Only a few have tried to bring the dispossessed to heel, and these met with universally dismal ends.

The last Eldest was Jamal, a warrior who held the Black Throne from 1494 to 1998. When ur-Shulgi arose, the ancient chose to test the Children's loyalty from the top down. Ur-Shulgi claims that Jamal refused to renounce Allah and was thus "sent... to meet his young god." Jamal was the first Assamite to die in such a fashion, and many schismatic warriors consider him a martyr. Ur-Shulgi refuses to take the mantle of Eldest, referring to Haqim himself by that title.

## THE DU'AT

The *du'at* council is traditionally the assembly of the heads of the three Assamite castes: the Caliph of the warriors, the Vizier of the viziers, and the Amr of the sorcerers. It is the clan's observed authority on matters of policy. Alamut's records put the formation of the *du'at* as a formal body at approximately 2000 B.C. The *du'at* was the Eldest's closest circle of advisors, though council members often drew information from their subordinate specialists. The council also collectively arbitrated crosscaste disputes that threatened the stability of the Children as a whole.

With the destruction of one member and the subsequent departure of the other two, it is unlikely that a *du'at* will be re-formed in the foreseeable future. Al-Ashrad currently seeks to restructure his followers into an organization more palatable to the Camarilla, and secret clan councils have no place in such a body. Ur-Shulgi refuses to acknowledge a new Caliph, Amr or Vizier among the loyalists, apparently preferring to allow its followers to sort themselves out without its guidance.

### The Caliph

The warrior caste's leader is known as the Caliph. He is, in theory, the greatest combatant among the Children of Haqim, though few Caliphs have been masters of every form of combat. The Caliph's primary duties are to advise the Eldest on matters that pertain to the defense of the Children as a whole and to guide the warrior caste in its

defense of the clan, its holdings and its mortal subjects (when the Assamites *had* mortal subjects, at any rate). Additionally, should a trial by single combat arise whose outcome affects the entire clan, the Caliph is the Cainite who fights on the Children's behalf. No records of such an event exist, though the fact that this is the duty of the Caliph suggests that such circumstances arose at least once before.

In the abstract, these duties make the Caliph the leader of the largest organized body of immortal soldiers and assassins in the world. In reality, the Caliph is simply the individual holding the leash of a clan of predators who may or may not obey any particular suggestion he gives them. Wise Caliphs choose to guide rather than command, lest those predators turn on the leash-holder.

According to warrior caste tradition, any warrior who feels that the current Caliph is failing to discharge his duties as the foremost defender of the Children of Haqim may challenge the Caliph to a duel for leadership. However, the Caliph has the right to choose whether the challenge will be one of unarmed combat, armed combat, tactical leadership or even strategic military command. Some Black Hand analysts believe that the tank battles of the 1972 Arab-Israeli War had some role in the last challenge to the Caliphate, though this theory is unproven.

If the current Caliph is defeated, he is expected to submit to ritual diablerie at the fangs of his challenger. Some newly minted Caliphs have allowed their predecessors the option of suicide by facing the rising sun from the side of the mountain that houses Alamut. Challengers who meet defeat have always been consumed by the Caliph, and each of their descendants is given the choice of destruction or exile. This ensures that challenges do not come frivolously, as the childer of a challenger have been known to pull him down themselves rather than risk the consequences of a failed challenge.

Currently, the position of Caliph is open following ur-Shulgi's destruction of the previous holder, and no one has yet stepped forward to claim it. However, several loyalist warriors have tentatively advanced themselves as possible claimants, and it seems to only be a matter of time before actual conflict erupts.

### THE VIZIER

The leader of the vizier caste (also known as the "scholar caste") goes by the title of Vizier. This may seem a confusing arrangement to outsiders, but the viziers are accustomed to it, usually applying a subtle emphasis to "the" when referring to *the* Vizier. The Vizier is the foremost academician among the viziers and serves as the conduit for information that the Eldest needs from the caste. As the viziers' studies range from theology to particle physics, this is a weighty responsibility indeed. Realistically, the Eldest rarely expects the Vizier to have



comprehensive knowledge of every single item of data to which the viziers have access, but he must at least be capable of identifying the caste's experts and gleanings from them information of greatest benefit to the Eldest.

As with the Caliph, the Vizier's actual responsibilities differ from his ideal ones. The loose disorganization of the viziers more closely resembles a network of academic contacts than a formal research collective, and any given vizier may or may not stay in contact with his brethren and superiors for any number of reasons. The Vizier often finds himself having to coordinate correspondence (or forcing correspondence to occur) between widely scattered individuals who feel the need to pay lip service to the idea of clan and caste loyalty only when they need something from their brethren.

Traditionally, the viziers elect the Vizier in a simple majority vote every 63 years. No process exists for formally declaring candidates, but individuals who believe they will be able to best advise the Eldest during the next six decades usually come forward a year or two before the election.

The vizier members of the Council of Scrolls (see below) tabulate the votes on every seventh winter solstice (though some more progressive members of the council would like to convene the group more frequently). Any member of the caste is eligible to vote if he can come to Alamut in person or send a proxy (usually a trusted ghoul or servant) within the six months immediately before the election. Until the most recent election, this was a grand gathering of the caste (and a good way for the Eldest and the *du'at* to gauge loyalties by counting absent faces) that filled Alamut for a month prior to the election, but the nascent phenomenon of air travel eroded this tradition in 1927. Of the viziers who even bothered to vote at the 1990 election, few stayed at Alamut for more than three nights.

The current Vizier is Tegyrus, an ancient legal expert who claims to have marched with Alexander the Great's armies in his mortal days and later watched as Emperor Justinian codified Roman law. He has held the title of Vizier for three consecutive terms, as well as one in the mid-14th century. Tegyrus opposed ur-Shulgi's usurpation of the Black Throne on the grounds that it did not follow the proper precedents for a transition of Eldests. He later followed al-Ashrad into exile, reportedly surprised that ur-Shulgi had not yet destroyed him. His current agenda and location are unknown. Some rumors have placed him at the World Court in the Netherlands, while others hint at a bid for full schismatic acceptance in the Camarilla and an appointment as the first Assamite Justicar.

#### THE AMR

The Amr is the leader of the sorcerer caste. Like his subordinates, he often walks a middle path between the



duties of the Caliph and those of the Vizier. Traditionally, the Amr's primary responsibility is to advise the Eldest on all matters relating to magic and the supernatural, including the affairs of and the threats presented by other Cainites. This somewhat vague definition means that he must not only deal with magical threats to Haqim's legacy but also with the realm of magical study in general. Additionally, the Amr is generally recognized as the most powerful sorcerer in the caste and thus the most powerful sorcerer in the world (though the latter distinction is more rhetorical than quantifiable).

Due to the prevalence of forms of magical communication among the sorcerers, the Amr has a greater ability to issue commands directly to his caste than his counterparts do. In practice, he rarely exercises this power, as the sorcerers are only marginally less independent than the warriors or viziers. However, on those infrequent occasions when the Amr does give an order rather than a polite suggestion, wise sorcerers do not hesitate to obey.

After the Treaty of Tyre, one of the last acts of the then-Eldest was to place the Amr in charge of the clanwide effort to break the Tremere curse. For most of the past 500 years, this has occupied much of the Amr's attention, though he and his assistants have still maintained the magical defenses of Alamut and played an intricate game of move and countermove against the Tremere and their infernal servants.

Traditionally, the Amr is re-selected every year on the night of the vernal equinox. Every sorcerer who is present at Alamut participates in a night-long ritual divination that reveals the identity of the sorcerer who is best suited to lead his brethren for the next cycle of the stars.

Since A.D. 120, the name al-Ashrad has been synonymous with the title of Amr. There has been no other for close to two millennia, and many Assamites cannot conceive of the greatest magician in the world being ousted from the position that he himself defined.

## THE SILSILA

The *silsila*, otherwise known as *shakari* or the Keepers of the Blood, were once the direct subordinates of the *du'at*. Tonight, though, they fulfil their role under ur-Shulgi's fanatical supervision. The spiritual elite of the Children, this small warrior priesthood is composed of those whom the *du'at* and the Eldest feel are the truest adherents to Haqim's teachings. Spiritually, their duties are the advancement of Haqim's Laws (and, depending on Alamut's political climate, the Path of Blood). However, they are also the keepers of Alamut's library and museum and the core of its defenses should the Mountain ever come under assault.

A sizeable portion of the *silsila*'s score of members declared schismatic loyalty; none are known to have survived to the present night in the face of fierce loyalist

attacks. The rest, all Path of Blood adherents, stood firmly behind ur-Shulgi and continue their stewardship of Alamut to the present night. Most of these are elders in both generation and age (in the terms of the Blood, estimated to be at least 9th generation and 400 years of age) and have reached a profound level of enlightenment as paragons of the Path of Blood. Their composition reflects the distribution of the castes within Alamut: Warriors make up the vast majority of the *silsila*, with a handful of sorcerers and only one (presumed) vizier member.

## LESSER OFFICES

The Assamites have never formally defined any positions aside from the Eldest, the *du'at*, and the *silsila*. However, the warriors have evolved a series of ranks that represent an individual's standing within the caste, and the sorcerers and viziers have cooperatively maintained an academic and professional ranking scheme for centuries.

### PRESTIGE WITHIN THE WARRIOR CASTE

The warrior caste has little use for talent that cannot be demonstrated. Clear-cut achievements, whether they be cleanly executed contracts or expertly forged swords, are the fastest route to social and political advancement. Martial success is the most obvious such path, though no few warriors have gained considerable renown for their supporting contributions as tacticians, intelligence analysts and craftsmen. In addition to general reputation, a gradual progression of peer groups occurs within the warrior caste wherein advancement is regulated by age, experience and acclaim. These have undergone several revisions in definition and label throughout the clan's history. The current classifications are derived from those used by the original mortal Assassin sect; it is unknown whether they were adopted out of respect or originated as a bitter jest that later gained full use.

#### Fida'i

Warriors who are new to the blood are known as *fida'i*, which roughly translates as "devotee." This signifies that the neonate has the will to serve Haqim, if not the skills. *Fida'i* remain as such until they have demonstrated that they are capable of carrying out the occasional requests of Alamut. Traditionally, this is at the end of a period of intensive training in both mundane skills and vampiric existence, though some individuals have received the Blood for acts that placed them above the *fida'i* even before the Embrace. Calling a warrior *fida'i* after he has been recognized as holding a higher station within the caste is moderately insulting, as it implies that he is incapable of making his own contributions to the Children and the caste. The closest equivalent to *fida'i* status is that of an unreleased child in the Camarilla or a Sabbat "shovelhead" who has yet to prove herself.



### Rafiq

Any warrior who has progressed past *fida'i* status is known as a *rafiq* (literally "comrade"). A *rafiq* has proven that he is capable of taking care of himself in the outside world and fulfilling the duties that his superiors assign him. Some warriors use *rafiq* to refer to any esteemed clan member, though many shy away from acknowledging sorcerers or viziers as *rafiq*. More commonly, the warriors refer to all warriors as *rafiq*, thus implying that *fida'i* are not truly warriors.

### Da'i

The *da'i* are a subset of the *rafiq*. Any warrior who is sufficiently versed in a religion to be considered an ordained priest, or that religion's version thereof, is a *da'i* (literally "summoner" or "missionary"). Most *da'i* are Muslim, though no few *da'i* hail from other religions. *Da'i* also refers to any *rafiq* who has advanced sufficiently far along an alternate road of morality and belief to be capable of teaching it to others (in game terms, a rating of 7 or more in a Path of Enlightenment). In the modern nights, this latter usage almost always refers to strict Path of Blood adherents.

### Ace

This Westernized term has gained more acceptance than the caste's elders would like in the past half-century. When used to refer to a *rafiq*, an ace is a warrior who has killed five or more non-Assamite vampires of equal or greater strength. The term is largely used by European and American *rafiq* and by those who wish to emulate them, though it is also common among the Assamite *antiribu*.

For formal occasions, some aces commission tattoos to present their kill records (though the effort involved in creating tattoos that will only fade by the next morning prohibits the use of these markings in nightly unlife). The current fashion tends toward rows of clan sigils corresponding to the heritage of each victim, with black circles denoting fallen foes whose lineage was unknown. More casual aces remain content with a clothing, jewelry or armament that bears their body counts, such as a leather jacket with a series of stenciled "kill flags" or a ceremonial scimitar with the names of foes etched into the flat of the blade. At the other extreme, some truly intense individuals use a scalpel and Baal's Caress to produce ritual scarification in lieu of tattoos.

### PRESTIGE WITHIN THE SORCERER AND VIZIER CASTES

Although the sorcerers are primarily blood magicians, their long association with the viziers has led them to value expertise in areas other than the arcane. The two castes collectively maintain the Council of Scrolls, an administrative and academic body that evaluates the skills of would-be scholars and makes sincere (if sporadic) attempts to standardize new knowledge as it becomes

available to the clan. This latter task is nigh impossible, given the widely varying cultures from which the Children of Haqim draw members, but the council has managed to stonewall certain edicts over the centuries. For example, the current linguistic standards for clan records state that Latin, Arabic, English, Swahili and Sanskrit are the "approved" languages for blood magic. Any newly discovered ritual must be translated into at least two of these tongues before the initial researchers may teach it to any other clan member.

The council's primary function, however, is to gauge the progress of sorcerers and viziers in their respective fields of study. The benchmarks that the two castes use are roughly equivalent, so the same group evaluates aspirants to the titles of either caste. The current Westernized forms of address and recognition were adopted in the late 18th century, despite (or perhaps because of) extensive protests from the warriors.

It should be noted that many sorcerers and viziers could have cared less what the council thought of their achievements. Many, however, at least publicly honored its decisions and edicts in order to gain the approval of their elders. With the Schism, the council is broken, and neither side seems likely to re-convene it in the near future — at least, not in any form that the opposition would recognize as legitimate.

#### **Aspirant**

All sorcerers and viziers are considered aspirants until they achieve actual recognition. In most cases, "aspirant" is used as a neutral form of address when an elder does not know — or chooses not to acknowledge — a neophyte's name ("So, aspirant, what have you learned from this night's misadventure?").

#### **Associate**

An associate has shown himself capable of exerting sufficient discipline and dedication to achieve the mortal equivalent of a doctoral degree in his chosen field. A blood magician must have mastered all but the most advanced demands of his primary path (Level Four and at least two Level Four rituals), while an academic must be capable of passing a formal examination at a university selected by his elders (a rating of 4 in the Ability that is the character's primary field of study, with appropriate specialties, should they be used in the chronicle, preferably with ratings of 3 in two or more other Abilities that directly complement the primary one).

#### **Master**

A master is just that: a sorcerer or vizier who has mastered her selected pursuit. She must demonstrate full proficiency with the highest levels of that art or study, as well as show that she is capable of thinking critically, not just reciting from rote memory, such as by publishing a book about her field of study or creating a heretofore unknown ritual. To attain this rank and those above it, a

would-be master must present the council with tangible proof of her achievements (the Assamite equivalent of a doctoral thesis, though occasionally defended with a blade as well as rhetoric).

#### **Distinguished Master**

A distinguished master has proven that she is capable of more than overspecialization by extending her expertise outside of her primary area of focus. For blood magicians, this entails full mastery of two Assamite Sorcery paths (the primary path and one other, each at Level Five). For more traditional scholars, the requirement involves comprehensive knowledge of both the primary area of study and one related but independent field (two Abilities related to the character's primary area of study with a rating of 5 in each, preferably with several supplementary ones with scores of 3 or better).

#### **Full Master**

A full master has reached the pinnacle of achievement in his chosen field of study and is recognized as being the equal of any authority on the planet (save for those elder Cainites whose ability exceeds that of any lesser being by incalculable amounts). For a blood magician, this requires complete mastery of the individual's chosen primary path, at least three other paths and expansive knowledge of rituals. For an individual specializing in nonmagical studies, this likewise requires complete knowledge, both theoretical and practical, of the primary declared area of study and at least three related but separate fields.

#### **Emeritus**

Appended to any title of master or greater ("Distinguished Master Emeritus"), this title denotes a Master who has withdrawn from active participation in clan affairs but whose expertise is still acknowledged and respected. Most often in the Final Nights, this is used to mark an elder who has entered torpor. More colloquially, it can also refer to a sorcerer or vizier who has declared dispossessed status by actively refusing to choose a side in the Schism.

## **THE CASTES**

As noted earlier, the Assamite clan has a hereditary structure unlike any other in the modern Cainite world. The unified clan consists of three "castes," or "sub-clans," each sharing certain common characteristics both within its own body and with the other two castes. For example, the lessons of Quietus come naturally to members of all three castes, though each one has its own full set of "instinctive" Disciplines, of which Quietus is but one. All Assamites experience an odd darkening of the skin with age, but the auras of each caste's members shift in radically different manners after the Embrace. The castes may be considered separate bloodlines for the purposes of sire-child relations — a warrior will always sire warrior childer, and a vizier will always beget viziers — but all



## THE COUNCIL OF SCROLLS

The combined assembly of viziers and sorcerers has no direct equivalent in any other society, mortal or Cainite. Its exact duties and powers change with the passing of time but to date have always included the approval of new blood magic paths and rituals for widespread use, as well as review and recognition of new scientific developments to be adopted by the clan. After the Tremere curse, the council's foremost goal became the breaking of that ritual.

The council traditionally consisted of 15 seats, each held by the clan's foremost authority on that seat's area of knowledge (only rarely has any less than a Distinguished Master held a council seat). The Eldest and the *du'ou* were barred from council membership due to the potential for conflicts of interest, though many Amrs and Viziers were once council members — or may be again. Warriors were once technically welcome to sit on the council, though more than a single warrior councilor has never claimed a seat at any one time.

With the Schism, the council, like so many other bastions of Assamite unity, shattered. Its members split between loyalist and schismatic support, with at least one dying by ur-Shulgi's hand for her part in the Schism. Neither faction has announced a desire to reform the council, though it is surely not far from al-Ashrad's thoughts.

### SEATS AND COUNCILORS

The following list summarizes the realms of expertise of each seat and that seat's holder in the nights immediately before the Schism, as well as the current disposition (if known) of each former councilor.

**The Seat of the Sun:** Mathematics and related sciences, including cryptography. Last held by vizier David Wendt, current loyalty and status unknown.

**The Seat of Copper and Lightning (formerly the Seat of the Forge):** Electricity and its subsequent daughter sciences, including computers. Last held by sorcerer Sarah Schneier, whom ur-Shulgi destroyed for her role in initiating the Schism.

**The Seat of Mirrors:** Information gathering and transference, including scrying, surveillance and

telecommunications. Still claimed by schismatic vizier Abid bin Haji.

**The Seat of Storms:** Natural sciences. Last held by sorcerer Badr Alkhaiwani, current loyalty and status unknown.

**The Seat of the Book:** Theology and philosophy, specifically excluding systems of belief that are exclusive to Cainites. Still claimed by sorcerer Hedeyat al-Nasr of the *silsila*.

**The Seat of Fire and Steel:** Weapons technology. Vacant since warrior Enrique Salazar disappeared in 1991 while evaluating American military forces in Iraq.

**The Seat of Wheel, Wing and Oar:** Transportation technology. Last held by vizier Kasparas Sikhorsky, believed to be in torpor following a duel with sorcerer Jayakar Dristi Bopara.

**The Seat of Glass and Smoke:** Chemistry and alchemy. Last held by warrior Aurora White, believed to have declared herself dispossessed; current whereabouts unknown.

**The Seat of Mist:** Spiritualism, necromancy and other studies of the immaterial world. Last held by loyalist sorcerer Qadir ul-Ghani.

**The Seat of Gold:** Economics and mercantile interests. Last held by vizier Azita Hisami, currently the dispossessed advisor to the Toreador of Saudi Arabia.

**The Seat of Dust and Bone:** Archaeology and ancient history. Last held by vizier Arishima Hisato, destroyed by ur-Shulgi for unknown reasons.

**The Seat of Wind and Stone:** Mortal politics, society and recent (less than 1000 years) history. Last held by vizier Filkriyya al-Jurr, destroyed by ur-Shulgi for unknown reasons.

**The Seat of Tongues:** Linguistics. Last held by loyalist sorcerer Amaravati, child and former protégé of al-Ashrad.

**The Seat of Stars:** Astronomy, astrology and related fields, most recently expanded to include space travel. Last held by sorcerer Jayakar Dristi Bopara; believed destroyed in a duel with vizier Kasparas Sikhorsky.

**The Seat of Flesh:** Medicine. Last held by vizier Dmitri Borodin, believed dispossessed, last seen in Venice.

three castes are Assamites. Their vitae is indistinguishable except under the most acute observation.

Arguably, the Assamites have no one caste that is "more Assamite" or "more Haqim's" than the others, at least in matters of descent. All three castes have had multiple members of the Fourth Generation who were sired by Haqim during the era of the Second City and perhaps afterward. Whatever the factors were that first defined the castes, they arose during that time, perhaps

due to differences between Haqim's broods. All Assamites are childer of their Ancestor, born of his heart and cursed with his will.

From a blood-magic perspective, the castes are similar enough that a sufficiently powerful effect directed at one will affect the others. The Tremere curse worked on this principle, banning all Assamites from drinking non-Assamite Cainite vitae. By contrast, the Baali curse laid in the 7th century specifically targeted

the warrior caste, but spilled over to some sorcerers and viziers, apparently at random.

#### THE DARKENING

All Assamites do indeed grow darker as they age, quite unlike other Cainites, who become progressively more pallid over the years. Several Assamites have charted the rate of this shift over the millennia. Their observations have produced the following guidelines:

- Assamites experience the initial post-Embrace pallor that other Cainites undergo for approximately two to five years, after which their skin returns to its mortal coloration.
- Darkening begins between 50 and 100 years after the Embrace and proceeds at a steady rate until the individual's skin is obsidian black and slightly shiny. This stage is reached at around the first millennium of unlife. With access to the proper reference materials, it may be possible to determine an Assamite's age to within 50 years by indexing his skin's coloration and luster.
- Frequent diablerie measurably speeds the process, rendering the normal dating procedures ineffective.

No Assamite has satisfactorily explained why al-Ashrad, alone of the Children of Haqim, has pale white skin. The Amr himself has offered no hints.

## WARRIORS

For a thousand years and more, the warrior caste was the Assamite clan, at least to the rest of the Cainite world. This unchallenged supremacy led the warriors to political ascendance within the clan. Their actions controlled the manner in which members of other clans treated Assamites, and their role as defenders of the clan gave them great leverage in determining how members of the other castes interacted with the rest of the world. In time, the warriors came to view themselves as the only true Children of Haqim, and thus his only real heirs.

Recent events have shaken the warrior caste's resolve and forced many warriors to question their shared self-image. The revelation of the warriors' original role as judges of their peers, a mere offshoot of Haqim's "true" first brood, has caused an upheaval of the sort unseen in the warriors' ranks since the time of Mohammed. Still, some factors of the caste's existence have remained constant.

The warriors traditionally make up the Children's most visibly active caste. Their role within the clan is that of the defender, both of their clanmates and Haqim's legacy of justice. As Cainites scattered across the Western world, the warriors gradually became mercenaries, their judicial role abandoned and forgotten with the fall of the Second City. Some applied their martial skills for personal gain. More worked to secure the Middle East against the influence of other Cainites, with a startling (though never

total) degree of success. The caste's mercenary endeavors gave birth to the tradition of the tithe, in which a warrior who was paid for his services gave a portion of this payment to his sire in order to enrich the clan as a whole and to honor the individual who trained him and judged him with undeath.

In the modern nights, few Cainites dispute the assertion that the Assamite warrior caste collectively holds one of the most fearsome assemblages of fighters on the face of the planet. Indeed, the warriors are perhaps the only Cainite line whose primary focus is the study of the application of violence. The predatory nature of the Beast and the violence inherent to the World of Darkness ensure that any vampire with more than a year of unlife has almost certainly been in (or run from) a fight. However, most Kindred don't make an organized study of martial professions until they see an imminent need for it. The Assamite warriors, by comparison, are as close to "professional killers" as vampires can get — at least, in their own ideal.

This is not to say that the warriors are an organized army, ready to sweep forth from the Mountain in a bloody tide edged with Damascene steel and wipe all other Cainite life from the earth. Too many differences of opinion divide the caste for a unified campaign to be successful. The Arab traditionalists loathe the European reformers, the Path of Blood adherents scoff at the weaklings who cling to Humanity, the bold swordsmen denigrate the cowardly riflemen, and the aloof strategists sneer at the knuckle-dragging line troopers. Indeed, only Haqim's Laws seem to keep the caste from devouring itself in a fratricidal frenzy.

Despite the name, not every member of the warrior caste is a warrior. Even though it is more a loose organization of individuals with vaguely related skills, the caste does (in theory) serve a somewhat universal purpose as the sword and shield of the Children of Haqim. For every assassin who stalks the nights in search of Cainite prey, a master swordsmith is forging blades in the depths of Alamut. For every tactician who advises a desperate prince in a defense against the Sabbat, an intelligence analyst is whispering advice over a satellite channel. And for every warrior who receives the Blood for his martial prowess, another gains immortality whose inept posturing is a thin excuse for the preservation of a pretty face. In short, the warriors are no more elite or monomaniacal in their Embracing habits than any other Cainites, though they tend to hide the fact better than most.

In the Final Nights, the warriors' agendas are more ill-defined than ever before. The Schism that now splits the clan has forced many to define loyalties that previously needed no definition. Some strike out at other Cainites in blood-maddened rage. Some fight for self-control and attempt to peacefully coexist with their former enemies.

Some renew vows of allegiance to their blood-soaked gods. Some walk no roads but the ones they map for themselves.

**Nickname:** Assassins

**Sect:** Approximately one in five warriors belong to the Sabbat, where they are known as the Assamite *antitribu*. An equal portion of the caste chose to follow al-Ashrad when he made his bid for alliance with the Camarilla. The remaining warriors remain loyal to ur-Shulgi and Alamut, and are therefore independent of sect allegiance. This does not, of course, count those dispossessed warriors who maintain no loyalty to any faction of the clan.

**Appearance:** Warriors usually dress in simple yet elegant attire in which they can either blend in or fight as needed. Among the wealthier and more modern members, fine fabrics have become more common. Most warriors are physically fit. An overweight or elderly warrior is either deceptively dangerous or proficient at some noncombat occupation that the caste found indispensable at the time of his Embrace.

**Haven:** Regardless of sect or Schism, most warriors keep similar havens. These locations tend to be isolated and easily defensible, with security measures ranging from German shepherds to German machine guns. When traveling, warriors tend to arrange temporary havens near major transportation channels, the better to make a quick exit.

**Background:** Many warriors are males of African or Middle Eastern descent, though this is more of a generalization than a rule and should not be taken to imply that all warriors fit that profile. Most come from some profession dealing with the application of force or personal violence in one form or another: terrorists, soldiers, police and hit men are all likely prospects. However, the caste also Embraces professionals in related or generally useful fields: Photographic intelligence interpreters, smugglers, gunsmiths and strategists are all respected noncombatant members of the warriors.

**Character Creation:** Most warriors are fairly straightforward in personality, with similar Natures and Demcanors — unless they're used to working undercover, in which case anything goes. Physical Attributes are usually a primary concern, though the Children have no use for warriors who can't think on their feet; Mental Attributes are especially valued for strategists and other leaders. The caste values Talents and Skills

equally. A warrior who isn't at least competent in one form of combat is most likely a support specialist whom

the caste considered indispensable. Many warriors have Mentors and a variety of Contacts in their line of work. Generation is also common, slightly more so among the loyalists than among the schismatics.

Most schismatic warriors follow Humanity, while a significant number of loyalist caste members follow the Path of Blood. Among the *antitribu*, the Path of Caine and the Path of Honorable Accord are the most common alternate systems of morality.

**Suggested Concepts:** Arab prince, arms dealer, bodyguard, bomb disposal technician, border patrol officer, chess grandmaster, gang leader,





### IN NIGHTS PAST: THE TREMERE CURSE

Until the Breaking in late 1998, all Assamites were subject to the Tremere curse of poisoned vitae. Storytellers who wish to set their games prior to this time may wish to use the previous clan weakness. Pre-Breaking warriors are incapable of becoming addicted to Cainite vitae because it is a corrosive poison to them. No Assamite gains sustenance from it, and every point of Cainite blood that an Assamite imbibes inflicts one automatic health level of lethal damage on him. Diablerie attempts result in automatic aggravated damage, one health level per point of permanent Willpower the victim possessed, and the would-be diablerist gains no benefits (including generation reduction) if he survives the process. All three castes' auras are still stained at this time, but few consider this a significant liability. The sorcerers and viziers still suffer from the weaknesses detailed on the following pages as well.

gunsmith, hunter, intelligence analyst, Noddist historian, prophet, retired general, secure courier, self-defense instructor, small unit tactician, surveillance technician

**Caste Disciplines:** Celerity, Obfuscate, Quietus

**Organization:** Loyalist warriors follow the organizational pattern presented in *Vampire: The Masquerade*. They often operate in packs of two to six members, led by the eldest among them. Each pack (sometimes known by various paramilitary terms, such as "fire team," "squad," "brick" or "lochos") is subordinate to a warrior member of the *silsila* who has some personal connection to the pack's leader or is familiar with the geographic area in which the pack operates. If and when a new Caliph is chosen, the *silsila*'s leadership role will theoretically revert to this individual, though some *silsila* members may resist this loss of power.

Those warriors who follow al-Ashrad are usually subordinate to the eldest magus or vizier in their home city. Their vitae addictions and stained auras make them dangerous bedfellows in the eyes of the Camarilla if they're not "properly restrained" by their clanmates. These individuals tend to be solitary refugees dwelling on the fringes of Camarilla society, though some have established themselves as sheriffs or scourges and a few have offered their services as archons. They currently have no formal head, though some favor declaring a "Caliph-in-exile."

The Assamite *antimibu* have their own unique structure which is described in the *Guide to the Sabbat*.

**Bloodlines:** The Assamite *antimibu* of the Sabbat consider themselves a separate bloodline, though there is no functional difference between them and the main body of the warriors in the modern nights. North Africa is home

to a small nomadic warrior line of Bedouin stock that practices Animalism and makes extensive use of ghoulish predators and warhorses to maintain their dominion over the thinly populated wastelands that they call home. These individuals hold no sectarian allegiance and are only nominally loyal to Alamut.

## SORCERERS

Their existence has long been known to the Tremere, but the rest of the modern Cainite world considered the notion of Assamite blood magicians unthinkable until recent nights. The sorcerers greet this notion with no small degree of ironic amusement, as their own records state that they are the eldest organized blood magicians of any clan.

The Assamite sorcerers originated in the Second City, shortly after Haqim created his second brood to act as the city's judges. The first of their number were mortal wizards enlisted in various conflicts with the promise of temporal power and eventual immortality. They worked alongside the judges as interrogators, seekers of the truth and hunters of demons, and consorted with the scholars in pursuit of knowledge for knowledge's sake. After the Second City's fall, their role expanded to include such tasks as magical communication to keep the clan unified, weather sorcery to nurture the crops of the mortal herds that the Children of Haqim kept and combat threats from both Cainites and other supernatural creatures. During the Long Night, the sorcerers were often at the forefront of Assamite incursions into Europe, particularly in al-Andalus. Near the end of the Anarch Revolt, they became the clan's first line of defense against the Tremere.

After the Warlocks levied the curse, the sorcerers' first duty to the clan became the breaking of that same curse. However, that same period of time brought a shift in the sorcerers' dedication to the idea of a homogeneous Assamite clan. They had been a moderate unifying force throughout much of the Long Night, but the curse seemed to affect them to a lesser extent. Many became dispossessed and vanished, reappearing a century or more later if at all. No few others fell victim to attacks by marauding Tremere eager to learn the secrets of the Saracens. Those who remained attentive to Alamut's agendas seemed sullen and listless, as if the curse — or the desperate need to break it — was sapping their will.

Only in the past decade have the sorcerers rallied, returning to their former prominence as an equal and integral part of the Children of Haqim. Their artificers and alchemists supplied the warriors with a myriad of creations, many of them byproducts of research into the curse and the nature of Tremere Thaumaturgy. The seers swamped the warrior caste's militants with reams of information on enemies and allies alike. Those few who still

followed their forebears' tradition of demon hunting swung into furious action, cleansing their territories of servants of the Tremere and anything else unfortunate enough to cross their paths. A furious exchange of information crackled across the global telecommunications network and arced through the ether, uniting brethren unseen in centuries in a resumption of purpose: find the roots of Tremere power and shatter the curse.

Then ur-Shulgi arose. With a week's preparation and a single night of action, it accomplished what hundreds of lesser sorcerers had vainly attempted for five hundred years. The shock waves of its feat, both magical and social, rolled through the caste. All but a tiny handful of sorcerers felt the fluctuation of energy when the Methuselah called upon the blood that flowed in their veins. The caste collectively held its figurative breath, waiting to see what ur-Shulgi would do next.

The resulting conflict between the new Eldest and its child, the Amr, rocked the sorcerer caste to its roots. All but the eldest sorcerers knew the Amr as the greatest magician in the world, and few remembered ur-Shulgi as more than a name from a legend. The caste's faith in its leader was nearly unshakable — but the appearance of a godling from the clan's dim past was enough to shatter the faith of many. Though al-Ashrad was the Amr, and thus the leader of the sorcerers, ur-Shulgi was the new Eldest and thus the leader of the Children of Haqim. The question became one of loyalty to the Amr over loyalty to the clan.

Tonight, equal portions of the caste support ur-Shulgi's bloody vision for the Children of Haqim and al-Ashrad's calm words of moderation, while no few sorcerers walk the path of the dispossessed in the hopes that the conflict will pass them by and they can return to their private studies. The recent upheaval has left many sorcerers out of contact with their former comrades, Alamut, and the Amr, and many are now operating under their own "best judge-

ment," free from the shackles of duty and the light but ever-present yoke of the caste's hierarchy.

**Nickname:** Magi (singular "Magus"); sometimes called "viziers" by outsiders

**Sect:** The sorcerers are split evenly between al-Ashrad's schismatics and Alamut's loyalists. The only magi who might have joined the Sabbat at its inception are assumed to have died at some forgotten, chthonic city in Mesopotamia centuries ago, and only a few have declared such allegiance since the Schism. Many sorcerers become dispossessed at some point in their unlives due to some argument, real or imagined, with the caste's organizational structure or an individual elder's practices. However, a significant majority of these return to the fold sooner or later, either out of a thirst for further instruction or to escape the attention of the Tremere or others who hunt blood magicians.

**Appearance:** Most sorcerers dress in clothing that allows them to work in comfort, ranging from lab coats to loose-fitting robes or caftans.

Those who spend a lot of time working "in the field" favor military fatigues, photographers' vests or other multi-pocket garments in which they can conveniently store ritual components and useful concoctions. Very few sorcerers wear occult symbols in public, as they see such advertising as

both vain and dangerous. A sorcerer who can be identified as a blood magician by his appearance is either in his own home, dangerously foolish or supremely confident of his power.

**Haven:** Sorcerers prefer spacious quarters with at least one or two rooms devoted to ritual circles and alchemical workshops. Their havens tend



### IN NIGHTS PAST: LOSSES OF VISION AND POWER

Originally, the sorcerers had *Auspex*, not *Obfuscate*, as a caste Discipline, and all opposing powers were two levels up, not one, for purposes of opposing any form of magical cloaking (see *Libellus Sanguinus III: Wolves at the Door* for more information on the Assamite sorcerers in previous eras and the Storyteller's Options sidebar, below). As the caste's focus gradually shifted to concealment, their Discipline aptitude shifted as well. Individuals trying to pierce the supernatural cover of modern sorcerers enjoy less of an advantage because mystic concealment is now more of an innate quality than one that a sorcerer must learn as a "foreign" skill.

To perform the Breaking, *ur-Shulgi* crafted a unique ritual that allowed him to borrow a portion of the magical power of every vampire descended from him. As over two-thirds of the Assamite sorcerers can trace their ancestry to *ur-Shulgi*, this ritual affected all but a handful of them. This ritual's effects lasted in full for a year and a night, then gradually faded over the next year. Between 1998 and the latter part of 2000, all sorcerers found themselves diminished in strength for the purposes of all blood magic, not just "foreign" practices (see *Assamite Sorcery*, p. XX) and were required to spend one extra blood point for any blood magic invocation, be it a path or ritual. By the end of 2000, these effects had disappeared, leaving the sorcerers with only their "default" caste weakness. This weakness appears in a simplified form in *Vampire: The Masquerade*.

to be isolated or highly secure, the better to hide their magical practices from the eyes of mortals and supernatural beings alike.

**Background:** The sorcerers usually select progeny who are strong-willed, disciplined, and able to grasp the abstract concepts and differing perceptions of reality that Assamite Sorcery presents its practitioners. They also seek above-average levels of education, though this can be provided after the Embrace if needed. Magical potential is not an absolute requisite, as the sorcerers are scholars and scientists as much as they are magicians. The caste has no particular preference for gender or ethnicity.

**Character Creation:** The sorcerers kept a low profile for centuries and still tend to do so tonight, so their personalities tend to be subdued, at least externally. Like most other blood magicians, they tend toward Mental Attributes and high Willpower. Slow learners and the undisciplined do not fare well within the caste. It is a rare sorcerer who lacks some level of Academics and Occult, though such individuals do exist. Almost every sorcerer enjoys the tutelage of a

Mentor at some point in her unlife, and many have Contacts or Allies in their areas of expertise.

Most sorcerers follow Humanity, though many are rather distanced from its higher aspirations by the end of their first decades of unlife. The caste boasts a moderate number of Path of Blood adherents, mainly among the loyalists. Those who have recently joined or had dealings with the Sabbat find the Path of Caine and the Path of Power and the Inner Voice particularly enticing, and a few Iberian sorcerers are rumored to pursue the Path of Night.

**Suggested Concepts:** alchemist, astronomer, bibliophile, demonologist, embalmer, eternally tenured professor, fake mystic, hematologist, herbalist, historian, linguist, mathematician, metallurgist, museum curator, private investigator, Kabbalist, sage, seer, theologian, toxicologist

**Caste Disciplines:** Assamite Sorcery, Obfuscate, Quietus

**Organization:** Prior to the Schism, the sorcerers maintained a loose meritocracy based on a combination of skill and academic descent. Status came from a sorcerer's own abilities and the credentials of his teachers. The clan's separation has torn this structure asunder, and both halves of the caste are currently re-establishing their own social orders.

Both loyalists and schismatics follow the pre-Schism tradition of appointing the *Amr*, the head of the caste, through ritual divination every year. *Al-Ashrad* heads the schismatics, to no one's surprise. The loyalist sorcerers have not yet made a formal appointment (or even performed the ritual since the Schism), but they generally acknowledge *al-Ashrad's* child and protégé, *Amaravati*, as their *Amr*.

**Bloodlines:** No known variations exist among the modern sorcerers. Historical records show that the caste was once predisposed to *Auspex* rather than *Obfuscate*, but the shift to the current set of proficiencies took place between the 12th and 15th centuries.

## VIZIERS

Prior to the Final Nights, few modern Cainites would have guessed that a portion of the Assamite clan could be devoted to peaceful pursuits. Yet the vast majority of the vizier caste is, if not pacifistic, then at least inclined toward studies other than combat.

By the most commonly accepted account, the viziers are the eldest of the three castes. *Haqim* was a warrior before he was a scholar, but his first brood was one of artisans and sages, each one the finest example of his chosen profession or craft that the Second City's mortals had to offer. Such exclusive selection, so the stories say, caused no small amount of strife between *Haqim* and the Ancient *Arikel*, who most Cainite scholars agree was the founder of the Treador clan.



Indeed, the vizier line appears to bear some vague similarities to the "clan of the rose," though neither group is willing to admit any close relation.

The viziers originated as seekers of knowledge, and a surprisingly strong majority of the line has held to this ideal over the millennia. Indeed, it seems as if the caste as a whole is driven to create and learn, as if possessed by a solitary mania — or guided by a single will. Yet few viziers consider their obsessive impulses anything more than perfectionism or the spark of inspiration (though the viziers are, in truth, no more capable of actual artistic creativity than other Cainites). To suggest that a vizier is mad — or, worse, lacking free will — is one of the greatest insults that one can bestow upon a member of this line.

After the fall of the Second City, as the Children of Haqim settled into their modern caste structure, the viziers became the clan's thinkers, creators and occasional leaders, though the warriors never relinquished complete control of Alamut. They were also the Children who, as a general rule, had the closest contact with mortal society on a nightly basis. This latter state of affairs continues to the present night. While the warriors gravitate toward the martial and religious aspects of any given culture and the sorcerers seek certain select professions, the viziers tend to associate with nearly any social stratum. However, their innate monomania makes them less than adept at efforts to guide, or even slightly nudge, the mortal masses.

The viziers' "caste culture" may best be described as a very loose affiliation of individualists. Most of the caste is as disunited as the sorcerers, but without that body's resources for magical communication and coordination. Viziers tend to keep to themselves unless involved in a mentor-protégé arrangement or conducting some cooperative venture. This is a product of both the caste's shared psychological tendencies and the need for secrecy during the Long Night and later periods. However, the Schism and the schismatics' subsequent alliance with the

Camarilla has allowed many viziers to exist relatively openly among other Cainites, and no few have chosen to enter social and political arenas — with varying degrees of success.

**Nickname:** Scholars or Artisans

**Sect:** Over a third of the caste may be considered dispossessed for all intents and purposes, as their ties to the rest of the clan are marginal at best. The majority of the remaining viziers chose to follow al-Ashrad to the Camarilla. A significant minority of the caste remains loyal to Alamut. Few viziers are known to exist in the Sabbat, and even these are likely scattered fugitives.

**Appearance:** As a general rule, viziers are the Children of Haqim most adept at blending into mortal society. They usually dress professionally or informally as the situation requires. Their common particularity (or derangement — see the Storyteller's Options sidebar below) tends to polarize them toward the two extremes of hygiene and style. Many viziers are either immaculate and perfectly poised or unwashed, rumpled and constantly distracted.

**Haven:** Viziers tend to select havens that are indistinguishable from the homes of similar mortal professionals. As with personal appearance, depending on the focus and severity of the individual vizier's tastes, the quarters are either immaculately clean or cluttered so heavily that walking becomes difficult. Many viziers maintain extensive libraries or workshops, preferring to "work from home."

**Background:** As a caste dominated by intellectuals, artisans and a few politicians, the viziers usually Embrace individuals who are both exceptionally dedicated to their chosen professions. Few viziers are Embraced in the hope that they will realize some previously neglected potential. When the clan was more unified, many viziers selected their progeny on the basis of their ability to serve the Children as a whole. The decay of Assamite unity over the past few centuries has seen this practice largely fall into disfavor (with the exception of those researchers Embraced to assist in



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### THE VALUE OF HIDDEN FACES

While the warriors remained well known throughout the Assamites' history, the sorcerers and vizier castes became clouded and indistinct in the eyes of Kindred outside the clan. Many accounts refer to them as one caste or bloodline, labeling all nonwarrior Assamites "viziers." The Assamites traditionally encouraged this misconception for several reasons. First, as the Tremere rose in power, other Kindred practitioners of blood magic found themselves threatened. Although they were powerful, the sorcerers were also wise. They had no desire to embroil Alamut in a futile conflict with the blood-witches of Clan Tremere, so they disguised their natures. Second, the warriors' growing dominance of the clan in the same period led them to view to all nonwarriors as inferior, and thus they did not acknowledge the viziers and sorcerers as their equals when speaking to those outside the clan. Finally, as the clan moved into a period of war against all other Kindred, the Assamites realized the value of hidden faces: if the clan's enemies didn't know of a resource, they couldn't destroy it.

breaking the curse). Vizier tastes often overlap with those of the other two castes, and occasional disputes arise over potential progeny with particularly valuable abilities. Like the sorcerers, the viziers make no particular effort to Embrace members of any particular ethnic extraction or gender.

**Character Creation:** The viziers have even more experience at deception and denial than the magi do, given their centuries of "invisibility." Their public personae usually reflect this, though many are rebellious or innovative explorers at heart. They are equally likely to favor Social or Mental Attributes, depending on individual professions, and likewise follow the path of greatest utility when selecting Abilities. Viziers are the Children of Haqim who are most likely to have some degree of Influence in mortal society, and they often enjoy a corresponding amount of Resources due to professional or artistic success in mortal circles.

The vast majority of viziers follow the moral codes of Humanity. Few adopt the Path of Blood, but those who do are twice as brutal as an average member of the warrior caste. Those few who have joined the Sabbat in recent nights seem to favor such diverse beliefs as the Path of Cathari, the Path of Death and the Soul, and the Path of Power and the Inner Voice, depending on their individual agendas. Once a vizier sets forth upon a Path, he pursues its tenets with a convert's fervor.

**Suggested Concepts:** archaeologist, architect, art dealer, Bombay movie producer, biochemist, doctor,

forensic anthropologist, historian, holy man, jeweler, journalist, judge, oil baron, political theorist, sculptor, "special advisor," storyteller, telecommunications expert, translator

**Caste Disciplines:** Auspex, Celerity, Quietus

**Organization:** The viziers have no formal structure as a whole. They resemble a loose organization of vaguely affiliated professionals more than any sort of occult conspiracy or military order. Prestige is generally a matter of who an individual vizier knows and what she's done, and varies depending on the audience — a poet may not be all that impressed by a particle physicist. The caste does have one unique custom derived from Arab scholarly traditions: Academic lineage is considered as important as blood descent. Thus, a vizier's sire may not be as important as his instructors, and some go so far as to present themselves in such a manner when making formal introductions. As noted above, most viziers tend to their own affairs unless working on a specific cooperative project.

**Bloodlines:** One group among the viziers was active in Byzantine politics during that empire's nights of prominence, and its survivors and their descendants still favor Presence over Celerity. Perhaps two dozen members of this courtier line exist in the modern nights, and they are largely confined to the Middle East, acting on their own agendas in the courts of the Ashirra.

### STORYTELLER'S OPTIONS

For those Storytellers choosing to highlight the distinctions between the Assamite castes, the following optional systems are included. Note that unless the Storyteller chooses to implement these options, all Assamites suffer the "normal" clan weakness as presented in the core rulebook regardless of caste.

**In Vampire: the Dark Ages,** the castes suffered these weaknesses as part of the "official" rules of the setting. In the modern nights, however, these mechanical variations are not so important as the social and political struggles the clan faces nightly. Almost in spite of themselves, the Assamites have grown closer in the ties of the blood as they have distanced themselves ideologically.

A Storyteller employing these systems in her chronicle should consider the purposes of the various weaknesses. She may also wish to levy the weaknesses *in addition to* the "common" clan weakness, should it suit the story.

**Variant Warrior Weaknesses:** As per **Vampire: The Masquerade**, all warriors may become addicted to the blood of other Cainites. Every time a warrior tastes Kindred vitae, the player must make a Self-Control roll (difficulty equal to the number of blood points ingested +3). If this roll fails, the character becomes addicted. From that point on, every time he comes into contact with Cainite vitae, the player must make a Self-Con-

trol roll (difficulty 8) or the character enters an immediate hunger frenzy.

The warriors also suffer from stained auras — an inspection of a warrior's aura that scores any degree of success automatically reveals signs of diablerie, even if the character has never so much as tasted Cainite vitae since his Embrace. The caste widely believes this to be a remnant of their judge forbears' practice of ritual diablerie in the Second City. This staining is little problem among the loyalists or the *antimbu*, but it can be a severe impediment to a warrior who seeks Camarilla acceptance.

**Variant Sorcerer Weaknesses:** The sorcerers claim to have practiced blood magic since the nights of the Second City. Whether or not this is the case, they have been at the task long enough for it to mark them, even those who do not make extensive explorations of Assamite Sorcery. A sorcerer's aura always shows the distinctive signs associated with blood magic, and any observer with the ability to recognize auras will always see these markings.

This manifestation, however, is merely a side effect of the sorcerers' strong tendencies toward blood magic. The caste as a whole has practiced the art for so long that it permeates their blood, making each individual sorcerer stand out like a beacon to anyone with supernatural perception. Any use of a supernatural power on a sorcerer for purposes of perception enjoys a -2 difficulty. Additionally, attempts to penetrate a sorcerer's supernatural concealment using an opposed power are considered to operate one level higher than normal (so a character with *Auspex* 2 trying to penetrate a sorcerer's *Obfuscate* has an effective *Auspex* 3).

Note that these weaknesses give no benefits to an observer with no supernatural perception, though mortals may be more likely than normal to notice a sorcerer's supernatural nature (Storyteller's discretion). They likewise do not affect mundane concealment such as camouflage.

**Variant Vizier Weaknesses:** Despite their protestations to the contrary, the viziers are mad — at least, by the standards of the game system. Every vizier finds himself caught up in the continuance of his chosen pursuits to the exclusion of trivial concerns such as daily shelter or nightly nourishment. If the character has a particular area of expertise, he focuses on it to the point of monomania. If he has no such focus for his nightly existence, he fixates on the minute details of routine tasks. In game terms, each vizier has an *Obsessive/Compulsive derangement* (*Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 222) associated with his highest-rated intellectual or creative Ability. If the character's focus of effort shifts, so does the focus of the derangement. The player should roleplay this change gradually rather than slap it into place at the moment that experience expenditure changes the character's Traits.





When this derangement is active, the character'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. Following a successful use of *Aura Perception*, the viewer may make an Intelligence + Empathy roll (difficulty of the vizier's Humanity or Path rating); two successes give the viewer the focus of the vizier's obsession and four reveal his Nature.

## MIND'S EYE THEATRE CASTES

### WARRIORS

The warrior caste follows the "default" Assamite profile given in *Laws of the Night*. The only addition is this: Any application of *Aura Perception* always reveals diablerie in a warrior's aura, even if the observer fails the challenge.

### SORCERERS

The Assamite sorcerers are the same individuals that *Laws of the Night* calls "viziers." Conceptually, they are the same as in the above material — Mind's Eye Theatre requires no particular adjustments for roleplaying a sorcerer. However, the game mechanics relating to their characteristics change to reflect Mind's Eye Theatre rules:

**Advantage:** All sorcerers have some degree of familiarity with the mysteries of the arcane, even if they themselves do not extensively practice blood magic. Some learn this from their mentors and instructors. Others pick it up through sustained social contact with their contemporaries. Additionally, all sorcerers are somewhat more educated than the human norm, either from mortal academic pursuits or through post-Embrace tutelage. All sorcerer characters begin with two Ability Traits spread between *Academics*, *Linguistics*, *Medicine*, *Occult*, and *Science*.

**Disadvantages:** Any use of *Aura Perception* on a sorcerer reveals that he practices blood magic, even if the character has no knowledge of *Thaumaturgy* or *Assamite Sorcery* and even if the observer fails the Static Mental Challenge required to read the sorcerer's emotional state.

All uses of *Auspex* or other supernatural perception on a sorcerer gain two bonus Traits.

Any observer using supernatural perception to pierce a sorcerer's *Obsfuscate* is considered to have one more level than she actually has for purposes of comparative power levels. For example, a character with *Aura Perception* attempting to penetrate a sorcerer's *Obsfuscate* treats his *Auspex* as if he knew *The Spirit's Touch* when comparing it to the sorcerer's level of *Obsfuscate* mastery.

### VIZIERS

As with the sorcerers, the viziers undergo no conceptual changes when converted to Mind's Eye Theatre. However, their Traits do change to a certain extent:

**Advantage:** Viziers generally have more contact with mortal society than members of the other castes. A vizier begins with two additional levels to apply to any Backgrounds except *Generation* or *Mentor*.

**Disadvantages:** A vizier character has an *Obsessive/Compulsive* derangement that is related to the creative or intellectual Ability in which he has the most Ability Traits. When this derangement is active, it displays itself in subtle patterns in the vizier's aura. An observer who uses *Aura Perception* on the vizier while this derangement is active may make a Static Mental Challenge against a difficulty of the vizier's permanent Mental Traits. Success lets the observer know what the derangement's focus is. The observer must have at least one Ability Trait in *Empathy* to attempt this identification.

## THE GUIDANCE OF THE ELDER

With the exception of a dozen or so dispossessed who sought protection in the Camarilla over the last few centuries, the Assamites do not follow the Traditions as such. This is common knowledge in the Camarilla, which collectively regards the Assamites as lawless renegades due to their disregard for Caine's commandments to his descendants. However, it is much less widely known that the Children of Haqim have their own ancient set of codes handed down from their founder. The clan collectively refers to these as the *Laws of Haqim*.

Translations of these edicts from the original Enochian are surprisingly unvarying. Members of all three castes and

### THE LAWS OF HAQIM

#### THE LAW OF LEADERSHIP

Honor the Eldest among you, for he is to rule my House when I am absent.

#### THE LAW OF PROTECTION

Ward the mortals from Caine's descendants and treat them with honor in all things.

#### THE LAW OF DESTRUCTION

Slay not those of the Blood, for that judgement is for the Eldest alone.

#### THE LAW OF THE WORD

Deceive not those of the Blood, for my House is founded on Truth.

#### THE LAW OF JUDGEMENT

Judge those of Caine's blood and punish them should they be found wanting.



all major clan factions agree on their wording. The doctrinal split that now divides the clan stems from differences of interpretation of the intent of these laws. On such subtle points are the fates of many decided.

The "original" copies of the Laws of Haqim are a set of five clay tablets engraved in Enochian, the language of the First City. They are one of the most treasured relics of the clan's history. The magi and viziers who tend Alamut's library have used many techniques, magical and mundane alike, to keep them in pristine condition. When ur-Shulgi ordered the *silsila* to seal Alamut's library and museum, the tablets were removed from their vault and placed in Alamut's great hall at the right hand of the Black Throne.

Every Child of Haqim who claims loyalty to the clan must commit the laws to memory. Only young dispossessed are wholly unaware of them. Over the centuries, various fashions have sprung up regarding personal representation of the laws. Many elders who received the Blood around the 15th and 16th centuries still use henna to inscribe the laws on their skin for formal occasions, and an individual with the laws rudely tattooed across his shoulders was probably Embraced in the mid-1800s (or long, long before then). Shortly before the schism, it became fashionable among neonate Children to wear jewelry with the laws engraved on it, usually an amulet or a set of rings.

### THE LAW OF LEADERSHIP

The Children of Haqim are an uncommonly hierarchical clan. They recognize that with age comes wisdom, and those who have lived a dozen or more mortal lifetimes are more capable of making informed decisions than those who are still new to the Blood. Most Children interpret this law as an overriding guideline for their clan's hierarchy, with neonates deferring to ancillae and ancillae executing the requests of elders. This principle "trickles down" to the lower levels of clan organization. If three Children are in a city, their *de facto* leader is the eldest among them. At the highest level of organization, this is a mandate for the eldest active fourth-generation Child of Haqim to sit on the throne of Alamut as Eldest, Haqim's regent.

As with the social structure of the Camarilla, this system has the potential for a vast amount of abuse by complacent elders. However, unlike the Camarilla, the Children of Haqim maintain a social structure in which violence is both overt and relatively common. In practice, very few elders who are predisposed toward despotism enjoy long or successful unives as iron-fisted tyrants. Most successful leaders among the Children know when to delegate authority — and also when to consult younger experts for advice on a particular situation that their unives have left them ill-equipped to confront personally.

Over the past millennium, the Law of Leadership has been supplemented with an unofficial, but highly accepted, tradition of reasonable challenge. The four most

esteemed positions within the clan (Eldest, Caliph, Amr and Vizier) are not necessarily occupied by the oldest eligible office-holders, but rather by the most proficient and confident candidates. The individuals who hold each of these four positions must accept any formal challenge, so long as it does not come at a time the Eldest determines to be a time of crisis for the Children as a whole. However, the challenged party may choose the method by which the challenge is executed. Each of these positions has a short list of formal options for resolving the challenge and an even shorter list of stiff penalties for the losing party. Many lesser positions, both formal and informal, follow less structured versions of this challenge system.

One point of note is that the Children generally measure a vampire's age by how long he has been a recognized and active member of the clan, not by how many years have passed since he received the Blood. An individual who was Embraced in the 12th century but spent 800 years in torpor or solitude is expected to defer to someone who has been awake and participating in affairs at Alamut since her Embrace in 1872.

### THE LAW OF PROTECTION

The warrior caste's progenitors, the judges, came into existence to combat the excesses that other Cainites inflicted upon mortals. Haqim felt strongly enough about this issue to make it one of the defining characteristics of his descendants. Although the Children do not follow the Masquerade as the Camarilla recognizes it, most interpretations of the Law of Protection agree that "warding the mortals" includes warding them from the knowledge of accursed, undying parasites who prey upon them and encourage the worst excesses of their society.

Although it is not a dogmatic tenet of the Law of Protection, most Children of Haqim extend special regard to those individuals who mirror their respective caste's ideals in mortal society. Few sorcerers or viziers will inflict serious harm on a dedicated mortal scholar if they have another option, and it is the rare member of the warrior caste who will injure a police officer or soldier except in self-defense (or open war).

This law does not prevent the Children from using mortals as a food source, nor does it discourage them from participating in human institutions or governments for their own ends. It simply acts as a brake upon the worst excesses that would otherwise be committed in the name of expediency. Very few Children consider individual mortals to be expendable pawns if those mortals act with some semblance of honor or decorum. When feeding, most members of the clan hold back from draining their vessels to the point of death or hospitalization. In practice, minor violations of this law are quite frequent, though simple peer pressure prevents more obvious or excessive transgressions.

In one of their very few points of agreement, loyalists and schismatics alike despise the *amiribu* for violating this law nightly.

### THE LAW OF DESTRUCTION

Although this law bears some resemblance to the Camarilla's Second Tradition, that resemblance is superficial at best. Most Children of Haqim take "Blood" to mean "Haqim's Blood," not "Caine's Blood," and thus this consideration does not extend to other Cainites except as a matter of practicality among the schismatics, many of whom now dwell among other Cainites. Haqim, it is believed, had no particular desire to clean up the messes that widespread fratricide tends to leave behind.

The Law of Destruction forbids wanton killing of clanmates. It says nothing, however, about injuring or maiming them: "Slay not" doesn't equal "harm not." Warriors often fight duels, and it's not uncommon for viziers and magi to do so as well. Such duels are usually semiformal affairs with a neutral arbiter. Terms can range from "to torpor" to "to the first cut," and the matters they settle can be as trivial as possession of a valued automobile or as significant as the authority to levy assignments across an entire continent. Slips and accidents are not uncommon, though the deceased's friends and superiors usually investigate them thoroughly. Likewise, nonfatal punishments for transgressions against the Path of Blood or Laws of Haqim may be intended to mark the accused as a reminder of his failure. Ritual brands with ash rubbed into the wound, salt or stone dust pressed into the flesh after scarification — such things are commonplace and exact their burden forever after.

The Law of Destruction ties into the Law of Leadership in that it allows "the Eldest" the right to kill any Child of Haqim under her supervision. Under the most common interpretation of the Law of Leadership, the accepted "eldest" Child in a given group has the right to slay any subordinate. However, excessive exercise of this right sometimes leads to fatal retribution. Generally, an ancilla or elder who feels the need to remove a subordinate from the world requests permission from a higher authority, typically her caste leader or one of that leader's direct lieutenants.

Occasionally, two Children of Haqim come to hate each other to the point that each can be satisfied only by the Final Death of the other. In most such situations, the Children recognize two options. The first is an unsanctioned duel to the death, which usually results in the destruction of the survivor at the hands of the first elder to find out what happened. The second is for both disputants to gather their belongings, walk away from each other for one lunar month (or travel an appropriate distance in the modern era) and make every possible attempt to avoid one another's presence for the next century. The latter solution is generally regarded as more honorable and less



wasteful of clan resources. A few Assamites believe that the duel between al-Ashrad and ur-Shulgi ended in such an arrangement, with the Schism resulting from a final attempt to avoid a full-scale civil war in the clan.

With the Schism, both primary factions have formally stated that their claim to the Blood places their opposite numbers outside the aegis of the Law of Destruction. Fatal conflicts between loyalists and schismatics may eventually become more the rule than the exception, though nonlethal sparring and "tagging" still dominate for the moment. Within both factions, the penalty for deliberately killing a fellow Child of Haqim from the same faction is Final Death by beheading unless the offender can prove extenuating circumstances.

### THE LAW OF THE WORD

As in the case of the Law of Destruction, "of the Blood" generally means "of Haqim's Blood" as far as the Children's interpretation of this law is concerned. Treatment of non-Children is subject to the individual Child's whim and the practicality of lying or stealing in any given situation.

As a matter of practicality, absolute honesty is as difficult to provide as it is to enforce. "Little white lies" and passing gossip are usually overlooked, unless their consequences snowball later. A malicious or damaging deception, such as slander, receives a punishment that is as old as the clan itself: The guilty party is restrained by four of his peers while a supervising elder carves his tongue out of his mouth. Theft receives a similar penalty — the attending elder wraps a horsehair rope around the thief's wrist and other Children pull on the other end of the rope until the thief's hand (or arm) separates from his body. In both cases, the elder then smears the resulting raw wound with alchemical paste or salt that prevents regeneration for the next lunar month. The Children of Haqim have few repeat offenders.

Except in matters where secrecy is required for the good of the clan or caste, Children of Haqim do not often lie to one another. The clan commonly believes that Haqim considered theft "a lie of possession," so Children typically do not steal from one another either. As with the Law of Destruction, these restrictions loosen considerably when a Child from one faction is dealing with a member of the opposition.

Many members of the warrior and magus castes hold the breaking of a clan-mandated deception to be akin to a lie. This specifically includes those individuals who reveal too many secrets of the Children to outsiders. Polite, casual conversation on points of theology is usually acceptable. Giving away the address of the local safehouse is not. Truly catastrophic breaches of silence usually result in a bloodbath as every Child in the region joins in the effort to silence the wagging tongue and all who heard it.



## THE LAW OF JUDGEMENT

The last and most important of the Laws of Haqim is the one whose interpretation has shattered the clan in the Final Nights. Although other factors do exist, the heart of the split between the loyalists and the schismatics is the responsibility for evaluating and punishing the Kindred that Haqim assigned to his judges so long ago.

Ur-Shulgi's interpretation of the Law of Judgement, which members of the loyalist faction share to one degree or another, is that all other vampires (and many of Haqim's Children) have failed to live up to the standards of honor and integrity put forth by Haqim in the nights of the First City. The Kindred have become a blight upon the mortal world, and thus they unilaterally violate the Law of Protection. Like a cancerous tumor, they have become too deeply entrenched to be treated with noninvasive half-measures. They must be cut out of the body upon which they feed. Momentary alliances with useful individuals or groups may be possible, but ultimately only those few truly penitent Cainites who adopt the Path of Blood and turn on their former peers should be allowed to survive.

The schismatic argument against this interpretation is that Haqim never intended his Children to be an external control mechanism for Cainite affairs, nor did he see them as innately superior to other Kindred. The judges existed inside the First City's society, and they were as subject to their own laws as any other vampire of the time. In order to properly administer justice, a sense of perspective is necessary. This, argue al-Ashrad's supporters, means moderation, and it requires an ability to "work within the system" in order to curb the worst excesses. The "system" that is best suited to such a purpose is the Camarilla. By its own admission, the Sabbat holds itself above mortals in such a manner as to spit on the Law of Protection. While not all schismatics use this argument as their justification for rejecting Alamut's rule, most members of the faction at least pay it lip service.

## INTERNAL DIVIDING LINES

As with all of Caine's progeny, the Assamites have a number of ideological demarcations within their ranks. Some are political in nature, arising either from the fundamental difference of belief that ur-Shulgi's awakening brought to boil or from even older conflicts. Others are the result of certain Assamites' membership in the various secret and open societies within the clan that have endured to the modern nights.

### FACTIONS

Prior to ur-Shulgi's awakening, the primary political divisions among the Assamites broke down by their

members' views on the clan's relations with other Cainites. This is still true to a certain extent: As might be expected, few Assamites who favor peaceful relations with Camarilla "Kindred" still reside at Alamut. However, the divisions are now more pronounced, and the two new halves of what was once a somewhat unified clan are engaged in a shadow war whose consequences may stretch far beyond a few Final Deaths.

### LOYALISTS

The loyalist faction is that which is most similar to the general Kindred world's view of the Assamite clan as a whole. The loyalists hold themselves to be superior to all other vampires — they believe they are the next step on the food chain, as far above Cainites as Cainites are above mortals. Not all loyalists follow the Path of Blood, but most of them are familiar with its teachings and honor them to one degree or another, as a code of behavior if not morality.

Loyalist doctrine holds that ur-Shulgi, the Assamite Methuselah who awoke at the end of the 20th century, is Haqim's herald. According to ur-Shulgi, Haqim is the only true authority that any Child of Haqim should recognize. The Ancestor's peers once charged him with bringing order to the Second City, but their petty bickering (and that of their descendants) proved them incapable of maintaining the honor necessary to uphold their part of that bargain. Thus, the destruction that the Children of Haqim visit upon the Cainites is nothing more than the justice that they themselves once requested. They are a blight upon the world, as the unrest and suffering they cause across the globe proves nightly.

Among the loyalists, diablerie serves a dual purpose. First, it allows the diablerist to absorb the power of the Blood from those who are unworthy to bear it. This both removes a potential threat to the Children of Seth and strengthens the diablerist for future struggles against the Cainites. Second, it grants a final rest to the soul of the unworthy one, which no doubt rebels against its accursed condition even if its owner's mind refuses to consciously acknowledge this truth. Although most Cainites view diablerie as a violent, murderous act, loyalists believe that it is one of the foremost services they can perform to honor their Ancestor.

Most loyalists fall along traditional lines of clan organization. The center of their hierarchy is Alamut, the mountain stronghold that has been the clan's physical heart since the fall of the Second City. They acknowledge Haqim as their actual leader, though ur-Shulgi serves as Eldest and regent of Alamut until the return of the Ancestor (which the loyalists believe is imminent). The loyalists have no current Caliph, though several candidates are jockeying for position. A series of challenges for the position seems inevitable. The Amr is Amaravati, al-Ashrad's childe and chosen successor. The faction acknowledges no loyalist Vizier and probably never will,

as vizier backing of the schismatic movement was too widespread for ur-Shulgi to trust the few members of the caste who remain aligned with him.

#### Playing Loyalist Characters

Loyalist Assamites are created as per the usual rules found in *Vampire: The Masquerade*. However, they are true independents. No loyalist may hold office or Status in the Camarilla or the Sabbat without benefit of an extensive cover identity (which is usually beyond the capacity of a starting character).

While all loyalists believe that the Children of Haqim are superior to other Cainites, most of them don't act that way every night. One cannot tell a loyalist from a schismatic with a simple glance — members of the factions do not wear sashes or sigils to proclaim their sympathies. Wise loyalists exploit this in order to sow discord among other Kindred, the better to undermine the schismatics' attempts at credibility and acceptance. Even if it doesn't necessarily harm the schismatics, a loyalist may pretend to be something other than what he is in order to further his own goals. Of course, a loyalist's player should be prepared for his character to experience a potentially fatal backlash if the disguised Assamite is ever unmasked by the Cainites who have come to trust him.

#### SCHISMATICS

The first public appearances of the schismatics in early 2000 threatened to shatter the Kindred world's long-held assumptions about the Children of Haqim. Although few would be so foolish as to call the schismatics "the good Assamites," they are the members of the clan who are generally the most capable of coexisting nonviolently with those Cainites who follow the Traditions. Many schismatics retain their mortal values and moralities, though a significant minority of Path of Blood adherents exist within their ranks. These latter individuals generally follow the Path's tenets of honor and justice over those that promote systematic destruction of all other vampires.

The core doctrinal argument that led the schismatic leaders to split from the main body of the clan has to do with Haqim's Law of Judgement and ur-Shulgi's interpretation of it. Most schismatics believe in moderation when interpreting the Law of Judgement. Widespread destruction of all non-Assamite Cainites is tantamount to genocide, and judging all other vampires on the basis of the actions of a visible minority — or even a majority — of them is anything but just. Most schismatics have a strong sense of irony, recognizing that the very prejudice they condemn in their own clan is levied against them by most of the rest of the Kindred world.

A large portion of schismatics have no particular leaning toward one or another interpretation of the Law of Judgement. Rather, their quarrel with Alamut is a matter of faith. When ur-Shulgi ascended to the Black Throne, one of his first dictates was the immediate cessa-

tion of all worship save that of Haqim. While the Muslim majority of the clan may have tolerated a simple order of silence for years or even decades, ur-Shulgi followed up his initial proclamation by summarily destroying several widely respected elders who refused to renounce Allah. The Leopards of Zion were the first Children of Haqim to challenge ur-Shulgi in defense of their faith; they were far from the last. Practitioners of every major world religion and no few minor ones followed al-Ashrad into exile, turning their backs on their clan rather than on their respective gods.

As tentative allies (and, according to some reports, prospective members) of the Camarilla, all schismatics publicly refrain from diablerie. This is particularly difficult for warrior-caste schismatics, as their hunger for vitae did not die with their shift of allegiance. Whenever possible, schismatic warriors exist under the direct supervision of a sorcerer or vizier who monitors them for signs of slipping self-control. Most Camarilla princes are aware of the warriors' addiction, thanks to al-Ashrad's revelations during his bid for Camarilla hospitality, and grant their warrior citizens whatever they consider appropriate concessions. Most such concessions are "privileges" like "warrior Assamites are excluded from mandatory attendance at any Elysium where attendance is otherwise required for the Kindred." No sensible vampire wants a potential cannibal too close, and so the once-proud warriors have been largely reduced to little more than the lackeys and dependents of the other castes. For the most part, schismatic warriors tolerate the restrictions on their behavior with remarkable good will — they knew what they were stepping into, and they left Alamut because they believed in something (even if that "something" was only self-preservation) strongly enough to accept the social stigma of being "refugees" or second-class Cainites.

The schismatics currently maintain a loose organizational structure that mimics, but does not fully conform to, the clan's pre-Schism order. Al-Ashrad serves a dual role as Amr and Eldest. Tegyrus, the pre-Schism Vizier, still holds that position. The schismatic faction has no Caliph, as the Camarilla would see the establishment of a formal organizational structure for the schismatic warriors as too much of a threat. In most Camarilla cities, the eldest sorcerer or vizier is the de facto leader of all local schismatics and must typically report his "subjects'" activities to the prince on a regular basis.

#### Playing Schismatic Characters

As with loyalists, schismatics are created as per *Vampire: The Masquerade*'s normal rules. Unlike the "default" Assamites presented in that book, however, schismatics may be at least nominally members of the Camarilla, depending on the preferences of the players and the Storyteller. However, they're nowhere near as widely accepted as members of the seven founding clans are, and it's rather difficult for them to accrue large amounts of Status or hold office. No Kindred has heard any



reports of Assamite princes, though the seneschal of Phoenix is a vizier and Paris and Athens have a sorcerer and a vizier, respectively, among their primogen. These are exceptions rather than rules. Most schismatics fortunate enough to have claimed Camarilla titles this quickly are sheriffs or scourges.

Many schismatics still privately believe that they're superior to all other vampires. Old lessons die hard, after all. But those who are unwise enough to be vocal about their beliefs are usually on the receiving end of a very pointed lesson from their "Kindred." Most members of the faction know what a good thing they have going with the Camarilla don't want their less-diplomatic peers to jeopardize that. If they want to be accepted as full sect members some night, their best option for the present is to keep their mouths shut.

#### ASSAMITE ANTITRIBU

The faction of the clan known as the Assamite *antitribu* began its existence as a group of desperate survivors fighting to salvage their clan's honor in the face of what they saw as an unconscionable submission to an inferior opponent. When the ragged handful of warriors joined the nascent Sabbat, they had little to offer the sect but their blades.

In the aftermath of the Anarch Revolt, that was enough.

Over the centuries, the Assamite *antitribu* grew into the backbone of the Black Hand, the Sabbat's elite military arm. This power did not come without a price, however. In their desperate pursuit of a new role in unlife, the *antitribu* gradually grew away from their warrior-caste roots. By the end of the 18th century, few Assamite *antitribu* neonates were aware of more than the haziest basics of their clan's history. Many had no idea of the existence of separate "castes" of Assamites. This was partially due to the Sabbat's emphasis on allegiance to the sect over misplaced loyalty to the clan but mostly stemmed from the faction elders' collective desire to distance their broods from the "disgraced" main body of the Assamites.

By late 1998, the Assamite *antitribu* made up the majority of the Black Hand's leadership and comprised far more of the Hand's total membership than any other single clan or bloodline. The Sabbat overpowered close to one Camarilla-dominated city a month in a blitzkrieg campaign along the American East Coast, and the Hand — and, consequently, the Assamite *antitribu* — were spearheading the most successful and profitable series of assaults in the sect's history.

Then ur-Shulgi completed the Breaking. Over a single night, the symbol of the Assamites' submission to the Camarilla was shattered by blood magic that was ancient centuries before the curse's casters were born. For the Assamite *antitribu* neonates, this was a frightening sign that the Antediluvians were close to awakening. For the faction's elders, however, it was an invitation to return to

the fold. Whatever the Sabbat thought, the faction's leadership had always considered its sectarian allegiance one of convenience — the Sabbat was a useful means of striking at the Camarilla, and it provided formidable protection from other enemies that the *antitribu* had made at the time of their split from the main body of the clan.

Over the course of two weeks, the majority of the Black Hand's leadership simply disappeared.

The result was a crippling blow to the Sabbat's campaign against the American Camarilla. With the loss of much of their strategic and tactical guidance, Black Hand cells and their supporting packs foundered and stalled. Young members of the *antitribu* attempted to take up the slack, but met with mixed results due to their relative inexperience within the Hand and the sect. By early 1999, it was clear that the Assamite *antitribu* were no longer the heart and mind of the Black Hand, though they still made up a good portion of its ranks. Several of the upper echelons of the Hand were quickly filled by ambitious Tzimisce, along with Gangrel, Ventruue and Salubri *antitribu* and other militaristic Sabbat firebrands eager to prove their long-denied worth.

Within a year, the Assamite *antitribu*'s ranks swelled again — not from "war draft" Embraces but rather from an influx of refugees. For the first time since the faction's inception, Assamites were defecting from Alamut en masse. Their motivation now, however, was not an escape from disgrace, but rather a flight from what one early arrival termed "the walking atrocity that sits on the Black Throne and claims to speak with Haqim's voice."

Tonight, the Assamite *antitribu* are far from their previous prominence. Their elders within the Sabbat have all vanished but for a select few, and many of their most promising lieutenants perished in the chaos that followed the elders' abandonment of the sect. They are by no means broken, however. The refugees from Alamut are very much a mixed bag, but they all share two common traits: They found ur-Shulgi's presence too terrifying to endure, and they found the Camarilla too much of a stifling alternative to consider. In addition, their numbers include several members of the sorcerer caste and, some rumors say, a handful of viziers. These new arrivals are the first nonwarriors to claim Assamite *antitribu* membership since the faction's escape from the curse — and they have galvanized their brethren into action. What the faction now lacks in upper-echelon leadership, it makes up for with numbers and a renewed dedication to the destruction of the Antediluvians and their servants.

#### Playing Assamite Antitribu Characters

In many ways, the Assamite *antitribu* are closer to the general stereotype of the Assamites than any other faction of the clan. Until the past year, they were exclusively warriors by caste. While some Assamite *antitribu* who were

not combat specialists did become True Sabbat, such as the secure couriers who keep the Mexican and Canadian Sabbat connected, no sorcerers or viziers were among their numbers. Many subscribed to the Path of Caine, which set them in direct opposition to the more "humane" elements of the Camarilla — not to mention the main body of their own clan. The *antitribu* kept to themselves, maintained a high average level of combat prowess and generally regarded outsiders as potential meals (with the exception of their fellow Sabbat members). Under the leadership of the *hulid* and his *shakari* advisors, they claimed to be maintaining the only pure line of the Assamite clan.

When the *shakari* and their contemporaries parted with the Sabbat, their actions eviscerated the Assamite *antitribu*'s claims of purity and jeopardized the survival of the descendants they left behind. The only thing that saved the vast majority of Assamite *antitribu* loyal to the Sword of Caine from a merciless purge was a rapid investigation spearheaded by Jalan-Aajav himself that cleared those who remained of any complicity in the departure of their leaders. In his report to an assembly of archbishops and Black Hand leaders, the Seraph pointed out a clear line of demarcation between the loyalists and the deserters within the *antitribu*. With only a handful of exceptions, none of those who left was Embraced after the Sabbat's first century of existence. The Vaulderie ensured the loyalty of most later inductees — which makes many Sabbat question just what the original Assamite *antitribu* did to escape their bonds.

The Assamite *antitribu* are still a major component of the Sabbat's paramilitary arm, though their role is somewhat diminished in the Final Nights. The faction as a whole is disorganized and demoralized, though several charismatic young leaders are taking steps to forge scattered elements into a cohesive whole once again. Most Assamite *antitribu* in the modern nights are young (under a century of age), competent (else they would not have survived the initial wave of uncoordinated reprisals) and highly motivated. The Sabbat would do well to not count them out of the running to regain leadership of the Black Hand.

A few all-Assamite *antitribu* packs still claim membership in the Sabbat, mostly those that existed prior to the elders' departure. New arrivals from Alamut are usually inducted into existing cosmopolitan packs, the better to keep an eye on the new recruits until the Sabbat can determine their true motives. Most arriving warriors attempt to gain positions in the Black Hand or as templars. Vizier defectors have established cabals or loose packs in Sabbat-dominated cities in Central America, though at least three are suspected to have taken up residence in Montreal. Any sorcerers who have joined the Sabbat are

keeping low profiles, possibly in the company of Tzimisce *koldun* with whom they can exchange information and share facilities.

### THE DISPOSSESSED

More a catchall category than a rigidly defined faction, the *dispossessed* are traditionally Assamites who choose their own paths over the clan's internal hierarchy. The first recorded use of the term dates to the eighth century B.C., when the warrior caste's historian, Thucimia, wrote of her rebellious childe as "a wanton and wild thing, heeding no authority save that of the spear, dispossessed by his own hands and lips of the safety of Alamut's hearth and the comradeship of Haqim's Children." In the early Middle Ages, dispossessed warriors seeking mercenary employment in the Cainite courts of Europe gave birth to the first tales that cast the Assamites as hired killers. Several centuries later, a group of honor-conscious individuals briefly earned the label of "dispossessed" before establishing themselves as the Assamite *antitribu*. Assamites who claimed Inconnu membership were always considered dispossessed, as were those rare few who gave the Camarilla their loyalty or fled east to attempt alliance and coexistence with the Cathayans.

The greatest numbers of dispossessed existed during the Long Night. In this era, perhaps as many as one in three Assamites was dispossessed, though the clan has never kept exact records of the number of newly Embraced members who turned their backs on Haqim's legacy. This population boom could not last, however, and the nascent Camarilla's crusade against the Assamites fell heavily on the dispossessed. Many nonaligned Assamites met Final Death prior to the Treaty of Tyre for no reason other than their heritage. Dispossessed elders were favored targets of Assamite-hunting coterie by virtue of their unnaturally dark skin. By the time the treaty was signed in 1496, less than a few score dispossessed remained in existence across Europe and North Africa. The rest had either perished, renounced their iconoclasm and rejoined Alamut, entered torpor or sought sanctuary with the Inconnu.

Owing to recent events, the dispossessed may now make up a portion of the clan close to that of a millennium ago. Although many members of all three castes fled Alamut for the relative security and stability of the Camarilla, roughly as many chose to follow no leader rather than submitting to a power structure that they had known as the enemy since receiving the Blood. Alamut and the Camarilla are two polar extremes, with the Sabbat lying somewhere off the scale, and many Assamites feel that none of these options are acceptable. Both faction heads are scrambling to bring these diverse individuals back to the fold — as are the various leaders of the Assamite *antitribu*.

### Playing Dispossessed Characters

In general, a dispossessed character is the best option for a player wanting to portray an Assamite who does not conform to any of the clan's various hierarchies or claim any factional loyalty. Dispossessed come from all three castes and may have rejected clan authority for any number of reasons, including distrust, paranoia, the threat of a personal enemy, lack of sufficient instruction from their sires in the "clan culture," disgust with Assamite politics or just a stubborn streak of independence. Likewise, dispossessed tend to ally themselves with whatever pack, coterie or individual seems to provide the best opportunity for personal gain — or simply for personal safety.

For purposes of the views of the organized Assamite factions, Assamites who become anarchists or who join the Inconnu or other elder-exclusive organizations and conspiracies are dispossessed. As stated earlier, "dispossessed" is more of an "everything else" category than a given set of clan members.

## ORDERS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Although the Assamites have never been as unified as some would claim, the center of authority that is Alamut has always provided the basis for a strong clan structure. This allows a degree of interaction on many levels that is much more difficult to achieve in any group without central leadership. In turn, the very existence of a clan structure has led to social polarization along many lines: political, racial, religious, professional and more. In the Assamite clan, secret societies and open organizations have always flourished.

Cynical observers note that, in addition to the clan structure that makes such clustering possible, many vampires share a common need to feel special or superior by belonging to some body that excludes others. In a clan that has traditionally stood alone, simple descent from Haqim is not always enough.

Whatever the reason, the Assamites have always had their share of internal groups that range from the deadly to the purely social. The following are some of the most prominent, noteworthy, active or visible.

### THE SISTERHOOD OF THE ERINYES

The Sisterhood has existed in some form or another since the nights of ancient Greece, when a foolhardy vizier gave the Blood to a trio of sisters who were rumored to have powers of prophecy. This overzealous individual, whose name is lost to history, should have done more thorough research. The sisters had some small prophetic skills among them, but they were priestesses of Bacchus — and their divinations gave best results when performed with the entrails of a still-warm subject. The sisters merrily used

their sire's withered innards to come to a better understanding of their new condition, then continued in their accustomed roles for another two centuries until an itinerant sorcerer encountered them and gave them a more thorough explanation of Haqim's history.

After a brief consultation over the ashes of another Cainite sacrifice, the three agreed to accompany the sorcerer to Alamut and learn the ways of the clan. During their journey, the sisters came to know the clan's origins. They understood the value of history and heritage, and they faced something of a dilemma: Which of Haqim's legacies should they follow, that of the scholar or that of the judge? The eldest favored study. The youngest, the pursuit of the guilty. The deadlock was broken by the middle sister, who suggested that perhaps another divination was in order. Rather than go the way of the sisters' sire, their guide quickly agreed and stated that, as he was more familiar with the ways of the clan, perhaps he should perform the divination. His readings of the stars suggested that the sisters would be best suited to judgement, and all three accepted this as the gods' will.

When the sisters finally arrived at Alamut, the clan was in one of its periods of male dominance. Rather than being welcomed as long-lost fellows finally brought back to the fold, they were ostracized and ridiculed for presuming to be the equals of the clan's male members. The three patiently swallowed their pride and sought out the company and support of other daughters of Haqim who were equally piqued by the clan's collective mindset. Taking the Greek gods' own judges as their example, this first loose band declared their intent to hold truer to Haqim's ideals of justice than any other Assamites could. They made no specific statement of gender exclusivity, but the implication was clear enough.

Over the centuries, the ranks of the Sisterhood of the Erinyes have waxed and waned in number depending on the clan's current attitude toward its female members. The Sisterhood is a strictly informal group, more of an acknowledged social clique than a formal society. Those who wish to make some sort of declaration of Sisterhood wear a pin or other emblem depicting the traditional blindfolded female representation of justice. This is roughly akin to wearing an ethnic pride emblem; it confers no special privileges, simply giving knowledgeable observers a clue to the wearer's sympathies.

Most female Assamites who strive to uphold Haqim's Laws, particularly the Law of Judgement, and to maintain a roughly human moral compass are acknowledged as Sisters. This latter qualification means that Sisters tend to take moderate views on relations with other Cainites, and that no Sister follows a Path of Enlightenment other than Humanity. However, those who assume that this is indicative of some sort of weakness do so at their own peril. Most female Assamites of



warrior alignment have had some level of dealings with the Sisterhood, thanks to that caste's most recent surge of pro-male, pro-Islam sentiment. With the clan's current crisis, the Sisterhood is split between supporters of al-Ashrad and dispossessed. Very few, if any, Sisters believe that ur-Shulgi upholds Haqim's highest ideals.

#### Playing Sisterhood of the Erinyes Characters

As noted above, the Sisterhood of the Erinyes is purely a social circle, with no formal rules except those that various ambitious neonates try to codify every few decades before learning the folly of such imposition. The only requirements for Sisterhood (and even these are understood rather than explicitly stated) are that the prospective Sister be a female vampire or ghoul and that she take Haqim's Laws as her guide in unlife, with the Law of Judgement as the most important of the five. Sisterhood is theoretically not restricted to Assamites, though acceptance of Haqim's Laws is not exactly widespread outside the clan.

Sisters tend to have high personal standards of honor, and they usually hold others to equally stringent requirements. Interpretation of "judgement" varies across the Sisterhood, ranging from the righteous to the malevolently gleeful. At least one Sister is known to enforce her personal ethics through character assassination, seducing her targets and then publicly humiliating them at important social events. Others may provide painful but nonfatal "object lessons" or simply document an offender's actions for the local Cainite authorities. At least four Sisters have taken positions as sheriffs and scourges in Camarilla cities over the group's millennia-long existence.

Most Sisters claim schismatic allegiance or dispossessed status, though a few believe that ur-Shulgi has Haqim's best interests in mind and thus remain loyal to Alamut. Many have a level or two in Mentor or Allies, as Sisters tend to watch out for one another. Most have relatively high Humanity and Conscience ratings (a Humanity Trait of 6 or higher and Conscience of 3 or higher, respectively). They can be from any caste, and the potential for non-Assamite Sisters is slowly appearing as the schismatics interact with Camarilla society.

#### THE WEB OF KNIVES

Until the beginning of the Crusades, the warrior caste maintained a tradition of Embracing progeny and then allowing them to survive or die on their own merits. In 1102, a small band of warrior-caste assassins challenged this custom by establishing a training center in the Byzantine Empire. These individuals recruited the most promising mortal assassins they could find, imparting to them accumulated centuries of knowledge and training. When the Eldest questioned their behavior, they stated, "We are giving birth to the new breed of Haqim's childer." Over the next century, this group came to be known as the Web of Knives, and the graduates of its training program took their place among the elite of the warrior caste. The Web still exists in the modern nights. Its members are some of the most devout adherents to the Path of Blood, and they are all staunch loyalists. Its mission is simple: to create the most lethal individuals in Kindred society so that they may serve as Haqim's right



hand when he returns to lead his lineage in a final war against Caine's tainted descendants.

The Web maintains a startling combination of secrecy and open advertising. The locations of its training facilities and members' havens are nigh impossible to uncover, as are the "safe" identities of its members. However, most of the active assassins of the Web have one or more "field" identities through which they deal with the rest of the Cainite world. The Web never acknowledges its existence outside Assamite ranks. In fact, the name is only known to a few Camarilla and Inconnu intelligence-gatherers, most of whom believe it to be a mortal terrorist organization that the Assamites support. However, the Web's reputation is such that the activities and origins of its members are generally perceived as those of the entire clan, though this stereotype is shifting in the Final Nights. The phrase "Web of Knives" is largely unknown, but its individual members' deeds tend to attain an infamy out of proportion to their actual significance, and these accomplishments are the most visible contributions of any Assamite to the Cainite world as a whole.

Each member of the Web is recruited because of his martial skills, whether these lie in personal combat or in tactical command. His prospective sire gives him a choice: Join the world's foremost organization of assassins or walk away. If he chooses the latter option, his regretful contact summarily executes him and disposes of the body. If he chooses to join, his recruiter makes him a ghoul and personally delivers him to one of the Web's facilities, where he spends the next seven years in constant training. The recruit's master visits him once a month to deliver another dose of vitae, but his night-to-night development rests in the hands of the Web's permanent instructors and their ghoul assistants.

Supervised training lasts from sunset to dawn, seven nights a week. Another two to eight hours of each day are given over to physical conditioning or independent academic study. The instruction consists not only of physical training in personal combat but also includes investigative techniques, social deception, and, most importantly, an array of propaganda and brainwashing designed to convince the trainee of the Assamites' innate superiority to all other vampires. The pressure is constant. Recruits take no holidays during Web training. No time off, no coffee breaks. Only an individual who has the discipline to maintain this exhausting regimen and the long-term vision necessary to understand its transitory nature has even the slightest chance of success. Washout rates in this seven-year period are obviously quite high. The instructors tolerate any given mistake exactly once. A repetition of the same failure leads to death.

After this seven-year apprenticeship, the student receives one last task: a final field test. He receives a photograph, a name and a hemisphere of the world where this individual may be found. He must identify, locate and kill this target within one month, then return to his training facility—a place from which he has not traveled more than 20 miles in the last seven years. Targets vary: Some are mortals, some are Cainites, and a few have been other supernatural beings of varying types. If the assassin succeeds, his sire Embraces him in a solemn, elaborate ceremony, and he enters the next seven years of his training. If he fails but survives his failed attempt, he is considered dispossessed. No Web of Knives member will ever acknowledge his existence again (with one exception; see below) unless he interferes with Web business.

The second seven years of training are more difficult but more lenient. The transition from ghoul to vampire is more severe than the transition from mortal to ghoul. In addition, most Web trainees do not receive indoctrination in the tenets of the Path of Blood until after their Embraces, so the neonates face the additional problem of a complete moral and religious readjustment. Finally, the trainee is in the "real world" again, now under the direct supervision of his sire, acting as an aide and accomplice in missions of assassination for high-paying Cainite clients or to further the goals of Alamut. At the end of these seven years, the student undergoes a month-long examination ranging from philosophical debate to trials by combat. If he passes, his ceremony of induction into the Web as a full member includes the destruction by diablerie of an Assamite who failed to uphold the Web's vision of the clan's ideals—often one of the dispossessed who failed.

The Web has a consistently small membership, primarily due to attrition but also thanks to its rigorous selection criteria. At any given time, less than 20 full-fledged members are presumed to populate its ranks. Half of these are active in the world, while the other half maintain the Web's three training facilities in Afghanistan, Nigeria and Colombia. Under their supervision are several dozen ghoul candidates in varying stages of training and an equal number of elder ghoul instructors. Members are overwhelmingly male, mainly due to traditional chauvinism. Physical requirements such as raw strength are easier to meet when one is a ghoul. Until the last century, all Web members were of Arab or African extraction, but a handful of Europeans and Asians have completed the training since the first one did so in 1869.

The Web operates on a seven-year cycle, with active members rotating between training duty and field work on a seven on/seven off schedule that begins with a field cycle upon "graduation." The organization is small enough that it has no formal internal rank structure among its active members, though informal respect is awarded on the basis

of seniority. The eldest member is the Web's leader, and he reports directly to the Caliph and the Eldest at Alamut.

#### Playing Web of Knives Characters

These individuals are some of the deadliest Cainites in the World of Darkness when placed against others of comparable age and generation. Storytellers should think carefully about allowing Web of Knives characters into their chronicles — they can easily upset the direction of many games, particularly ones in which the other characters are predominantly ancillae or neonates. The Web is a contracting house for assassinations commissioned by elders (and the occasional Methuselah) against rivals of corresponding power, and it serves a secondary function as a "political" tool for the leadership of the Assamite clan. A fresh graduate of the Web's 14-year training regimen has spent more time learning how to kill than most of the people reading this book have spent in school — and he didn't take summer vacations.

That being said, the Web of Knives can be an effective plot device for the discerning Storyteller, provided that a Web character doesn't become an excuse for a player with an overcompensation problem to go berserk. Of course, this is a potential problem with just about any warrior-caste Assamite character in the hands of a problem player, but even more so with a Web member in the story.

Web members know how to do more than just kill. They are adept at blending into a wide variety of cultures, both mortal and vampiric (though, admittedly, most of their knowledge is theoretical rather than experiential, and initial attempts at gaining entry into a new culture rarely go as planned). This means that a Web assassin is likely to operate under an assumed identity for an extended period of time. Neonate coterie often provide good background for cover identities (and good cover in a firefight), and neonates are not as likely as elders to catch a Web member's social gaffes. On the other hand, the sheer amount of training that a Web inductee undergoes rivals the accumulated casual experience of centuries of "normal" Cainite existence, so a Web neonate can function as an integral, equal part of a coterie of elders in situations where he isn't called on to play the elders' political games. Finally, while Web members usually operate solo unless they're with a student, the occasional group assignment could provide a good plot for an all-Assamite, all-Web story.

All Web of Knives members are warrior-caste Assamites and Alamut loyalists; no exceptions to this rule have yet surfaced. Concerning character creation, a recently graduated Web character is built with the following point spread: 10/7/5 Attributes, 20/12/8 Abilities, 10 Backgrounds, 10 Disciplines, 7 Virtues, and 20 Freebie Points.

Before a potential Web character's player starts looking smug, there are certain qualities that every such character must have. First and foremost, every Physical Attribute must be at ●●● or higher, as must Manipulation, Perception and Wits. Second, the following list depicts the *absolute minimum* Ability ratings for a Web neonate:

- : Alertness, Brawl, Investigation, Melee, Stealth
- : Athletics, Dodge, Firearms, Linguistics, Subterfuge
- : Etiquette, Occult, Security, Streetwise, Survival

Next, a Web character must have at least Mentor ●●● to represent his sire. A Web member also has an affinity for Potence due to his extended time as a ghoul that allows him to purchase it at in-clan experience costs. All starting Discipline points must be allocated to Potence or the character's usual in-clan Disciplines. Finally, the character must have a minimum Willpower Trait of 8 and must be on the Path of Blood with a minimum rating of 4.

#### THE LEOPARDS OF ZION

The name "Leopards of Zion" has been applied to over a half dozen different groups of Assamites since the Long Night. Traditionally, any such group that lays claim to the title is comprised solely of radical Jewish clan members who have taken it upon themselves to act as the defenders and avengers of their mortal people (whether or not those mortals want or need the assistance). The Leopards' last resurgence was in the late 1940s, when an elder calling himself Zev Benzion (literally "Wolf, son of Zion") led eight skilled assassins on a bloody purge of Camarilla Kindred who had indirectly supported the rise of the Nazi Party. Benzion was torn to shreds in a Blood Hunt in Rio de Janeiro in 1951, but not before he and his followers accounted for over 50 Final Deaths and several hundred executions of German and Austrian mortals.

After Benzion's destruction, his protégés scattered to the four winds. Most became dispossessed, but a few proudly returned to Alamut. One of these individuals, a warrior named Amaris bat Ariela, quietly spent the next two decades selectively Embracing and gathering followers. During the Six Day War in 1967, she led a silent, bloody slaughter that effectively destroyed all outside Cainite influence over Israel. In the years since, Amaris's new Leopards of Zion have not attempted to direct the course of Israeli politics save for brutally suppressing any other clan's bids for the territory. Only the Followers of Set have managed to regain a toehold in Israel, and they are playing a vicious game of move and countermove with the Leopards.

Tonight the Leopards of Zion are staunchly schismatic, as might be expected. Ur-Shulgi has yet to challenge them, save for striking down the sorcerer Sarah Schneier when she broadcast al-Ashrad's message that began the Schism. The group numbers no more than 20 Assamites,



which leads some to question who their allies may be. They are largely confined to Israel and the surrounding territories, but some known Leopards have been seen in Camarilla cities in Europe in recent months.

#### Playing a Leopard of Zion Character

The Leopards of Zion consider any Cainite who is of the Jewish faith and displays both willingness and ability to defend the Jewish people from outside supernatural threats to be one of their number, at least provisionally. However, one must gain acceptance from the group and, ultimately, from Amaris herself in order to be a full-fledged Leopard. This acceptance usually comes only after the prospective Leopard has risked his unlife (or, on occasion, his soul) in support of the Jewish faith, the nation of Israel, or the Middle East peace process.

The Leopards do not explicitly exclude non-Assamites from their ranks — indeed, one of their most respected members is a Ventrue elder who has made his haven in Gaza for 300 years. However, virtually all prospects who are not Children of Haqim are met with a high initial degree of suspicion. The Leopards follow a “cell” organizational structure, with Amaris bat Ariela heading the organization from her haven in Tel Aviv. Most are skilled in personal combat, as Amaris prefers to rely on ghouls and mortal contacts to provide noncombat support for her various schemes. Many of these agents are the former servants of those Cainites the Leopards destroyed in 1967, who willingly accepted the blood bond in exchange for continued sustenance.

#### THE THOUSAND-METER CLUB

More an informal acknowledgement of skill than a formal brotherhood, the Thousand-Meter Club began as an inside joke among Americans and Europeans who were Embraced into the warrior caste during and after the Second World War. Apocryphally, the founder of the Thousand-Meter Club was a Marine sharpshooter from West Virginia who took offense to several Arab Assamites’ slurs against his race and his choice of armament. He goaded one of his tormentors into issuing a challenge, then specified that the duel would be a hunt to take place over a hundred square miles of the Zagros Mountains. The sharpshooter set an ambush for his pursuer, then shot the overconfident traditionalist through the throat from a thousand meters away, effectively decapitating him.

Since that incident, any Assamite who kills another Cainite at a range of thousand meters or more is said to have “joined the Thousand-Meter Club.” The subject of what constitutes a “legal kill” is under constant debate, as most Assamite riflemen do not consider the use of blood magic or Discipline powers a legitimate bid for membership.

#### Playing a Member of the Thousand-Meter Club

As there are no formal membership requirements save for one accomplishment, almost any character whose history and Traits allow for the possibility may be said to be in the Thousand-Meter Club. If such an individual entered through the “traditional” route (using a rifle), she almost certainly has Dexterity, Perception and Firearms Traits each of 4 or better. Storytellers are advised to take the realities of physics into account when considering more outlandish claims — no realistic amount of Potence will allow a character to kill another vampire with a thrown rock from 3,300 feet.

## FOREIGN RELATIONS

At first glance, it would appear that the Assamites are radically divided on their views of other Cainites. However, even the recent Schism cannot erase centuries of conditioned responses. The primary differences between the loyalists’ opinions and those of the schismatics lie in degrees of outspokenness and willingness to change.

#### THE CAMARILLA

*You'd think we should hate the Camarilla — and many of us do, if the truth be known. Just ask any of ur-Shulgi's laughing boys. But you have to remember that the Camarilla is the one power outside our clan that has proven it can defeat us. That's indisputable proof that an alliance is stronger than a single force that stands alone, no matter how unified that force may be internally. For many of us, that sort of strength demands respect — and beckons us to join with it, especially considering conditions on the Mountain. Final Nights or no, there's a war coming, and I want to be on the winning side.*

*On the other hand, that sort of strength also demands a certain degree of attention, because it remains a threat. I can see where the loyalists are standing, and it makes a good deal of sense. If something has proven itself to be a threat once, beat you senseless and then backed off, you'd be hard-pressed to just let it be when you felt you had the advantage, wouldn't you?*

— Kasim Bayar, sheriff of Milan, schismatic warrior

#### BRUJAH

*If they understood how to buck up and keep it in their pants, they might be a more credible threat. When they're not fighting, they're whining. When they're not whining, they're looking for a fight. They remind me of a bunch of Irishmen, actually. Still, it's best to let someone else oblige them — or shoot them in the head from a distance. Some of them can throw down as well as we do, and it's all over if one gets his hands on you. The elders are the most dangerous, as they like to pretend they're calm and rational scholars, but their fuses are cut just as short.*

— Evan Rogers, freelance bodyguard, dispossessed warrior

### MALKAVIANS

Although we are encouraged to extend charity and compassion to the mad, those of Malkav's brood would strain even a more tolerant heart than mine. They are capricious, unsettling and capable of reaching insights to which they should have found no path. They have always taken a particular delight (or seen a particular duty) in meddling with us, but of late their jests have become less frequent and their skewed stratagems more potent. It almost appears that they have become more focused, which, in its own way, is more disturbing than a shift in the other direction would have been.

Do not mistake me: I believe their ability to perceive layers of reality would be valuable. I simply do not find the price agreeable.

— Mohninda Vajpayee Cheran, intelligence analyst, loyalist vizier

### NOSFERATU

An oft-quoted mistranslation of the Book of Nod states, "In any Jihad, the Nosferatu are first to die." The correct translation: "In any Jihad, the Nosferatu are first to disappear." If you ever expect trouble to strike your city, keep a close eye on the Nosferatu. When they vanish down their boltholes and pull them shut, follow their example. They are the Camite world's greatest survivors, and they can see a threat clearly before anyone else has more than a vague sense of unease.

If they have a flaw as a group, it is curiosity. I almost believe that some Nosferatu could subsist on knowledge alone if vitae were unavailable — they would certainly make the attempt. Feed this thirst and they will repay you in kind. Our clans have enjoyed a long and productive symbiosis that is far stronger than any transitory political considerations. I advise you to foster that relationship whenever possible.

If you have no choice but to destroy a Nosferatu, do not, under any circumstances, confront him on his home territory. We will never find your ashes.

— al-Ashrad

### TOREADOR

As a clan, the Toreador are frighteningly ineffectual. They'd rather stare at old pictures and oddly shaped stones and make wailing noises about their lost heartbeats than actually get out and do anything.

As individuals, some Toreador are frighteningly efficient at whatever arts they apply themselves to. If an individual Toreador considers swordsmanship an art, you can bet your heart's blood that he's the equal of any two of our warriors. I reserve my personal fear for those Toreador who consider politics an art rather than a hobby — one of those is responsible for starting that whole Camarilla mess.

If the truth be known, the Toreador remind me a lot of

the viziers, but less organized — which is saying quite a bit. Fortunately for us, most of the clan still seems to be of the "paint smears and pretty rocks" school of thought.

— Kurush Ishraqi, weather-wizard, loyalist sorcerer

### TREMERE

The Tremere may be the greatest threat to the Children of Haqim since the ancient struggles that shattered the Second City. They dragged themselves up by their bootstraps, usurping not only immortal blood but immortal power in so short a time as to seem a mere sucker by undying standards. Never trust a Tremere, never turn your back on a Tremere and never forget that they feared the Children enough to lobby for outright destruction. Their curse was a compromise. By some standards, the Tremere may be the perfect vampires: They are cold, rational, patient enough to wait yet swift enough to strike, never cursed by Caine, and deadly in their resolve and their arts. You may, if you like, consider a Tremere a cobra, coiled to strike at you for its own reptilian reasons and well armed with its own particular venom.

If you are fortunate, I will teach you to be a mongoose.

— Deviki Prasanta, Web of Knives Pentjak-Silat instructor, loyalist ghoul

### VENTRUE

Many Children of Haqim bitch and moan about our defeat at the hands of the Ventrue, the weaklings, the "rear-echelon motherfuckers," the spoiled rich boys from the Old Country. They say that we should have struck deep into Germany and England and burned them screaming from their castles, because the Ventrue are incapable of defending themselves. We fought them. We lost.

A lot of our clan can't understand how we didn't win, because all the Ventrue seem to do is trade favors and lounge around their courts. Understand this: we didn't lose to the Ventrue five hundred years ago. We lost to the Ventrue and all their allies and their servants and their friends and every poor peasant son of a bitch who ever made the mistake of making eye contact with his undying lord. Understand that, and you'll understand where the real strength of the Ventrue lies.

— Lydia Dorn, psychologist, loyalist sorcerer

### THE SABBAT

The Sabbat doesn't know what the hell to think of us right now, and we're pretty careful about how we view it. Most of our elders bugged out last year, and that pretty much fucked the Black Hand's leadership structure. Things were kind of tense for a few months, and a lot of us who stayed behind were waiting for the hammer to come down. Apparently, though, our loyalty meant more to the higher-ups than our sires' disloyalty did. Some of us have moved up in the ranks, and the rest seem to be relatively free from Black

Hand or Inquisition suspicion. As long as we keep kicking Cammie ass, anyway.

The sudden surge in recruitment from the Mountain is another thing entirely. On one hand, it's nice to get confirmation of the reason for the Sabbat's very existence. The Antediluvians really do exist, and they're determined to wipe out everyone who won't kneel to them. Ur-Shulgi doesn't leave much room for doubt there, judging from the reports I've heard. On the other hand... shit. That's the kind of confirmation I could have done without for a long while. Now we need to figure out what to tell the rest of the Hand.

— Michael diCarlo, sharpshooter, *antitribu* warrior

#### LASOMBRA

Never, never, never underestimate the Lasombra. They are the Ventrue without the moral frailty. They are the Tremere without the pretensions, they are the Setites without the posturing — and they are none of these things. Elements among their ranks have also shared a common faith with us, as well as common lands. Those nights are long past, but many Lasombra still remember them. More than any other clan in the last two thousand years, they have been our occasional allies, and this makes them a greater threat than any other.

— Fatima al-Faqadi, former Hand of Vengeance, dispossessed warrior

#### TZIMISCE

What a truly reprehensible collection of freaks, fuck-ups and megalomaniacs. The Tzimisce are sort of like Silly Putty Toreador with the attitude problems of a Brujah on crystal meth. I truly fail to understand why the Lasombra persist in letting these fools think they're in charge. I mean, every so often, you may need someone to charge a machine gun, but that's no reason to waste effort on keeping them in figurehead positions and countermanning all their silky-ass dictates from behind the scenes.

Sooner or later, we'll get the order to give them what we gave the Tremere *antitribu*. I look forward to that night with an anticipation that mere words cannot describe.

— Gene Bancroft, templar, *antitribu* warrior

#### INDEPENDENTS

There is no such thing as independence in the Jihad. There is only lack of awareness of one's masters.

— ur-Shulgi

#### FOLLOWERS OF SET

The serpent metaphor is actually quite inappropriate for the Setites. Though they may be reptilian in appearance, they are more akin to a trapdoor spider in behavior. At any given time, any given Setite has three times as many schemes in motion as he is suspected of masterminding. Many of these will be interrelated, so that the failure of one will ensure that the responsible party blunders right into another. Never

make the mistake of engaging a Setite on his own battlefield, that of the social and political. You won't notice the fangs until they're in your throat.

For all their prowess in their chosen fields of entrapment and entanglement, the Setites have two rather useful weaknesses. First, a typical one is so dedicated to cultivating external power that he himself may be relatively weak. Second, many members of the clan fall prey to the same blind idolatry of their founder that we are often guilty of. If you can exploit these, you may be able to remove the creature.

— Sukainah, court advisor of Algiers, dispossessed vizier

#### GANGREL

The Gangrel know many of the same things that we do. They don't have the same specifics, but they've been keeping their ears to the ground, and they're also aware that some very old, very bad things are waking up. Their decision to leave the Camarilla was not a political maneuver for sympathy or leverage — it was a calculated survival tactic.

You've heard the story about the two hunters who meet the bear? One starts lacing up his running shoes. The other asks, "what are you doing? You can't outrun that bear." The first guy grins and says, "I don't have to outrun the bear, I just have to outrun you." That's why the Gangrel got out of the Camarilla and why their *antitribu* haven't left the Sabbat. The Sabbat can run faster, y'see.

If you meet one of the newly independent Gangrel, don't get condescending. Living with the animals does not necessarily make them oblivious to social niceties, it just reduces their tolerance for bullshit — and they are killing machines like most of the Sabbat thinks we are.

— Lydia Leszcznska, nomadic scout, *antitribu* sorcerer

#### GIOVANNI

They command vast portions of underworld power. They have machine-gun-wielding minions at their beck and call. They measure their personal wealth in possessions and companies because mere dollar amounts have lost their significance. They have an extended family from which they can attain assistance anywhere in the world. They perceive aspects of reality that are forever closed to most of us.

I could be describing the Giovanni. Then again, I could be describing the crack dealers of the Chicago streets. Aside from the necrophilia, there's not much difference.

— Khaled Johnson, bounty hunter, dispossessed warrior

#### RAVNOS

Everyone underestimates the Ravnos. They share our particular problem of a one-dimensional stereotype in other Cainite eyes. They also share our particular advantage of a great deal of internal diversity that the rest of the Kindred aren't aware of. We probably get along better with them than we do with just about any other clan, in part because survival in the places where we have the most contact with each other demands too much attention to leave much time for comparing fang sizes.



*Of course, the lack of political arguments with them may have something to do with it, too. They're nonsectarian and have never demanded our heads on pikes, and they've never gone out of their way to arouse our ire by committing mass atrocities on the mortals. We stay out of their way, and they stay out of ours. Occasionally, we'll have to kill one of their younger, stupider kleptomaniacs. Occasionally, they'll have to kill one of our younger, stupider sociopaths. It's an equitable arrangement.*

— Gerhardt von Eich, negotiator, loyalist sorcerer

## OTHER PARTIES

### SHAPESHIFTERS

*Do you understand how those of us who walk the Path of Blood feel about the Camarilla? Most skin-changers have similar feelings toward all vampires, and they enjoy a similar position of relative strength.*

*Do not try to negotiate with them. Do not try to understand them. Do not try to use them or redirect them. They will offer you none of these considerations.*

— Kazimiera Zuyus, sculptress, loyalist sorcerer

### MAGES

*They are as old as we are, and so are their disputes. In general, most wizards treat you with a level of respect equal to that with which you treat them. They are mortals in form, which makes them inherently fragile, but they have several advantages over us — not the least of which is the simple ability to walk in the sun.*

*Some have heard of me, and mentioning my name may rescue you from trouble with a magus — once. Do not use this privilege lightly or expect it to be effective with all parties.*

— al-Ashrad

### GHOSTS

*We make lots of these.*

*Less slipantly: For some reason, we have little problem with hauntings, and few of us have reason to talk to the dearly departed. I understand that some sorcerers possess a fair degree of necromantic aptitude, but all of the names I've heard are attached to individuals who are still at Alamut.*

— Jessica Tate-Duncan, former DEA agent, schismatic warrior

## DISCIPLINES

As with any elders, the ancients among the Children of Haqim have developed their own unique permutations of the "common" Disciplines that the castes practice. However, their greatest innovations involve the Assamites' proprietary Discipline, Quietus. The blood magic of the sorcerer caste also offers several unique techniques unseen elsewhere in the Cainite world.

## AUSPEX

Some Assamites claim that Haqim was a scholar and that Auspex was his foremost tool. Regardless of the truth of this statement, the vizier caste still wields Auspex with a precision and strength equal to that of any Toreador visionary or Malkavian prophet. Many viziers refer to the Discipline as "Haqim's Eyes" and use whispered invocations to their clan's founder to help them focus their perceptive arts.

### ANIMA GATHERING (AUSPEX LEVEL SEVEN)

The power of Psychic Projection allows limitless exploration. However, many of the experiences that it grants cannot be adequately conveyed to individuals who cannot share them. Other would-be observers on the astral plane are left blind and deaf. The viziers believe Anima Gathering originated as a technique for leading warrior-caste mystics on vision quests. It allows a willing seer to bring a small group of companions into the astral realms with him.

**System:** All individuals who want to benefit from Anima Gathering must be in physical contact with the character who possesses the power or with someone who is in contact with him — in effect, they must form an unbroken chain of participants.

The player spends a blood point for each "follower" the character wishes to bring into the astral realm, up to a maximum of his Wits. He then leaves his body as per the system for Psychic Projection (*Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 152). As long as they remain in physical contact with the character, all followers are treated as if they know Psychic Projection, regardless of their actual Auspex ratings (if any). This temporary power functions as if each follower had rolled a number of successes equal to those that the "leader" rolled.

On the astral plane, followers remain within close proximity to their leader — within 100 feet or so — tethered to him by a thin silver leash. They may not break this connection. This imposes no penalties save for a faint awareness of the leader's location at all times.

Any follower who loses her physical connection to the character instantly returns to her body and loses a number of temporary Willpower points equal to 8 — the character's Wits. If this reduces her to zero Willpower, she falls unconscious until the next sunset.

**MET System:** The participants must be in physical contact as noted above. Spend a Blood Trait for each "follower," up to a maximum of half your permanent Mental Traits (rounded down).

If a "follower" loses her physical connection to you, she loses three Mental Traits, falling unconscious for the rest of the night if this reduces her to zero Mental Traits.

## CELERITY

One of the most primal Cainite gifts, Celerity has long been a favored art of the Assamites. Although its most common applications are martial, many viziers have developed other uses for the preternatural speed that their blood can bring them. The clan's earliest records, such as the *Parables of Blood*, speak of "catching the wind," implying that the Assamites have been predisposed toward it since their inception.

### PRECISION (CELERITY LEVEL SIX)

While many elder Cainites simply develop their superhuman reflexes to truly amazing levels, others find new and varied uses for the ability — like Precision. This focused technique allows its wielder to apply all of his intense energy to the smallest of targets. He effectively increases his fine manipulation capabilities beyond those of the most advanced mechanical lathes by moving so quickly as to disturb absolutely nothing save that which he actually touches. Cainite sculptors who have mastered Precision are capable of creating works of near-microscopic detail by striking so swiftly as to remove only the tiniest shavings of wood or stone. A certain medical specialist of the vizier caste is reputed to be capable of wielding surgical tools so deftly as to be able to reattach severed spinal tissue.

**System:** The player spends two blood points and a Willpower point and rolls Dexterity + Crafts (difficulty 6, substituting an appropriate Ability for Crafts at the Storyteller's discretion). For each success, the player may add one dice to all rolls pertaining to precision, fine manipulation or moving something without disturbing its surroundings. This power lasts for a number of minutes equal to the character's Celerity rating.

The character is in something of a trance state as she concentrates on channeling all her speed into tiny, flickering motions. Any actions that do not involve fine manipulation are at +2 difficulty. Even conversation is a strain. The character may voluntarily withdraw from Precision before its duration elapses, but all benefits are lost without a subsequent re-invocation of the power. Under no circumstances does Precision give any benefits in combat (though it may allow the preparation of weapons of fiendish intricacy).

**MET System:** Spend two Blood Traits and two Mental Traits. For the next five minutes, you gain two free retests on all challenges related to precision, fine manipulation or moving something without disturbing its surroundings. You lose all ties on challenges that involve gross physical movement, including combat.

## OBFUSCATE

The legendary "invisibility" of the Assamites is a staple of many rumors about the clan. Most neonates have heard stories of fearsome assassins who can appear from thin air and vanish in a ripple of shadow. Many Assamite historians suspect, though, that Obfuscate was not one of the line's initial Discipline affinities at its Second City founding, and only one caste was predisposed toward it as recently as a millennium ago. Tonight, however, the vast majority of Haqim's Children are skilled in the ways of moving unseen. Warriors and sorcerers both hold a blood affinity for it, and many viziers seek at least basic instruction from their clanmates. Although most Assamites know the common name for the Discipline, many have picked up their elders' habit of referring to Obfuscate as "the black veil," and "donning the veil" is a common expression for misdirecting others' gaze away from oneself.

### BLITHE ACCEPTANCE (OBFUSCATE LEVEL SIX)

Many Assamites undertake pursuits that would seem less than savory to most observers. Indeed, simply being known as an Assamite is enough to draw suspicion in many circles. This Obfuscate technique serves to dampen the repercussions of its practitioner's actions to a certain extent, making anything he might be doing seem much more tolerable. Bear in mind that Blithe Acceptance has its limits: While carrying a rifle down a street might be overlooked ("I'm taking this to be appraised."), firing that same weapon into a passing car would alert even the most complacent observer.

**System:** The player spends a blood point and rolls Manipulation + Subterfuge (difficulty 7). Any observer must roll an equal or greater number of successes on a Wits + Alertness roll (difficulty 8, reduced to 6 if the observer is actively looking for suspicious activity) to take note of the character's actions, so long as these actions are not physically threatening and the character does not attempt to directly interact with the observer.

Unlike most lesser Obfuscate powers, Blithe Acceptance remains in effect even if the character affects his physical surroundings or acts in an obtrusive manner. While using Blithe Acceptance, he could pick a lock, defuse a bomb, take money from a cash register or rappel down a skyscraper in Times Square, and all but the most perceptive or paranoid individuals would shrug his antics off and promptly forget ever witnessing them, as long as those actions stayed within the observer's definition of nonthreatening activity. The Storyteller is always the final arbiter of any given character's definition of "nonthreatening."

**MET System:** Spend a Willpower Trait and two Mental Traits. An observer who wishes to take exception to (or even take note of) any nonthreatening actions you



make must defeat you in a Mental Challenge in which you win all ties.

## QUIETUS

The Discipline now known as Quietus has undergone several shifts in focus since Haqim's judges first developed it during the nights of the Second City. In its modern incarnation, it is a Discipline that uses the unique properties of Cainite vitae for two purposes: direct martial applications and the dispensation of Second City-era justice to other Cainites. In many cases, it's uncertain which of these purposes any given technique supports.

Initially, Quietus was a tool that only the judges used. Few scholars bothered to learn a Discipline that was little more than a series of techniques used to punish Cainite criminals. However, after the fall of the Second City, all of Haqim's Children found themselves in a situation where they were more likely than not to be the targets of other vampires who no longer had a use for overreaching laws or the enforcers of those laws. The scholars who prevailed upon the former judges to teach them Quietus for self-defense quickly found a variety of divergent applications of many of the basic powers. Any scholar who has ever entered a noisy library has wished for peace and quiet; *Silence of Death* (*Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 175) quickly proved to be useful for more than silencing a public disturbance or suppressing the pleas of a cornered fugitive.

As the scholars explored other manifestations of Quietus, they began to develop unique permutations of these powers, either singly or with the conjunctive application of other Disciplines. Some used their own blood to strengthen irreplaceable artifacts rather than melee weapons, while others learned how to selectively nauseate an interview subject in order to encourage him to only speak the truth. Although they did not always have uses for Quietus's primary powers, many sorcerers and viziers adopted the Discipline to take advantage of the supple-

### WHAT'S A QUIET OOS?

Players wishing to portray Assamites may wish to be aware of the etymology and pronunciation of "Quietus." The Discipline has possessed a variety of appellations throughout its history. The current one is derived from the Middle English phrase *quietus est*, which roughly translates to "he is quit" and was used as a declaration of release from responsibility — in this case, release from the burden of guilt through an appropriate punishment. In modern usage, "quietus" may mean final settlement (as in that of a debt or obligation), death, cessation of activity or a thing that silences or suppresses. Literate Assamites pronounce it "kwi-EET-us" or "kwee-AY-toos," not "QUIET-us."



mentary uses to which their peers put it. In time, the entire clan gained an affinity for Quietus.

Even Quietus's most basic powers have undergone several shifts over the millennia. The warrior caste, whose judge predecessors were the Discipline's originators, has always set the tone for Quietus' primary focus. As the warriors' general tactics shifted from overt to covert, so too did the Discipline's martial powers change emphasis from direct injury to indirect impairment. Ironically, many of the modern powers, which are less overtly damaging than those practiced two millennia ago, are closer to the judges' original tools of punishment and retribution. Additionally, the Tremere curse rendered one of the basic Quietus techniques useless to its users; the Children quickly adapted a less complex manifestation to fill the void left in their teachings.

As may be expected, some ancient powers still exist in the Final Nights. Elders who learned them when they were commonly accepted are unlikely to forget them, and these individuals may bestow these lessons on deserving neonates if they receive suitable respect and recompense. However, the hierarchy of Quietus's elementary applications is, for the most part, static, like most low-level Disciplines. Archaic manifestations are remnants of forgotten nights, not commonplace incarnations of the modern Discipline.

#### **BLOOD SWEAT (QUIETUS LEVEL SIX)**

Although vampires do not have functioning sebaceous glands, they are still capable of sweating at times of extreme stress. This "sweat" is actually a thin sheen of blood on the Cainite's forehead and palms. Most Kindred see blood sweat as an admission of fear or guilt. The Assamite who has mastered Blood Sweat is capable inducing these feelings in a subject to a preternatural degree. The victim experiences a torrential outpouring of vitae if he harbors the tiniest shred of remorse for any action he has ever undertaken.

**System:** The character must be within line of sight of the subject and spend three turns in concentration. The player spends a Willpower point and rolls Manipulation + Intimidation (difficulty of the target's Willpower). The target loses one blood point per success. Mortals sustain injury as if they had lost blood from being fed upon. The target actually "sweats out" the lost blood in a sudden rush of sanguinary perspiration that soaks his clothes. Large amounts may even form puddles at his feet. Blood lost through this process is considered dead, inert mortal blood and provides minimal nutrition (half normal) for Cainites desperate enough to lick it up from the floor or wring it out of towels. It provides *no* sustenance for the individual from whom it most recently emerged.

In addition to the blood loss, the victim is overcome by a sense of remorse and guilt for his past transgressions (if he has a strong conscience) or an overwhelming compulsion to brag (if he is of sufficiently coarse moral character). The severity of this impulse depends on the number of successes rolled: One success causes a slight twinge of conscience, while five successes may result in a proud declaration of the subject's crimes. This effect is more storytelling-oriented than mechanical, and the Storyteller is the final authority on what the victim feels compelled to confess or boast.

Note that this power's existence is not widely known. Vampires and mortals alike tend to shrink away from someone who begins spontaneously sweating blood, and experiencing such an affliction may panic even the staunchest individual.

**MET System:** Spend three turns (or fifteen seconds out of combat) in concentration and issue a Mental Challenge which your target resists with his Physical Traits. You may risk as many of your Mental Traits as you like in this challenge. If you win, make a number of Simple Tests equal to the number of Mental Traits you risked. For each such Simple Test you win or tie, the target loses one Blood Trait (or takes one level of lethal damage if mortal).

#### **SELECTIVE SILENCE (QUIETUS LEVEL SIX)**

Although Silence of Death is an effective tool for the battlefield and the court alike, it is indiscriminate in its effects. The assassin who uses it in preparation for firing a shotgun also silences the radio over which her comrades might warn her of an oncoming guard. The courtier who suppresses a room full of dissenting voices is likewise unable to speak her own mind. Selective Silence allows the skilled Assamite to overcome these limitations by silencing only those individuals or objects that she wants to silence.

When using this power, most individuals exhale a thin mist of blood that clings to the selected subjects, gradually evaporating as Selective Silence's effects fade. Some Assamites also use a similar technique when invoking Silence of Death, in which case the mist surrounds them and moves with them.

**System:** The player spends two blood points and rolls Stamina + Stealth (difficulty 7). Each success is one individual or object that the character can silence with this use of the power. Each subject must be within 20 yards of the character. Objects larger than a man count as more than one subject: a heavy machine gun counts as two, a car as three, and a small aircraft as five. Objects larger than a private jet or creatures larger than an elephant cannot be silenced through the use of this power.

Each subject is completely silenced for a number of minutes equal to the character's permanent Willpower. Nothing it does generates sound, though the secondary effects of its actions will do so normally. For example, a gun silenced with this power will not produce an audible explosion when fired, but its bullets still make noise as they break the sound barrier. A silenced victim can scream all he likes and not make a sound, but may be able to summon help by smashing a window.

**MET System:** The player spends two Blood Traits then makes a Static Mental Challenge against a seven-Trait difficulty for each object he wants to silence, up to a maximum number of subjects equal to 3 + his number of Stealth Ability Traits.

#### **RIPPLES OF THE HEART (QUIETUS LEVEL SIX)**

According to Assamite lore, this technique originated with a Byzantine scholar who wanted to protect his herd from the thirst of other Cainites. Ripples of the Heart allows a Cainite to leave emotions within the bloodstream of any mortal from whom he feeds. Any other vampire who subsequently drinks from that mortal experiences those same emotions as if they were his own.

**System:** The character drinks at least one blood point from the subject mortal then spends a minute in physical contact with the subject while concentrating on the emotion he wishes to leave in her blood. The player spends a point of Willpower and rolls Charisma + Empathy (difficulty 7 under normal circumstances, 5 if the character is currently experiencing the intended emotion, 9 if he is currently experiencing a strong opposite emotion). The subject's blood carries the weight of the intended emotion for one lunar month per success rolled. A mortal's blood can only carry one emotion at a time. Subsequent attempts to use Ripples of the Heart on the same individual have no effect until the previous application has worn off.

Any vampire who drinks from a vessel under the effects of Ripples of the Heart must succeed in a Self-Control roll (difficulty of the mortal's Willpower) as soon as she swallows the first blood point. If she fails this roll, the vitae-borne emotion immediately overtakes her. The strength of the emotion depends on how many blood points she drinks. One blood point results in a momentary mood swing, two cause a significant shift in demeanor, and three or more generate a complete change in emotional state. Depending on the circumstances and the precise emotion, the effects of this may be spectacular or catastrophic. A vampire overtaken by romantic passion may temporarily believe she is in love with the mortal (or any other convenient bystander). One who drinks from a hate-infused vessel may rend her prey to shreds, and one who takes a draught of a mortal touched with fear may run

away screaming. The vampire remains subject to the emotion for a number of hours equal to the mortal's Willpower, though she is still subject to other feelings after the initial rush of sensation.

The mortal who is under the effects of Ripples of the Heart is unaware of the power's effects on him, though he is slightly predisposed toward the emotion in question while the power is in effect. The vampire who used Ripples of the Heart on a mortal is immune to any of its effects he places on targets through the use of this power.

**MET System:** Drink from the target mortal, then spend a minute concentrating and expend a Social Trait and a Blood Trait. For the next month, anyone else who drinks from the subject must win a Static Mental Challenge against a difficulty of your permanent Social Traits or experience the emotion you left in that mortal's blood. The mechanical effects of such artificial emotion are left to the Storyteller's discretion, but may include modified difficulties for frenzy.

#### **PURIFICATION (QUIETUS LEVEL SIX)**

Although most mortal cultures affix negative connotations to the spilling of blood, most Assamites — indeed, most vampires — have quite the opposite reaction to it. For them, blood is an unlife-affirming and reinvigorating substance. Purification works on this principle, using the power of vitae to cleanse and restore. Rather than purging foreign taints from the body, Purification allows its wielder to clean other individuals' minds and souls of stains, including those left by the mind control of other Kindred. The vampire using this power expels his own blood through his skin and allows it to soak through his subject, slowly dissipating. As it does so, it carries away spiritual impurities and outside influences.

**System:** The character touches the forehead of her intended subject, and both parties spend a minimum of five minutes in deep concentration. The player spends a number of blood points equal to the subject's Willpower. The subject rolls Willpower once for every external supernatural influence (a vampiric Discipline, usually, though other supernatural creatures may have their own unique powers) to which his mind has been subjected (difficulty of the level of the power in question +4, with a difficulty of 7 if the power has no level). A success nullifies that effect.

Purification has its limits. It can remove directly intrusive influences such as Dominate-implanted commands, Dementation-generated derangements or the imperatives caused by elder vampires' Presence. It cannot dispel influences that are transmitted by blood, including a blood bond or the dispositions imparted by one's clan or bloodline, nor can it erase those caused by purely mun-



dane techniques such as persuasion, hypnosis or brainwashing, or genuine emotional states such as love and hate. It can remove mind-altering blood magic effects, but either the character wielding Purification or the power's beneficiary must have a level of Thaumaturgy equal to or greater than that with which the effect was placed. A character cannot use Purification on herself.

**MET System:** Spend a number of Blood Traits equal to your subject's permanent Mental Traits. Your subject may then make a Static Mental Challenge against a difficulty of 7 Traits for each external supernatural influence that he wishes to purge. Success nullifies that effect. The above limitations apply to this power's MET version as well.

#### **BAAL'S BLOODY TALONS (QUIETUS LEVEL SEVEN)**

The toxin generated by Baal's Caress (*Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 176) is not enough to significantly harm some truly fearsome foes. This progressive development of that lesser technique allows its user to envenom his weapon with a blood-based poison so potent that it corrodes the very weapon that bears it, eating away at the strongest metal in a minute or less. However, its effects on its victims are spectacular enough to make the loss of even the most treasured blades worthwhile. This power's effects are of very limited duration, as the substance it creates will quickly evaporate away if it does not neutralize itself as it dissolves everything with which it comes in contact.

**System:** The character coats an edged weapon with her own blood, as per Baal's Caress. The player spends one or more blood points and rolls Willpower (difficulty 7). The weapon now does aggravated damage. It also gains a number of additional damage dice equal to the number of successes rolled plus the number of blood points spent. These extra dice fade at a rate of one per turn as the poison dissipates, drips off and reacts with the weapon's material. Once the extra damage dice are all gone, the weapon's base damage dice begin to fade at the same rate. The weapon breaks if used when its base damage is reduced to the wielder's Strength. The only weapons that can resist this corrosion are those created with a supernatural power of a level equal to or greater than the character's Quietus rating, and even this is subject to the Storyteller's discretion.

Baal's Bloody Talons is subject to the same limitations as Baal's Caress, except the limit on the number of successful strikes that do aggravated damage. A weapon affected by Baal's Bloody Talons does aggravated damage with every successful attack until it is destroyed.

At the Storyteller's discretion, the character may use the venom this power produces for other purposes, such as burning through a padlock or destroying an incriminating



tape. He may not, however, store this poison for later use — even if a container proves resistant to it, the substance becomes inert within a few minutes of leaving its creator's body.

**MET System:** Spend one or more Blood Traits and coat the weapon with your blood. It now does aggravated damage and gains a number of *Envenomed* traits equal to the number of Blood Traits you spent, which add to its bonus traits. On a successful strike with the weapon, you may make a Simple Test for each *Envenomed* Trait it currently possesses; success is an additional health level of damage. At the end of each turn, the weapon loses one *Envenomed* Trait. When it loses the last *Envenomed* Trait, it is destroyed.

#### POISON THE WELL OF LIFE (QUIETUS LEVEL SEVEN)

Beyond just leaving emotional traces in a subject's blood, the master of this Quietus power can now taint that same vitae, making it into a deadly poison for any other Cainite who drinks from that mortal. Some Assamites use Poison the Well of Life to guard their own herds against "poachers" or to ward specific vessels against indiscriminate feeding. Others have been known to employ it as a subtle trap for other vampires, turning herds against their owners. Rumor has it that this power sprang from the clan's studies of the Tremere curse.

**System:** The character touches the mortal he wishes to taint and smears a streak of his own vitae on the victim's skin. The player spends three blood points and rolls Stamina + Occult (difficulty 7). For a number of months equal to the number of successes, any other vampire who drinks that mortal's blood sustains two health levels of aggravated damage for every blood point imbibed. This damage manifests as a combination of acid burns and something akin to toxic shock.

While a mortal is poisonous to vampires, his body's alchemical balance is slightly altered toward toxicity. He gains two extra points of Stamina for the purposes of resisting the effects and damage of poisons and acids. However, his bodily excretions, especially his sweat, are slightly more noxious than normal. He suffers a one-die penalty to all Social dice pools if whomever he chooses to interact with has a particularly sensitive nose and is close enough to smell him.

**MET System:** Touch your intended subject and spend three Blood Traits and any number of Physical Traits. For a number of weeks equal to the number of Physical Traits you spent, the mortal's blood is poisonous to any vampire except you. Any vampire who drinks from such a mortal sustains two health levels of aggravated damage for each Blood Trait he takes.

The mortal in question is up two Traits on all challenges to resist the effects of poisons and acids, but gains the Negative Social Trait *Repugnant*.

#### SONGS OF DISTANT VITAE (QUIETUS LEVEL EIGHT)

Many Assamite scholars believe this ancient power to have been in use as early as the Assamite judges' inception in the Second City, originally used as a powerful technique for punishing Cainites who fed improperly or with excessive cruelty. Blood magic practitioners and individuals skilled at Auspex have long known that vitae can carry residual impressions of emotion and personality. This power invokes those impressions to overwhelm its victim with "remembered" images and sensations drawn from the vessels who held that blood before the vampire fed from them. Particularly strong-willed or hardened subjects may shrug off these visions as daydreams, but those who are less self-possessed can be permanently changed by the experience. A side effect of the use of this power is the partial destruction of the vitae from which the images are drawn. Some viziers theorize that this is the result of motes of the vessels' consciousness making an effort to escape their usurper.

**System:** The character touches his target and spends a turn in concentration. The player spends four blood points and rolls Wits + Intimidation in a contested roll against the victim's permanent Willpower (difficulty 7). If the target has committed diablerie within a number of nights equal to the character's Perception, the attacker gains one automatic success. The result depends on the number of net successes the attacker rolls. Note that in all invocations of this power, the sensations that the subject relives are expressly negative and terrifying — for example, he experiences none of the pleasure that would normally accompany the Kiss when he flashes back to such an event.

In addition to the successes listed below, the subject of a successful attack loses a number of blood points equal to the number of successes rolled. This vitae erupts from his body in warm red trickles that do no damage but are certain to terrify onlookers.

**Botch** The attacker enters a flashback sequence in which he relives his last feeding from the vessel's point of view. If the player rolled three or more 1s, the character acquires a permanent derangement related to feeding.

**Failure** The target is unharmed and immune to this power for a number of nights equal to his Willpower.

**1 success** The target experiences a brief (10-second/3-turn) flashback sequence in which he relives his last feeding from the vessel's point of view. During this time, he is at +2 difficulty to all rolls.

**2 successes** The target experiences a brief montage (15 seconds/5 turns) of flashbacks during which his viewpoint flashes between various feedings from the vessels' points of view. During this time, he is at +3 difficulty to all rolls. Once the initial rush of sensation passes, he is unsettled and at +1 difficulty to all rolls until he succeeds

on a Self-Control roll (difficulty 8), which he may attempt once per scene.

**3 successes** The target experiences a composite memory, assembled by his own subconscious, of the terror that various vessels felt while being stalked and fed upon. He must succeed in a Courage roll (difficulty 8) or instantly enter Röttschreck. If he succeeds in this roll, he is still at +3 difficulty on all actions for the rest of the scene due to the distraction that his visions impose.

**4 successes** The target is stunned and completely unable to act for a number of turns equal to 8 – his Self-Control as he is bombarded by a sequence of the most terrifying memories of his various vessels. Once this initial onslaught subsides, he must roll Courage (difficulty 9) or enter Röttschreck. If he fails this roll, he must roll Self-Control (difficulty 8) or gain the Sanguinary Animism derangement.

**5 successes** The target is thrown into a nightmarish reenactment of the greatest fears of every individual upon whom he has ever fed. He must roll Self-Control (difficulty 9) or fall into torpor for (10 – the target's Stamina) nights, at the end of which he loses half his permanent Willpower and gains the derangement Sanguinary Animism. If he succeeds on the Self-Control roll, he enters Röttschreck for the rest of the night, during which time his greatest fear is of his own image. At the end of the night, he must roll Willpower (difficulty 9) or lose a permanent Willpower point and gain the derangement Sanguinary Animism.

**MET System:** This is an Ascendant-level Discipline in MET. To use, fulfill all of the conditions described above and make a Mental Challenge against the victim (Intimidation counts for retests). If the victim has committed diablerie within the past week, the user wins on ties against him. If the Mental Challenge is successful, the player may choose to spend up to three Mental Traits. For each Mental Trait expended in this fashion, the victim loses one Blood Trait as the blood pours out of his body in crimson tears.

**1 Mental Trait** In addition to the above effect, the target spends 5 minutes reliving his last feeding from his vessel's point of view. During this time, he must bid an additional Trait in all challenges.

**2 Mental Traits** The victim suffers a montage of experiences from vessels he's fed upon, assembled by his own subconscious. The player must win a Courage Test against a difficulty of four Traits or his character instantly enters Röttschreck. Even if he succeeds at the test, he must bid an additional Trait in all challenges and loses on ties for a full hour or scene.

**3 Mental Traits** The target is thrown into a nightmarish reenactment of every feeding he's ever committed, again from the perspective of his victims. He must



succeed at a Self-Control Test (difficulty 5 Traits) or fall into torpor for 10 – half the victim's Physical Trait total, at the end of which time he loses half of his permanent Willpower total and gains the derangement Sanguinary Animism. Even if he succeeds at the Self-Control Test, he enters Röttschreck for the remainder of the night, during which time his greater fear is his own image. At the end of the night, he must win (not tie) a Simple Test or lose one permanent Willpower Trait and gain the derangement Sanguinary Animism.

#### CONDEMN THE SINS OF THE FATHER (QUIETUS LEVEL NINE)

Although the Second City's judges recognized that heritage does not equate to guilt, they also encountered many situations in which a vampire's entire brood had committed the same crime. In such cases, the judges often decreed the same punishment for all transgressors. This technique, which modern vizers believe to have originated at that time, allows its wielder to administer such overreaching punishments. Through Condemn the Sins of the Father, a Cainite can apply lesser Quietus powers to an entire lineage. Some rumors within Alamut state that ur-Shulgi used Condemn the Sins of the Father as the core of the ritual that enacted the Breaking, though no one has yet explained how (or where) the Shepherd managed to find Haqim to use as the ritual's focus.

**System:** After successfully using any lesser Quietus power on another vampire, the player spends a permanent Willpower point and 10 blood points and rolls Stamina + Occult. The difficulty of this roll is equal to four plus the number of generations of the original target's descendants that the player wants to affect, up to a maximum of 10. If the roll succeeds, every descendant of the original target within the specified range of generations suffers the same effects that the original target experienced, resisting with his own relevant Traits. The player may exempt a number of potential subjects from this effect equal to twice the character's Wits, but the character must know their faces or have tasted their vitae.

*Example:* Ur-Shulgi is displeased with a certain Ventrue prince and wants to use Dagon's Call on him and all his descendants. The prince is of the Seventh Generation. To be certain of making a clean sweep, ur-Shulgi chooses to extend the blight all the way down to 13th generation, or six generations of descendants. Ur-Shulgi's player (and why the hell are you playing ur-Shulgi, anyway!) must roll against a difficulty of 10. If the player makes the roll, every character who can trace his vampiric lineage to that prince, whether or not he's aware of his heritage, is subject to the same effects that the prince suffered from ur-Shulgi's use of Dagon's Call.

**MET System:** This is a Methuselah level power in MET. After successfully using any Quietus power on

another vampire, the player spends a permanent Willpower Trait and eight Blood Traits, and enters a Physical Challenge (retest Occult) with the target. The victim's Trait total is equal to his own Physical Traits plus twice the number of generations the Assamite wishes to affect. The power then affects all of the descendants within the specified generation range. Each descendant resists individually with appropriate Traits. The player may exempt a number of potential targets equal to his Mental Traits, but the character must know their faces or have tasted their vitae.

#### FORCED MARCH (CELERITY ••, FORTITUDE ••)

This focused application of superhuman speed and endurance has gradually fallen out of favor in the modern era, as aircraft and automobiles bridge distances in a single night that would take a man on foot a week or more to traverse. Still, in the desert nations that the clan claims as its center of power, modern transportation is neither available on a regular basis nor reliable when it is present. Many elder Cainites also prefer their own two feet to any noisy, reeking mechanical contraption, so Forced March still finds use.

**System:** Forced March may be used whenever the character is moving on foot for a protracted period of time. In effect, it allows continuous rapid movement without the devastatingly exhausting effects of combat Celerity use.

At the beginning of each hour of steady travel, the player spends a number of blood points equal to half the character's Celerity rating. The character's overland movement rate (normal human movement rate over most relatively flat terrain can be assumed to be 4 miles per hour, reduced by rough ground or poor weather) is multiplied by her Celerity rating. This bonus remains in effect only so long as the character is constantly moving, with no more than a minute's pause each hour — anything longer than dropping off a letter makes her lose momentum.

Forced March may be used for a maximum number of hours each night equal to the character's Fortitude rating. It is of absolutely no benefit in combat situations.

It costs 12 experience points to learn this power.

**MET System:** You may reduce out-of-game travel times by a factor equal to the number of Celerity powers you possess. For example, if you have the second Intermediate Celerity power, for a total of 4 Celerity powers, you divide normal travel times by 4. Each hour, or fraction thereof, of movement costs you a number of Blood Traits equal to half the number of Celerity powers you have. You may use this power a maximum number of times per night equal to the number of Fortitude powers you possess.

You must have *Swiftness* and *Mettle* to learn this power, which costs 6 Experience Traits.



### SHADOW FEINT (CELERITY ●●, OBFUSCATE ●●)

The way of the assassin is deception, not direct confrontation. However, even the most straightforward members of the warrior caste acknowledge the utility of misdirection in combat. This technique allows its wielder to slow her enemies' perceptions of him, leaving their image of her a fraction of a second behind her actual physical location. This makes the fighter's moves virtually impossible for an opponent to anticipate, allowing her to strike with little fear of reprisal.

**System:** The player spends a blood point at the beginning of a turn in which the character's Celerity is active, and the character's first action for the turn must be evasive movement. For the rest of the turn, all attack rolls made against the character have their difficulty increased by 2, to a maximum of 10. This power is considered an Obfuscate power for purposes of negation. An observer with sufficient *Auspex* is immune to it, as is one viewing his target through a video camera or other electronic intermediary.

This power costs 14 experience points to learn.

**MET System:** Spend an additional Blood Trait when you activate *Celerity* for the turn. Your *Swiftess* action for the turn must be evasive movement. For every attack on you this turn to which you respond with an evasion rather than a counterattack, you gain 2 bonus Traits.

You must have *Swiftess* and *Unseen Presence* to learn this power, which costs 6 Experience Traits.

## BLOOD MAGIC (ASSAMITE SORCERY)

From a purely mechanical standpoint, the blood magic that the Assamite sorcerer caste practices differs little from that wielded by the Tremere. From a philosophical perspective, however, worlds of difference separate the two. The Tremere force every piece of knowledge they incorporate into the structured, rigid framework of high Hermetic invocation. By contrast, the sorcerer caste's practices are the result of millennia of adaptation and melding, and are too truly disparate to be considered "structured" in any real sense.

The Assamites' recorded association with blood magic began in the Second City. The first Assamite-affiliated sorcerers were mortal magicians to whom Haqim promised eternal life in exchange for their loyalty and service against a cult of demon-worshipping vampires (and, some would say, other opponents both martial and political). Their earliest work, adapting their various arts to call upon the power of vampiric vitae, established the "ground rules" of modern blood magical practices, though many later

### VAULTS AND GRIMOIRES

Like the Tremere, the Assamites maintain vast repositories of magical knowledge. Prior to the Schism, the clan's central magical library was in Alamut, with subsidiary collections in Bombay, Marrakech, Cape Town and Vilnius. When al-Ashrad's followers broke away from Alamut, they left the Great Library there—but took with them dozens of copies of its contents, encoded on sets of CD-ROMs by the last sorcerer to hold the Seat of Copper and Lightning. The Bombay collection is believed lost to the Cathayans, as neither faction of the clan has had communication with its curators since July 1999. The guardians of the Marrakech and Cape Town libraries are both firmly loyal to ur-Shulgi. The Vilnius facility's staff is believed to be in transit to the United States to rendezvous with al-Ashrad, but their current whereabouts are unknown and their materials are out of circulation along with them.

The CD-ROM copies of the Great Library are a disquieting mix of high technology and ancient sorcery. Each one spans 32 discs, most of which are taken up by digitized images of artifacts too fragile to photocopy and too intricate to inscribe in the brief time that Sarah Schneier had to prepare for flight. The encryption scheme used is MI-5's latest, and not even al-Ashrad can explain how his late subordinate got her hands on it. However, Schneier's true masterwork is in the enchantments that the disks bear. An adaptation of a Byzantine-era privacy ritual ensures that any attempt to copy the data fails: A straight data copy crashes hard drives and burns out processors, while more indirect attempts like taking notes from the monitor meet with other equally expensive mechanical failures. Furthermore, the disks are protected by a fierce and eldritch guardian spirit. If any non-Assamite hand touches the disks or attempts to access their contents, something that witnesses describe as a vaguely humanoid whirlwind of blood droplets manifests. Its first action is to incinerate the disks. After that, it mercilessly assaults the offending party.

In addition to these communal resources, most Assamite sorcerers maintain their own private notebooks and records. The form and language of these varies depending on each sorcerer's personal preference. Some prefer to laboriously scribe notes on fawnskin in Devanagiri script, while others keep their records in three-ring binders and microcassette recordings. The most commonly used languages for formally recorded information are Arabic, Hebrew and Hindi.

Al-Ashrad is not known to keep journals. No one has ever reported seeing his personal library, if indeed he has one. Ur-Shulgi likewise does not apparently keep written records. It claims to have no need of physical reminders.

efforts duplicated this work in different ways. Some of these early blood wizards remained Haqim's blood bound ghouls, but others requested the Embrace from their master or various high-ranking scholars or judges. Under the leadership of Haqim and their eventual master ur-Shulgi, these latter blood magicians united into a cohesive group, drawing traditions and methods from both the scholars and the judges but remaining a subset of neither group. Over the next several thousand years, the clan's modern caste structure evolved, and the magicians — though never the most numerous Assamites — rose to equal their brothers in the Ancestor's eyes.

The modern body of knowledge that is Assamite Sorcery draws its content from a wide array of magical traditions, from the ecstatic rites of Kali and Shiva's followers to the subtle precision of *feng shui* to the elegant symbolic and mathematical transformations of Islamic alchemists and astronomers. In the words of the Arab philosopher al-Kindi, whom many sorcerers and viziers revere as a spiritual forefather, "We should not be ashamed to acknowledge truth from whatever source it comes to us, even if it is brought to us by former generations and foreign peoples. For him who seeks the truth there is nothing of higher value than truth itself."

The sorcerers took this and similar admonitions to heart, and still pay heed to such advice in the modern nights. The twin watchwords of Assamite blood magic, which seem slightly contradictory to many initiates, are *discipline* and *pragmatism*. With so many different ways to reach the same goal, Assamite studies of blood magic often guide a student toward whichever methods work best for him, even going so far as to trade an apprentice among five or six mentors before an agreeable partnership arises. However, the novice who takes such latitude as an opportunity to grow lazy or frivolous receives little mercy. The sorcerers recognize all too well that their tradition's very nature allows for many more paths to disaster than it does to success. Even when practicing those arts that use altered states of mind to achieve their goals, sorcerers are careful to use the experience rather than allowing it to use them.

#### MECHANICAL DIFFERENCES

Assamite blood magic, which is referred to as Assamite Sorcery when discussing the specific Discipline, is mechanically identical to the more common Tremere-codified Thaumaturgy that appears in *Vampire: The Masquerade*. However, though they work on similar principles (the use of vampiric vitae to fuel exertions of conscious will in order to effect change upon the physical or spiritual world), the two are not crosscompatible. A Tremere strives to perform his magic the same way, all the time, every time. An Assamite may never enact the same ritual the same exact way twice in a millennium (though some

#### ASSAMITE PATHS AND RITUALS

The sorcerers have equivalent teachings for many common blood magic techniques in addition to their own unique lessons. The following list is not an exhaustive coverage of everything in the Great Library, but it is a starting point for players and Storytellers who wish to determine the capabilities of Assamite sorcerers. It does not include those paths and rituals that this or other books have specifically designated as primarily Assamite in origin. The list is organized by book, presenting first the paths and then the rituals found in that publication to which the Assamites commonly have access. Names in parentheses are the names that the sorcerer caste prefers to use for each item, if the Assamite name differs from the commonly accepted one. Paths marked with an asterisk are usually options for an Assamite sorcerer to learn as his primary path, provided his instructor approves.

##### Vampire: The Masquerade

**Paths:** The Path of Blood, The Lure of Flames\*, Movement of the Mind\*, The Path of Conjuring, Hands of Destruction

**Rituals:** Defense of the Sacred Haven (Curtain of Will), Wake with Evening's Freshness (Black Sunrise), Communicate with Kindred Sire (Speak with Sire), Deflection of Wooden Doom (Turn the Impaling Shaft), Ward versus Ghouls, Principal Focus of Vitae Infusion (Draught of the Pebble), Incorporate Passage (Passage of the Ghul), Bone of Lies (Stain of Guilt)

##### Guide to the Camarilla

**Paths:** Elemental Mastery\*, Neptune's Might\*, Spirit Manipulation\*, Weather Control\*

**Rituals:** Engaging the Vessel of Transference (Falsely Sealed Vessel), Incantation of the Shepherd (Shepherd's Silent Vigil), Purity of Flesh, Blood Walk, Burning Blade, Donning the Mask of Shadows, Warding Circle versus Ghouls, Sanguinary Assistant, Shaft of Belated Quiescence, Ward/Warding Circle versus Lupines, Splinter Servant, Ward/Warding Circle versus Kindred, Enchant Talisman, Ward/Warding Circle versus Spirits/Ghosts/Demons

##### Guide to the Sabbat

**Paths:** The Path of the Father's Vengeance (Path of the Ailing Jackal)

**Rituals:** Blood Rush, Illuminate Trail of Prey, Eyes of the Night Hawk, Machine Blitz, Recure of the Homeland, Mirror of Second Sight

##### Blood Magic: Secrets of Thaumaturgy

**Paths:** Alchemy, The Focused Mind (Echo of Nirvana), Path of the Blood's Curse

**Rituals:** Encrypt Missive (Loyal Eyes), Rebirth of Mortal Vanity, The Scribe, Sense the Mystical, Craft Bloodstone (Follow the Lie), Impassable Trail, Steps of the Terrified (Run to Judgment), A Touch of Nightshade (Haqim's Disfavor), Infirm Inert, Severed Hand

Assamites do very well through rote and precision). He always goes through the same basic steps, but all the details between those steps might change to suit his mood and the situation.

As may be expected, students of Assamite Sorcery have great difficulty learning the practices of other blood magic traditions, as the basic principles diverge once one moves past "you are altering the world around you by an application of your will as the guiding force and your Cainite blood as the power source." All experience points costs to learn other blood magic paths and rituals are increased by half (round up) for Assamite sorcerers. In addition, even once the sorcerer has incorporated these lessons into her repertoire, they are still alien to her. All invocations of a "foreign" path require one extra blood point and all rituals take triple the normal time and require one extra success for any desired result (MET: one extra Blood Trait for paths, triple time and two extra Mental Traits risked for rituals).

Assamite blood magic should be recorded on the character sheet as "Assamite Sorcery." Should such a character manage to learn the basics of another blood magic Discipline, such as Thaumaturgy, Necromancy or Setite Sorcery, it should be recorded under its own name. Obviously, the player should keep separate track of which paths and rituals the character knows for which Discipline.

## AWAKENING OF THE STEEL

Although combat mastery is hardly the sorcerer caste's primary goal, they have a long tradition of standing ready to defend themselves and, if need be, assisting the warrior caste on the battlefield (though they have not joined any large-scale struggle since the Long Night). Awakening of the Steel is one legacy of this preparedness, a path that some say began with the alchemists who studied in the forges of Toledo and Damascus. This set of techniques focuses on the symbolism of the sword as the ultimate extension of a trained warrior's body, drawing on the mythos that various warrior traditions attached to their swords and daggers: European Crusaders and their blessed blades, the kris of Indonesian Pentjak-Silat practitioners, and Indian Ghurka and their kukri knives, among others. The practitioner of Awakening of the Steel focuses on this symbolism as he uses the power of his blood to enhance his weapon and his skill.

A student of Awakening of the Steel finds that a keen understanding of both the form and the function of a blade is necessary for full mastery of this path. A character must have a level of either Melee or Crafts Ability equal to his level in Awakening of the Steel. Those who practice this path also find that its lessons are tightly focused, perhaps

to the point of overspecialization. The path is at its most effective with swords and knives, and the wielder can only extend its effects to other edged weapons. Any attempt to use a technique of this path on another edged weapon is at +1 difficulty.

**MET System:** Any use of this power on a different edged weapon requires an additional Blood Trait. You must have a total number of Ability Traits in *Melee* and *Crafts: Blacksmith* equal to your level of mastery. Awakening of the Steel uses both *Melee* and *Crafts: Blacksmith* for retests.

### • CONFER WITH THE BLADE

Although few Assamites claim to have actually spoken to a weapon's soul, blacksmiths and warriors alike have ascribed spiritual qualities to hand-forged blades for centuries. Practitioners of *Auspex* are familiar with the manner in which inanimate objects can bear impressions of their own history. Confer with the Blade allows a weapon's wielder to delve into the events that have occurred around his weapon. Some practitioners of this power claim this makes the weapon feel more "comfortable" in their hands, while others speak of the sense of history that an ancient blade bears. The actual impressions only take an instant to gain, though many prefer to spend much longer in contemplation if time permits.

**System:** The number of successes determines the amount of information the sorcerer gains regarding the blade's history and its present state, as well as all information yielded by a lesser number of successes. With three or more successes, the sorcerer may lower the difficulty on his next attempt to apply a blood magic ritual to the weapon by one.

One success Physical information only: precise length and weight (to the micrometer and milligram), chemical composition (assuming the character understands metallurgy), number of damage dice and type of damage (lethal or aggravated).

Two successes Historical overview: when and where the blade was forged, the name and face of its smith, brief glimpses of significant events in its existence.

Three successes Sorcerous understanding: the type and relative level of power of any enchantments or supernatural enhancements that the blade possesses as well as the name and face of the individual who laid them.

Four successes Subliminal synthesis: comprehensive knowledge of the sword's history. For the next seven nights, the character recognizes the taste of any blood that has ever stained the blade if she tastes it herself.

Five successes Total communion: The sword and the wielder become linked at a level deeper than the physical and more enduring than the immediate.





The Storyteller determines what information the sword holds for the character, but it may include any event in the blade's history or any aspect of its present existence and condition.

**MET System:** Make a Static Mental Challenge, risking up to five Mental Traits, against a difficulty of 7 traits. If you win, consult the above chart, substituting "Traits risked" for "successes." The Storyteller is the final arbiter of how much information any sword can give you.

#### •• GRASP OF THE MOUNTAIN

The best scimitar in all creation does its owner no good if it's lying five yards away from him. Grasp of the Mountain strengthens the spiritual bond between the sword and the swordsman in order to reinforce the wielder's physical grip on his weapon. A blade that is under the effect of this art never leaves its master's hand unless he so wills it.

**System:** For the rest of the scene, the character has a number of automatic successes to resist all attempts to disarm him equal to the number of successes rolled. He cannot accidentally drop the blade (which means his botches are likely to result in self-mutilation instead of an empty hand). If the character is somehow disarmed in spite of Grasp of the Mountain, he may call the blade back to his hand by successfully invoking this power again, assuming he has a clear line of sight to the weapon.

**MET System:** Spend a Mental Trait. For the rest of the scene, you may add your Mental Traits to your Physical Traits to resist attempts to disarm you, and you will not accidentally drop the weapon. If you are somehow disarmed, you may call the blade back to your hand by winning a Static Mental Challenge with a difficulty of the number of paces between you and the sword.

#### ••• PIERCE STEEL'S SHIN

At this level of understanding, the sorcerer can command his blade with such precision as to strike at an opponent's physical protection rather than his body. The sword transfers its full fury to the intended target, shredding even the toughest chain or plate. This strips away the victim's defenses, leaving him vulnerable to the next attack. While this power is of limited utility in modern nights, as full plate has fallen by the wayside, it remains in the path's progression of lessons due to its utility in destroying other obstacles.

**System:** For a number of turns equal to the number of successes rolled, each successful attack the character makes inflicts damage on the target's body armor rather than injuring him directly. Armor injured by this power must be of the metal variety. When the character makes a successful attack against an armored target, the player does not roll damage. Instead, he rolls a number of dice equal to the sword's damage bonus (the number of dice that it adds to his Strength) against a difficulty of 7. Each success reduces

the armor's soak bonus by one die. Armor that is reduced to zero soak dice in this manner is completely destroyed and unsalvageable.

While Pierce Steel's Skin is in effect, an attack against an unarmored target inflicts half damage (rounded down). Additional successes beyond those needed to destroy a piece of armor have no effect. At the Storyteller's discretion, Pierce Steel's Skin may destroy other inanimate objects (walls, doors, cars, dramatically appropriate obstacles) without significant damage to the sword. For the purposes of this power, Fortitude counts as part of the target's Stamina, not external armor.

**MET System:** For this turn and the next three turns, any successful attack you make with the weapon destroys two health levels' worth of armor protection for every one health level you would normally inflict. At the Storyteller's discretion, you may cut through inanimate objects that your weapon would not normally damage, with dramatically appropriate effects.

#### •••• RAZOR'S SHIELD

Many swordsmen hold that the duel is the ultimate test of the warrior because it places all opponents on an equal footing: Death is only three feet of steel away, and only the skill of the combatants determines who walks away. However, observers who are more pragmatic than romantic note that an enemy with a ranged weapon, be it bow, sling or gun, has the advantage of striking from much farther away than arm's length. While Awakening of the Steel cannot completely counteract this advantage, this power allows the skilled sorcerer some measure of defense as the sword interposes itself between its master and attacks from afar.

**System:** For a number of turns equal to the number of successes rolled, the character may attempt to parry projectiles. This requires one action for each projectile that the player wishes to block, and the character must be able to see the shot coming (Heightened Senses allows visual tracking of bullets). Each parrying attempt requires a Dexterity + Melee roll, with a difficulty determined by the speed of the projectile. Thrown objects have a difficulty of 6, arrows and crossbow bolts a difficulty of 7 and bullets a difficulty of 9. Each success subtracts one of the attacker's successes on his attack roll.

Razor's Shield does not allow the character to parry ranged attacks that do not incorporate solid projectiles, such as flame, lightning or spat blood.

**MET System:** For this turn and the next three turns, you may use your Melee Ability Traits to retest in challenges where you are subject to ranged attacks. You must be able to see the projectile. Bullets require Heightened Senses or a comparable power.

#### ••••• STRIKE AT THE TRUE FLESH

Although pacifists may find other uses for blades, turning their swords to plowshares, a warrior knows that swords were created for one purpose: to carve an enemy's flesh into bloody ruin. Strike at the True Flesh invokes the very essence of the sorcerer's weapon, reducing it to the embodiment of its very definition (or, as the more classically minded would put it, invoking the Platonic form) while simplifying its target to a similarly basic level. The results of such an invocation are usually devastating on both a philosophical and practical level as weapon and victim momentarily lose all supernatural attributes.

**System:** The effects of Strike at the True Flesh last for a number of turns equal to the number of successes rolled, and they end with the first successful attack that the character makes within this time period. The sword inflicts only the base amount of lethal damage that a weapon of its size and type would normally cause, disregarding all enhancements that it may have received (though augmentations to the wielder's strength or speed, such as Potence and Celerity, still have their normal effects, as do extra successes on the attack roll).

However, all the target's supernatural defenses (including Fortitude) are likewise negated — he soaks the attack only with his base Stamina. If the negation of his powers and defenses renders the target unable to soak lethal damage, he cannot soak the attack at all. Body armor does protect against this attack, as it is a mundane form of defense.

**MET System:** Expend two Mental Traits in addition to the power's Blood Trait cost and make an immediate attack with the sword, which counts as part of this action. For this attack, the sword loses any supernatural modifiers it might otherwise provide for accuracy and damage, inflicting only the base amount of damage for its type (though your Potence, Celerity and similar powers still affect your own strength and speed).

Your victim may not use any supernatural powers to absorb, negate, redirect, or otherwise affect this damage (including Fortitude powers). Any extra health levels are bypassed — if all of a target's normal Healthy levels are crossed off as a result of this attack, he instantly loses all "extra" ones and any further damage from the same attack is applied to his Bruised health levels. Body armor provides its normal degree of protection.

## MERITS AND FLAWS

### MAGICAL ADDICT (3-OR 5-PT. PHYSICAL FLAW)

Whether through a weak will, a lingering anomaly from your mortal days or overuse of ritual components like

*kalif*, you have become addicted to the alchemical psychoactive drugs that some sorcerers use to focus their blood magic. Going beyond a mere physical or psychological addiction, this dependence goes so far as to affect your very mastery of the powers at your command. Your competence with Assamite Sorcery is dependent on the frequency at which you cater to your addiction.

If you take this Flaw at 3 points, suffer a +2 difficulty to all rolls related to blood magic, including (but not limited to) use of path powers and rituals, whenever you are not under the effect of your drug of choice. For 5 points, you are completely unable to focus yourself enough to perform even the simplest blood magic if the drug is not in your system.

Only characters with at least one dot in Assamite Sorcery may take this Flaw. Non-Assamites may take this Flaw if they somehow receive tutelage in the Discipline.

**MET System:** If you take the Flaw at 3 points, you must bid two extra Traits on all challenges related to your blood magic when you are not under the influence of your substance of choice. For 5 points, you may not use any of your blood magic powers or rituals without the aid of your preferred chemical. You may not take this Flaw unless you have at least one basic Assamite Sorcery power. For the assistance of the terminally stupid, we'll say this explicitly: Roleplay your character's drug use, don't actually do it yourself.

#### UnBroken (3-pt. Supernatural Flaw)

For whatever reason, the Tremere curse was stronger in you than in most of your clanmates. This was no great liability while all of you were so afflicted. However, when ur-Shulgi cast the Breaking, the great ritual's power did not fully cleanse you. You now share your caste's thirst for Cainite blood—but for you, the very substance you crave is still a poison.

The Tremere curse that once affected your clan has been weakened in you, but it is not completely gone. When you drink non-Assamite Cainite vitae, each blood point enters your blood pool normally. However, on the way down, it inflicts one automatic, unsoakable level of lethal damage in a combination of unnatural toxic shock and internal acid burns. On the plus side, all your difficulties to resist the warrior caste's addiction are at -1 difficulty—think of it as aversion therapy. If you are a sorcerer or vizier, this Flaw is worth one additional point (for a total of 4), but you gain the warrior caste's addiction *in addition* to your own caste's weakness.

**MET System:** You take one health level of lethal damage for every Blood Trait of non-Assamite blood you ingest, though these Blood Traits do enter your Blood Pool after the damage is inflicted. You may not use *Fortitude* powers or other supernatural abilities to reduce this damage. You gain one free retest on every Self-Control challenge dealing with the warrior caste flaw.







## CHAPTER THREE: SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF HAQIM

*We few, we happy few, we band of brothers  
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me  
Shall be my brother  
—Henry V, Act IV, Scene iii*

Three castes. Four factions. A hundred tongues.  
Ten thousand years of history.

With all these factors, categorizing the Children of Haqim becomes an impossible task. Nevertheless, some attempt it. The following characters may be seen as representatives or as exceptions, depending on the view any given observer takes. Some are ready to play, fresh

from the Mountain and ready to prove their worth — just season their histories and Traits. Others have witnessed the passage of countless centuries and should not be trifled with, lest they drain the interloper dry and leave his desiccated corpse on a mountainside as a warning to others.







**PHYSICAL**  
 Dexterity x2 Tireless x2  
 Quick \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tough \_\_\_\_\_  
 Dignified \_\_\_\_\_  
 Diplomatic \_\_\_\_\_  
 Reclusive \_\_\_\_\_  
**MENTAL**  
 Alert \_\_\_\_\_ Reflective \_\_\_\_\_  
 Insightful \_\_\_\_\_ Vigilant \_\_\_\_\_  
 Instinctive \_\_\_\_\_ Wise \_\_\_\_\_  
 Knowledgeable \_\_\_\_\_  
**ABILITIES**  
 Brawl \_\_\_\_\_ Firearms \_\_\_\_\_  
 Craft/Dodge \_\_\_\_\_ Melee \_\_\_\_\_  
 Etiquette \_\_\_\_\_ Streetwise \_\_\_\_\_



**BACKGROUND**  
 Contacts x2 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Generations x2 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Influence/Street x1 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Resources x3 \_\_\_\_\_  
**INFLUENCES** \_\_\_\_\_  
**DISCIPLINES**  
 (Celestial/Alecity/Silence)  
 Quietude/Silence of Death) \_\_\_\_\_  
**MERITS & FLAWS** \_\_\_\_\_

**CONSCIENCE/CONVICTIONS**  
 ○○○○

**SELF-CONTROL/RESISTANCE**  
 ○○○○

**COURAGE**  
 ○○○○

**BLOOD**  
 ●●●●●●●●  
 □□□□□□□□

**WILLPOWER**  
 ●●●●●●●●  
 □□□□□□□□

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_  
**CHARACTER** Circuit Rider  
**CHRONICLE** \_\_\_\_\_  
**CLAN** Assamite (warrior)  
**GENERATION** 11th  
**AGE** \_\_\_\_\_  
**NATURE** Loner  
**DEMANDS** Conformist

**PHYSICAL**  
 Dexterity x2 Vigorous  
 Nimble x2 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Charming \_\_\_\_\_  
 Gentle \_\_\_\_\_  
 Intimidating x2 \_\_\_\_\_  
**MENTAL**  
 Attentive \_\_\_\_\_ Vigilant \_\_\_\_\_  
 Patient \_\_\_\_\_  
 Rational \_\_\_\_\_  
 Shrewd \_\_\_\_\_  
**ABILITIES**  
 Brawl x2 \_\_\_\_\_ Security \_\_\_\_\_  
 Investigation \_\_\_\_\_ Stealth \_\_\_\_\_  
 Melee x2 \_\_\_\_\_



**BACKGROUND**  
 Contacts x2 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Generations x2 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Resources x3 \_\_\_\_\_  
**INFLUENCES** \_\_\_\_\_  
**DISCIPLINES**  
 (Of Fortune & Luck of Sinners,  
 Mask of 1000 Faces)  
 Quietude x2 (Silence of Death,  
 Scorpion's Touch)  
**MERITS & FLAWS** \_\_\_\_\_

**CONSCIENCE/CONVICTIONS**  
 ○○○○

**SELF-CONTROL/RESISTANCE**  
 ○○○○

**COURAGE**  
 ○○○○

**BLOOD**  
 ●●●●●●●●  
 □□□□□□□□

**WILLPOWER**  
 ○○○○●●●●  
 □□□□□□□□

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_  
**CHARACTER** Boggaman  
**CHRONICLE** \_\_\_\_\_  
**CLAN** Assamite (warrior)  
**GENERATION** 11th  
**AGE** \_\_\_\_\_  
**NATURE** Bravo  
**DEMANDS** Rogue

















**RAW/HUMANITY**  
●●●●○

**PHYSICAL**  
Enduring x2 Tough  
Energetic  
Quick  
Dignified x2  
Diplomatic

**SOCIAL**  
Insightful  
Knowledgeable  
Observant  
Patient

**ABILITIES**  
Academics  
Mettle  
Linguistics x2 (Arabic, Sanskrit)

**DISCIPLINES**  
Auspex x2 (Heightened Sense, Aura Perception, The Spirit's Touch)  
Obsfuscate (Cloak of Shadows)

**BACKGROUND**  
Contacts x2  
Fame x1  
Generations 5  
Resources x1

**INFLUENCES**

**MERITS & FLAWS**



**CHARACTER/ARCHAEOLOGIST**  
NAME  
CHARACTER/ARCHAEOLOGIST  
CHRONICLE  
CLAN ASSAMITE (vizier)  
GENERATION 8th

**BLOOD**  
●●●●●●●●  
□□□□□□□□

**WILLPOWER**  
Age  
NATURE Architech  
DEMANDOR Visionary

**COUrage**  
●●○○○

**SETBACK/TORTURE**  
○○○○○

**CONNECTION/ADMINISTRATOR**  
●●●●●

**RAW/HUMANITY**  
●●●●○

**PHYSICAL**  
Graceful x2  
Steady

**SOCIAL**  
Alluring  
Beguiling  
Elegant Witty  
Alert  
Clever  
Creative  
Charmant x2

**ABILITIES**  
Brawl  
Expression x2  
Etiquette

**DISCIPLINES**  
Auspex x2 (Heightened Sense, Aura Perception)  
Quietus x1 (Silence of Death)

**BACKGROUND**  
Fame x1  
Generations 1  
Herds 3  
Influences: High Society, Al-Medakhil

**INFLUENCES**

**MERITS & FLAWS**



**CHARACTER/CHARACTER ASSASSIN**  
NAME  
CHARACTER/CHARACTER ASSASSIN  
CHRONICLE  
CLAN ASSAMITE (vizier)  
GENERATION 12th

**BLOOD**  
●●●●●●●●  
□□□□□□□□

**WILLPOWER**  
Age  
NATURE Judge  
DEMANDOR Bon Vivant

**COUrage**  
●●○○○

**SETBACK/TORTURE**  
○○○○○

**CONNECTION/ADMINISTRATOR**  
●●●●●

## ARCHAEOLOGIST

**Quote:** Well, it's not Second City vintage... but it just may be from Carthage. See the symbol etched into the tablet here? It's a derivative of a certain Brugh elder's personal sigil. Now hand me that trowel. And watch where you put your hands — sometimes they take up.

**Prelude:** There's something about holding a piece of history in your hands, watching it come alive again, gradually cleaning it and reassembling it and finally letting it go out into the world on display. It's almost like raising a child, and you have lots of children out there, scattered from New York to London to Cairo to Bombay to Bangkok.

Your last trip to the Arabian Peninsula was to be your final expedition before you returned to teaching for another five years. You were determined to make this one count, to bring back the find that would secure your place in the history books. Satellite radar had identified a complex of previously undiscovered ruins, and your team was to be first on site.

Three weeks of digging yielded little of substance: a few pots, some household tools, nothing significant. Your colleagues began to despair, but you remained resolute. Certainly the next chamber, the next shattered house, would yield something. Your certainty drove you to work through the nights, sleeping for a few hours at the height of the day's heat before forcing down another tasteless meal and plunging back into the dust.

Then, beneath the tumbled walls of a temple to a forgotten god, you found a crypt, sealed for countless centuries before a chance shifting of rocks had broken its lid. Taking a flashlight and a video camera, you eagerly descended, heedless of the dead air and hazardous footing within.

And then you were not alone in the darkness. An iron grip seized you and pinned you against the walls, and icy thoughts probed your mind. Then a voice spoke, harsh from a millennium of disuse, in a tongue you'd only studied in theory. It made you an offer: your obedience and your knowledge of the modern world in exchange for all the answers for which you'd never even known the questions. Of course, it already knew your answer.

**Concept:** You only consider yourself a Child of Haqim in an academic sense. You're doing much the same thing now that you did when you were alive, but your assistants have to carry more of the load. Every so often, your sire calls on you

### VAMPIRE

HERO CHARACTER SHEET

Name: _____	Heroic Archetype: _____	Characteristics: _____
Class: _____	Discipline: Visionary	Heroic: _____
Character: _____	Class: Archivist (Vizier)	Concept: Archivist

---

Attributes		
Strength: _____	Charisma: _____	Perception: _____
Dexterity: _____	Manipulation: _____	Intelligence: _____
Stamina: _____	Appearance: _____	Will: _____

---

Advantages		
Abilities: _____	Acquired Skills: _____	Acquaintances: _____
Advantages: _____	Charm: _____	Connections: _____
Edges: _____	Deceit: _____	Contacts: _____
Edges: _____	Empire: _____	Investments: _____
Edges: _____	Presence: _____	Law: _____
Edges: _____	Skills: _____	Linguistics: _____
Edges: _____	Traditions: _____	Medicine: _____
Edges: _____	Strength: _____	Chivalry: _____
Edges: _____	Survival: _____	Politics: _____
Edges: _____	Survival: _____	Science: _____

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Disadvantages		
Character Flaws: _____	Threats: _____	Weaknesses: _____
Character Flaws: _____	Defenses: _____	Character Flaws: _____
Character Flaws: _____	_____	Self-Confidence: _____
Character Flaws: _____	_____	_____
Character Flaws: _____	_____	Group: _____

---

Health: _____	Stamina: _____	Wounds: _____
Health: _____	Stamina: _____	Wounds: _____
Health: _____	Stamina: _____	Wounds: _____
Health: _____	Stamina: _____	Wounds: _____
Health: _____	Stamina: _____	Wounds: _____
Health: _____	Stamina: _____	Wounds: _____
Health: _____	Stamina: _____	Wounds: _____
Health: _____	Stamina: _____	Wounds: _____



for an exchange of knowledge. You explain a part of the world that it doesn't understand, and it gives you the key to another era of history it watched unfold. It seems to be working toward some goal — you wish you could piece together what it is.

### Roleplaying Hints:

You're no two-fisted adventurer like that Jones fellow in the cinema. Leave that foolishness to the warriors — your prey is knowledge, and the ravages of time are your enemy. Cainite politics bore you. You've fallen in with these Camarilla chaps because they provide enormous amounts of funding, and they have the pull to keep those Setish fellows off your back.

**Equipment:** rucksack, sleeping bag, pick, shovel, various smaller excavating tools, lantern, notebooks, maps, handheld GPS, crumpled grant confirmation letters from three museums

LEIF JONES 2009

## DARIAH DOG

**Quote:** *Go find your own alley. This one's mine. Want to fight for it?*

**Prelude:** You were born on the street of New Delhi — literally on the street, if your mother's half-coherent stories were to be believed. Your earliest memories were of the legs of passersby and a begging bowl that was as empty as your stomach. As you grew older, you learned how to do more than beg. First came theft, mainly picking pockets or snatching food from street vendors' carts. Then came fighting, the gradual result of more beatings than you could count. And when you got good enough at fighting, you learned to kill anyone who threatened you or your family.

You weren't good enough to save them from the monsters, though. During the last rainy season, you heard stories of things in the night, avatars of the gods come to punish the wicked. You shrugged them off as more of the things that drunk old men said — until you came home one morning to find your mother and sisters strewn about the shack like so many broken dolls. You couldn't pay the priests for funeral rites, so you simply set the hut on fire and prayed for the first time in your life.

Two nights later, your own luck ran out when you walked into the middle of a fight between the monsters. One of them grabbed you and tore your throat open — so you bit it right back. You were going to die anyway, right? Except you didn't. Well, almost didn't.

**Concept:** You're a street kid through and through. Your Embrace was an accident, the result of a sloppy and desperate feeding by a Child of Haqim fighting for his life against... something else. You've only met one other vampire since, and the conversation lasted just long enough for you to get the most basic information on what you are. She told you that India is no longer hospitable to your kind, and you're thinking about moving west. After all, one dirty street is as good as another.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You're uneducated, illiterate, unwashed and half-feral, but you're not stupid. You're just used to surviving in conditions that would turn most American street people pale. "Future" is a difficult concept for you because you're so accustomed to focusing on "tonight." Were you left to your own devices, you'd

be quite content to eke out a night-to-night existence on the streets, assaulting low-caste mortals for blood and money. You're obsessed with your own safety, but you're also a curious sort, which may lead you into running with a coterie to learn more about what you are.

**Equipment:** rusty knife, two stakes, three ghoul pariah dogs, burlap sack full of stolen odds and ends

VAMPIRE		
Name:	Arisee Survivor	Overseer: Dth
Player:	Hudson Bay	Home:
Character:	Clay Attache (vicer)	Concept: Pariah Dog
<b>ATTRIBUTES</b>		
Dexterity      Strength      Stamina		
Strength	Charisma	Intelligence
Dexterity	Manipulation	Will
Stamina	Appearance	
<b>ABILITIES</b>		
Tactics      Social      Resources		
Alertness	Animal Kin	Academics
Athletics	Craft	Computer
Brawl	Drive	Finance
Edge	Empathy	Investigation
Empathy	Focus	Law
Expression	Malice	Leadership
Intimidation	Performance	Medicine
Leadership	Security	Occult
Resource	Stealth	Politics
Subterfuge	Survival	Science
<b>ADVANTAGES</b>		
Background      Disposition      Vices		
Appearance	Attractiveness	Generosity/Generosity
Contacts	Aspirations	
	Charisma	
	Clarity	
	Composure	
	Control	
	Discipline	
	Endurance	
	Empathy	
	Focus	
	Grace	
	Intelligence	
	Intimidation	
	Leadership	
	Malice	
	Manipulation	
	Performance	
	Politics	
	Science	
	Security	
	Stealth	
	Survival	
	Tactics	
	Will	



LEIF JAMES





<p><b>CONSCIENCE/CONVICTION</b> ●○○○○</p> <p><b>SELF-CONTROL/TEMPERANCE</b> ●●●●○</p> <p><b>COURAGE</b> ●●●●○</p> <p><b>BLOOD</b> ●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●● □□□□□□□□□□□□</p> <p><b>WILLPOWER</b> ●●●●○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□</p>		<p><b>BACKGROUNDS</b> Generations x 2 _____ Rebels x 3 _____</p> <p><b>INFLUENCES</b> _____</p> <p><b>DISCIPLINES</b> Animalism (Facial Whispers) _____ Auspex (Heightened Perceptions) _____ Celebity (Alacrity) _____ Quiesce (Silence of Death) _____</p> <p><b>MERITS &amp; FLAWS</b> _____</p>	
<p><b>NAME</b> _____</p> <p><b>CHARACTER</b> <u>Pariah Dog</u></p> <p><b>CHRONICLE</b> _____</p> <p><b>CLAN ASSAMITE (VIZIER)</b> GENERATION <u>13th</u></p> <p><b>AGE</b> _____</p> <p><b>NATURE</b> <u>Director</u></p> <p><b>DEVIANCE</b> <u>Survivor</u></p>		<p><b>TALENTS/HURDLES</b> ○○○○●</p> <p><b>PHYSICAL</b> Quick x 2 <u>Tireless</u> x 2 Resilient <u>Vigorous</u></p> <p><b>SOCIAL</b> Stalwart _____ Ingratiating _____ Persuasive _____</p> <p><b>MENTAL</b> Alert x 2 _____ Cunning _____ Intuitive _____ Vigilant _____</p> <p><b>ABILITIES</b> Animal Ken <u>Stealth</u> Brawl x 2 <u>Streetwise</u> Occult <u>Survival</u></p>	

<p><b>CONSCIENCE/CONVICTION</b> ●●●○○</p> <p><b>SELF-CONTROL/TEMPERANCE</b> ●○○○○</p> <p><b>COURAGE</b> ●●●●○</p> <p><b>BLOOD</b> ●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●● □□□□□□□□□□□□</p> <p><b>WILLPOWER</b> ●●●●○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□</p>		<p><b>BACKGROUNDS</b> Generations x 2 _____ Herds x 2 _____ Mentors x 2 _____</p> <p><b>INFLUENCES</b> _____</p> <p><b>DISCIPLINES</b> Assamite Sorcery (Lunar Frenzy) x 2 _____ Hand of Flame (Flame Bolt) _____ Obscurate (Cloak of Shadows) _____ Quiesce (Silence of Death) _____</p> <p><b>MERITS &amp; FLAWS</b> _____</p>	
<p><b>NAME</b> _____</p> <p><b>CHARACTER</b> <u>Witch-Hunter</u></p> <p><b>CHRONICLE</b> _____</p> <p><b>CLAN ASSAMITE (SORCERER)</b> GENERATION <u>11th</u></p> <p><b>AGE</b> _____</p> <p><b>NATURE</b> <u>Conformist</u></p> <p><b>DEVIANCE</b> <u>Bowto</u></p>		<p><b>TALENTS/HURDLES</b> ○○○○●</p> <p><b>PHYSICAL</b> Agile <u>Robust</u> Dexterity x 2 <u>Tenacious</u> x 2 Lithe _____</p> <p><b>SOCIAL</b> Dignified _____ Intimidating _____ Persuasive _____</p> <p><b>MENTAL</b> Determined <u>Shrewd</u> Discerning _____ Discipline _____ Rational _____</p> <p><b>ABILITIES</b> Academics <u>Occult</u> x 2 Firearms <u>Streetwise</u> Melee <u>Subterfuge</u></p>	

## WITCH-HUNTER

**Quote:** *We can do this the easy way or the hard way. It doesn't matter much to me. Just choose how much pain you want to die with. I know exactly how much you can endure.*

**Prelude:** You first became aware of vampires in college. Actually, they tried to recruit you. The instructor for the evening section of Anatomy & Physiology you were taking was a pallid, sickly-looking old fellow who had a reputation for being rather eccentric. When he asked you to meet him in his office for a "conference," you were expecting some sort of homosexual proposition. Instead, you were treated to a display of something he called "thaumaturgy." Then he offered you an apprenticeship. When you refused, he tried to do... something... to you. It didn't take, and you ran.

You spent the rest of the semester a nervous wreck, sleeping during the days and spending the nights barricaded in your room. Your grades plummeted due to nonattendance, and you really weren't surprised when the school expelled you. With nowhere to go, you drifted downward, taking a series of dead-end night jobs that kept you around enough people to lend the illusion of safety.

Two years later, you were tending bar in Marrakesh when you saw a familiar face come through the door. You almost dropped the bottle and bolted for the back door, but your former professor's eyes met yours and you knew you'd never make it in time. You grabbed a bar towel with some half-formed thought of making a Molotov cocktail, but before you could find a matchbook, someone else struck. The windows blew in with a deafening thunderclap and a flash of lightning and suddenly a man-shaped torch was shrieking and flailing in the middle of the room. As the bar emptied in a panic, you simply stood there and watched as the thing you'd been running from for two years burned.

As the flames died, you felt a presence at your shoulder. Before you could turn, a voice whispered in your ear, "If you want to spend the rest of your life waiting for his friends to appear, walk away. If you want to learn how to keep the world safe from them, come with me."

**Concept:** A former medical student who stumbled onto the existence of vampires through sheer misfortune, you were ripe for recruitment with the right offer — the opportunity to strike out against humanity's Cainite parasites. You've thrown yourself into your studies with a fervor that impresses Children of Haqim who have centuries more experience than you, and you've already slain two Tremere blood-witches in single combat. The warlocks are your favored targets, both because your former nemesis was one and because of the threat they represent to your clan.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You're a fanatical convert, but you're not a stupid one. You know when to restrain yourself and when to go all-out. Many Camarilla neonates have met you without ever realizing what you were or how much you wanted to scatter their ashes. Some part of you still bemoans your lost humanity, and you've resumed your medical studies

### VAMPIRE

Character Sheet

Name:	William Confronted	Organization:	11th
Discipline:	Domination, Blood	Home:	Atlanta
Clan:	Clan Akasha (paragon)	Current:	With Hater

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#### Attributes

Strength	4	Charisma	1	Presence	1
Dexterity	1	Manipulation	1	Intelligence	1
Stamina	1	Apparition	1	Will	1

---

#### Abilities

Alibi	1	Animal Empathy	1	Assessment	1
Artistic Ability	1	Charm	1	Computer	1
Blame	1	Control	1	Deceit	1
Bluff	1	Empathy	1	Forgery	1
Body	1	Focus	1	Law	1
Business	1	Heal	1	Linguistics	1
Charm	1	Intimidation	1	Medicine	1
Concealment	1	Leadership	1	Occult	1
Deceit	1	Medicine	1	Politics	1
Empathy	1	Occult	1	Science	1
Forgery	1	Politics	1		
Heal	1	Science	1		
Intimidation	1				
Leadership	1				
Law	1				
Linguistics	1				
Medicine	1				
Occult	1				
Politics	1				
Science	1				

---

#### Advantages

Acquaintance	1	Disguise	1	Victim	1
Artistic Ability	1	Artistic Ability	1	Concealment	1
Blame	1	Blame	1	Deceit	1
Bluff	1	Bluff	1	Empathy	1
Body	1	Body	1	Forgery	1
Business	1	Business	1	Heal	1
Charm	1	Charm	1	Intimidation	1
Concealment	1	Concealment	1	Leadership	1
Deceit	1	Deceit	1	Law	1
Empathy	1	Empathy	1	Linguistics	1
Forgery	1	Forgery	1	Medicine	1
Heal	1	Heal	1	Occult	1
Intimidation	1	Intimidation	1	Politics	1
Leadership	1	Leadership	1	Science	1
Law	1	Law	1		
Linguistics	1	Linguistics	1		
Medicine	1	Medicine	1		
Occult	1	Occult	1		
Politics	1	Politics	1		
Science	1	Science	1		

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#### Equipment

Flare Pistol	1	Medical Kit	1
Nomex Gloves	1	Textbooks	1
Paraphernalia	1	Notes	1
Stolen Items	1		



when time permits in the vague hope of making a positive contribution to the mortal world.

**Equipment:** flare pistol, Nomex gloves, paramedic's kit, medical texts, notebooks full of observations on other vampires, stolen Thaumaturgical paraphernalia that you don't understand yet

KEIF  
2000

## PROPHET OF CAINE

**Quote:** *Do not despair, my brethren! For even though our ranks are lessened, we grow stronger through our traitorous cousins' weakness! Know that any who fall tonight will arise to fight again on the Final Night, and we will prevail, for our cause is that of freedom!*

**Prelude:** You were barely a man when the Master came to your village, as he had every fourteen years for generations. You never expected to escape from the simple life of a shepherd and barely believed that the Master was more than a tale your mother had told to frighten you. But when your turn came to stand before him and gaze into the mirror he held, you did not see your own face but the image of a burning mountain. Then the Master passed his obsidian hand across your face and the vision faded. "You will learn," he said, and took you away. And for eight years, you learned.

Your first year as a Child of Haqim had barely passed when ur-Shulgi awoke and rent the Tremere curse like a rag. You felt the horrible surge of power singing in your blood, and you knew the true strength of the immortals. And if ur-Shulgi was truly Haqim's herald, then you could never heed the Ancestor's will, for Allah could not forgive you if you turned away from him. So you ran, ran far enough that your sire's voice in your head could not call you back, ran fast enough to elude the hounds that the Eldest set to bring down all those like you. And when you were starving in Milan, penniless and desperate and unable to even speak the local language, the Lasombra who found you extended a merciful hand, showed you the glory of the Sabbat and told you of the Antediluvians' treachery.

And Allah will forgive you for your studies of Caine's power. Does he not command you to seek knowledge?

**Concepts:** You are a dual anomaly within the Sabbat: an Assamite sorcerer and a Muslim. Most Noddists approach the Path of Caine with European or Christian assumptions; your interpretation of many of its tenets and early historical facts from an Islamic perspective brings you into frequent debate with more traditional scholars. Your packmates question some of your beliefs, but they recognize you as the spiritual heart of the pack.

### Roleplaying

**Hints:** You've seized upon the Path of Caine as a complement to, not a replacement for, your faith. The Sabbat is the

VAMPIRE		
Name:	Wahne Feghli	Generation: 9th
Clan:	Assamite	Home:
Character:	Chronic Director	Character:
	Chronic Antediluvian	Character:
	Chronic Prophet of Caine	
ATTRIBUTES		
Strength: 00000	Charisma: 00000	Presence: 00000
Dexterity: 00000	Manipulation: 00000	Intelligence: 00000
Stamina: 00000	Appearance: 00000	Will: 00000
ABILITIES		
Arms: 00000	Animal Ken: 00000	Academics: 00000
Athletics: 00000	Craft: 00000	Commerce: 00000
Awaken: 00000	Drive: 00000	Deceit: 00000
Charm: 00000	Empathy: 00000	Investigation: 00000
Composure: 00000	Etiquette: 00000	Law: 00000
Empathy: 00000	Heal: 00000	Leadership: 00000
Intimidation: 00000	Performance: 00000	Medicine: 00000
Leadership: 00000	Security: 00000	Stealth: 00000
Presence: 00000	Social: 00000	Politics: 00000
Subterfuge: 00000	Survival: 00000	Science: 00000
ACTIVITIES		
Academics: 00000	Artistic Pursuits: 00000	Commerce/Finance: 00000
Arms: 00000	Path of Blood: 00000	
Artistic: 00000	Quest: 00000	Religion/Spirituality: 00000
Charm: 00000		
Composure: 00000		
Empathy: 00000		
Intimidation: 00000		
Leadership: 00000		
Presence: 00000		
Subterfuge: 00000		
Willpower: 00000		
Discipline: 00000		
Control: 00000		
Empathy: 00000		
Intimidation: 00000		
Leadership: 00000		
Presence: 00000		
Subterfuge: 00000		
Willpower: 00000		
Discipline: 00000		
Control: 00000		
Empathy: 00000		
Intimidation: 00000		
Leadership: 00000		
Presence: 00000		
Subterfuge: 00000		
Willpower: 00000		
Discipline: 00000		
Control: 00000		
Empathy: 00000		
Intimidation: 00000		
Leadership: 00000		
Presence: 00000		
Subterfuge: 00000		
Willpower: 00000		
Discipline: 00000		
Control: 00000		
Empathy: 00000		
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**CLEANER**

**Quote:** Jimmy, I swear to God, if you make me come down here one more fucking time, you're gonna be drinking your dinner through a straw for a month. Now shut your yap and grab that mop. You made one grand-high motherfucker of a mess here and I'm not wiping all this shit up by myself.

**Preludes:** When you were a kid, you laughed at all the movies about the mob. None of the Hollywood image was true. Anyone who'd been that careless wouldn't have lasted a week in the organization. The name of the game is deniability: don't get caught. And from the word "go," you were eminently deniable. Your baby face was a constant source of irritation, but it made you look innocent enough to avoid scrutiny. A few acting courses in college (don't laugh, a straight guy in a drama class gets more ass than a toilet seat) put the polish on an already impressive ability to bullshit your way out of nearly any situation.

You started off doing smalltime work, a little bit of money laundering here and some enforcement there. One night, you got a panicked call from Frankie Angelou, who had a stiff on his hands and the heat on his tail. You did some fast planning and gave Frankie a roundabout route to take to your place. While he was on the road, you were stealing the ten-point buck that your neighbor had dressed out and hung from the tree in his back yard. You swapped the deer for the corpse and sent Frankie home with eighty pounds of venison and your granddad's hunting rifle in his car. That explained all the blood soaked into the car. Then you made a quick run by a chemical plant in your old neighborhood and found a half-full waste drum to ditch the dead dude in.

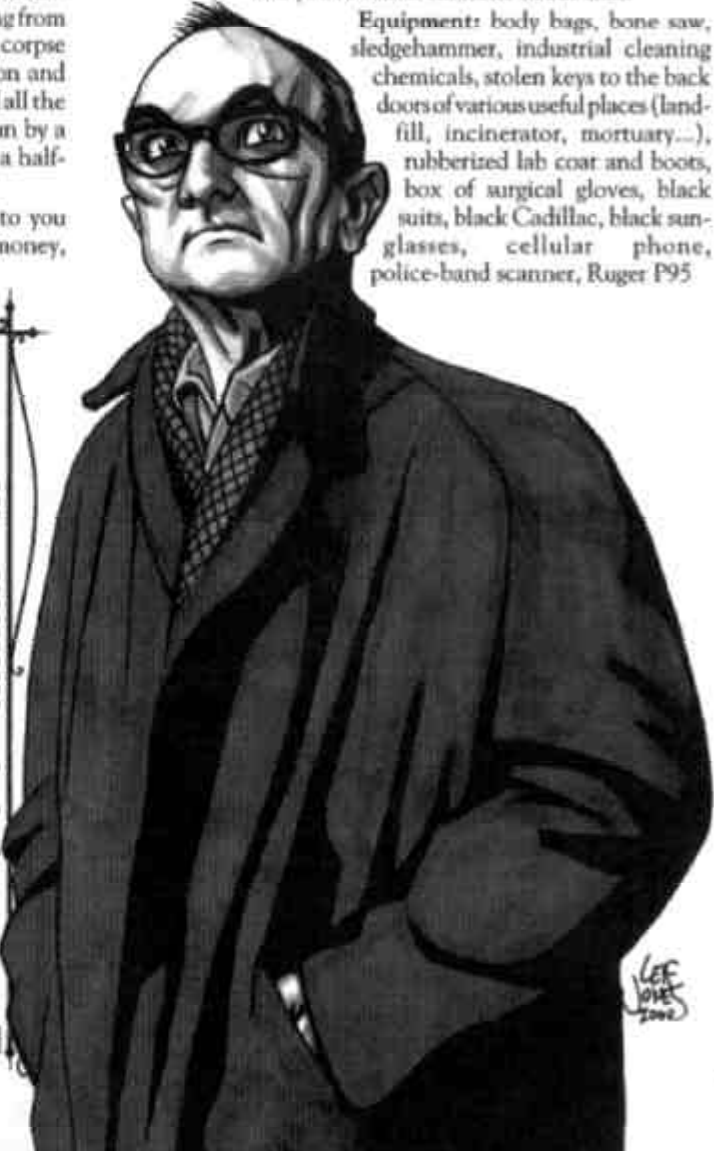
After that, you were in business. People came to you when they had shit to hide. Bodies, guns, cats, drugs, money,

girls... once you made an 88-foot yacht vanish, and you're never telling how you pulled that one off. When a dead guy walked into your office with a new job offer, you laughed at him. Then he showed you a few tricks that made you sit up and take notice. Disappearing from plain sight? Gimme some of that.

**Concept:** When you were Embraced, your first priority was covering up the evidence of the warrior caste's violent episodes. Now you're working for an archon, covering up Masquerade breaches—which makes for a lot more work, but a lot more variety. Nothing but ashes and bloodstains was getting tiring. You still keep in touch with the organization, because they're family, and the occasional exchange of favors isn't out of the question.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You talk a lot of shit, but you really do know what you're doing. Mafia connections make for a certain amount of image and intimidation factor, though people keep thinking you're one of those Giovanni assholes. Give everyone around you good-natured (or plain malicious) verbal abuse if there's no crisis to deal with, but you're all business when the hammer comes down. The irony of working for what amounts to a Camarilla cop doesn't escape you, and you're rather sarcastic about that.

**Equipment:** body bags, bone saw, sledgehammer, industrial cleaning chemicals, stolen keys to the back doors of various useful places (landfill, incinerator, mortuary...), rubberized lab coat and boots, box of surgical gloves, black suits, black Cadillac, black sunglasses, cellular phone, police-band scanner, Ruger P95



LEE JONES 2000

**VAMPIRE**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Species: **Human-Perfectionist**      Generation: **12th**

Clan: **Asshole (Gardner)**      Group: **Cleaner**

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**ATTRIBUTES**

Strength	Charisma	Perception
Dexterity	Manipulation	Intelligence
Stamina	Apprentice	Will

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**ABILITIES**

Address	Animal Ears	Academics
Adrenaline	Carry	Computer
Blade	Charm	Finance
Edge	Empire	Investigation
Empire	Evade	Law
Empire	Hide	Leadership
Intimidation	Performance	Medicine
Leadership	Security	Shock
Security	Stealth	Politics
Subterfuge	Surreal	Science

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**ADVANTAGES**

Adaptability	Disguise	Victims
Alert	Aggravated Servant	Guaranteed Conversion
Contacts	(Weather Control)	
Empire	Chastity	
Empire	Gifted	Self-Cannibalism
Empire		Change

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Blood of Life: \_\_\_\_\_     
 Humanoid Feature: \_\_\_\_\_     
 Blood:

\_\_\_\_\_     
 Gift: ●●●●●○○○○○     
 Horn:

\_\_\_\_\_     
 Willpower: ●●●●●○○○○○     
 Injured:

\_\_\_\_\_     
 \_\_\_\_\_     
 Wounded:

\_\_\_\_\_     
 \_\_\_\_\_     
 Masked:

\_\_\_\_\_     
 \_\_\_\_\_     
 Opposed:

\_\_\_\_\_     
 \_\_\_\_\_     
 Suspended:

\_\_\_\_\_     
 \_\_\_\_\_     
 Exorcism:

# THE HEIRS OF HAQIM

## REAPERS OF THE WHIRLWIND (SIGNIFICANT WARRIORS)

### JAMAL, FIRST MARTYR OF THE SCHISM

Jamal rose to prominence among the Children of Haqim in the late 12th century. Already an elder then, he had been involved in the Holy Land's long history of warfare since his breathing days, when he came from sub-Saharan Africa to follow the Prophet's call. Later, he led the warriors who participated in the establishment of the Abbasid caliphate. Jamal made his haven in the Abbasid capitol of Baghdad until the crusades, when he moved west to take the field against the French. During the centuries of battle, he distinguished himself as a leader as well as a master swordsman and archer.

During the Anarch Revolt, the Eldest sent Jamal to destroy the Tzimisce elder Dracula, who opposed the Tzimisce alliance with the Children of Haqim. Jamal disappeared for nearly a century, returning to Alamut bearing the scars of a vicious battle. He spoke to no one save the *du'at* and the Eldest of his defeat, and none of those parties ever made the details public. Five years later, after the signature of the Treaty of Tyre, the Eldest committed ritual suicide to expiate his shame. Jamal, then the oldest active fourth generation Child of Haqim, assumed the Black Throne in 1497.

Jamal proved a cunning and effective Eldest, though his open practice of the Muslim faith troubled many Path of Blood adherents who could not reconcile the tenets of a mortal religion with those of their own codes. The Eldest had no such difficulty, reminding many warriors that Allah, like Haqim, is merciful and just to those who deserve such considerations.

In the end, Jamal's faith proved to be his undoing. When ur-Shulgi arose, the current Eldest was the first Child of Haqim to whom the Shepherd appeared. Jamal refused to recant his faith in favor of utter devotion to Haqim. Ur-Shulgi staked him, displaying Jamal's impaled body above the Black Throne for a month before draining his blood into a clay vessel and scattering his ashes across the sand of Petra. The intended message of absolute obedience did not come across as well as ur-Shulgi had intended, as Islam has a long tradition of holy martyrs. Many Muslim Assamites now use Jamal's name as a rallying cry in the Schism.

### TARIQ THE SILENT

The Camarilla fears Tariq above few other Children of Haqim. Perhaps their perspective would change if they knew of ur-Shulgi's existence and agenda — but perhaps not. No other Cainite has occupied a place on the Red List for as long as Tariq, nor has any other Assamite received credit or blame for the destruction of more Camarilla vampires.

The Sabbat, too, fears Tariq, but for different reasons. His capture by the Tremere *antitribu* was the last major

accomplishment of that bloodline before its destruction. Several archbishops suspect Tariq of, if not slaying the Tremere *antitribu* single-handedly, then at least playing a key role in their destruction.

In truth, Tariq would have slain Goratrix's entire band of followers if he could have, but other matters occupied his attention at the time. The Seraph Djuhah, himself an Assamite *antitribu* warrior, had assigned a pack of his childer and grandchilder to follow Tariq, obeying his every command as if it came from the Seraph himself. This fostered the impression among the Sabbat that Djuhah had accomplished the feat of recruiting Tariq to the Sabbat cause, which in turn gave Djuhah the political leverage necessary to establish other permanent Black Hand units and cells.

While this tactic was highly effective for four years, buying Djuhah no small amount of maneuvering room, it eventually ended in disaster. One of Tariq's "followers" was an overly loquacious individual. Fascinated by Tariq's reputation, she approached him, engaging him in repeated one-sided conversations despite his inability to respond. Over the course of several months, she allowed enough of Djuhah's scheme to slip for the broken-spirited Tariq to piece it together. The night after the realization struck Tariq, the pack awoke to find him gone. Two weeks later, Djuhah's ghouls found his remains pinned to the wall of his study with a spear through the left eye socket.

Tariq's current whereabouts and loyalties are unknown. Ur-Shulgi is doubtless interested in securing the allegiance of such a renowned warrior, but all attempts by Alamut's sorcerers to locate him have met with failure. Tariq has not appeared in any Camarilla city since Djuhah's death, nor have any Sabbat reported encounters with him.

### FATIMA AL-FAQADI

Like her sire, Thetmes, Fatima al-Faqadi was widely regarded as one of the most proficient killers among the Children of Haqim. Like her sire's long-time rival, the former Eldest Jamal, Fatima was unwavering in her dedication to Allah for the state of her soul, taking Haqim as merely her guide for affairs on earth. Combined with her oft-denied love for the Lasombra elder Lucita, these factors led to her estrangement from her sire near the end of the crusades. Since then, Fatima has operated largely as a free agent, returning to Alamut only when compelled by the bonds of loyalty.

Fatima's last contact with Alamut was shortly after the Breaking. She returned at the request of al-Ashrad to evaluate the training of several neonates and to grudgingly accept an assassination contract on the Lasombra Archbishop Ambrosio Monçada. During her execution of the contract, Fatima received a warning from her sire that she must choose between Allah and Haqim or face destruction at the hands of the Eldest. Fatima executed her contract, then vanished, not even returning to Alamut to claim her reward. Ur-Shulgi subsequently declared Fatima to be a renegade, subject to destruction at the hands of any Child of Haqim who could bring her down.



This distinction causes Fatima little distress. After a year's meditation in a cave near Mecca, during which Lucita was her only visitor, she has reconciled her conflicting loyalties and renewed her commitment to follow Allah as her undead condition permits. The former Hand of Vengeance has vowed to find her own truth in Haqim's teachings and is reportedly attempting to contact the mysterious Inconnu in hopes of dealing with any ancient Children of Haqim among their ranks. She currently considers herself dispossessed, maintaining neutral relations with al-Ashrad himself but none with his schismatic followers. Those loyalists who have attempted to engage her have found themselves staked and shipped to Baghdad with the warning "mercy is sharper than any knife" ringing in their ears.

#### THETMES

**Background:** As a young man, Thetmes was conscripted into Ptolemy's army to fight against Cleopatra and her Roman allies. After Ptolemy's defeat, many of the survivors of his forces were sent to Rome to fight in the gladiatorial games. Thetmes found a talent for single combat that had eluded him in the chaos of the battlefield. As his star rose, the young Egyptian caught the eyes of many wealthy spectators. After changing hands several times, Thetmes found himself in the employ of a Syrian cloth merchant who extended him the opportunity to kill all the Romans he could ever want. Thetmes eagerly agreed and began his indoctrination into the Web of Knives within the year.

By the early 12th century, Thetmes had risen to lead the Web of Knives through a combination of skill and opportunity. He had not confined himself to Web business during the intervening centuries. Indeed, few warriors who had seen more than a century did not know him. To many, Thetmes epitomized the popular stereotype of the Assamite assassin: He was no longer a soldier or a gladiator, but rather an artist whose chosen craft was death. Every new warrior, Thetmes believed, had something to teach him, and he had some knowledge to share in return.

With this outlook, few were surprised that Thetmes was appalled by the disastrous assault on Vienna in 1529, which saw the destruction of nearly thirty warriors and a dozen sorcerers. He returned to Alamut and challenged the Caliph with the words, "a thrice-blinded Salubri healer with the leadership skills of a camel could command the *rafiq* better than you." The resulting unarmed duel lasted for precisely the amount of time required for Thetmes to shatter each of the Caliph's major joints into dust before twisting his head from his shoulders and presenting the crumbling skull to Jamal.

During Thetmes' tenure as Caliph, he was constantly at odds with the Eldest. Thetmes never adopted Islam and saw Jamal's adherence to the Muslim faith as an affront to Haqim's own glory. Many among the *silsila* believed that only the common bond of warrior caste blood kept Thetmes from challenging Jamal for the Black Throne. However, he never censured any warrior of lesser rank who professed



Muslim beliefs, stating that "in the end, only you can tend to your own soul as you see fit."

Thetmes disappeared from view soon after the appearance of ur-Shulgi. For a time, he was rumored to have been destroyed in a manner similar to that in which Jamal perished, though none could say what Thetmes could have done to offend the new Eldest. More recently, rumors have placed him on a variety of covert missions for the Eldest. Many warriors claim to have encountered him shortly before or immediately after making decisions as to where they stood in the Schism.

**Image:** Thetmes carries himself like a hunting cat: eyes constantly in motion, body perfectly still, ready to spring into action at a moment's notice. Some have compared his mannerisms to those of ur-Shulgi, and they are not far wrong. His natural features are those typically ascribed to Egyptians and other North Africans, but he often prefers to blur them with *Obfuscate*. Likewise, he often lightens his jet-black skin with cosmetics when dealing with non-Assamite vampires, downplaying his age and clan in order to create a false sense of security.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You are ur-Shulgi's right hand in preparing the Children of Haqim for the Ancestor's return. This is not the blind obedience you see in some of your younger subordinates, but rather a carefully calculated position based on a thousand years of dealings with other vampires. You are occasionally troubled by the gaps in your personal experiences. One of the many periods you spent in torpor spanned the point at which Haqim left the clan for the last time, and the fact that you were never able to offer him your respects gnaws on your conscience. In some way, you feel that service to his herald will atone for this shortcoming.

If a Child of Haqim feels the need to separate himself from Alamut, allow him to go — he has made his choice, and eventually he will suffer for it. To those who are still

questioning their loyalty, be as accommodating as your considerable patience allows you to be, giving them any guidance they may beg of you. You only want allegiance based on reason, not that which comes from a moment's passion or a mercenary's hunger for power and wealth. On the rare occasions when you deal with other vampires, allow them one chance to prove themselves honorable. If they do so, treat them with all the respect you would show to a fellow Child of Haqim — within reason, of course. If they do not, disabuse them of any notions of equality they may possess.

**Sire:** Sha'hiri

**Nature:** Visionary

**Demeanor:** Fanatic

**Generation:** 5th

**Embrace:** 25 B.C.

**Apparent Age:** early 20s

**Physical:** Strength 4, Dexterity 6, Stamina 5

**Social:** Charisma 5, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

**Mental:** Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 6

**Talents:** Alertness 6, Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 4, Expression 3, Intimidation 4, Leadership 7, Subterfuge 2

**Skills:** Archery 5, Etiquette 2, Firearms 2, Melee 7, Performance 4, Security 1, Stealth 5, Survival 3

**Knowledges:** Academics (Path of Blood) 6, Investigation 4, Linguistics 4, Medicine 2, Occult 2, Politics 3

**Disciplines:** Auspex 2, Celerity 6, Fortitude 4, Obfuscate 6, Potence 4, Presence 2, Quietus 8

**Backgrounds:** Allies 8, Clan Prestige 8, Contacts 8, Herd 3, Influence 2, Retainers (ghoul mercenaries) 8

**Virtues:** Conviction 5, Self-Control 4, Courage 5

**Morality:** Path of Blood 8

**Willpower:** 8

#### JANNI

**Background:** Janni was born in 1947, one of the first children of the new Jewish homeland. Her father's stories of the Shoah inspired her to make her own vow of "never again," and she became involved in patriotic youth groups as soon as she was old enough. Her fervor and natural intelligence brought her to the attention of the nascent Israeli intelligence services, and Shin Bet recruited her during her first year of college. Her later accomplishments brought her to the attention of another force as well, and a Persian warrior elder Embraced her in 1970.

Abandoned by her sire when she refused to adopt the Path of Blood, Janni quickly associated herself with such notables as warrior Amarisbat Ariela and sorcerer Gerhard von Eich. She quickly proved to have a natural aptitude for weapons of all types, from slings to guided anti-tank missiles, earning the coveted warrior caste title of "Master of Weapons" within five years of her Embrace. Her utter refusal to back down from her beliefs (even after being beaten into torpor several times) and her innate proficiency with the tools of warfare earned her the respect of the newer generations of warriors, and the personal regard

of several hundred Assamites provides considerable political leverage.

Oddly enough for one of her rock-solid faith, Janni has not declared schismatic allegiance in the wake of ur-Shulgi's appearance. She remains loyal to Alamut, though she continues to pursue her own agendas across the Middle East, forsaking the pursuit of Camarilla blood over the destruction of Setites and the occasional Lasombra. For its part, ur-Shulgi seems oddly tolerant of this ascendant neorate and has not yet summoned her to Alamut to profess her allegiance to Haqim above all others. Indeed, the Eldest has mentioned Janni in passing when asked about possible candidates for the title of Caliph to replace the absent Thetmes. "In a century or three," it says, and makes an expression that would be a smile on another being.

**Image:** Janni is of strong Mediterranean blood: dark eyes, wavy dark hair, dark skin. She can fit in virtually anywhere except the Far East. With a few adjustments to her posture, clothing, hair and expression, she can appear to be any age between 14 and 45. She typically wears street clothes suited to Western middle-class fashion unless the situation calls for something else.

**Roleplaying Hints:** The Shin Bet gave you the opportunity to destroy the enemies of your people. The Assamites promised you the opportunity to destroy the enemies of *all* people. To be sure, you've had some chances to do so, as your drawstring bag full of Setite fangs proves, but many of the Children of Haqim seem to have lost sight of the lofty ideals they aspire to, and you're under a great deal of pressure to fight the clan's enemies rather than your own. You're having difficulty with your dual loyalties, and nightly you pray for guidance.

Of course, you don't allow any of this to show on the outside. As far as anyone you meet is concerned, you are perfectly composed, precisely prepared and eminently capable. When not taking on a temporary identity (not



your favorite thing, to be certain, as you slip away from your own self too easily), you prefer to spend your time on the streets of Tel Aviv among students like you used to be. There's always a chance that a former colleague will recognize you, or a new Shin Bet operative will know your face from a memorial wall, but you consider that an acceptable risk to stay in touch with the reasons you accepted the burden of immortality.

**Sire:** Anastasius the Axe

**Nature:** Perfectionist

**Demeanor:** Architect

**Generation:** 9th

**Embrace:** 1970

**Apparent Age:** anywhere from late teens to early 40s

**Physical:** Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

**Social:** Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

**Mental:** Perception 3, Intelligence 5, Wits 2

**Talents:** Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3

**Skills:** Archery 4, Drive 1, Etiquette 1, Firearms 5, Heavy Weapons 3, Melee 4, Performance (piano) 5, Stealth 1

**Knowledges:** Academics (mathematics) 4, Investigation 3, Linguistics 3, Medicine 2, Science 1

**Disciplines:** Auspex 1, Celerity 3, Fortitude 1, Obfuscate 2, Quietus 1

**Backgrounds:** Allies (other neonates) 5, Clan Prestige 4, Contacts 2, Mentor (various elders) 5, Resources 3

**Virtues:** Conscience 3, Self-Control 4, Courage 4

**Morality:** Humanity 5 (but slowly dropping)

**Willpower:** 9 (but, likewise, slowly dropping)

## COMPANIONS TO OWLS (SIGNIFICANT VIZIERS)

### MATA HARI

Margareta Gertrud Zelle was born in Holland during the late 19th century. Daughter of a Dutch shopkeeper and his Javanese wife, she was thrown out of teaching school for having an affair with the headmaster. At 18, she married a Dutch naval officer and moved to the Dutch East Indies with him, bearing him two children before divorcing him in 1905. She then relocated to Paris, taking the name Mata Hari ("Eye of Dawn") and the identity of a Javanese princess and debuting as an erotic dancer.

During the Great War, French intelligence agents recruited Mata Hari to spy on the German crown prince, with whom she was personally acquainted through her dancing. However, during her journey to Germany via Spain and Holland, her ship was stopped and she was interrogated by British officials. The British warned her that her mission was compromised and that she should return to Spain. Upon doing so, she entered into an affair with the German military attache to Spain. When her lover tired of the affair, he betrayed her to the French by sending a message to Berlin praising her value as a double agent, using a code that he knew the Allies had cracked.

Mata Hari was arrested upon her return to France in January 1917. Despite the lack of direct evidence against her, French and British counterintelligence agents had amassed sufficient circumstantial evidence to conduct a closed court-martial. She was found guilty and sentenced to death.

The night before her execution, Mata Hari received a visitor in her cell: a distinguished Turkish officer whom she knew from her performances at the Oriental Studies Museum in Paris. He confessed that he had been smitten with her from the first night he saw her and that such beauty should not be wasted by mere mortal authorities. When she stood before the firing squad at dawn, she refused a blindfold and blew the men a kiss before they fired. Other soldiers, ghouls of her sire, hastened her fallen form away before the sun could fully rise over the walls of the prison.

Since that day, Mata Hari has been one of the viziers' most valued spies within Cainite society, feeding the clan information on the most sensitive affairs of immortals across the globe. The talents that life never gave her a chance to develop have blossomed fully in death, and she is now one of the Kindred world's most adept infiltrators. A mistress of disguise and improvisation, she has a score of identities within the Camarilla, the Sabbat and various independent clans and sects. One of her many faces holds the principdom of a city in the American Midwest, while another leads a Black Hand pack in Chile and a third enjoyed a brief stint on the Red List before her "destruction." All sides of the Schism claim Mata Hari as a loyal member, and all of them may be correct.

### TEGYRIUS

**Background:** In his breathing days, Tegyrus rode with Alexander the Great's armies. A former cavalry officer, he was forced into working as a tribune and mercenary liaison officer when his mount fell and crushed his leg. He received the Blood from a nameless Child of Haqim who claimed to remember the nights of the Second City and the role the judges had played. Tegyrus took such a role for himself, wandering the world for centuries, serving as an anonymous neutral arbiter in countless Cainite and mortal disputes. Some ancient Ventrue and Malkavians remember his presence in the court of Justinian, watching as that emperor codified Roman law. Other Cainites remember his presence at later events: the bloody battles over Constantinople, in which he prowled among lesser vampires like a hunting wolf, slaying with apparent contempt for his victims.

After the sack of Constantinople in 1204, Tegyrus served one term as Vizier before disappearing for several centuries. Some reports placed him in torpor in a forgotten sewer of Rome, while others stated that he had gone east in search of the knowledge that Saulot had once found there. Whatever the case, he reappeared in France in the late 17th century in the company of the surviving members of his Byzantine-era coterie. After settling whatever business had brought together that disparate group of



elders, he journeyed to Alamut at the request of the Vizier to claim the Seat of Dust and Bone on the Council of Scrolls.

In 1801, the viziers again elected Tegyrus to lead them. He remained at Alamut for most of the following two centuries, though the latter half of the 20th century saw him make sporadic trips to the World Court in the Netherlands. The abrupt drop-off in vizier involvement in the 1927 and 1990 elections reportedly discouraged Tegyrus, and he entered month-long torpors on many occasions.

Ur-Shulgi's awakening and subsequent assumption of power galvanized Tegyrus to action. While reverence toward Haqim was acceptable to the Vizier, blind worship of him as a genocidal god went against every legacy of the Second City. Shaking off the lethargy of centuries, he conspired with al-Ashrad to confront the Children of Haqim with the proof of their long-ignored heritage as judges and defenders of the mortals. Many Children on both sides of the Schism consider him to be one of the primary architects of that rift.

Tonight, Tegyrus is firmly entrenched in the schismatic camp. His exact whereabouts are unknown, presumably as protection against ur-Shulgi's loyalists, but his hand is visible in every Camarilla city that welcomes the schismatics. Some viziers who were close to Tegyrus before his assumption of the Vizier's mantle whisper that one of his ancient associates now sits on the Camarilla's Inner Council and al-Ashrad's bid for Camarilla alliance would have failed had it not been for the Vizier's connections. To date, no one has had the courage to directly inquire as to the truth of these rumors.

**Image:** Tegyrus still maintains the short pointed beard he wore in life. He was Embraced near the end of his military career, and the gray hair in his beard and at his temples stands in sharp contrast to the pure black of his skin. He still walks with a slight limp, the result of a shattered thigh that never healed properly, but centuries of practice allow him to minimize its effects. Tegyrus is a master linguist and any accent that a listener can detect in his speech is a conscious choice on his part.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You are ancient, and the recent conflict within your clan is one of the few things that can capture your interest long enough to keep you from slipping into torpor out of sheer lethargy. For the present night, you're intent on securing the Children of Haqim's position within the Camarilla, and you will do whatever is necessary to preserve the tenuous alliance. If anyone asks your opinion on a matter that requires more than a moment's thought, you tend to become lost in yourself as you cite countless precedents and historical minutia. You're not exactly senile — more like overloaded — but that's the impression you give at times.

The only other thing that truly captures your attention is a military matter. You were a soldier in life, and you still consider yourself one — and to their own personal choice of hells with any warrior who says differently! Anyone who discusses military history with you finds an



adept and willing mentor, so long as they refrain from slighting any of the great generals with whom you claim personal acquaintance.

**Sire:** unknown

**Nature:** Judge

**Demeanor:** Traditionalist

**Generation:** 5th

**Embrace:** 330 B.C.

**Apparent Age:** late 20s

**Physical:** Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 6

**Social:** Charisma 6, Manipulation 6, Appearance 2

**Mental:** Perception 7, Intelligence 6, Wits 7

**Talents:** Alertness 6, Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 5, Empathy 6, Expression 2, Intimidation 8, Leadership 8, Subterfuge (Cainite politics) 7

**Skills:** Archery 7, Crafts (blacksmith) 7, Drive 1, Etiquette 7, Firearms 1, Melee 7, Stealth 2, Survival 6

**Knowledge:** Academics 8, Investigation 8, Law 8, Linguistics 8, Military Science 7, Occult 8, Politics 7, Science 2

**Disciplines:** Auspex 8, Celerity 7, Dominate 3, Fortitude 6, Obfuscate 2, Potence 4, Presence 5, Quietus 8

**Backgrounds:** Clan Prestige 7, Contacts 8, Influence 5, Resources 5, Status 3

**Virtues:** Conscience 1, Self-Control 4, Courage 5

**Morality:** Humanity 3

**Willpower:** 8

## BROTHERS TO DRAGONS (SIGNIFICANT SORCERERS)

### NAR-SHEPHTA

**Background:** Nar-Shephta, curator of the Great Library for three centuries, was the first Assamite sorcerer to conduct extensive experiments into harnessing the

power of lightning. This Babylonian princess met Final Death in her ninth century of unlife when an attempt to harness a storm spirit went horribly wrong, leaving only a small pile of ashes fused into the sandstone of her laboratory's floor. The embittered survivors among her apprentices removed that section of floor and placed it in the Great Library in the Gallery of Folly, a small chamber in which the sorcerers and viziers keep various reminders of the misfortunes that can befall a careless magician.

In early 1999, Sarah Schneier made contact with the remaining consciousness of Nar-Sheptha, using that sandstone block as a material link. On Final Death, Nar-Sheptha's soul had not gone on to the usual Cainite reward, but had instead remained suspended in the skies over Alamut, victim of a last cruel jest by a vengeful spirit. Schneier promised Nar-Sheptha an escape from limbo, though the alternative might not be much to her liking. The Babylonian, seeing a release from over a millennium of boredom, agreed readily.

Schneier powdered the chunk of sandstone flooring, using alchemy to incorporate its dust into the CD-ROMs that she was using to store as much of the Great Library's contents as she could. She then bound Nar-Sheptha's consciousness to the disks and charged her with their protection. The spirit agreed readily; her centuries as physical guardian of the Great Library had predisposed her toward such a task, and she had never been fond of ur-Shulgi. Tonight, Nar-Sheptha serves as the final means by which the schismatic sorcerers protect their portable tomes from the predations of outsiders who would steal their secrets, though she is unwilling to directly strike at other Assamites. This has allowed the Loyalists to recover eight sets of disks. However, Nar-Sheptha recognizes that, because she is now irrevocably bound to the disks, their destruction is hers as well. Thus, she retaliates with her full strength against any attempt to harm a set. She is also known to hunt down and "chastise" Schismatics who are careless enough to allow "her" disks to fall into the wrong hands.

#### NAR-SHEPHTHA THE GUARDIAN

*Note to Storytellers: the following Traits are meant as guidelines, not absolutes. All Storyteller characters should be able to do whatever your plot requires them to do — and, more importantly, should be unable to do whatever your plot requires them to be unable to do. However, Nar-Sheptha is a special case, because she's the disembodied soul of a former elder vampire, which is something that none of the usual rules cover.*

Nar-Sheptha was a sixth generation Assamite sorcerer at the time of her discorporation. Her current form allows her access to little of this power with the exception of her knowledge of blood magic. She is immune to nonaggravated physical damage save for area effects (say, those which would affect a cloud of blood droplets, such as an industrial exhaust fan). If she is reduced to the Mauled health level, she will attempt to flee into "her" disks, which takes her one full turn.

For purposes of Discipline use and healing, Nar-Sheptha has the blood pool and expenditure limits of a sixth generation vampire. She typically replenishes this

through the use of Theft of Vitae. She is immune to Dominate, Presence and blood bonds, though she is susceptible to Disciplines and blood magic effects that deal with spirits, such as the Path of Spirit Manipulation. She still has the mentality of a vampire and thus is capable of frenzying. She cannot make physical attacks, and she is subject to normal limits on Discipline use in a turn. Her Celerity rating is for movement purposes only. In non-combat conditions, she can make fine manipulation attempts using her listed physical Attributes. The Abilities given below are those to which she has access. Skill with a sword matters little when you can't wield one.

**Image:** A swirling cloud of blood droplets that occasionally manifests in an approximately humanoid shape. When Nar-Sheptha speaks, it does so through telepathic contact rather than actual vocalization. Its mental "voice" sounds like that of the most feared woman in the listener's life.

**Nature:** Traditionalist

**Demeanor:** Bravo

**Physical:** Strength 1, Dexterity 1, Stamina 3

**Social:** Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 0

**Mental:** Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 3

**Talents:** Alertness 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 1, Intimidation 5, Subterfuge 2

**Skills:** Etiquette 2

**Knowledges:** Academics 4, Computer 1, Linguistics 7, Medicine 3, Occult 5, Science 1

**Disciplines:** Assamite Sorcery 7, Auspex 4, Celerity 4, Presence 2, Quietus 5, Serpentis 1

**Assamite Sorcery Paths:** Hands of Destruction 2, Lure of Flames 5, Movement of the Mind 3, Neptune's Might 4, Path of Blood 5, Path of Technomancy 2, Spirit Manipulation 3, Weather Control 5

**Virtues:** Conscience 0, Self-Control 2, Courage 5

**Morality:** Humanity 1

**Willpower:** 6





# Assamite™

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
 PLAYER: \_\_\_\_\_  
 CHRONICLE: \_\_\_\_\_

NATURE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 DEMEANOR: \_\_\_\_\_  
 CONCEPT: \_\_\_\_\_

GENERATION: \_\_\_\_\_  
 SIRE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 HAVEN: \_\_\_\_\_

## ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	MENTAL
Strength _____ ●0000	Charisma _____ ●0000	Perception _____ ●0000
Dexterity _____ ●0000	Manipulation _____ ●0000	Intelligence _____ ●0000
Stamina _____ ●0000	Appearance _____ ●0000	Wits _____ ●0000

## ABILITIES

TALENTS	SKILLS	KNOWLEDGES
Alertness _____ 00000	Animal Ken _____ 00000	Academics _____ 00000
Athletics _____ 00000	Crafts _____ 00000	Computer _____ 00000
Brawl _____ 00000	Drive _____ 00000	Finance _____ 00000
Dodge _____ 00000	Etiquette _____ 00000	Investigation _____ 00000
Empathy _____ 00000	Firearms _____ 00000	Law _____ 00000
Expression _____ 00000	Melee _____ 00000	Linguistics _____ 00000
Intimidation _____ 00000	Performance _____ 00000	Medicine _____ 00000
Leadership _____ 00000	Security _____ 00000	Occult _____ 00000
Streetwise _____ 00000	Stealth _____ 00000	Politics _____ 00000
Subterfuge _____ 00000	Survival _____ 00000	Science _____ 00000

## ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS	DISCIPLINES	VIRTUES
_____ 00000	_____ 00000	Conscience/Conviction ●0000
_____ 00000	_____ 00000	
_____ 00000	_____ 00000	
_____ 00000	_____ 00000	Self-Control/Instinct ●0000
_____ 00000	_____ 00000	
_____ 00000	_____ 00000	
_____ 00000	_____ 00000	Courage _____ ●0000

### MERITS/FLAWS

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### HUMANITY/PATH

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

### WILLPOWER

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

### BLOOD POOL

### HEALTH


Bruised   
 Hurt -1   
 Injured -1   
 Wounded -2   
 Mauled -2   
 Crippled -5   
 Incapacitated

### WEAKNESS

Easily Addicted to Vitae







# Assamite™

## EXPANDED BACKGROUND

ALLIES

MENTOR

CONTACTS

RESOURCES

FAME

RETAINERS

HERD

STATUS

INFLUENCE

OTHER

## POSSESSIONS

GEAR (CARRIED)

EQUIPMENT (OWNED)

FEEDING GROUNDS

VEHICLES

## HAVENS

LOCATION

DESCRIPTION





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