

C L A N B O O K :

Followers of Set™





C L A N B O O K :

Followers of Set™

BY DEAN SHOMSHAK

CREDITS

Author: Dean Shomshak
Developer: Erhan Skemp
Editor: Crystal Forkan
Art Director: Richard Thomas
Layout & Typesetting: Brian Glass
Interior Art: Michael Gaydos, Lief Jones, Christopher Shy and Drew Tucker
Front Cover Art: John Van Fleet
Front & Back Cover Design: Brian Glass

SPECIAL THANKS

To the Editorial Posse, who have cleverly taken to traveling in numbers to increase their strength. Still won't get you a corner office, boys.

AUTHOR'S THANKS

The author would like to thank James Ganong for information about prostitution, drug addiction and the depths to which they drag their victims. I'm glad I never saw this stuff myself, but this book would be much the worse without these real-life horrors. They are far more frightening than anything I could imagine.



735 PARK NORTH BLVD.
SUITE 128
CLARKSTON, GA 30021
USA

© 2001 White Wolf Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction without the written permission of the publisher is expressly forbidden, except for the purposes of reviews, and for blank character sheets, which may be reproduced for personal use only. White Wolf, Vampire, Vampire the Masquerade, Vampire the Dark Ages, Mage the Ascension, World of Darkness and Aberrant are registered trademarks of White Wolf Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. Werewolf the Apocalypse, Wraith the Oblivion, Changeling the Dreaming, Hunter the Reckoning, Werewolf the Wild West, Mage the Sorcerers Crusade, Wraith the Great War, Trinity, Guide to the Camarilla, Guide to the Sabbat, Blood Magic and Clanbook Followers of Set are trademarks of White Wolf Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. All characters, names, places and text herein are copyrighted by White Wolf Publishing, Inc.

The mention of or reference to any company or product in these pages is not a challenge to the trademark or copyright concerned.

This book uses the supernatural for settings, characters and themes. All mystical and supernatural elements are fiction and intended for entertainment purposes only. This book contains mature content. Reader discretion is advised.

For a free White Wolf catalog call 1-800-454-WOLF.

Check out White Wolf online at

<http://www.white-wolf.com>; alt.games.whitewolf and rec.games.frp.storyteller

PRINTED IN USA.



C L A N B O O K :

Followers of Set



CONTENTS

THE HEALING POWER OF MEDICINE	4
CHAPTER ONE: A HISTORY OF LIES	10
CHAPTER TWO: AFTER SUCH KNOWLEDGE	36
CHAPTER THREE: BROKEN IMAGES	72



THE HEALING POWER OF RELIGION

Maria looked up as Doc and the woman entered the room. She ignored the woman, just like she ignored the scuttling roaches. Only Doc mattered. Doc, who gave her the meth. The chain from her waist to the wall clinked as Maria shifted herself to kneel on the grimy gray mat on the floor. Her body shook. Doc had waited a long time. He must want her to do something. Probably the dog again, with the woman watching.

Doc pulled the little glittering vial from his pocket, tossed and caught it. He grinned as he watched her watching the vial — up and down, up and down. Yes, it must be the dog.

"Want your medicine, bitch?" he asked. Up and down, up and down. The last two times it was a Labrador Retriever.

"Please, Doc." She knew the ritual. His name was Hayes, but he liked his women to call him Doc. He didn't have to hit her anymore.

He cocked his head. "Medicine costs, bitch. I ain't runnin' no free clinic. You gotta pay me back somehow."

"What do I do, Doc?" Once, she fucked men to get her crank, after her own money ran out. *Don't remember the job, the corner office.* Then Doc said she was too old, too used, but men (and sometimes women) paid to see her do it with another woman. Or a dwarf. Or, the last month, a dog. Doc had done worse, though: His "hospital

food" punishment... She pulled off the old, ripped jacket and the shorts Doc had given her.

Doc frowned then. She'd never seen him frown like that: not angry but puzzled. Doc turned to the woman who stood by his side. She had swarthy skin, straight black hair and long nails lacquered green. She wore a dark green business suit, carried an attaché case and stood very still, expressionless as a statue behind wraparound black sunglasses. "Umm... You didn't say what you wanted, Ren. Ma'am."

"I want to test her," the woman said. The black goggles focused on Maria. "Do you know the Lord's Prayer?"

That wasn't in any of Doc's little games. Doc looked as surprised. Before he could speak, the woman swiftly raised a finger and cut him off. Maria had never seen anyone silence Doc that way. He stopped tossing the vial of crystal.

"Do you know the Lord's Prayer?" the woman repeated. The meth, she must get the meth....

"Yes." Sunday school was a long time ago, though. Could she remember it?

The woman unsnapped her attaché case and withdrew a glass jar. Inside was a huge spider, long-legged and hairy. The woman raised it before her and stared at the spider for a long moment. So what if the woman was crazy; she must please her so Doc would give her the crystal.

The woman unscrewed the top of the jar as she walked to Marla. "You must recite the Lord's prayer. All of it, no mistakes. You must not flinch or move at all." She gently withdrew the spider and held it before Marla's eyes. "Begin."

"Our — our father, who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name."

The woman dropped the spider on Marla's shoulder. Marla gritted her teeth and tensed her muscles, keeping herself from slapping it off. "Continue."

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will — thy will be done. On Earth as it is in Heaven." She could feel the spider's legs, feather-light brushes against her skin as it slowly, so slowly, walked down her back. "Give us this day our daily bread." *Meth!* "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Marla squeezed her eyes shut and the world shrank to her skin. The spider stalked across her hip to her thigh. "Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from evil." The words came faster. Perhaps she could do this. "For thine is the power and the glory for ever and ever amen!" Marla almost sobbed with relief, but remained frozen until the woman bent, scooped up the spider and returned it to the jar.

"She'll do," the woman said. "Fifty bucks. More than she's worth."

"Deal," Doc said. He looked relieved.

"Give her *one* rock, a small one. I need her able to walk, but no more."

"Yes. Ma'am." Doc handed Marla the light bulb-turned-pipe, and the lighter; she immediately struck the flame and set the glass over it. When the smoke came, she drew on it like she was gulping for air. Ah, sweet crystal! Sweet, sweet end of pain!

Once it made her feel invincible and energetic (and crabby as hell). Then it just made her crabby. Now it just kept her from feeling like she wanted to die. She didn't think about the strange woman anymore. Nothing mattered except the end to the gray, flat despair of life without meth.

The old VW Rabbit pulled into the small parking lot of a small church wedged between a 7-11 and a row of identical brick houses. The sign out front said CHURCH OF CHRIST DELIVERER, dimly illuminated by the corner streetlight. A smaller sign next to the door



announced that the church was a Safe Place for runaways. Do-gooders? That would explain the prayer... no, actually it didn't, but so what? Maria resolved to nod her head at the right moments, promise anything, and run away as soon as she could to find more meth. Not before they fed her, though.

Contradicting the car's age and low value, the woman — Ren — had a chauffeur: a large, middle-aged man with a bald head. He opened the car door for her. Ren gripped Maria's elbow as she got out of the car. Her grip was stronger than Marla expected, and her hand was cold. She unlocked the church's door and shepherded Maria inside, the chauffeur looming behind. They bypassed the sanctuary and walked down stairs to the basement. An old piano hunched in the corner. Ren led her between the long tables and the black-painted wooden posts that held up the ceiling. They did not, however, enter the kitchen at the far end of the room. Instead, Ren pulled a key from her pocket and unlocked a door in the far wall. Another set of stairs going down? Maria hung back, unsure.

Ren smiled at her. Suddenly she seemed kindly and appealing. "It's an old fallout shelter," she explained. "We've fixed it up for poor folk in a bit of trouble who need a room for a few nights." Marla reflexively smiled in return and stepped forward. Ren held her shoulder this time and steered her down the steps.

They stepped into a room with murals on the walls. Men and women with animal heads? Wolf, crocodile, cobra, and some long-snouted, long-eared beast she could not identify... Lots of snakes. Two other doors and heavy black drapes in a third doorway. A font in the middle of the room.

"What the hell?" Marla looked around rapidly, took a step back to the stairs.

"Look at me," Ren said. Startled, Marla met the other woman's gaze. Her eyes: golden, slitted...

Marla found herself lying on a bed — no, a plastic-padded table — as the chauffeur bound her hand and foot in padded cuffs. Ren stood over her. Her eyes were dark brown, normal.

"What do you want of me?" Marla asked, afraid. "Please — I don't have any money, but I'll do anything, anything. You saw. Oh God, please, don't hurt me!"

"Hurt you?" Ren smiled slightly. "Yes, detox will hurt a great deal. I believe in — ah — cold turkey." Panic gripped Marla's heart and she

thrashed on the table, but the cuffs did not yield. "Help!" she shouted, and then screamed as loud as she could, already knowing that no one outside would hear. Ren pulled a folder from a smaller table nearby and flipped through the papers inside.

"Marla Kenyon, age 32; B.A. *cum laude* in business administration from Columbia in 1991. Last employed at Searies International — middle management, excellent prospects, hard worker. Very hard worker. Began using cocaine in 1994. You wanted an edge, I assume, something to help keep you going through those 18-hour workdays. Work becomes erratic in 1995... I presume that's when you switched to methedrine... vial of crystal meth found in desk in September of that year, fired to avoid scandal... and a year later you're working for Mr. Hayes, which position you held for the last five years. Actually, many positions, I expect," she said, smiling again. "Some fairly acrobatic. And yet you have not lost your memory or your ability to concentrate." Ren flipped the folder shut. "You may have potential."

"Please," Marla whispered, shaking now in fear. "I don't have potential. I gotta have meth. I'll die if I don't have meth. Or something."

"You'll die?" Ren said. "Possibly. In that case, I'm out fifty dollars and have to look for another prospect." She leaned over Marla. "I'm a *headhunter*," she said. "And I'm recruiting you...if you survive."

The chauffeur sat by Marla through the hours of shaking, twisting and pleading that followed. When she lost orifice control, he cut away her clothes and passionlessly swabbed her down with a wet sponge.

At last Marla lay limp on the table, too sick and weary even to weep. The chauffeur unlocked her bonds, chivvied her into a black robe and dragged her out to the room with the painted walls and the font. He splashed water on her face, reviving her a little. The man pulled her through the drapes into another room. Dim red and green light spilled from the mouths of gargoyles, and a blue-and-yellow flame danced in the middle of an altar. Behind the altar loomed a statue of polished black wood ornamented with gold: a muscular man in a kilt, with the head of a snouted beast and long, square-topped ears. Marla did not resist as the chauffeur pushed her to her knees before the altar.

Ren stood before her, dressed in a robe like her own. She carried a golden rod with a twisted crossbar at the top. A belt of interwoven green and golden serpents clasped her waist. Other golden serpents twined around her arms.

"Maria Kenyon," Ren intoned, "You have known fear and pain, craving and despair. You will know them again, but I will guide you past them. Drink now your first sacrament." She drew a long, green-lacquered nail across the heel of her palm, cupped her hand and held it to Maria's lips. The chauffeur gripped Maria's head and forced her mouth open. Cold liquid on her tongue: salty, metallic, faintly sweet; a reptile-house musk sliding down her throat, nauseating... not as bad as some of the things Doc made her eat, though... not really that bad at all. Maria drank, feeling stronger, until Ren pulled back her hand and licked it. She showed Maria her palm; the cut was gone.

"You have received the first sacrament. With my blood, I claim you as my own." Ren seemed to stand taller, the shadows clotting around her yet somehow making her more visible. Maria's breath caught in terror and awe. The ghastly light glimmering in Ren's hair spread into a hood — no human face atop her neck, but instead the head of a giant cobra.

"I am Renenet, daughter of Sutekh. I am your god."

* * *

"No," Renenet said.

Maria kept her head down as she knelt before her mistress, to hide the terror in her eyes. "Have I displeased you?" She hated the whine in her voice.

"You displease me greatly with your laziness." Laziness? She'd worked as hard as she had in her office days. Running Renenet's errands, both for the cult and the church that disguised it — reading endless liturgies and parables, hours of chanting and studying hieroglyphics — more tasks than she could easily list. And the temptations. Renenet's divine blood thrilled her more than meth ever did, but the old longing still hit her now and then, when an errand took her past the dealers lounging on the street corners. She never gave in. That was worth something, wasn't it?

"You fail to learn the proper lessons. You are slothful, self-indulgent, weak. I give you no more of the Blood. I cast you out." Each word

struck her with more force than Doc's fists ever had.

"I have found a more worthy acolyte." Renenet clapped her hands. Maria heard the door to the audience chamber open. Booted footsteps crossed to Renenet's throne. Maria looked up to see her replacement.

Doc. Denim jacket pulled tight over heavy shoulders. Hair greased into spikes. Cowboy boots. Heavy brass belt buckle stamped with the head of a longhorn bull. Doc. He leaned over. Renenet leaned up, and he kissed her on the lips. Shock, embarrassment, betrayal and outrage boiled in Maria's stomach.

"If you wish to stay in the cult," her goddess said, "I suppose you may serve Mr. Hayes."

Doc grinned at her. "Guess you're working under me again, Nurse," he said.

"Ghaaa!" Maria launched herself at Doc. Without thinking, she called on the last of the divine blood remaining within her. She slammed into Doc and they flew back, somersaulting across the carpeted floor. Maria sat up first but Doc rolled away. Both staggered to their feet, closed and grabbed each other. Maria picked the large man up, threw him across the room and lunged after him.

Just as Maria was about to pulp Doc's head against the concrete wall, Renenet yanked her away and punched her in the gut. Maria doubled over but grabbed Renenet around the waist and drew her to the floor. They wrapped their hands around each other's necks, but only one of them had to breathe.

Fear pushed out the rage as the world darkened and her head spun. Then, suddenly, Maria could breathe again — and she realized that she had attacked her goddess. She forgot about Doc, now pulling himself to his feet, and babbled apologies and pleas for mercy as Renenet stood up.

Doc loomed over Maria. Renenet snapped her finger an inch from his nose. "Leave us," she commanded.

Doc's fists clenched. "No bitch does that —" he began.

"Leave us," Renenet hissed, showing her fangs. Doc turned pale, mumbled something and fled.

Renenet pulled Maria to her feet and smiled. Maria stared at her. "Well done," she said. "You have passed the Gate of Rage. Well done indeed!" She slit her palm and offered Maria her blood.

* * *

Marla stood before Renenet, facing the flaming altar and the statue behind it. Now she knew whom the statue represented: Great Set, Sutekh, the Dark God. Renenet took the name of Set's daughter. Her priestess, mistress and teacher — she now knew — was a more remote descendant, adopted nearly a century ago. The other cultists knelt behind her, silent and awed witnesses to her own...adoption.

"Will you pass the Gate of Eternal Night?" Renenet asked, the last of a long series of questions and answers. Marla had assented to them all, and she knew the response to this one too.

"I will. I curse the name of Ra and renounce the light. Now and forever, I follow only Set."

"Approach, then, for I am the gate myself." Marla stepped forward and bared her neck. Renenet's head flickered, human one moment, giant cobra the next. Marla now understood the hypnotic trick. She mustered her will and saw only the serpent head. Such was proper when Renenet called upon the greatest of all the powers she inherited from the Dark God.

The long, slender fangs slid easily into her throat. As always, Marla gasped at the incredible, impossible sweetness of Renenet's kiss. She stood as long as she could, but inevitably sagged as her life slipped away. Renenet caught her in her arms. The light dimmed for the cultists too, as Renenet's chauffeur switched them off one by one. The gas jet in the altar was the last to die. The Great Mystery demanded total darkness. Marla's heart slowed, then stopped.

Marla drifted in endless night. She heard the soft purling of water, the river Duat that flows through the caverns of the dead. Then, a faint and distant light, like the first glow before dawn. Far away, she saw a silver-golden boat. Beside her, however, she saw her god.

Set Himself.

She had no voice and He did not speak. The glittering sapphire eye in Set's bestial, snouted head saw her entire life, her soul, her pledge, and she knew that He was pleased. Then He had the head of a man, red-haired, and He kissed her lightly on the mouth, turning her away from the distant boat. His lips tasted of salt and metal and reptile-house musk...

Marla's eyes fluttered open. A bud of blue light grew into the altar flame. Renenet steadied her on her feet. Marla felt *hungry*. Renenet tapped her staff on the ground and pointed to one of the cultists. The young man waddled forward on his knees, grinning at the honor, and held up his bare arm. Marla drew him to his feet. She felt the pulse in his arm, felt her new fangs lengthen. They slid in easily and the young man gasped, as mortals always did, and Marla tasted his blood, sweet and rich as blood had never tasted before, draining down her throat. Renenet clasped her shoulder and pulled her back when she had taken enough, and then directed her from cultist to cultist until she drank her fill.

* * *

After the ceremony Marla and Renenet talked like sisters about Marla's Embrace and about their lord and god. Renenet, too, had seen the Dark God and received his kiss. So had her own sire. Renenet thought that every Follower of Set received their ancestor's blessing this way, though perhaps not all of them remembered afterward. They spoke of the colors of darkness, and the music of flowing water.

"But there's one more thing to do tonight," Renenet said afterward. "You need your first ghoul. I picked someone special. He'll never earn the Embrace but he'll serve." They skipped to the audience room.

Doc knelt before the empty throne. From the way he shifted his weight and grimaced slightly as he looked up, Marla guessed that he'd knelt quite a long time. He waited until Renenet seated herself before bursting out, "Please, Ren, the Vee-Tay ran out a week ago; I could feel it; I'm really jonesin'. And Gaskin is tryin' to lean on me, I gotta be able to push back." He paid no attention to Marla, and she knew exactly why.

Renenet silenced him with an impatient wave of her hand. "You will not serve me any longer, Mr. Hayes — not directly. I give you to my child and sister. From now on, Marla commands you. You must please her to receive the Blood." She turned to Marla with her small, cool smile. "Consider this the next step in your training: dealing with old...attachments."

Doc looked at Marla, really *looked* at her, for the first time since she'd entered the room. Saw her smile: wide, fierce, vengeful. Recognized her at last. Turned pale.

"Want your medicine?" she said.





CHAPTER ONE: A HISTORY OF LIES

I invoke thee who art in the void air, terrible, invisible, almighty, god of gods, dealing destruction and making desolate; O Thou that hatest a household well established. When Thou wast cast out of Egypt and out of the country Thou wast entitled, HE THAT DESTROYETH ALL AND IS UNCONQUERED.

*I invoke Thee, TYPHON SET...
— The Leyden Papyrus*

I walk the sands of Egypt, ancient homeland of my clan. I come in search of the truth.

Truth! Most of my fellow Deathless would laugh to think that the Followers of Set have anything to do with the truth. Sometimes I wonder myself. In two centuries of search, I heard many tales that the tellers swore were true. Sometimes they could even produce evidence — such as it was — for their contradictory claims.

Yes, old colleague, I kept secrets from you. I deceived you about my clan. If I had told you at the beginning, would you have spoken to me at all — or only seen a treacherous Serpent? Please, consider this testament an act of contrition and disclosure. We complemented each other well and uncovered many secrets together. I would not see our partnership end with such rancor, especially when we of the undead can hold a grudge forever.

Together we chronicled many activities of the Followers of Set. Here I hope to provide some context. Facts are not history or meaning. Those lie deeper in my clan's past. From the town of Komm Ombo, ancient Ombos, I send you this *esquisse* of my clan's history. I hope that it will help you understand what I sought, and why. Perhaps you will pass it on to other Kindred who wonder at my clan's many mysteries and strange practices.

Will you or they believe what I write? Manuscripts can be forged. Artifacts can be fabricated. We Kindred excel in such frauds. All tales agree, however, that my clan began here in the land of the Nile. This is not my first visit. Perhaps this time, however, I will go beyond tales. Perhaps I will find the heart of the labyrinth, the truth hidden amidst a thousand lies and rumors.

OSIRIS, SET AND HORUS

Our lineage began — appropriately, many would say — with treachery and a brother's murder. No, not Cain and Abel. Our tale is much older than that Hebrew fable, and the two brothers were gods.

Even in this unlettered age, many people know the version of the story told by the Greek essayist Plutarch. In his honor, I shall use the Greek names for Egypt's gods. I also act from honesty...and prudence: Were I to employ the names reconstructed by archaeologists — Ausor for Osiris, Heru for Horus, and so on — I would commit a small and subtle lie, for those names are but speculations. No man living knows how to pronounce Egyptian names correctly. That secret the Followers of Set jealously preserve. If I told you the true pronunciations, I would place both our existences in danger.

In the ancient times when the gods lived on Earth and ruled Egypt directly, the sun-god Ra grew old and decided to retire. Ra chose his great-grandson Osiris as his heir and successor. This did not sit well with Osiris' brother, Set. Our progenitor was the mightiest warrior among the gods. Every night he guarded the sun-barque as it passed under the Earth from the gates of sunset to the gates of dawn. Every night he battled Apep, the Great Serpent of Darkness, so that the sun might rise again. Did his valor count for nothing?

Set's jealousy and wounded pride drove him to murder his brother. He fashioned a beautiful coffin proportioned exactly to Osiris' body, and said he would give this princely gift to whoever would fit in it. All the gods tried the coffin in vain. Then Osiris took his turn. Immediately, Set and his 72 accomplices slammed the coffin's lid, nailed it shut and threw it in the Nile. Osiris drowned. When the goddess Isis, Osiris' wife and sister, used her magic to retrieve her husband's body, Set took more permanent measures: He hacked his brother's body to bits and scattered them about Egypt. Patiently, Isis gathered the fragments, reassembled the body of Osiris and used her magic to conceive a child by her dead husband.

When their child Horus grew to manhood, he challenged Set for the kingship of the gods. Some legends speak of mighty battles between gods and armies. Other tales describe their strife as a farcical court case, full of low tricks and silly contests. One way or another, Horus prevailed. Horus lost an eye in their strife; in revenge, he castrated Set. Osiris, meanwhile, became King of the Dead just as his son became King of the Living; and the Pharaonic dynasties henceforth claimed to rule by descent from Horus the Avenger. As compensation, Ra gave Set two foreign goddesses as concubines and made him god of storms: "He will thunder in the sky and make men afraid."

So much for the myths that the mortals know. I know many variations, all claiming to be the *true* story of Set and Osiris.

The Canites' fragmented collection of wonder-tales, the *Book of Nod*, says that Set and Osiris were mortals, not



gods; and that both became vampires and fought many battles directly. Set eventually defeated Osiris — a foregone conclusion, my classmates like to say — but Isis restored him from Final Death and bore him Horus as a child.

I know, old friend — Kindred legend paints half the gods and heroes of antiquity as blood-sucking monsters like ourselves. I do not believe most of these myths either. The legend of Osiris the vampire seems to have spread further than most such claims, however, and shows unusual elaborations.

According to a creature of the Giovanni clan, whom I paid well for the information, Osiris survived as an undead for more than a thousand years. He established a secret order of his ilk who sought to resist the Beast through ritual, prayer and self-denial. This secret cult, the Children of Osiris, knew how to survive without blood and could return their brothers from Final Death. Pietro Giovanni sought this cult for fifty years, hoping to wrest the latter secret from them. I can well imagine the Giovanni's interest in returning vampires from Final Death!

An aged apothecary in London's Little Egypt ghetto — whom his neighbors called a sorcerer — told me that Horus became immortal in another way. Thutmose al-Khalseran told of a potent Spell of Life that enabled persons to live over and over again, returning from death to a restored body. Horus and the rest of these "Reborn" pursued an eternal war against Set and all his childer. Naturally, I did not tell him of my own lineage.

I heard later that Pietro Giovanni disappeared on an expedition to Tibet. I cannot imagine why he would search there, of all places. I cannot verify al-Khalseran's tale and do not believe it, either, any more than I believe that the Sun is literally a boat sailing across the sky.

My grandsire Shenebti gave yet another tale. She denied what the legends of the other clans say. Their "First City," she said, was Annu, the city of Ra. The Greeks called it Heliopolis. The Bible calls it On. "Enoch" is just another variation. Heliopolis-Annu is now a rather nice suburb of Cairo. The middle-class Egyptians who live there would be astonished to learn that they walk over the House of the Eclipse, one of the oldest and most prestigious temples to Set.

Shenebti insisted that Set, Osiris and Horus were indeed gods. Not mortal kings, not even magicians, but gods. She recounted Plutarch's familiar tale... then spoke of what happened *after* the victory of Horus.

When the other gods acclaimed Horus as their new king, Ra turned on his faithful defender and cursed Set to live in darkness forever. Then the gods thrust Set into *Duat*, the dark Underworld of the dead, and the river of death whose waters come from the Primeval Ocean itself. Here Set fought the great serpent Apep once more. He slew the Worm of Darkness and ate its heart. With Apep's death he took on Apep's dark wisdom and learned secrets hidden from the beginning of the world. When Ra created the world, he gave it life through his own semen, creating gods and the souls of human beings alike. Souls differed in size but not in kind. Jealous Ra

lied to all his children. He told them that he was mightiest of all things, creator of the universe, when he merely shaped a tiny portion of the Primeval Waters. Now, however, Set knew the truth: All souls could grow as mighty as their tyrant father and become creators themselves.

Set returned to the world by stealth. The Primeval Waters carry life as well as death. Every year, the gates of the world open to let the Primeval Waters bring new life through the yearly inundation of the Nile. Set disguised himself as a water-serpent and slipped through the gates with the rushing waters. He swore to overthrow Ra — not for revenge but for compassion, to liberate the souls Ra held in bondage.

Despite the power gained from Apep, Set still had to hide from the sun; he could not break the curse of Ra. Nor did he truly live, for he had tasted the waters of death. As he walked the night, however, Set found twelve human disciples to hear his message of rebellion against the tyranny of the gods. The disciples swore to follow Set. To seal their oath, they used a warrior's rite: They mingled their blood with Set's in a bowl and drank from it, swearing thus to become brothers and sisters in the coming struggle. Set even granted them equal shares in his own divine power. They too would become gods.

As the last disciple drank, however, the company of the great gods appeared. The treacherous Moon, whom Set trusted to keep silent, told the other gods about Set's return. Ra the tyrant decreed that all who joined Set's cause would share his banishment from the Sun and his castration, and that having sealed their pact in blood the thirteen would feed on blood alone.

Now Set learned what flawed vessels humans were. His twelve disciples wailed at the curse and begged for mercy, saying that Set misled them. Their betrayal outraged Set. (He always did have a short temper.) He swore that if they would not help him fight the gods, after all he had given them, he would destroy them as well, though it take him a million years!

And so, from the curses of Ra and the power of Apep, Set and his twelve disciples became the first vampires. In time they learned to pass their curse and their power to other mortals, becoming the founders of the thirteen clans. Set remained the greatest of the thirteen, for he had been a true god and the source of the power wielded by his treacherous disciples. The others never forgave their benefactor for witnessing their treachery and their cowardice. Set's childer remained faithful to him: He learned from his mistakes and chose more carefully. The childer of the other first Vampires schemed against their sires. *We*, the *Mesu Bedchet*, Children of Rebellion, remain loyal — and this is as glib in the mouths of Set's rivals. They taught their childer to hate and fear Set and his clan; they invented fables to hide how they themselves became vampires.

Treachery and lies. They haunt the history of the "Kindred" from the beginning. The *Book of Nod*, Shenebti's tale and the dozen other stories about the origin of vampires agree on nothing else. They speak no history, but in this they surely tell the truth.

I know one other truth. The demons of Egypt are real. I have seen sorcerers of my clan evoke the serpent-demons of *Chai* and the divine servitors we call *Bau*. The *Bau* take the form of the god from whom they emanate.

The Followers of Set call these gods the *Aeons*. My clan teaches that the *Aeons* serve Ra just as the *Bau* serve the gods. If the servants and emanations of the gods are real, may not the gods and Ra be real as well? As I said before, however, my clan also teaches that these are false gods who tell only lies—the gaolers of the world.

THE ANCIENT WORLD

I once believed in a god, a Holy Trinity. I believed that Jesus loved me and would cast me into Hell to burn forever if I did not love Him back. The Followers of Set helped me see the inconsistencies in that particular doctrine. They offered me Set instead, but having escaped one god I did not want to surrender to another.

Enough of myth! I desired *history*. What had my clan done? How should I understand my clan except through its deeds? Surely we, the undead immortals, must preserve true accounts of ancient times. I sought the elders of all the clans.

Yet we are not as ageless as we pretend. The truly ancient ones, the vampires who lived in the time of the pharaohs—so few remain. They met Final Death, or fell asleep long ago. Even their childer's childer guess at their true names. I found only traditions passed from sire to childer, and manuscripts copied from copies.

I learned that sires can lie. I learned that manuscripts can be forged. Always some other temple held the true, eyewitness record of ancient nights. In my own clan and the others, however, all the traditions agree that the Followers of Set ruled the Egyptian night of long ago. Beyond that, all is rumor and hearsay—save for the threads that bind one tale to the next.

PHARAONIC EGYPT

We began in Egypt, like civilization itself, and we ruled the night. In other lands, vampires of several clans schemed and fought for power; not so along the Nile. Bounded by desert to east and west and sea to the north, Egypt lay on no easy paths of invasion or migration. When vampires of other clans came to elder Khem, carried by merchant caravans or daring the wastes themselves, they knelt in obeisance to the Hierophants of Set...or they met Final Death. The *Nosferatu* dwelt in the Nile mud; other vampires joined the Followers of Set in the towns. We, however, outnumbered them all. Egypt's population and cities let us grow into one of the world's largest clans.

In those days, of course, "largest" was very much a relative term. The Census of Belit-Sheri claims that in the reign of Sargon of Akkad, no lineage held more than 60 vampires—none of them more than three generations from their Antediluvian forebear. The priestess at the Cave of Apples, who showed me a rubbing of the Census tablets, said

that Belit-Sheri accurately recorded the numbers of Set's descendants at this time, 2600 BCE. I never saw the records of our clan that the priestess cited, for she said the Temple of Ombos held the only copies. A bad joke, that. I already knew that Ombos was no more.

ANCIENT ENEMIES

My most ancient sires had other enemies than vampires. The magician-priests of Egypt's other gods fought the Followers of Set at every turn. For 3000 years, they strove to bind Egypt in a net of magic, to the greater glory of the *Aeons* they served. They called this net *Maat*, the Order of Things: natural, social and moral law all in one, a law to hold Egypt in stasis forever. The Followers of Set strove to rip the net of *Maat*. Rage, lust, craving, ambition—through these, Set's gifts, do men live as men instead of slaves. Were the priests of the *Aeons* to finish their Web of *Maat*, not one high heart would risk death for an enemy's doom, a pouch of gold or his true love's lips. Men would simply obey, placidly, forever.

I sympathize with this aspect of my clan's teachings. The priests of Ra and Osiris are dust, but the *Aeons* still weave nets to snare men's hearts and dull their minds. The Followers of Set no longer strive against wizard-priests, spell against spell. Instead they battle the *Aeons* directly, one heart at a time.

The ancient Setites also strove against fierce shapeshifters, part human and part cat or jackal. We fight them still. The beast-men draw power from the spirit world to block our spells, while their claws rend our flesh and drag us into Ra's deadly light.


I understand why the were-cats hate us. They claim descent from Bast, one of my clan's divine enemies. I presume that the were-jackal tribe of Lupines would claim descent from the god Anubis. In myth, Anubis conducted the dead to Osiris' hall of judgment. Perhaps the jackal-folk hate us because, caught between life and death as we are, we never walk that road unless someone slays us.

The priest-magicians and shapeshifters had one great weakness: They grew old and died, and the Followers of Set did not. I cannot say this of our third great legendary enemy, the *Shemsu Heru* or Reborn. The folk of ancient Egypt mummified their dead because they believed their souls would someday return to their bodies and live again. The legends say that Isis created a mighty spell to achieve this very feat. A person so enchanted would sojourn in the Afterlife but return from death, lifetime after lifetime. Led by no less than Horus himself—as my London apothecary said—these living mummies war upon us century after century.

That, at least, is the story. I have never met anyone who claimed he or she was a living mummy. Neither has any other Follower of Set whom I know. Always the tale happened to a friend of the teller's sire, or long ago. The werecats and were-jackals are all too real, but I think the Reborn are a fable.

CHANGING FORTUNES

Through millennia of struggle with the shapeshifters and mortal priests, the fortunes of the Children of Rebellion rose



and fell. Sometimes, our enemies hounded us day and night and even the mightiest Followers of Set walked in fear. Other times the Serites held the whip and took their full revenge.

The Old Kingdom.... No matter which temple I visited, I never found my clan's writings from the Old Kingdom — strange, since we (like the Egyptians themselves) seem to write down everything and delight in our own history. Always the librarian said that some other temple held my clan's chronicles from the Old Kingdom.

The mortals built a temple here at Ombos — a double temple, really, dedicated both to Set and Horus as the Lords of the Two Lands. Horus ruled Lower Egypt and the black land by the Nile, while Set ruled Upper Egypt and the red land of the desert. On the walls of ruined temples and tombs, I can still see paintings of the two gods. They clasp hands over a papyrus reed and a lotus blossom: the plants that symbolized the Two Lands. I must wonder when the war between Set and Horus truly began, and why. I must wonder what the eldest of my clan hide from the rest of us.

In the 7th and 8th dynasties, the Old Kingdom fell apart. The nomarchs — the local lords of cities and provinces — defied the pharaohs. My clan takes credit for the continuous civil war that smoldered as nomarch fought nomarch. In this time of chaos, I am told, the early Followers of Set ruled openly, as nomarchs themselves. Thousands of conscripted peasants labored to dig great temples of Set beneath Egypt's eldest cities. The blood of men and oxen flowed in rivers to feed the Children of Rebellion and honor the Dark God.

It may be true. The archeologists of the kine can find hardly any records from this period. No one among the kine had much time to chisel inscriptions that would outlast the millennia... and my clan had plenty of time to destroy any records from this age. Perhaps some long-lost tomb from this period contains papyrus scrolls that will astonish and terrify the world.

Our power waned again with the start of the Middle Kingdom. Powerful monarchs and priesthoods forced the Followers of Set to hide. The centuries of the Theban dynasties may have been a golden age for Egyptian art, culture and conquest, but not for the Children of Rebellion. Slowly, my ancestors labored to weaken the Pharaoh's hold over the nomarchs and create another civil war....

...And then Set himself roused to deliver Egypt into our hands at one stroke. In the 18th century BCE, he rode across the Sinai Desert in a chariot pulled by dragons from *Duat*, with the army of the Hyksos barbarians at his back. He raised his hand, and desert storms swept across the Black Land; he clenched his fist, and lightning crashed down upon the palaces; he shouted, and the earth shook and the temples of the gods fell down; and the iron blades of the Hyksos shattered the bronze swords and spears of Egypt.

Set then slept again, but for 200 years the Hyksos kings ruled Lower Egypt in his name. They forced tribute from the native princes of Upper Egypt. The Hyksos filled the Nile Delta with black granite sphinxes, monuments and statues of

Set, whom they called Sutekh. They treated the Followers of Set with honor. The Hyksos built for us the greatest of our temples, in the Nile Delta city of Tanis. Mortal wizards and undead sorcerers labored together to craft mighty talismans and plumb the depths of magic. Kings and princes drank the blood of Set as a royal sacrament.

Thus I heard from the priests of a dozen temples, as they showed me old murals of Set and the Hyksos. The priests said that when Set returns he will lead a new army with stranger weapons. These new barbarians will join the Children of Rebellion to conquer the world.

At another dozen temples, however, the priests swore that this glorious age never happened. The Hyksos came by themselves and, although they made Sutekh their favorite god, they persecuted the Followers of Set. Decide for yourself which version to believe.

All things pass and the Acons never tire. Once again the Acons worked through the princes of Thebes. Armed, so our chronicles say, with magic from the gods and allied to mummies, Lupines and Bast's brood, the Theban lords drove the Hyksos from Egypt. They established the New Kingdom. The new dynasty ordered the statues of Set destroyed, or re-carved to show the ibis-head of Thoth instead. They chiseled out the inscriptions and gave Hyksos sphinxes Egyptian faces. Very few Hyksos monuments remain, outside our secret temples. The Serites of that age sacrificed half their number and their temples to the purge, that the remaining half might remain hidden from the Thebans' wrath. Setite craftsmen carved effigies of those who met Final Death and wrote their names on the walls of mortuary shrines. I have stood in the Garden of Asps' shrine to their memory, and the world of the dead seemed very close indeed. The martyrs still receive a yearly sacrifice, though I suspect that none of them volunteered. I know my clan too well.

The 18th dynasty ended with a...not a dark moment for the Followers of Set. Say rather, a time of terrible light. The priests of Amun-Ra steadily gained power under the Theban pharaohs, until the pharaoh Akhenamen abolished the worship of every god but his own: The god Aton, the visible disk of the sun. The pharaoh changed his name to Akhenaton and built the desert city of Amarna as his new capital. My ancient sires found this whimsically eccentric. They did not laugh, however, when Akhenaton invited wizard-priests and sages from throughout the known world to Amarna. He declared that as there was only one god, Aton, they should merge their magic arts into one art. He asked that they combine their power to fix the Sun within the sky, so that night would never come and Aton's light would shine on everyone without interruption, forever.

Of course the task was impossible — but my Serite grandsires did not know this. They too believed that the Sun was a god, perhaps carried across the sky in a boat. The *Chronicle of the Final Day*, that I read in the Red Temple of Thebes, records the elders' terror lest the wizards succeed in

abolishing the night. The wizards repelled their mightiest curses; the pharaoh's soldiers and his own impossible luck foiled their ghoul assassins. Ironically, the priests of Amun-Ra saved the night. They roused the nomarchs, the army and the common people against the mad pharaoh, all demanding the return of their cherished multitude of gods. The rebels sacked Amarna and killed Akhenaton and most of his family. They chiseled out Akhenaton's name from his inscriptions and smashed his statues, so that he should find no place in the Afterlife and die a second death.

The rebels did leave one small son of Akhenaton's alive as a figurehead prince. He was named Tutankhamun. I have found only one brief mention of him in my clan's archives: he was a very minor king, for all his present fame, and my clan ignored him.

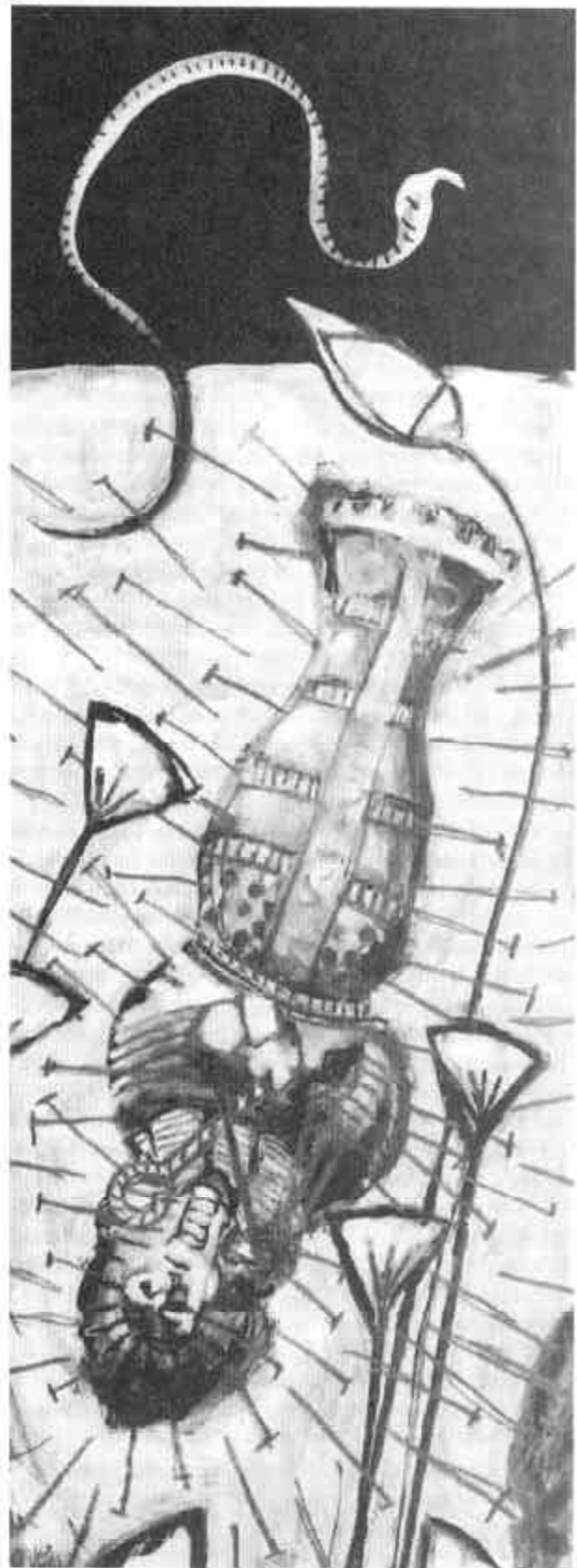
The clan's fortunes improved in the 19th dynasty. That line of pharaohs honored Set as the god of war, the god who could bring victory over foreigners. Two pharaohs took the throne-name of Set. Others called themselves "Beloved of Set" in their inscriptions. Ramesses II rebuilt the old Temple of Set in the city of Tanis. The temple so impressed the Eternals of Sothis—the eldest of our clan, whom we consider the childer of Great Set himself—that they made the temple their haven. Our clan gained a capital of sorts and a ruling council of elders.

This favor for the god extended to his undead childer and affected them strangely. When the worship of Set became patriotic, the Followers of Set became patriots. Ankhmessut's panegyric on Ramesses II praised him like a Napoleon, as the almighty soul of the nation—conqueror and savior in one. I found no record of Ramesses II becoming a ghoul, but that would explain his 67-year reign and more than 100 children. Priest and Setite, Lupine and werecat briefly set aside their hostility to revel in the pride and power of Egypt.

The Setites of the time, however, completely missed the significance of a slave revolt in the province of Goshien. Ramesses II defeated the rebellious "Apirus" and they fled east into the Sinai Desert. Centuries later, the slaves' descendants became the nation of the Hebrews. More centuries passed before the Followers of Set realized that Ra had assumed a new mask and perpetrated a powerful new deception to enchain the human soul.

After the 19th dynasty, a line of weak pharaohs squandered Egypt's wealth to expand the temples of Amun and other gods. Eventually the priests of Amun helped a Libyan general usurp the throne. Once more the magician-priests made war upon the Followers of Set and harried them back to their deepest, most secret catacombs. We would never forget that lesson: *Trust no one but another Setite!*

Dynasty followed dynasty, some native Egyptian, some Libyan or Nubian or Ethiopian. The Assyrian Empire conquered Egypt in 670 BCE. Several Assamite vampires came with them. In 660 BCE, the Egyptian prince, Psamtik, drove his Assyrian overlords from Egypt and the Followers of Set rallied to destroy the Assamite invaders. In 525 BCE, however, the Persians conquered Egypt and the Assamites followed



them in force. For the first time, another vampire clan dominated the Egyptian night. The Persians ruled Egypt by day, and the Assamites by night, for nearly 200 years. Native rebellions never succeeded for long. Only another foreign invader, the prince of an obscure barbarian state located far across the sea, could lift the Persian yoke at last.

Alexander of Macedon did not take the Followers of Set by surprise, though. They knew he would come. They knew from before he was born.

HELLENISTIC AGE

How strange that Alexander of Macedon should be one of my clan's greatest heroes, when he was never even Embraced. If the *Testament of Seterpenne* speaks truth, my clan shaped Alexander in his mother's womb with the help of the sorcerer Nectanebo, last Pharaoh of Egypt. The kine received a legend that the god Amun fathered Alexander with Nectanebo's connivance; our elder Seterpenne wrote that Nectanebo infused the unborn child with Set's essence. The sorcerer-king chafed at his Persian masters. The Followers of Set gave him a greater weapon than he imagined.

Alexander certainly lived up to his mythical parentage. He conquered Persia, conquered Egypt, and was pushing into India by the time his officers forced him to turn back. The mortal histories tell of his genius as a strategist and his charisma as a leader of men. He deserved to be the son of Set the Warrior.

Mortal histories also tell of Alexander's terrible drunken rages and bouts of cruelty to his dearest friends. He had a Beast he could not control. Some Setites wonder if he was the ghoul of one in our clan. One Setite even told me of rare ghouls-from-birth and speculated that Alexander was one such. I do not believe such speculations. In the crypts of Shiraz, however, I found a scroll writ by an Assamite long ago. He tasted a stolen drop of Alexander's blood and declared it untainted by vampires — but genuinely divine. After that the Children of Hagim no longer fought for Darius of Persia. The Alexandria Typhoeum keeps the treaty, graven on a human skull plated with gold. The Assamites acknowledged the conqueror as King of Kings and pledged no more to test the Setites' vigilance of his life.

Was Alexander truly the Son of Set? I do not know. Was he truly the son of a god? I cannot say he was not. He died of a fever at the age of 33. I know of another "son of a god" who died at that age too.

Nevertheless, Alexander forged ties that lasted long after his death. Merchants and scholars followed the routes of his armies, and Setites did too. The Children of Rebellion spread beyond Egypt. In the exuberance of the age, they traveled west as far as Spain, south to Nubia and Abyssinia, and east to India. We learned the magical secrets of every land and added them to our own. Although Greeks ruled Egypt, this age saw the Followers of Set in glory. All the peoples and wealth, religions and lore of the world met in Alexandria under the Setites' watchful eye. Vampires came

too, humbly seeking to learn the mysteries of Set just as mortals sought the mysteries of Isis and Osiris.

One of my teachers says that in this era the first Setite temple succeeded in the Great Work of ripping open the world's shell and passing to the Primal Ocean. Of Tartessos, the greatest city of ancient Spain, no trace remains except a finger-ring graven with curious signs and a few stone blocks found in the mud of the Guadalquivir River.

A pretty story...except the dates are wrong. Records of Tartessos end about 500 BCE. The city disappeared two centuries too soon for my teacher's fable. Someone is lying.

A BRIEF INTERLUDE IN CARTHAGE

Carthage! This city obsesses many in the Brujah clan. They celebrate it as their great lost utopia, where they ruled the kine wisely and well, and weren't the Roman Ventrue just *ouful* for destroying it?

Perhaps you expect me to boast that the Followers of Set arranged that war — so like the cunning, vicious Serpents, you think. Perhaps you expect me to debunk the Brujah's utopia and accuse them of some disgraceful, long-hidden villainy.

I shall do neither. I have read four supposed eyewitness accounts of life and unlife in Carthage. They do not agree on any single point. Nor do the dozens of "Tales of Carthage my sire told me" manuscripts present any consistent picture. Confronted with such disparities, a rational person discounts all claims alike.

The truth? Once upon a time, several Brujah dwelled in a city called Carthage. Vampires of other clans dwelled there too, or visited. The expanding, ambitious Roman Republic bumped into expanding, ambitious Carthage. Quite naturally, they fought to the death — and I need no rivalries between vampire clans to explain that! Carthage lost and the Romans destroyed it. A century later they rebuilt it. The city flourished until a Muslim general destroyed it again in the 8th century CE. Anything else a vampire tells you about Carthage is a pack of lies.

The priests at the Labyrinth of Bones claim that they excavated the sleeping Brujah Methuselahs of Carthage centuries ago. They even showed me several staked vampires — but I cannot confirm their identity. This must remain one more groundless fable.

CLEOPATRA

The Ptolemaic dynasty ruled Egypt well; Egypt claimed them and made them its own. The Followers of Set, however, committed a great folly. Many of the clan's elders scorned the Ptolemies as foreign invaders. When ever-hungry Rome turned its eye on Egypt after defeating Carthage, the Setite elders did not defend their homeland. They left that job to the last of the Ptolemies.

Some Setites say that Cleopatra was a ghoul of my clan. I fear that is wishful thinking — and our loss. As far as I can tell, Cleopatra, last Queen of Egypt, received nothing from

the Followers of Set. She learned none of our hoarded magic lore. We taught her none of our philosophies. She was human. She was magnificent.

I never found a Methuselah who could tell me about Cleopatra from direct experience. Such ancients exist, and most belong to the Followers of Set, but all now sleep in torpor or hide themselves. I must rely upon the history-books of the kine, or second-hand memoirs.

What a Setite Cleopatra would have made! She spoke and wrote several languages. She beguiled both Julius Caesar and Mark Anthony; her courage matched her cunning; she very nearly made Rome the slave of Egypt. Had Set issued one word in her favor — had our elders bestirred themselves, cast one small curse to strike Augustus Caesar down — Cleopatra could have ruled the world.

Set remained silent and asleep. His childer forbade the clan to help one foreigner against another. Mark Anthony fled the Battle of Actium; Cleopatra chose death from the asp's bite — Setite even in her death! — and Rome seized Egypt for its own.

The Romans did not care about Egypt's ancient magic and religion, or the treasury of wisdom in the great Library of the Ptolemies. They simply wanted Egypt's grain to feed the teeming masses of Rome. Thus ended the Golden Age of the Followers of Set.

THE ROMAN EMPIRE


Depending on how you look at it, Rome was either very good or very bad for the Followers of Set. My clan cemented its place in the North African night. The great Setite temples of North Africa — the Labyrinth of Bones in Tunis, the Descending Aerie of Tangier and others — date from this period. The provinces west of Egypt became rich in grain, olive oil and cattle. The *Mesu Bedshet* drank deep from the thriving cities of Cyrenaica, Numidia and Mauretania. As the Romans built palaces and temples above ground, the Setites built them below. Ours are not ruined, so who built the better?

The Romans encouraged conquered peoples to join their empire and become Romans too. Eventually, a third of all the Roman Senators actually came from Africa. So did the Severi dynasty of emperors. At least some Followers of Set learned racial tolerance from the Romans.

Younger Setites who countenanced defending the Ptolemies did not shirk from saying "I told you so!" They not only taught the mysteries of Sutekh to mortals of other lands, they defied their elders and Embraced them. The Eternals of Sothis prayed to sleeping Set for guidance. To their chagrin, all their dreams and divinations showed the Most Ancient blessing the young rebels. Thus did our clan avoid the schisms that bred an Anarch Rebellion centuries later.

Unfortunately, the history of this dispute remains obscure. I found only slender clues and passing mentions in the ancient chronicles. No elder — whether mortal, Setite or





Cainite — likes hearing that a young upstart is right! Most of the chronicles pass over the disagreements. They pretend that the Dark God ordered his childer to Embrace men and women from other lands and that the younglings piously obeyed.

The *Mess Bedshet* also penetrated Europe for the first time, carrying the Cult of Set to Roman cities along Roman roads. The Romans tolerated foreign cults and gods, as long as they accepted the divinity of the Emperor and the primacy of the Roman state. For the worship of Set, however, the Roman civil authorities made an exception.

Our most successful cult, then, cloaked the worship of Set in the form of Greek and Roman gods. The Cult of Typhon began in Hellenistic Alexandria, but it gained adherents throughout the Roman Empire. Cultists worshipped three gods: Bacchus the god of wine, intoxication and frenzy; Mars, the god of war; and Pluto, god of the dead. The Cult of Typhon eschewed politics. It promised the awful, glorious horror of blood sacrifice and the soul's temporary escape into sacred madness. In time, some cultists would learn that all three gods expressed aspects of Typhon the Terrible, child of Earth and Hell...and that Typhon's other name was Set!

Soon, however, the Followers of Set would face a new faith that hated all gods but its own. An obscure preacher in Judea would unleash a storm greater than any of Set's.

CHRISTIANITY

Like every Frenchman in my breathing nights, I was raised a Christian. My greatest consolation when I became a childer of Set was that the clan's ancient archives might hold some long-hidden text that would tell of Jesus during his life. As you must know, all the Gospels were written decades after his death.

I found no vampiric memoirs of Jesus at all. Indeed, I discovered only three records that dealt with both vampires and Judea from that time period. The first was a letter from the Red Temple to a Judean shrine, asking why it had sent no word for twenty years; I date this missive at roughly 28 CE. The second was the testimony of the ghoul who delivered the message, saying that he found the temple long abandoned and disheveled, with no trace of the priests except their scattered, dusty vestments. The third was an entry in an old Brujah's diary, noting that a broodmate had gone to Judea and not returned.

This curious lacuna ends, however, with one of the most important events in my clan's history. In 33 CE (the alleged year of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, you will note), the God of Storms awoke. Darkness covered the sky at noon and the Earth shook with Set's rage and pain. For three days and nights, or seven — tales differ — the Dark God spoke in thunder and his childer heard him, from India to Britain. For those days, Set's childer, grandchilder and great-grandchilder could not sleep. Sutekh roared out commandments and prophecies, giving his childer new revelations and instructions. At last Set stopped and his descendants collapsed, faint from the ordeal.

The next night a delegation from the Council of Tanis traveled to their site's hidden tomb. They found it empty and Set's mighty stone sarcophagus shattered, its shards driven into the walls and ceiling. We have not seen him or received any communication since then.

GNOSTICISM

Over the decades, numerous cults dedicated to Jesus spread throughout the Roman world. Some of them followed his teachings more closely than others. Many cults claimed that they possessed "secret teachings" that Jesus gave to one especially favored disciple or another. Many of these "secret teachings" directly contradicted the publically known Gospels — because Followers of Set wrote them.

Just as they did with the Greek and Roman gods, some within my clan sought to disguise the worship of Set by cloaking it with another faith. The Setite cults offered gnosis: revelation, wisdom and transformation of the soul. Catholic theologians denounced these hybrid cults as heresies.

The Ophites were the most blatant of these hybrid heresies. This cult glorified the Serpent of Eden as humanity's great enlightener, who delivered Adam and Eve from the false god's delusions. Through the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the first mortals became capable of sin, but also of the redemption brought by Christ. The congregation brought forth a pet snake at worship services and as a sacrament ate bread touched by the serpent.

Another cult declared Jesus the reincarnation of Seth, the third son of Adam and Eve. The Sethians propounded a doctrine of a false creator who could not see the true god revealed by Jesus-Seth. These Gnostics promised that their initiates could transcend the world to reach the heaven of the true god.


For centuries the Followers of Set strove to guide and promote the Ophites, the Sethians and other cults that incorporated fragments of Setite teachings. They brought thousands of people to the true worship of Set...but tens of thousands of kine, and then hundreds of thousands, followed other doctrines. As churches withered or merged, they placed more emphasis on obedience and ritual. Jesus the fisher of men looked more and more like Osiris the king.

You know how this story turned out. When the Emperor Constantine placed Roman state power behind the church of Peter and Paul, it suppressed the clan's Gnostic churches. *In hoc signo vinces.*

THE FALL OF TANIS

Set's disappearance was not the only disaster to befall our clan in the Roman era. An equal blow came five centuries later, in the Roman Empire's decrepitude, at the climax of four years of global misfortune.

Summer never came in 539 CE. Roman records from this year tell how in high summer the sun shone dim and cold for only four hours a day. I met an ancient Ventrue who remembered this year. Vampires still felt the compulsion to sleep when the sun rose, but those who resisted sleep could walk



unharmful for at least an hour after sunrise, so dark the sky remained. Crops failed, from the cold and from the heavy and unseasonable rains. The darkness and cold continued for three years before the skies completely cleared...but in 542 the bubonic plague spread from Egypt and Syria to Europe. Although less well known tonight than the 14th century's Black Death, this epidemic was proportionally worse. My Ventrue informant swore that half of Europe died before the plague burned itself out in 594.

543 CE was the year of earthquakes, from the Atlantic shores to far Cathay. The last earthquake struck Egypt, and Tanis suffered the worst of it. As the chronicles tell it, the earth shook two hours before dawn. Some buildings crumbled. Others sank into the soft delta soil. Shortly thereafter, as Setites and mortals pulled themselves from the wreckage of fallen buildings, a great host of Lupines attacked the city, killing everyone they met in their brutal rage. When the seven wakeful Eternals of Sothis came forth to battle the man-beasts the earth shook again, even stronger, and the lagoon of Manzala swept into the city. Mortals and Lupines drowned; the water pulled many Setites back out into the lagoon. The Setites who escaped the water sought shelter as best they could before the sunrise.

The next night, the surviving Setites tried to find the six sleeping Eternals, but the Temple of Set had sunk into the mud and Lake Manzala now covered the whole city. A few nights later, a group of Setite sorcerers tried to contact the sleepers by magic and could not find them. Gangs of Setites dove into the drowned city and tried to dig out the buried crypts. They did not come back. The Lupines and werewolves did not kill them: the beast-men tried to dig out the buried Eternals too, and they did not come back either.

The mystery remains. Indeed, it grows...but more about that later.

THE AGE OF FAITH

The destruction of Tanis marked the end of a long, slow decline for the Followers of Set. The spread of Christianity in Egypt resembled a good news-bad news joke. The good news? Christianity extinguished our ancient enemies: the priests of Isis, Osiris, Ra and Horus. The bad news? The Christians were worse.

According to the Catholic doctrine I learned as a boy, Jesus conferred a bit of his own divine power to each of his disciples and granted them the right to confer it in turn. Each priest receives this right from the priest who ordains him, in "apostolic succession"—just as a vampire receives his undead powers from his sire. Indeed, Jesus promised that all his followers would work miracles in his name.

The ancient Setites learned to believe in this divine force. Legends from this time are full of miracles wrought by apostles, bishops, holy hermits and pious virgins. The Setite chronicles echo the legends tenfold. Previous religions had

their wizard-priests, but some Christians performed wonders without training in sorcery. These miracle-workers were rare, but not rare enough! Many a Setite felt the burning scourge of faith from a mad-eyed desert hermit or a crusading teenage girl.

The miracles tapered off when Emperor Constantine made Christianity the Roman Empire's official religion. By 400 CE Christians happily persecuted Pagans just like they had been persecuted before (when they did not fight among themselves over points of doctrine) and miracles virtually ceased. In Alexandria, the bishop Cyril whipped up Christian mobs against the city's Pagans and Jews. He also led the mob that tortured the philosopher Hypatia to death and burned the Library of Alexandria. The Typhoeum's records say that a mystic "Sarmoung Brotherhood" drove Cyril and protected him from my clan's vengeance. This secret order was nothing less than the cult of Aton in a new guise. At this critical time, my clan lacked the strength or unity to fight them.

After the destruction of Tanis, the remaining seven Eternals each resumed his or her place as Hierophant of one of Egypt's great old temples. The seven Eternals supposedly acted by consensus. The ancient chronicles, however, suggest to me that this seldom actually happened. How could it? At any given time, two or three of them might be in torpor.

Some of the Seven also became more bigoted. They shunned Setites Embraced in other lands and barred the Hierophants of foreign temples from their debates. You may recall that Set endorsed racial diversity; you may also recall Christians using the words of their "prince of peace" to justify war. Trust me, no mortal can equal an ancient vampire for hypocrisy and sophistry. The Eternals' chauvinism created further divisions in the clan and weakened it exactly when the Children of Rebellion most needed strength and unity.

In the 7th century CE the Followers of Set acquired yet another enemy. The Arabs conquered Egypt in 642 CE. Another new religion drove them: Islam, dictated by an angel to a camel-driver. Divisions among Egypt's Christians weakened the country. Bishops loyal to the Byzantine Empire clashed with churchmen and native people who disagreed on fine points of doctrine. The Followers of Set did what they could to exacerbate these disputes, to weaken the grip of the Byzantine empire. More importantly, they sought to replace Christians' faith in Jesus with allegiance to a church and hatred of its rivals. Our temple records confirm what some kine historians suggest. Cyrus, the Byzantine patriarch of Alexandria, so hated the "heretical" Egyptians of the Coptic Church that he betrayed Egypt to the Muslims. In hindsight, the Setites of that time were not wise to weaken Egypt with infighting. The Muslim Arabs were no improvement over Constantinople.

I must debunk a common myth among the kine. These first Muslim conquerors did not force the Egyptians to convert or die. They merely demanded tribute. Do not think this grew from an intrinsic religious tolerance. Christians and other infidels paid higher taxes than Muslims, even if they converted

to Islam later. Copts ran Egypt's bureaucracy. The Arabs — like the Byzantines, the Romans, Greeks, Persians and Assyrians — wanted Egypt's grain and tax money, not its souls.

Meanwhile, the Western Roman Empire fell to the Vandals, Goths and other Germanic tribes — the way an old maid falls for a bold young swain. Romans no longer believed in Rome. The barbarians seemed like "noble savages" compared to the Emperor's tax collectors. Many a late Roman writer scornfully compared their Empire of effete patricians, greedy bureaucrats and ruthless spies to the manly, martial, honest barbarians. Many Romans cheered at their Empire's slow fall, though I understand that a few Ventrue elders chose to watch the sun rise after Alaric the Goth sacked Rome. Thus did the Western Roman empire crumble into petty barbarian kingdoms and the "Dark Ages" begin in western Europe.

Truly, I'd like to claim that the Roman Empire fell because of diabolical Serite subversion, but it wasn't so. After Constantine, we had little influence over the Roman state.

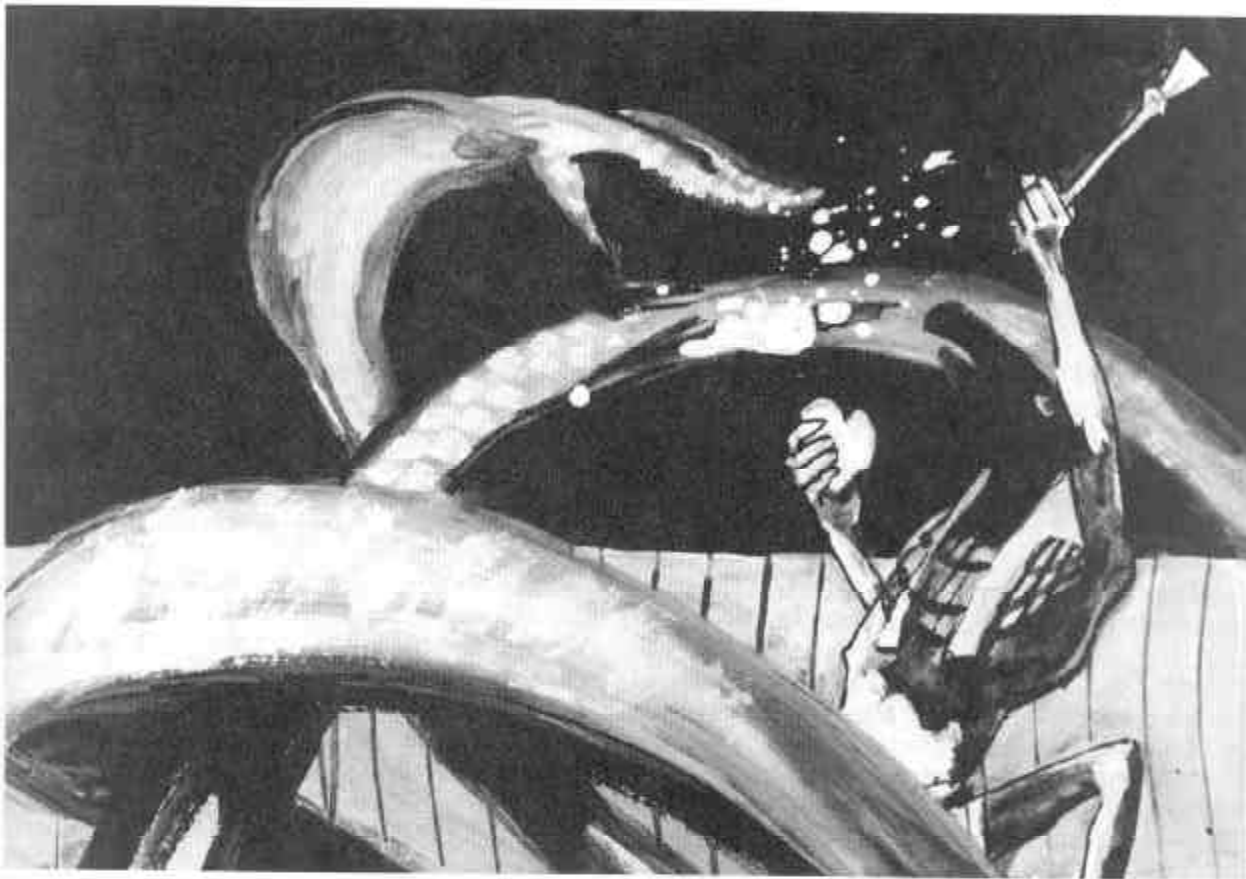
BYZANTIUM

The Eastern Roman Empire survived centuries longer than the Western. As the Greek-speaking Byzantine Empire, it became a bureaucratic marvel held by armies of soldiers, clerks and churchmen. All the powers of Church and State converged on an Emperor as despotic and divine as any Pharaoh. All laws converged in a unified *Maat*.

More than mortal will animated the Byzantine Empire. A triumvirate of powerful Toreador, Ventrue and Tzimisce broods ruled the night in Constantinople. The city and the Empire expressed a dream of their three Methuselah founders. These broods dominated the Byzantine night, but Constantinople found room for vampires of all clans. In that Christ-obsessed city, theology became a popular sport (often full-contact; church council debates provoked riots). How could the Followers of Set stay away?

The Serite Khay'tall came to Constantinople in the 5th century CE at the invitation of the Toreador Methuselah, who called himself Michael. The city was Michael's dream most of all; Khay'tall came to test the city's perfection — to pit himself against the sworn champion of the Aeons. Since Michael took the name of an angel, in that city the Followers of Set called themselves the Children of Judas. Eventually, Khay'tall won. I heard much of the tale from the Toreador, not from Serite chronicles. Michael went mad. He believed he was an Aeon himself, the actual angel whose name he took. As he drifted in fantasy, Khay'tall and his agents tempted the other city's other vampires. Appetites and ambitions still ruled them despite the powerful *Maat* of the city. The Children of Judas unraveled the networks of power uniting the city's vampires and spread strife among the kind.

I believe that at the end, Michael knew he had lost. Right before the Fourth Crusade sacked the city, the Archon-



gel submitted to diablerie by a much weaker vampire whose identity is unfortunately lost to history. The city never recovered from the looting by the treacherous Crusaders. The Aeons failed again.

The Followers of Set could not claim much of a victory, though. Some other vampire also destroyed Khay'tall. Visiting Setites from Egypt discovered that the Children of Judas, corrupters of Byzantium, had themselves been corrupted. They told their mortal cultists that Set was no Dark God but a demon, merely one of many who served Satan.

You smile. A Follower of Set, indignant at corruption and subversion? No less than we deserve, eh?

I may not feel great reverence to Set, but I do understand the difference between a Dark God and a demon. Our priests and theologians insist that the Followers of Set do not simply "corrupt" other people. We try to change the way they think, to liberate them from the delusions imposed by the Aeons. I find that Setites often differ on the details of their Great Enlightening Truth, but they do believe in it. I suppose I'm trying to open your mind myself.

Our "Theopudian" doctrine does not command us to prey on other people's weakness just to make them miserable, or to aggrandize ourselves. It most certainly does not tell us to enslave ourselves to any evil spirit who comes along. Recall that we seek to end enslavement by spirits.

Indeed, our theologians argue that demons represent the final degradation of the Aeons, their true form when they take off their masks of hymns and churches and high-sounding gospels. Whether an Aeon calls himself Ra, Jupiter or Jehovah, the message boils down to a demon's "Serve me and I will give you something; defy me and I will make you suffer." Set promises that he will make you suffer if you serve him, but only to make you stronger, as an athlete suffers in his training. When you grow strong enough to spit in God's face, you can become a god yourself.

Maybe that doesn't make much sense either, but it is different.

The Hierophants eventually agreed to purge the "Children of Judas" — too late. The demon-worshippers scattered and passed their Satanism to many young, non-Egyptian Setites. The Hierophants banned all "foreigners" from Egypt's temples, so these children never learned from the Setites who learned from Set himself. Thus the cult of Set rendered its first heresy impossible to eliminate.

I take comfort, however, that the elders of all the other vampire clans show episodes of equal stupidity.

HOLY WARS

My clan lacked experience at purging heresy — we are usually on the other end — and they did not do very well. My clan still bears a Satanist minority. The elders had no shortage of distractions, though, so I will excuse them this failure. While the Children of Judas wrecked Byzantium and turned

to demons, several holy wars wracked the Middle East. Some Crusades came from Europe, directed against the Muslims. One came from the Muslims, directed at us.

WARRIORS OF CHRIST

For a thousand years, barbarians from the East invaded Europe: Goths, Huns, Magyars and more. In the 12th and 13th centuries CE, Europeans returned the favor through the Crusades. The Seljuk Turks cut off Jerusalem and the other pilgrimage sites in the Holy Land. The Byzantine Emperor wanted help fighting said Turks. An ambitious Pope saw a chance to assert his primacy over Christendom. Ambitious noblemen hoped to carve fiefdoms out of the wealthy East. The Crusades had many causes but vampires were not among them, no matter what certain elder Ventrue may boast or Assamites accuse.

Numerous undead joined the Crusades, though — on both sides. They did so for eminently human reasons, just like their mortal comrades. The most reliable Cainite memoirs and documents from that time do not support any "jihad" of clan mobilizing against clan. European Ventrue, Lasombra and other vampires fought for Christianity, for land and mortal herds, or for loot. Syrian, Turk and Arab Assamites, Brujah and other vampires fought for Islam, or because they wanted to keep what was theirs.

The Followers of Set could hardly ignore the commotion. In every temple, Setite priests and elders pondered what to do about the invaders from the West. Two policies emerged. Some elders advocated doing nothing. The Christians were enemies of Set; the Muslims were enemies of Set. Let them slaughter each other. Other elders chose a more active path: encourage the other vampires to slaughter each other. Play both sides. Every "Cainite" destroyed was one less vampire to oppose Set's return. Every Christian or Muslim dead was one less slave of the Aeons. The two faiths would bleed each other to death.

The Crusaders proved the easiest to dupe, since they knew nothing about the Children of Rebellion. For all the mortal commanders knew, one of our brothers was simply a pale Levantine who appeared at night with information about their enemies. European vampires seldom inquired any more deeply into an informant's pedigree. The local Cainites showed more suspicion, since they had heard wild rumors about the "degenerate Followers of Set." But if you are fool enough to believe that any one clan is "less trustworthy" than another, you are probably not clever enough to discern when your guest is telling you the truth about his lineage.

Neither Kindred nor kine overlooked the possibility of false informants. Thus, Followers of Set bearing strategic information needed a "cover story" to explain why they wanted to help. Tales of persecution by the opposing side sometimes allayed suspicions, but the most convincing explanation turned out to be the simplest: the informant wanted money.

Some of my colleagues noted that armies required fodder for men and horses, water, weapons and a wide variety of supplies. An army that lacked sufficient materiel tended to

lose. This gave Setite agents another way to influence the course of battles, by sabotaging one army's supply train and selling provisions to the other.

By intervening in war, therefore, the Levantine Followers of Set discovered war profiteering. Not only could they prop up a weakened side and keep it fighting longer, they could also make a great deal of money in the process. A true follower of our philosophy, of course, scorns the love of filthy lucre for its own sake. The elders agreed, however, that money had its uses and that not all material purchases were base and unreasonable. We were not the first religion, nor the last, to discover the attraction of commerce. We have never looked back.

THE CHILDREN'S CRUSADE

I cannot let this episode in history pass without mention. I find it bizarre even by our kind's standards. Perhaps you know how in 1212 CE, an army of children gathered to mount their own Crusade against the infidel. Heavenly voices told Stephen, a French shepherd boy, that purity and innocence would overcome the paynim and return Jerusalem to Christian hands.

More than 30,000 French boys and girls rallied to Stephen's banner. When they arrived in Marseilles, a group of shipmasters offered to carry them east. These merchants, however, dealt in human cargo. Two of the ships sank and the remainder delivered their hosts of children to the slave markets of Alexandria.

Do you look for our hand in this? I am sorry, no. We were not instigators, simply...a market. The Egyptian temples bought several consignments as servants and, I am afraid, sacrifices. But the story is not entirely bleak: 11 of the children eventually earned the Embrace and four of them survive as respected elders.

TEMPLARS

You shall also surely wonder about the Knights Templar and the lurid rumors surrounding their secret practices. Did they really initiate their members with homosexual orgies? Did they really worship an idol that they called Baphomet? Did the Followers of Set teach them these debaucheries?

My apologies; I must disappoint you. The Followers of Set did corrupt numerous Templars (as well as Hospitallers and other miscellaneous knights) into debauchery and treachery against their own forces. I have no record, however, of any Setite cult achieving influence over the entire Templar order. The vast wealth of the Templars gave Philip of France an entirely adequate motive to suppress them.

BARBAROSSA

The Crusades also bring me to another debatable episode in my clan's past: the Fifth Crusade and Frederick II of the Holy Roman Empire. The 5th Crusade attacked the port city of Damietta in the Nile delta. I am no general, but I cannot imagine what Frederick thought he could achieve. How long could he possibly hold a city in the heart of his enemy's domain? His opponent, the Sultan Kamil, had problems with relatives

who would rather rule splinter states of their own, but they put aside their ambitions to fight the European invader.

Nevertheless, Sultan Kamil cut a deal with Frederick. He gave the German king the city of Jerusalem. In return, Frederick pledged to support the Sultan against any enemy...such as his relatives. I assume. Frederick married the daughter of the last King of Jerusalem, crowned himself in the city in 1229 and promptly returned to Europe. He spent the next 21 years warring with Popes and rebellious Italian cities, chartering the University of Naples and establishing Italian poetry at his court in Sicily. Then he died.

Or did he? For the next century, people in Germany claimed that they saw Frederick II alive. Later, a legend grew that he slept in Kyffhausen Mountain in Thuringia. Someday he would emerge to restore peace and glory to the German people.

These are silly legends. I am supposed to believe in a German Elvis Presley turned German King Arthur?

Except... Four Setite temples in Egypt own portraits from life of Frederick II. Like his famous grandfather Frederick I, called Barbarossa, he had red hair. The two kings are often confused. My primal sire, Set himself, also had red hair. The Children of Rebellion traditionally honor red-haired men, for exactly the same reason that the ancient Egyptians thought it a bad omen.

The Hierophants do not commission portraits of every petty monarch who invades Egypt. Through the Blood, of course, Frederick could easily live, unaging, for decades after his supposed death. Through the Embrace, he could sleep beneath a mountain until Germany's need calls him forth — or someone's need, anyway.

Did my elders make some kind of deal with Frederick? Was he ghoulded or, eventually, Embraced? If so, what did he offer in return? The Eternals can be maddeningly secretive, devious...and patient.

THE PURGE OF BAYBARS

All in all, the Christian Crusades benefited the Followers of Set. They did not harm us (although individual Setites met Final Death by misadventure) and left the clan stronger than before. Two centuries of European attacks, however, bred a Muslim who was more fanatical, militant and intolerant than the world had yet seen. Once again, the Setites found themselves attacked by men led by priests.

Muslims hated the core attributes of our clan even more than the Christians did. Not only did the *Messu Bedsher* drink blood and serve a false god through perverse revelries, they also worshipped idols — the unforgivable sin. My clan suffered its Inquisition more than a century before the vampires of Europe. Other vampires suffered too, of course. The witch-hunters did not bother to ask a vampire his clan before they struck off his head. They made a special effort, however, to root out any and all "infidel" shrines — a Setite specialty — in the name of crushing Paganism.

Naturally, the purge became most severe where Setites remained most numerous, in Egypt. The hunt reached its



height in the latter half of the 13th century under the rule of the Sultan Baybars.

Baybars was a Mameluke, a Turkish slave bought and raised to fight for the Sultans of Egypt. Repeated Crusades (such as Frederick II's) forced the Ayyubid Sultans to keep the Mamelukes strong. The slave-soldiers became so strong that after the 7th Crusade, the victorious Mameluke general usurped the throne. In 1260, Baybars seized the throne in turn.

Baybars and the Mamelukes decided to deal with the Europeans conclusively. They did not settle for besieging and sacking the last Crusader strongholds in Syria and Palestine. Baybars led his army up the coast of Palestine, uprooting and burning every plant and filling every well. When Crusaders landed from Europe, they found no food or water for themselves or their horses. Baybars created a desert that endures to this night. For an encore, he defeated the Seljuk Turks and the Mongols, overran Armenia and quashed the mortal Hashishim. He also conquered Nubia and established hegemony over Arabia.

Somehow, Baybars also found time to order a comprehensive purge of Egyptian vampires. The Setites of that time thought they had mastered the arts of self-concealment, but not a year passed without another brood or shrine destroyed. The Mamelukes had unshakable courage, a great deal of practice with fire and steel, and — all too often — enigmatic sorcerers who shielded the warriors from the elder magicians of our clan. Our ancient enemy, the Cult of Aton, still sought to purge the childer of Set from the world and establish a worldwide rule of *Maat*. This time they called themselves the *Nur al-Allah*, the Light of God.

Perhaps you find this hard to believe, but I spoke with survivors from those nights of burning. They say that magic was far more common then. Wizards often wrought their magic in plain sight. The Masquerade has worked very well indeed; history forgets all the supernatural events of the past, or discounts them as wonder-tales from a more gullible age.

The wizards and Mamelukes even destroyed three of the great elder temples, burning and burying their millennial treasures of magic and lore. They also sent two Eternals to their Final Deaths. After the Mamelukes sacked the ancient temple of Ombos, the temple that claimed Set Himself as its founder, the Hierophants of the remaining temples made a terrible choice. The Followers of Set abandoned Egypt. They buried the entrances to their temples and cast mighty spells to hide them from the wizards. Only a brave few Setites remained to make war on the Mamelukes: our kind of war, the war of poisoned cups and poisoned words.

So the Proclamation of Red Tears commanded. So it was done. The Followers of Set carried away every scroll and artifact they could manage to the temples of other lands. The Egyptian Hierophants swallowed their ancient pride and offered gifts and apologies for old slights. Many of the old treasures never returned to Egypt. Perhaps that is best for the clan. We will never be so vulnerable again.

In 1277, Baybars died. I wish I could say that the Followers of Set killed him. No, an Assamite did the deed, an assassin who had suffered the deaths of his mortal grandchildren when the Mamelukes sacked their village.

Some cultures and some clans would feel cheated. The Followers of Set did not. We are wiser than that; we do not care, so long as we get what we want. Many Setite cults celebrate Baybars' death every year and honor the name of Vardar Vardarian, Child of Haqim six times removed. I believe he is the only vampire in history to win a Life Boon from an entire clan, by order of the assembled Hierophants of Egypt. Tell that to vampires who say the Followers of Set have no honor.

I once attended the Burning of Baybars festival at the House of the Eclipse. I gained new pride for my clan when the acting Hierophant shaved a sliver from one of Baybars' ribs and cast it into the fire. The wailing wraith of Baybars appeared above the brazier, wreathed in spectral flame! That night....

Some say that revenge is best served cold. Our parables say that revenge is best served forever...or at least for another thousand years, until the skeleton of Baybars is entirely consumed.

After the slave-king's reign, the Mameluke Inquisition faded decade by decade. After 30 years, the Setites returned to Egypt and their temples. The Mamelukes busied themselves with foreign wars and domestic usurpations. Now and then they persecuted the Christians, a new activity in Egypt that made no difference to the Setites. The Followers of Set encouraged the Mamelukes in these distractions. Meanwhile, the clan's network of temple couriers, merchants and spies encircled the Mediterranean and pushed farther into Africa, Europe and Asia. When the Ottoman Empire conquered the weakened Mamelukes in 1517, the Cult of Set had outlasted yet another enemy.

DARK CONTINENT: THE SETITES IN EUROPE

Even before the purge of Baybars, the Middle Eastern "holy wars" convinced the clan's leaders that they must pay more attention to events beyond Egypt. Not every Setite leader argued for expanding Set's war against other vampires. All but the most pacifistic Setites agreed, however, that Europe needed watching. If the European Kindred and kine remained fragmented and fighting among themselves, they would pose less danger to the Followers of Set.

I mentioned the Templars; they showed us the way. To support their war effort, the Templars gained great skill at moving money and supplies over long distances. This, and their tight internal discipline, made them Europe's first international bankers. A French knight could pawn his home to the Templars in Antioch, then redeem it in Sicily.

At the same time, mortal crusaders gained a taste for eastern luxuries such as silk and pepper. They carried these tastes back to Europe. Increasing numbers of merchants dared the long and dangerous journey to Palestine or Egypt, tempted by the enormous profits they could reap on their return.

ENECRATION LITANY

Burn! Burn! Blood! Blood!
Accused by Baybars the slave.
Let the crocodiles of the black river gnaw on your bones.
Let the snakes of the black ocean coil around your bones.
Thou, slave who became king, we enslave again!
Enemy of the Followers of Set,
Enemy of the Childer of Set,
Let death not shield Baybars from vengeance!
The king is our slave, stolen from death.
Baybars is our slave, stolen from death.
Let the pain of Baybars endure forever!
Typhon Set, dark sire of our sires,
In Thy holy name we torment vile Baybars.
Servant of a false book,
Servant of a false god,
We burn your book!
We burn your god!
Baybars, your grave is empty.
Baybars, your ka goes hungry.
Baybars, your bones we defile.
Baybars, we curse you forever and ever!

When the Followers of Set decided to launch their own "crusade" against Europe, they combined a Templaresque network with trade in eastern luxuries. Setites and their ghouls traveled to the great trade fairs laden with silk and spices, incense and jewels. Back east, they subverted certain European merchants and used them as pawns. Wealthy Europeans eagerly bought everything we sold, and then asked for more.

This gave the Setite merchants their opening. They offered to supply *anything* their wealthy clients desired. Did an up-and-coming merchant chafe at laws forbidding him to wear clothing above his station? His draper promised to discuss the matter with the local lord. Did a knight fret that a rival surpassed him at jousting? A vendor offered him a bear's strength by means of a "rare and potent elixir" before a tournament. Even bishops confessed their desires: the "foreign merchant" who supplied incense to sanctify the church's air could assist in winning benefices or obtaining relics of famous saints...or at least convincing imitations.

When a customer wanted something that one of our merchants could not supply at once, a ghoul servant rode to a clanmate in another town. Perhaps another family member had what the client desired. We established depots where their merchants could trade information and commissions. We appointed factors to manage their properties in their absence. Decade by decade, a vast trading network took shape.

Do not imagine this as a modern corporation. No single Hierophant, or even a committee, oversaw the network's growth. Individual Followers of Set, however, collaborated

more than they competed. They made more money by trading favors and fixing prices.

Many clients eventually came to depend on their "eastern merchant" friends for more than pretty clothes and tasty food. Even the clients who did not seek mortally dubious or politically dangerous pleasures valued the news the Setites carried from far places, and their cunning advice. A Setite could demand favors in return: a too-perceptive priest silenced; a mortal business rival crushed; the plan for a coming war. Some few Europeans became dependent enough — or showed enough instinctive awareness of Set's truths — that they earned initiation to the mysteries of the Dark God. Some learned the Lord of the Desert's ways so well that they received the Embrace.

Bringing Europeans into the Cult and Clan of Set caused great controversy among the elders. The same Eternals who opposed spreading the clan through North Africa and the Middle East opposed this increased dilution of the clan's "heritage." Some people never learn.

Other Hierophants and Eternals countenanced the clan's expansion. They took their lesson from the histories of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. A religion that clung to tribal roots remained small and oppressed. A religion that welcomed the gentiles as converts flourished and spread. Should not all the peoples of the world hear Set's message?

As the Setite merchants spread through Europe, however, they discovered that the question was moot. Europe already held two cults and lineages of Set's blood, established a thousand years before. Both cults Embraced Europeans; they could hardly have done otherwise.

The Cult of Typhon, you see, still survived in a few locations, celebrating the rites of Bacchus, Pluto and Mars. Some cult groups even persisted with no vampire to lead them. For instance, a letter from a Setite in 10th-century Venice mentions an all-mortal cult of Pluto called the Flamens of Dis, led by a family named DiGiovanni.

Most Typhonic cults quickly rejoined the cult of Set, and most Setites welcomed them back. Centuries later, when Europe's intellectuals rediscovered Greco-Roman culture, the Cult of Typhon expanded rapidly and drew many Europeans to the ways of Set. To this night, at least a quarter of all Setites in Europe come from Typhonist roots.

The second cult and lineage proved more problematic.

THE CAINITE HERESY

The Setite merchants discovered other vampires with an interest in religion. These vampires saw curious parallels between undeath and certain aspects of Christian doctrine. For instance, they made much of the supposed incorruptibility of a saint's flesh after death, and the power of vampire blood to hold back aging and confer supernatural powers upon mortals. They believed that Christ was a vampire, the "Second Caine," or somehow connected to vampires. I will spare you the details of their tortuous theology; if you desire a full exposition, any Setite shrine can obtain one for a moderate price.

These vampires sought to spread their "Cainite Heresy" throughout the Roman Catholic Church. Some genuinely believed they brought the true doctrine to the mortals they seduced and enslaved. Others, no doubt, saw the Church and the Heresy simply as a convenient way to gather mortal herds.

Most Setite theologians merely studied the Cainite heresy. The second long-sundered branch of Set's clan became part of it. These Setites led a cult, distinct from the rest of the Cainite Heresy, called the Church of the Black Magdalene. Somehow this Gnostic cult survived the centuries but lost contact with Egypt after Rome's fall. They presented Setite dogma as the "true doctrine" transmitted from Christ to his 13th apostle, Mary Magdalene.

Magdalenite doctrine differs from mainstream Christianity on several points. According to the *Magdalene Gospel*, Christ's ministry and sacrifice lifted the burden of original sin, but mortals take on sin anyway through the deceptions of the Aeons. The chief deceptions are Guilt and Law. The arch-Aeon Jehovah is the true Satan, the Accuser and God of This World. Satan-Jehovah plays both sides, the Tempter and the Punisher. He does not want people to understand that the deeds of the body have no impact on the soul's salvation. Any act performed with love and joy is holy, though to the world it may seem a heinous crime. Any act performed in a spirit of hate or resentment is sin, no matter how meritorious it may seem. Thus the Magdalenites encourage mortals to act upon their desires, and ask Christ to forgive them until they can forgive themselves and, finally, cast off shame forever.

Magdalenites also emphasize the role of the female in salvation. As they point out, Christ was born of woman and passed on his secret teachings through a woman. In the Middle Ages, the Church particularly condemned women (and especially love of woman) as the fount of evil. The witch-hunts showed where that doctrine led.

Magdalenites particularly sought to persuade the religious to break vows of celibacy. They argued that a person who could not achieve a perfect and passionate union with another human being was hardly qualified to achieve a union with God. They also advocated free love and sexuality, because a soul that feels only Love accepts all other souls as equally beloved. To more conventional clerics, of course, Magdalenite churches and nunneries seemed like whorehouses. Hence, Magdalenites were required to exercise discretion in how much they let conventional clerics see.

As a final oddity, the Church of the Black Magdalene claimed that Christ fathered a child on the Apostle Mary, who had children of his own. The Holy Blood bore some ill-defined connection to the Merovingian dynasty of France and continued in secret, guarded by the Magdalenites. Some Magdalenite priests and priestesses said they were scions of Christ themselves. I know, dear friend, that you retain some attachment to Christian doctrine. Please do not condemn me if this offends you; I merely report Magdalenite beliefs, not condone them.

The Church of the Black Magdalene proved quite popular throughout the Middle Ages, its spread limited only by its need for secrecy. Most converts were women. Read the writings of the many female mystics from this period. Their visions of Christ and the Virgin sound suspiciously erotic. Consider, for instance, the words of the Blessed Angela of Foligno:

And I felt an ineffable divine sweetness...

"My daughter, sweet to me; my daughter, my beloved, my temple, my daughter, my beloved, love me, since you have been much loved by me, much more than you love me.

"And after I have laid myself in you, now lay yourself in me. This is my creature."

The Church considered Angela orthodox enough to beatify her, but her ecstatic reveries differ little from those of Magdalenes who burned as heretics. As early as Dante Alighieri, the notion that love of woman could aid the soul in achieving love of God became quite respectable. After all, in the *Divine Comedy* it is his beloved Beatrice, not some stern priest, who leads Dante through Paradise and into the divine Presence.

In time, the Magdalenes might have radically altered the Catholic Church's doctrines through sheer weight of converts from within. Before that could happen, other vampires forced the Church's hand and brought doom upon them all. The Middle Ages ended in fire, and the modern world was born in terror from its ashes.

THE ANARCH REVOLT

The vampires of Europe did nothing to help Followers of Set who fled the purge of Baybars. No matter that these Setites fled the one who drove out the Crusaders and wrecked hopes for princedoms in Palestine. The Kindred who considered themselves Christians reviled us as Pagans. Many now-elder Nosferatu, Ventrue and Toreador from this period still despise us and call for our destruction. The true elders of that age cared less for religion, but they still turned away dark-skinned vampires who begged for refuge. Of all the emotions, pity is the first that the undead lose.

In the 14th century, Europe's vampires became the ones who needed succor. They brought it on themselves, of course. The Cainite Heretics became too numerous and too powerful to hide themselves any longer. The Church struggled to purge itself of the vampires within its ranks. Each vampire detected and destroyed led to others, more and more vampires...not all of them in the Heresy's ranks, either. By 1350, the Church's various Inquisitions (the name encompassed several institutions) made hunting vampires a major part of their job. Read the Church records from this time. Do you wonder how young women and old men withstood such horrendous tortures for so long? At least some of them were ghouls, striving not to betray their vampiric masters.

The Setites who oversaw the Church of the Black Magdalene burned with the rest of the Cainite Heresy. Some of them escaped the Inquisition, though. The cult as a whole just barely survived. It renamed itself the Priory of the Black

Magdalene in the 17th century. I understand that the Priory still claims to guard the descendants of Christ and preserve the bloodline through selective breeding. They have a lovely cathedral below Marseilles, but I don't believe a word of it.

The Inquisitions truly threatened to exterminate every vampire in Christendom. The great, immortal "lords of the night" found themselves hunted like beasts. With each vampire destroyed, the faith of the men who hunted them burned higher, making them even deadlier foes. Faced with invincible faith, the eldest vampires lost their nerve. Some of them, I know, turned to individual Followers of Set for help, Setites whom they scorned a century before. I note 11 documented instances of a Setite promising refuge...and ordering ghouls to deliver the day-sleeping elder to the local Inquisitor. Six other elders, carefully staked through the heart and dissected, grace various Setite temples; pardon me if I do not list their names or locations. I can hardly fault them.

Most elders, however, tried to fight back against their human hunters. They could not accept the need to hide from their prey. They commanded their childer to counter-attack the Inquisitors, or dressed them in their garb to meet Final Death as decoys. After a few decades of this, the elders' childer came to resent their usage as cannon-fodder (or rather stake-torch-and-beheading-fodder). When a group of Tzimisce vampires (themselves elders by most reckoning, but enslaved to even older monsters) discovered how to break the blood oaths that forced them to serve, quite naturally they rebelled. By 1400, a three-way war between Inquisition, elders and the self-proclaimed "anarch" vampires raged through Europe. As a further complication, the murderous Assamites allied with the rebels. They cared nothing for the anarchy's grievances, but they saw an opportunity to diablerize Europe's elders as their peculiar faith demanded.

Many vampires know how that war ended. Most European vampires agreed to a code of minimum cooperation needed to preserve the Masquerade. These became the Camarilla. The few who refused reconciliation became the Sabbat. The Followers of Set remained independent, although the elders who founded the Camarilla asked Europe's Setites to join. They even extended the invitation to the Founding Temples in Egypt.

I have spoken with more than a hundred Camarilla vampires about their sect's origin. Not one in ten knew about the invitation to my clan. None of them knew why we refused. For that matter, they did not know why we were asked in the first place. The Camarilla's founders did not ask the nascent Giovanni clan to join; indeed, they insisted that the Necromancers remain outside and neutral. Nor did they invite Europe's Ravens to join.

The role my clan played in the Anarch Revolt and its aftermath is one of the better-kept secrets of the undead. At first, few Followers of Set cared which side triumphed in the Anarch Revolt. The Hierophants certainly did not; they advised Europe's Setites to follow our well-known, even-handed custom of play-

ing both sides. A Setite brood might sell its aid to a gang of anarchists; then turn and sell knowledge of the anarchists to the elders. Setites from that time frankly told me that they hoped the anarchists and elders would destroy each other completely. Some of these Setites saw the other clans' extermination as Set's will, part of our founder's war against their founders. Others simply wanted revenge for personal insults.

That policy changed when the Assamites entered the war. Europe's vampires merely spar at Setites. The Assamites fought us for millennia, directly and through the mortal empires and faiths they championed. The Hierophants agreed that the Assamites would surely defeat whatever side won the long war of attrition. They decreed in council that the Followers of Set must help the elders, while preserving a façade of neutrality. In the last 20 years of the Anarch Revolt, most Followers of Set withdrew into hiding from Europe's other vampires. Secretly, they passed information about the anarchists to a few warlords of the elders, and passed disinformation that led anarch bands into traps. More importantly, my clan drew a secret net around the Assamites' stronghold of Alamut.


The true Alamut is not the ruined fortress you may read about in history books. The true Alamut is immensely older and hidden so that no mortal could ever find it. The Followers of Set, of course, uncovered its location centuries before the Anarch Revolt.

Thus, while Europe's elders bear down their rebellious childer, the Setites passed information about the Assamites' blood-sorcerers to the Tremere and assisted them in developing rituals to block the Assamites' sendings. Others of my clan established blood cults along the routes to Alamut, that the nascent Camarilla's army might find sustenance. They discovered the keys to the mystic wards that hid Alamut from the world. When the bulk of the anarchists surrendered, Setites guided a host of Europe's elders to Alamut's door. I wish I could have been there, when the Lords of the Tremere called lightning to scatter Alamut's hosts and Menele of the Brujah shook the earth as he broke down Alamut's granite doors. I am told those great slabs remain where they fell to this night, as a reminder against pride.

The elders of the Camarilla keep no records of the Setites' help against the Assamites, at least none they show to their childer. The Setites who were there documented it all, however, and wrote their memories into stone, that my clan might read and remember forever. I find much about my clan aggravating, but I have also felt Assamite pride and wrath. The humbling of Alamut makes me proud to call myself a childer of Set.

Now you too know what could impel the Camarilla's founders to put aside their bigotries and offer the Followers of Set a place at the Camarilla's table. The Camarilla would have had an eighth clan, had the Hierophants accepted their offer. Bigotry and grievances, however, work both ways. Joining the Camarilla would mean renouncing Set's war against the clan founders who betrayed him, and that they could not do — at least, that's what the elders say.





Nevertheless, a few among my kind believe that we do possess some hold over the Camarilla. Some say that the entire sect owes the Followers of Set a gigantic, collective Life Boon: that the Hierophants of Egypt have the right to demand *anything* from the Inner Circle, once. Others say that one Hierophant secretly attends each meeting of the Inner Circle, or that the Camarilla's leaders secretly consult certain Eternals when they face a problem or mystery they cannot solve. I doubt all such rumors. I do not believe the Methuselahs of the Inner Circle can muster that much honor, or the humility to admit when they could use our help.

Thus ended the Anarch Revolt, and the Age of Faith with it. In its zeal to destroy all vampires, witches and other servants of Satan, the Church did not care how many innocents it slew along the way. In truth, most mortals would confess to anything the Inquisitor wanted to hear, just to end the torture. As vampires mastered the Masquerade, the Inquisitors found fewer and fewer vampires. They did not stop, though. Witch-hunting became a highly profitable business for bishop and burgomaster alike: They could confiscate the assets of anyone convicted. When the Inquisition devolved into a morass of self-delusion and naked greed, its power of faith evaporated as well. Certain pious and fanatical priests and nuns still hunt vampires, but Holy Mother Church does not sanction them, or even believe that we exist.

MODERN PROBLEMS

After the Anarch Revolt, the Setites of Europe retreated into the shadows. No matter how much our zealots speak of "war on the betrayers of Set," we really prefer peace and the slow, patient acquisition of power.

This, I believe, is the real reason why my clan never joined the Camarilla — nor some mythical war begun thousands of years ago. Most of the anarchs accepted the fledgling Camarilla's amnesty, but the Lasombra and Tzimisce remained hostile. Joining the Camarilla would mean committing to a war without end. Our elders remembered the lessons of the Crusades and remained neutral. That way, we can sell our services to both sides; or if a Setite so chooses, lead vampires of either sect to wisdom or destruction. If a vampire of one sect becomes too dangerous, a Setite can call on vampires of the other sect to destroy him.

The ancient Hierophants also accepted that they could never drive Islam from Egypt, nor make Egypt master of the world. Indeed, what would Egyptian independence really mean, when the culture the Hierophants championed had died 1500 years before? No formal council ratified a "clan policy" to this effect, but every Setite who existed in this period remembers the intense discussions about the matter. Three of the Hierophants never did admit that they could not reverse history. Instead they retreated to their tombs and sleep to this night. As the Eternal Nakhthorheb said, "I shall wake when my Father calls me — not before."

Thus, when the Ottoman Empire conquered Egypt in 1517, the Followers of Set neither welcomed nor opposed them. They merely studied the new regime, to find how best to exploit it when possible and to avoid it otherwise.

THE OTTOMAN YOKE

Fortunately for the Setites, the Ottoman government was ideal for exploitation and intrigue. Although a viceroy sent from Istanbul ruled in name, the Mamelukes preserved a powerful role in the military and government. This bizarre ruling class continued to propagate itself by purchasing slave boys and raising them as soldiers. After their period of service, some slave-soldiers moved into civil government. The constant tension between the Turkish soldiers and bureaucrats and their Mameluke counterparts provided many opportunities for subversion. A Turkish minister who found a Mameluke rival too obstructive could count on a Follower of Set offering to help... as could the Mameluke. The slave-soldiers themselves engaged in drawn-out factional struggles and gladly accepted help from any source — even a blood-drinking Pagan demon.

Mortal historians do not treat the Ottoman Empire kindly, and neither will I. Their rule stultified Egypt, the Balkans, Syria and all the rest of their territories. Before the Ottoman yoke, the Middle East held a civilization as dynamic as anything in Europe. Cairo and Baghdad both hosted great universities. The arts and sciences flourished. For all its militaristic, factional faults, the Mameluke regime supported a sparkling intellectual life — especially historians, my own profession. Under Ottoman rule, Egypt produced only one great historian (and he had Napoleon as his subject) and no great art, architecture, literature or science. To a great degree, the Middle East is part of the "Third World" because of four centuries of Ottoman rule.

The Ottoman Empire held the worst sort of *Maat*: order without grace, grandeur or even efficiency, merely bureaucracy — and savage retribution for anyone who rebelled or failed to pay their taxes. Michael the Archangel would have wept blood-tears to see his beloved Constantinople become Istanbul, the capital of such a leaden empire. Perhaps, however, I am biased. I remember the Ottoman Empire only from its last century, when it became a tottering wreck that survived through sheer bulk.

The Followers of Set did play a role in transforming the Ottoman Empire from the feared besieger of Vienna to the "Sick Man of Europe." Yes, we seduced, corrupted and enslaved Ottoman officials and nobles. We did not, however, try to destroy the Empire through subversion. For 400 years — right up to World War One — the Middle Eastern Setites carefully protected the Ottoman Empire through its decay into graft and incompetence. Who would want the Ottomans replaced by some more dynamic and dangerous state? On a few occasions, Setite influence even saved the Empire from disaster by silencing aggressive pashas or viziers who did not know when to cut their losses.

Throughout the modern centuries, however, the Middle Eastern Setites did fight one war despite all their attempts at

peace. The Assamites were my clan's greatest vampiric rivals since Pharaonic times. They never forgave the Followers of Set for guiding the Camarilla to Alamut. The Assamites fought the Followers of Set like the Sabbat fights the Camarilla; everything from wild assaults on Setite temples to subtle schemes to neutralize our mortal pawns.

Your colleagues in the Camarilla tend to regard Assamites as nothing but professional killers (or, after their recent liberation from the Tremere's curse, cannibal maniacs). I fear the Camarilla is in for a shock when it discovers the full range of Assamite talents, as they surely must in this global age. I give you this warning...but I feel no obligation to the rest of the Camarilla. I hear little enough love for my clan, but neither the Camarilla nor the Sabbat ever gave me any reason to prefer them. Let them learn about the Assamites the hard way.

When both sects have suffered a few shocking losses to the Assassins, I expect that Camarilla princes and Sabbat bishops will receive offers of help from local Followers of Set. They will, of course, suspect a cunning plan to buy their souls. They will, of course, be right. They will, of course, accept the Serites' help anyway. I know my clan.

Enough of current politics.

In Europe, meanwhile, the contrast to the Ottoman East could not have been greater. As the bloated Empire stagnated, the many contending states of Europe moved from strength to strength. By fighting each other, they learned how to defeat the rest of the world. European scholars graduated from copying Greece and Rome to bold experiments of their own. The West arose to amaze and terrify the world.

The Followers of Set saw it all from the inside. As much as any vampire clan, the Serpents participated in the secret history of the Enlightenment.

AGE OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS

After the Renaissance came the so-called Age of Reason. Western mortals like to think of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries as a time of progress. In these centuries, Europeans explored the world, advanced the arts and had a variety of revolutions: Political, scientific and industrial. This was the age of Descartes and Voltaire.

Behind the palace-lined boulevards and Bach figures, however, boiled a witch's cauldron of secret societies, occultism and debauchery. The upper class of England applauded the easy verses of Pope and the mannered wit of Fielding, then adjourned to revel in drunken lust at the Hellfire Clubs. In France, Madame de Montespan commissioned Black Masses with infant sacrifice first to draw the King's love, then to kill him. Few remember that the arch-scientist Newton spent more time studying alchemy than gravity. The Followers of Set flourished in "Enlightened" Europe.

For every pioneering scientist, the Age of Reason also produced two or three self-proclaimed sorcerers — from a squalid little trickster called Doctor Faustus to Cardinal Richelieu, architect of the French monarchy. In less than 200

years, Europeans went from burning sorcerers to fettering them at court. The 18th century saw numerous adventurers like the "Count" St. Germaine, who added occult pretensions to their self-bestowed titles and courtly manners. Some suggest that St. Germaine was a vampire. I cannot say, as I never met the man. I hear that at least one vampire used the name after the *su-disant* Count's official death. If the "real" St. Germaine was a Cainite, he is the only one who ever won a royal grant for devising a laxative tea.

THE GRAND COPHT

The two most famous courtly adventurers, however, were surely Count Alessandro Cagliostro and Giacomo Casanova. The former, I am pleased to call a fellow Setite. The latter was not, but should have been. Of Casanova I need say little; his name has become proverbial. I shall merely add that Casanova's achievements included a "cabala" used both for fortune-telling and writing secret messages; and that his escape from the Inquisition prevented his Embrace. He died still mortal, though not from lack of effort by my clan and at least two others.

Cagliostro dazzled the courts of Europe with his magical powers: alchemical diamonds, a healing touch, evocation of spirits and more. He called himself the "Grand Copht," pupil of the Egyptian magus Althotas. Rumors of scandal and fraud pursued Cagliostro. Eventually a yellow-rag journalist (and convicted blackmailer) declared that Count Cagliostro was actually Giuseppe Balsamo, a petty thug from Sicily. The Count collapsed. He would not dispute the charges. Under pressure, his wife confirmed them and abandoned him. As far as the world knew, Giuseppe Balsamo, not the Grand Copht, died in the Inquisition's dungeons in 1795.

A group of Serites faked Balsamo's death and smuggled him out of prison. The Grand Copht was something of an experiment, in the spirit of *My Fair Lady*. The Setite coterie, who used "Althotas" as a collective pseudonym, wagered another coterie that they could turn any man into the toast of Europe. Althotas supplied a variety of talismans and spells to supplement the minor magic Balsamo learned as a ghoul. More importantly, they twisted Balsamo's mind inside-out. He truly believed he was the Grand Copht.

Althotas did not want to rescue Balsamo. They won their bet, but they considered their creation a failure in the end. Their own Hierophant, Shemti of the Crocodile Temple, demanded that they cover their tracks before Balsamo could reveal Setite secrets to the Inquisition. The Hierophant Shemti himself restored the Cagliostro personality and Embraced him. The Grand Copht now presides over one of Europe's leading temples to Set. We consider him a great magician of our clan.

SECRET SOCIETIES, SHADOW WARS

In life, our creature Cagliostro did more than play tricks to amuse bored aristocrats. He also founded his own order of Freemasonry, the Egyptian Rite, in 1784. Throughout the Age of Half-Reason, Europe's educated men joined Masonic groups and other mystical or fraternal groups. The civic and

religious authorities rightly feared that these semi-secret societies could become hotbeds of revolutionary thought. That is precisely why the Followers of Set wanted to walk among them! The men who joined these orders expected layers of mystery and initiation; the Setites hoped to give them different lessons than they expected and teach the Revelations of Set to Europe's free-thinking intellectuals.

Other groups meddled with the Masons as well. The Tremere began delving into Freemasonry long before us. So did a confusing array of mortal magi; I expect we shall never know in full who worked for which faction and what they wanted. My colleague and classmate Senbi MacGregor spent more than a century disentangling the occult conspiracies of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Last year he told me that he was close to discovering the true master behind one of the factions. Two weeks later he burned all his books and notes and haven, with himself still inside.

The secret societies themselves multiplied like Caitiff: Guerinets, the German Union, Philadelphes, Charbonniers — more than I could hope to name. The Followers of Set knew, however, that the ranks of conspiracy included our ancient enemies, the Society of Aton. They still sought to bind the world in an unbreakable, supernatural Law in the name of divine Light. This time they called themselves the Ancient Illuminated Seers of Bavaria — the Illuminati.

The kine will never know the secret and soterous battles fought nightly in the last quarter of the 18th century. The Setites within the Egyptian Rite Lodge blunted the efforts of the Atonists; Cagliostro also drew out the vampire dominators of several ghouled noblemen. On the other hand, the Illuminated Ones achieved several victories the full implications of which the Followers of Set still strive to grasp.

One victory, I'm sorry to say, is the foundation of your own United States of America. Mortal historians have adequately traced the role of the Illuminati and Masonic societies in your nation's early history. I will only say that the Illuminati showed great arrogance when they made the ancient symbol of the Atonists, the Eye in the Pyramid, the Great Seal of the United States. *Annuit coeptis novus ordo seclorum: Now Begins the New Order of the Ages.* Not if the Followers of Set can prevent it!

Many among my clan fear the "world's only superpower" more than the Antediluvians. They see the United States as the Aeons' final and most powerful gambit to seduce and fetter the human soul forever. Myself, I do not know. I remember the excitement I felt as a mortal student, reading about revolution across the Atlantic. American power — military, political and financial — clearly serves the Aeons' goals. American culture, however, tells a different story. Its music and cinema celebrate freedom, lust, impulse, rage and emotion. America's heart belongs to Set.

EGYPTOMANIA

Egypt fascinated Europeans from the night they learned anything about it. In the Middle Ages, Europeans knew almost nothing about Egypt. Travelers such as Sir John Mandeville thought that the Pyramids were grain-byres from the biblical story of Joseph. When Europeans rediscovered Greek and Roman writers such as Plutarch and Herodotus, they also glimpsed a civilization that the ancients considered ancient. Merchants brought back stories of pyramids and obelisks. Rich men built imitation ruins in their gardens; sometimes mock-Egyptian became the fad of the year.

Napoleon Bonaparte must be history's greatest Egyptomaniac. Why cross the Mediterranean to conquer Egypt in 1798? The Caesars did it; Alexander did it; so Napoleon had to do it too. To legitimize his adventure, Napoleon brought along a battalion of scholars. The French collected every antiquity that they could carry off, and sketched whatever they could not.

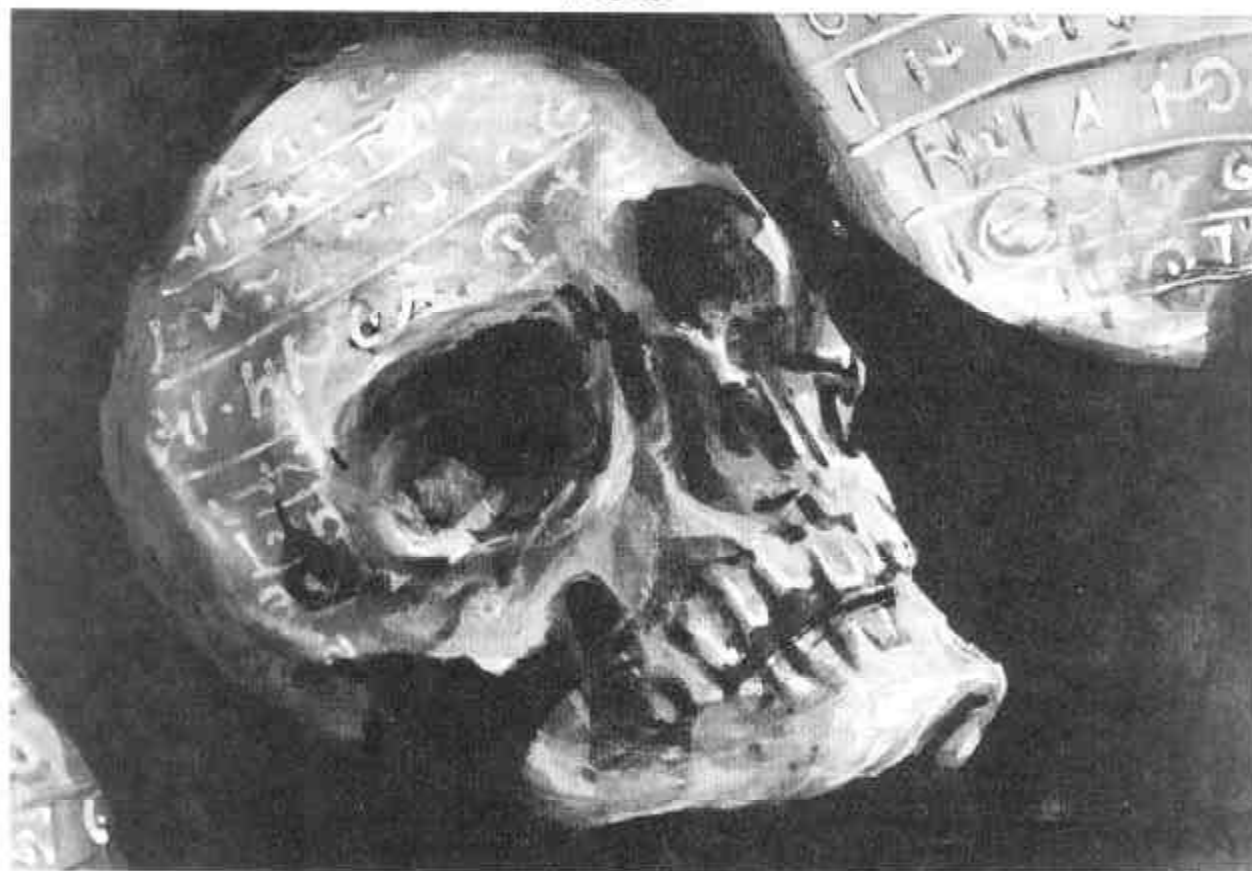
Of course, the French still could not read any of the inscriptions or manuscripts. Scholars had to guess what they said. Some Setites disgraced their lineage through childish impostures, posing as "the Sage of the Pyramids," telling amazing lies to naive Europeans and laughing behind their backs. When Champollion deciphered the Rosetta Stone, the new knowledge put a stop to some of that, at least. For the first time in 1500 years, the Setites no longer had a monopoly on Egypt's lore... lore potentially including the clan's own secrets.

Great Britain helped the Turks take back Egypt, but Britain and France both meddled in Egyptian politics throughout the 19th century. Curious Europeans pattered around the Land of the Pharaohs, copying artwork, digging up tombs and looting bits to take home as souvenirs. Architects built jails in "Egyptian Revival" style because they thought it looked properly severe.

When Howard Carter discovered Tutankhamun's tomb, the craze for all things Egyptian flared to its greatest height. Mortals bought mock-Egyptian jewelry, clothing, furniture and wallpaper. Vampires were no more immune than the kine. I believe the looped cross became fashionable at this time; I do not recall seeing vampires wear it before then. I'm afraid we Setites found it all very peculiar. We actually became fashionable. A Toreador social was not complete without a Follower of Set, suitably robed and accoutered with priestly staff and ghouled serpent, to speak about the Dreadful Mysteries of the Dark God. If real Setites were not available, you could usually find an impostor. A number of Setite elders placed themselves in torpor out of sheer disgust.

The Egyptian fad returned in the 1970s when the Egyptian government sent the King Tut exhibit on a worldwide tour. The mania never completely ended, and I suspect it never will. That does not please some members of my clan.

The Setites of Egypt constantly worry about archaeologists. The old Followers of Set left rather dramatic evidence



of themselves, from scrolls to massive subterranean temples. For the sake of the Masquerade, we must hide it all. The elders fear that some mortal will discover a minor temple, abandoned and forgotten in a war or purge long ago.

This very nearly happened when Sir W. M. Flinders Petrie excavated Tanis in 1885. Over the centuries, ruined Tanis slowly rose from Lake Manzala. A group of Setites frantically tried to relocate the relentless Petrie's dig without revealing themselves, while others tried tunneling into the long-lost tombs of the sleeping Eternals. Petrie and his laborers won... but to our amazement, the crypts were empty. Did someone else dig into Tanis and destroy the six Eternals of Tanis centuries ago? Did the Eternals make their own escape and, for some reason, not pass the word on to their brethren? I don't know.

My clanmates still post ghoulish agents within every major dig in Egypt, but that might not be enough. If a construction company should dig into a temple while laying a town's new sewer line — well, I do not know what we would do. The Egyptian elders had better work on their obfuscatory plans soon, though. In May of 2000, archeologists found the sunken remains of three more Nile Delta cities that sank with Tanis but did not resurface. Clan chronicles say that Herakleion, Canopus and Menouthis all held minor shrines to Set. Those

shrines must be nearly intact, though buried in mud. Sooner or later, the archeologists will find them.

On the other hand, Followers of Set have exploited mortal hunger for "Egyptian mysteries." Many a Setite recruits mortal vessels, servants or even childer by promising to reveal "Secrets of the Pharaohs." Egypt's potent glamour is itself a commodity for the Followers of Set. By now, more Setites pretend to be Egyptian than actually come from that country. Our elders may wince at pyramid-shaped hotels and silly songs about King Tut, but we market our reputation for uncanny lore and power as crassly as any Cairo shopkeeper who swindles a tourist with a phony scarab.

RECONNECTIONS

The 19th century saw more than the start of Egypt's newfound popularity. It was also the high point of European colonialism. The New World freed itself through the revolutions of Washington, Bolivar and Toussaint l'Ouverture, but the British and French cemented their grip on Africa and Asia. Portugal, Belgium and the Netherlands still held significant territories as well. European vampires followed European mortals, like them seeking new opportunities for wealth and power in ancient lands newly conquered — and like them brashly confident that they represented the high point of civilization. They thought the rest of the world

consisted of primitive savages and decadent, outworn empires, benighted heathens all who needed the white man's god and the white man's rule.

Most Western vampires now forget that vampires from the colonies journeyed in the opposite direction, traveling from Africa, India or other colonial regions to the great cities of Europe and the Americas. Mortals found the proliferation of Chinatowns, Little Arabias and other ethnic enclaves frightening enough. Princes who had never left Europe in 500 years found the foreign vampires incomprehensible. The newcomers did not recognize the Camarilla, the Sabbat or even the myth of Caine. They followed creeds, alliances and enmities of their own.

Either way, vampires from every part of the world met each other for the first time. The Followers of Set were no exception. Chiefly by way of London, we spread in our last diaspora. Unlike the other clans, we deliberately cultivated our long-lost cousins. I cannot say that every meeting was peaceful, or that we emerged as a united, worldwide clan; but I think we have warmer relations with our far-flung kin than any other clan has achieved.

SETITES OF AFRICA

The main clan never fully abandoned the Followers of Set who spread through sub-Saharan Africa, but the lines of communication remained extremely sporadic until the 19th century. Africa's deserts, jungles, mountains and rivers — and, I understand, beasts that walk as men — make it the most difficult of all the continents to cross. When European slavers, Arab pirates and nomadic tribes disrupted the caravans of gold and ivory, the Egyptian Setites completely lost track of their southern kin for about 200 years. In the 19th century, however, colonialists — especially the British — built railroads into the interior. The elders of Egypt sent envoys to check on the cults in Africa.

They found the African cults greatly fallen from our loose standards of orthodoxy. Younger African Setites did not even know Set's name. They ascribed their genesis to various native gods. They did not learn the Setite philosophy of wisdom through degradation, pain and deceit. The many scattered cults forgot the clan's roots in Egypt even as they forgot each other.

Personally, I find the African "Setites" no worse than any other vampires, in or out of my clan. I do not think they lose much through their ignorance of Theophidian doctrine. North African, European and American Setites now send missionaries to the poor, benighted Black Africans with all the zeal of any Jesuit or Methodist. The Africans do not seem to show much interest in rejoining their parent clan. In my last journey through Africa, I did find some of these semi-Setites hoping for a pan-African union of their scattered, sub-Saharan tribes.

DAITYA

The Setite community in India dates back to Alexander's invasion. After the collapse of the Greco-Indian kingdom of

Bactria and renewed Assamite hostility, though, the temples of Egypt could not communicate with their eastern scions. The Indian Setites went their own way for a full 2000 years. In the colonial age, they followed mortal Indian laborers to Africa, South America, Great Britain and other places. They and we rediscovered each other more or less at the same time.

They call themselves the Daitya, taking the name of legendary Indian demons. They know nothing of Set; they worship Shiva, the god of destruction, wisdom and storms. Other vampires of India consider them Beshmins, the priestly caste of their kind. Unlike we of the West, who slink through the night and shroud ourselves in deceit, the Daitya walk the night proudly and their Kindred accord them honor.

The Daitya do not submit to the elder temples in Egypt. They do not accept Set as the prototype for their Shiva. They demand treatment as an equal and separate clan. Our Hierophants have not officially granted their requests, but their word has no power over the Daitya. Indeed the Daitya Sundervere — dubbed the "Devil Brahmin" by the British Kindred he very nearly destroyed — proved that the Daitya include elders and sorcerers as potent as our own.

On the other hand, no one can reasonably deny that the Daitya are our kin. They too wield our serpentine Discipline and feel the Sun's wrath with special force. They impersonate gods and lure other vampires and mortals into blasphemy and debauchery. Their elders fully match our own in arrogance as well as power.


I should like to learn more about the Daitya, their history and their beliefs — some night. For now, I find the Western Setites quite enough to fill my time.

TLACIQUE

The New World holds broods of African Setites and Western Setites. In the last 30 years I also uncovered old tales and new rumors of Native American vampires who might be a hidden, long-lost Setite lineage. Memoirs by European Kindred who participated in the sacking of the Incan, Aztec and other New World kingdoms tell of vampires who openly ruled cities as gods, commanding entire empires as gigantic blood cults. These "Tlacique" wielded powers of hypnotic awe, concealment and disguise like our own. They claimed descent from Tzacatlipoca — the Aztec god of night, war and sorcery — or from some analogous god. They lacked our powers of serpentine metamorphosis, instead wielding the more miscellaneous Protean powers of the Gmgrel; this alone makes me hesitate to label the Tlacique as springing from the lineage of Set.

Unfortunately, I cannot find any records from the Tlacique themselves. They warred against both the Camarilla and Sabbat, and apparently the Sabbat almost wiped them out. Meanwhile, horrified churchmen burned all the Aztec, Incan and Mayan records they could find, seeking to expunge forever a religion they considered a bloody worship of Satan.

If the Tlacique exist as more than rumor, very few of them must survive in modern nights. I do not wonder that



they would hide from all other vampires. The Followers of Set, however, would probably welcome them as fellow childer of the Dark God. Perhaps some high priests and Hierophants already negotiate with the Tlaciue but have not told the rest of the clan. We Serpents are as good at finding secrets as keeping them. I cannot believe the Tlaciue could hide from a determined search by our elders.

SETITES IN AMERICA

The old slave trade resulted in secondary offshoot tribes of African Setites in the Caribbean and in South America. These were actually the first Followers of Set to reach the New World. I do not know why the African Setites followed their mortal kin across the Atlantic. In recent decades, many claim that their sires came to "avenge the crimes against their people." I can find no evidence of this fable before 1950, so I do not believe it. Did the African Setites simply want a share in the plantation profits? Did they fear the slaves moving beyond the cult's reach? I suspect that many fled more powerful enemies in Africa, but I cannot yet document this suspicion. Until the 19th century, these Afro-American Setites had even less contact with the parent clan than their cousins who remained in Africa.

Other Setites came to America along with more willing immigrants from Europe, the Middle East and all the world. Some cults moved en masse, fleeing hostile Cainites or civil authorities. Most of these Setites and their cults settled in the teeming industrial cities of the East Coast and the Midwest. The Red Hook Temple in New York City, for instance, was founded in 1893 as a daughter temple of Alexandria's Typhoeum.

Many of these Eastern Setites were young: neonates or junior ancillae hoping to win glory by carrying the Cult of Set to new venues. Other young Setites lacked religious zeal and traveled west to escape the disapproval of their elders. Many of these junior Setites prefer the commercial aspect of our clan to its scholarship or the faith in the Dark God. I sympathize with their desire to work for themselves instead of the Dark God (or a Hierophant who claims to have met him). On the other hand, sometimes I tire of other vampires assuming I peddle narcotics or run a string of whores.

Only since World War Two have older Setites from the Eastern and North African cults ventured to the Americas. Some New World Setites honor them as teachers and superior initiates. Others chafe at elders who waltz in to take control of their temple, or who exhort them to greater piety. My clan's faith is not gentle; a lesson from a Setite elder shakes the soul to its roots. Tremble at the thought of an elder considering you a promising student.

The Setite cult called the Cohort of Wepwawet attempted more than missionary work. In the 1970s and 80s, the Wepwawetans tried to force errant New World Setites back into their idea of orthodoxy. They especially disapproved of the Afro-Caribbean Setites, who had all but forgotten Set's existence. The Caribbean Setites fought back

and eventually turned to the Sabbat for protection. They now call themselves the Serpents of the Light and seek the parent clan's destruction. Their hope is vain, but all vampires seem prone to impossible vendettas. Our missionaries and theirs now strive to win the allegiance of the other African Setite communities in South America.

THE GENOCIDE CENTURY

My fellow historians propose many themes to sum up the departed 20th century. I choose genocide, that ugly word that the 20th century had to invent. The century began with campaigns of starvation and massacre against the Armenians and the American Indians. It ended with ethnic cleansing in Kosovo.

When I lived, I could not imagine that humans could commit such deeds. Surely no one would ever equal the savage massacres of the Assyrians or the Mongols. We had progressed. I leave the 20th century with one consolation: The mad dictators were not my clan's fault. The Followers of Set did not guide their hands. I know this. I watched what my clanmates did, and to whom, throughout the century.

Some of the 20th century's cruel ideologies do resemble Theophidian doctrines. The warriors within my clan would endorse the Nazis' creed of all-triumphant Will. Mao, Stalin, Pol Pot and that odious little German all tried to wrench their societies inside out and erase their past. They tried to do to their nations what Theophidian priests do to individuals. Like many Setites, the dictators made themselves worshipped as gods.

Two great differences, however, separate the dictators from the Followers of Set.

First, they tried to regiment their people more completely than any despot or cleric of the past could ever dream. I saw the Nuremberg rallies with my own eyes. Believe me: Fascism, Communism and Nationalism drug and delude the mind more than Christianity or Islam ever did. The State is the most terrible god the world has ever seen. The Aztecs' bloody faith cannot equal its hecatombs. The dictators rebelled against old codes, only to install new ones.

Second, the totalitarian creeds were all puritanical. They despised the free flow of passion and the pursuit of pleasure. Men and women must come together to breed workers and soldiers, they said. They exalted battle-fever as their favored drug. May I offer this in my clan's defense: Even our most deluded and exploited initiates experience pleasure, however fleeting.

Dictators also drag their countries into futile, overreaching wars. Sometimes they fight their neighbors; often they fight their own population. I hope I have convinced you that the Followers of Set are not that stupid. A government run by Setites — an amusing thought, eh? — would bow before its enemies, then drown them in honey, wine and cream.

The anarchy and warlords of the Third World disturb me more. I see militias in Sierra Leone and East Timor. These soldiers drink or drug themselves into madness and run wild, raping or hacking off limbs from sheer delight in cruelty —

and I think of my clan's bloodier rites. I visit clanmates in Colombia and find them commanding private armies from coca plantation haciendas.

The cities of Europe and Asia bother me most of all. In them, I see young people lust and rage and revel with abandon. The Aeons do not chain their minds. Why, then, do I see such despair in their eyes? That is why I cannot believe what the Theophidians preach.

JUBILEE

The Aeons enfold us. Massive bureaucracies of government and commerce strangle the world. Yet no one loves this new web of Maat. Its own alphabet-soup acolytes of WTO and IMF apologize to the frightened people who riot against them and plead for understanding.

Every Setite elder I know agrees that it has never been easier to draw mortals into the cults of Set. Some think it is too easy. They say that a person who does not pledge himself to Set with anguish in his heart can never truly understand the Dark God's revelations. Be that as it may.... The world seems more ready for Set than at any previous time in the last two thousand years.

A curious rumor circulates through the clan. Each one of us heard it from someone else. No one knows who began the tale, and I have sought its origin since it began three years ago.

The rumor says that Set's time has come. The Dark God will walk the Earth once more, and we will hear him thunder in the sky. Then the temples will all throw open their doors. The *Mesut Bedsher* will no longer hide, but instead call the world to Set's altar. The faithful must gather all their power — all their cults and informants, acolytes and minions and magic — for when the Dark God calls them to war against the Aeons.

They say he will return at Ombos, rebuilt at last after Baybars destroyed it.

I go to Ombos. Call it a pilgrimage of doubt. If the temple remains long-buried and abandoned, I know that the rumor is merely a rumor. The Cainites are certainly full of wild tales. The latest concerns an alleged mass suicide among the Ravnos clan. Why should we be more immune to hysteria than they? If I find other Setites working to rebuild the temple, perhaps I can learn something more definite. Perhaps I can even resolve some of my doubts, one way or another, and decide what to do with my heritage of forbidden wisdom and layered superstition.

I hope I will return to find you well, and your anger cooled.

Josué Pagnol

a.k.a. Manerho the Younger

THE CALL TO OMBOS

I walk the sands of Egypt, ancient homeland of my clan. Ombos looks the same as the last time I was here: Mounds of earth, a few toppled columns and fragments of wall, nothing more. Very little remains of the ancient cult center known to

the mortals. The archeologists say little existed to begin with. Last time, I saw no reason to doubt them.

As I walk through the starlit ruins, a man steps from behind an eroded mastaba. He wears a simple black robe and carries the measuring-rod of an ancient Egyptian priest. His head is shaved; he wears no jewelry. "Welcome in the name of Set," he says. He turns and gestures with his rod for me to follow as he strides away.

I stammer thanks and questions as I hurry after. "Where are we going? Are you really repairing the Great Temple?"

"The Great Temple is whole. It was repaired a hundred years ago." The priest does not even turn to look at me as he answers.

"A hundred years? Why didn't I see it before?"

"You were not ready then. You saw only what we wanted you to see. Now — you will see more. As much as the god wills."

"As much as the god wills, or the Hierophant?"

"The god." This time he stops and turns. "Great Set has returned. Now be silent!"

A thousand questions boil in my mind. Most are sarcastic. Nevertheless, I obey.

We walk into the desert for nearly an hour, until a lone pylon gate rises before us. "Through there," my guide says. "Great Set waits beyond. Walk straight ahead and you will come to Him. He will answer your questions Himself."

I do as he says and walk for miles. The night becomes very cold. I check my watch. It has stopped. Will I reach my destination before morning?

I have never seen the stars so bright in the black, moonless sky. The outcroppings of rock cast opaque shadows on the silvered desert sands. Yet I cast no shadow. Looking behind, I see no footprints in the sand. I kick at the sand and leave no mark.

Panic grips me. I run back the way I came... Is it the way I came? Did I pass that cluster of rocks? Did I climb that dune? The priest deceived me; how could anyone possibly keep a straight line in this desert, with no landmarks to guide him?

Eventually I stop running. I am lost. I kneel, call upon the Blood and strike the sand with all my might. I cannot move a single grain. I sit and watch a star near the horizon while I count to a thousand, three times. It does not move.

I have all the time in the world. Numb, I rise and continue walking.

The pylons rise before me again. If I pass through them again, will I return to the world I knew? Will I return, knowing no more than when I entered, defeated?

Great Set, my fate is in Your hands. I fear nothing. Sire of my sires, my Lord, my God, show me the truth.

I square my shoulders, lift my head and march away from the pylon gate again, into the desert. I do not look back.



Shirley



CHAPTER TWO: AFTER SUCH KNOWLEDGE

*What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish! Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief...
— T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land**

Other vampires think they understand the Followers of Set. They are the pimps and pushers, the scum who cater to the lowest, slimiest aspects of human and vampiric nature. And there's that snake-cult thing. Sires warn their childer to stay away from the Setites and their vile temptations.

And yet...vampires keep coming to the Followers of Set, despite all the warnings. If other vampires understand the Serpents so well, how could they possibly ensnare and "corrupt" anyone? "Let's see, you peddle every vice known to man, you worship the Egyptian God of Evil, and you say you want to be my special friend. Yeah, right. Pull the other one."


The Setites, however, are not the Clan of Corruption. They are the Clan of the Serpent. They claim for themselves an ancient, nigh-universal symbol of wisdom and power: sometimes benevolent, often dangerous. Like the serpent in Eden, the Followers of Set lead other Kindred and kine to a terrible, forbidden knowledge.

"Forbidden knowledge." The phrase sounds quaint at the dawn of the 21st century. Science penetrates to the farthest abysses of space and time, unlocks the atom and rewrites the code of life. What knowledge could possibly seem "forbidden" to anyone but a few reactionary religious nuts?

Knowledge of the world is safe enough. The fruits of such knowledge can do nothing worse than kill you — not much to fear at all. Knowledge of the soul is another matter. Learning what hideous desires and depravities lurk behind each human face — especially your own — that is the knowledge at which the mind recoils.

Yes, some Followers of Set addict people to drugs, run strings of whores and blackmail their clients. Everybody has to make a living somehow. Crime and vice, however, merely serve as tempting bait, drawing these Serpents' customers to their true commodity — the knowledge of good and evil.

Especially evil.



Come into the serpent's lair. Push your way past the dead-eyed teenagers with needle-scarred arms, the women and men so eager to sell you their favors, the businessmen and politicians desperate for an edge on the competition. Enter the Dark God's temple, where the torchlight glimmers on gold and polished onyx. Fear not.

Nothing here can harm you...except what you bring yourself.

THE CLAN OF FAITH

One feature, more than any other, sets the Followers of Set apart from every other vampire lineage. They believe themselves the childer of a god — not just an Antediluvian, a god. As worshippers of their forebear, the Followers of Set are as much a cult as a clan.

Not every Setite takes the same attitude toward their divine ancestor, any more than every mortal Catholic, Jew, Buddhist or Neopagan takes the same attitude to their faith. Some Serpents order their whole unlife around their religion, zealously trying to Follow Set and convert other people to his worship. Other Setites take a more casual (or pragmatic) attitude. Yes, they pray to the Dark God now and then and go to the temple on holidays, but more worldly affairs dominate their nights. Still others, like children of lapsed Jews who barely consider themselves Jewish, consider the label "Follower of Set" nothing more than a quaint (or embarrassing) relic of vampiric heredity. At the far extreme, a few Serpents actively rebel against their clan and its faith. Like many fervent atheists, their continuing, deliberate rebellion shows how much of a hold that faith still has upon them.

Like any stable religion, the Followers of Set contains various sub-cults and schisms... even a few heresies. Most drastically, the Serpents of the Light reject the worship of Set and ally themselves to the Sabbat. The main body of the clan also condemns a minority that turned to the worship of demons. Other sub-cults coexist, at times uneasily. These emphasize some particular aspect of Set, or identify him with a god or gods from some other cultural tradition.

Such differences would escalate into full-scale holy war, were it not for the continual pressure placed upon the Followers of Set by other vampires and other religions. The Setite faith runs contrary to the entire Abrahamic tradition of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Even among vampires who consider themselves Damned, the Setites' beliefs inspire fear and hate. By no stretch of the imagination can one consider the Serpents a tightly disciplined hive-mind — but most Setites understand that they cannot afford to war among themselves.

FUNDAMENTALS

Every religious practice has three important aspects: Doctrine, Ritual and Experience. *Doctrine* consists of what the religion says about the natural and supernatural worlds, humanity's relationships to them, social order, ethics and the like. Worshipers perform *rituals* to connect themselves to the divine and affirm

their cohesion as a community. What's the use of beliefs and rites, however, if the worshipper cannot experience himself joined to something greater — something divine?

Most Setite cults emphasize experience over doctrine. The Embrace, a shattering, personal transformation of body and soul, defines their very existence as childer of a god. Setites seek other intense and terrifying spiritual experiences and strive to grant other people such epiphanies as well.

Setite faith also demands ritual observances. A devout Follower of Set shows her obedience to the Dark God through prayer, psalms and sacrifices. She spends a few minutes each night praying before an image of Set, offering beer and a few drops of her own vitae to the god. In contrast to such brief and humble ceremonies, the cult marks its high holidays with rites that last most of the night.

Doctrine holds a lesser role in Setite religion. This may seem strange, for the Followers of Set possess an enormous canon of scripture: chronicles of the clan's history, devotional tracts, liturgies, grimoires, metaphysical speculations and even a gospel allegedly written by Set himself. The Setite attitude to their holy books, however, differs greatly from that of a Christian, Jew or Muslim. Every scripture or gospel (except Set's own) merely records one particular Setite's interpretation of his mystical experiences. Although the Setites place great value on the act of writing, they believe that words cannot capture spiritual truth. The worshipper cannot find the Godhead in a simple set of commandments and dogmas. She must feel it, sense it, be it.

Because of this emphasis on personal experience, Setite cults rarely suffer venomous doctrinal disputes. A Setite's salvation does not depend on the minutiae of doctrine. The Dark God does not make his followers pass a written test. Set's tests are far more... visceral.

DOCTRINE

Followers of Set do agree upon a few fundamental doctrines. They permit wide variations in detail; the broad outline, however, remains the same for most sects. These beliefs define Setite orthodoxy.

THE WORLD

Setite theologians begin with ancient Egyptian myths but develop them in their own way. Theophidian doctrine holds that the world is a bubble of light and life within an endless black sea called Nun. This "Primeval Ocean" contains within itself the unrealized potential for all existence. Atum-Ra, the Creator, spontaneously arose from Nun when he became aware of his own existence. Atum-Ra raised a mound of earth from the waters so that he would have a place to stand. This mound grew to become the entire world. Setites describe the Creator as a small and wicked god, a mere Demiurge, rather than a truly universal deity.

Modern Setites do not take this story too literally. Some believe that the Primal Chaos of Nun exists in another dimension. Perhaps, they say, Nun is the black, tempest-wracked ocean that underlies the realm of the dead. More materialistic,



Setites suggest that Nun is the black void of outer space and point to the great dark clouds of dust and gas that give birth to new stars and worlds.

Whatever truth hides behind the enigmatic symbols of Nun and Atum-Ra, the Setites say that the Creator birthed lesser deities — the Aeons — to assist him in shaping and ruling the world. The Demiurge and Aeons created humanity, too, but created her too well. Perhaps Atum-Ra breathed too much of his divine essence into the first humans when he gave them life and souls. Setite mystics propose dozens of poetic fancies about the Great Accident that gave humans free will.

In the First Age of the world, the Aeons lived among humanity, apparently quite corporeal. Setites disagree about whether the gods grew apart from humanity to become bodiless spirits, or whether human perceptions coarsened so that mortals could no longer interact directly with gods. Set became the first vampire during this Age of Fable. Many Setite mythopoeists declare that the Dark God's metamorphosis forced the Aeons to depart the material world.

The Aeons no longer intervene in human affairs directly. Instead they rule spiritually, deluding the mortals into working their will. The Aeons create religions, governments, commerce, wars — all culture and society — as a web to ensnare human souls. Even the salvations and afterlives promised by other faiths are cunning snares by which the Aeons harvest souls to become their slaves. The Demiurge is a jealous god. He

does not want humans to know that they could grow as powerful as himself.

The Primeval Ocean can birth new worlds at a powerful soul's command. The Setites hope to escape or overthrow the Earth's divine masters so that each Setite can become a Creator in his own right, as Set promised them long ago.

ETHICS

Most Setites couple their view of the world with a special attitude about good and evil. The Abrahamic religions chiefly define good and evil in terms of deeds: kindness or cruelty, obedience or disobedience. A Theophidian defines evil as a condition of ignorance. Theophidians feel a profound alienation from a world that seems painful, absurd and chaotic. Why are people born only to die? Why do bad things happen to good people? Why do "rational" souls feel such crazy, burning passions? *Why doesn't the world make more sense?*

The core Setite faith answers such questions by proposing a radical split between the divine, eternal soul and the corrupt, transitory world and body. The laws of the faith say that deep down the soul knows it does not belong in a prison of matter. Anything that distracts the soul from this knowledge and ties it to the world must be a trap — and if the world is a prison, then the gods must be its jailers. To achieve liberation, a soul must shed all the false doctrines, cravings and habits that bind it and blind it. Such self-awareness cannot come from mere argument



or faith. Only direct experience of the most extreme sort — *gnosis* — can break the soul free. The Path of Typhon gives Setites their guide.

Vampires occupy a special place in the world. They are dead flesh, but incorruptible and possessed of supernatural powers. Vampires escape the iron law of time and decay that afflicts other material things because of their spiritual force. Through *gnosis*, the Setites believe they can achieve truly divine power over the world and liberate themselves from every physical and spiritual constraint.

Theophidians differ in what they want to do with the world once they escape its grip and fully realize their divinity. Some Theophidians want to depart this world and shape new worlds in the abyss of Nun. Other Theophidians hope to replace the gods and rule the world themselves. A few quietists say that once the soul achieves *gnosis*, the world and the Aeons become irrelevant.

The most extreme Setites declare, however, that to defeat the Aeons they must destroy the world the Aeons built. Whether this instantly liberates all uninitiated souls or destroys them does not matter much to these radicals. The Demiurge made the world a prison; these Setites mean to escape, even if they have to burn the prison down from the inside. As they survey the World of Darkness, they see the fires already set.

All ready, Set...

THE AEONS

Most Setites call the Aeons by the names of Egyptian gods. In ancient times, perhaps they believed that Ra and Osiris really did rule the cosmos, exactly as their mythology described. In Hellenistic times, however, the Setites adopted a more ecumenical approach. Setite doctrine declares that the gods of myth are poetic symbols, "masks" that both reveal and conceal the Aeons. The Demiurge is not really a falcon-headed man called Ra, any more than a boat really carries the Sun across the sky, but these images give simple folk a way to approach mysteries beyond their comprehension. An Aeon can use many masks and many names. Amon is Zeus is Marduk is Indra is Chango is St. Barbara... and so on, *ad infinitum*. An Aeon might also use several masks within a single religion. Theophidians love to cite the Father, Son and Holy Ghost as an example.

More than one Aeon might use a particular god as its mask. The Egyptians identified virtually every god with the sun-god Ra at one time or another. They also freely merged gods into composite deities such as Serapis, a fusion of Apis and Osiris. In sum, gods and Aeons do not possess distinct, individual identities the way people do.

A Serpent might merge Set himself with other gods. Theophidian psalms often grant Set the attributes of other Egyptian gods. He possesses the valor and majesty of the war-god Mont, or the magical prowess of Thoth; he rules the dead like Seker, or shapes the living like Knum. Setite missionaries identify the Dark God with gods of other mythologies, if they think this will help worshippers understand Set's mysteries. The Cult of Typhon Trismegistus, for instance, identifies Set with

the Greek-god-monster Typhon and the Roman gods Bacchus, Mars and Pluto.

The Setites draw the line, however, at identifying Set with his great enemies Ra, Osiris and Horus. Ra is the mask of the Demiurge himself, though he also calls himself Atum, Khepri, Aton, and for that matter Jehovah and Brahma. Osiris, prototype of all gods who die and come back to life, forms a more active enemy as the Demiurge's chief executive in the spirit world. Horus, the least of this trinity, represents the worldly power of kings, presidents and governments. Some Setites deny Horus a place among the Aeons. They say that the "Avenger" still walks the Earth, immortal but quite corporeal.

THE PATH OF TYPHON REVISITED

To other vampires, the Setites' service to their divine forebear looks utterly evil. Setites wallow in degradation and try to drag everyone else down with them. Mere debauchery does not account for the hatred other vampires feel. After all, the average Cainite elder sees cruelty and perversity that would make the maddest Roman emperor gag. The Setites, however, seem to get away with it. They thrive on villainies that would send any other vampire into the berserk madness of the Beast. It isn't fair!

Such hatred and fear saddens devout Theophidians, but they are used to it. The living and the undead have grown so used to the mental prisons of the Aeons that they fear to leave. The Path of Typhon teaches liberation, not corruption, but the path of freedom holds fear and pain. Naturally, the priests of the Aeons' false religions condemn Setite beliefs as "sinful" — confronted with the truth, liars and knaves always fall back on slander.

The Followers of Set teach that their founder was one of the gods of Egypt. The Setites say that they are much older than the Hebrew legend of Cain. Set became a vampire through his defeat of Apep and the curse of Ra, but turned the curse of undeath into a divine blessing that he shared with deserving mortals. In life or in death, the gods could manipulate mortals and hide the truth from them. Caught between life and death, Set's followers have eternity to pursue enlightenment and the liberation of humanity.

A devout Theophidian strives to root out any trace of conscience or morality based on custom and the dictates of society. He deliberately seeks out the objects and acts that revolt him, to break their power over him. He also confronts his own desires, to break their power as well — if necessary, by exhausting them through hyper-indulgence. His goal is to hate nothing but the Aeons and desire nothing except his own emancipation and the emancipation of others.

Although the Followers of Set seek influence over persons and institutions, the Path of Typhon tells them not to gather power for its own sake. Rather, Theophidians seek to wrest power away from the Aeons and their mortal (and Kindred) dupes. When a Setite controls other people through their desires, she leads them to liberty... eventually.

Most people cannot recognize the spiritual chains that bind them. Here too, mortal desires serve the Theophidian cause. If a person cannot understand his enslavement to social convention, perhaps he will understand enslavement to alcohol, sex or money. The Setites would teach gently if they could. All too often, however, nothing will open a person's eyes but the complete ruination of his life and pride. Theophidians call such soul-shattering lessons the Revelations of the Void. At last, humbled and stripped of worldly entanglements, a Setite's victim may devote his life or unlfe to Set and begin the long trek to transcendence.

So say the proselytes of the Path of Typhon, anyway. In practice, few Followers of Set achieve such icy purity. Many a Setite practices a rather more selfish credo with a veneer of Theophidian rhetoric. They employ the tools of enslavement and degradation to benefit themselves. Such Setites usually follow the path of Humanity — poorly — rather than adhering to the beliefs of the Path of Typhon.

HISTORY

Theophidians claim that they follow the oldest Path of Enlightenment. The Followers codified and rewrote the Path several times to keep it up to date. Over the millennia, dozens of variations on the basic doctrine have come and gone. Setite cults may incorporate elements from Greek mystery cults, Christian Gnosticism, African tribal religions, Sufi mysticism, Hindu philosophy and indeed any other mystic or esoteric ideas

a Theophidian might encounter. The Path of Typhon encourages creative theology: if a new interpretation or cult practice leads more people to enlightenment, it is true, or at least true enough for those of limited understanding.

Most of the Setite scriptures in current usage employ Greek terminology because they were written in Hellenistic and Roman times. Much of that jargon also occurs in more widely known Gnostic gospels, some of which were actually written by Setites.

CURRENT PRACTICES

Some Kindred imagine that the Followers of Set form a giant syndicate of temptation reaching around the world. Nothing could be further from the truth. Rather, the Cult of Set consists of numerous sects, large and small, exploring variations on the basic doctrines. They have no fixed canon of commandments or sacred texts. Ultimately, each Theophidian must decide for herself what she believes. They draw the line, however, at the Serpents of the Light. Theophidians of all stripes regard the *antitribu* bloodline within the Sabbat as traitors who sold out to the Aeons. Theophidians also despise clan members who turn to Satanism — to their eyes, the cheapest of false beliefs.

Followers of Set serve their cause in many ways, from scholars to courtesans. Alas, many within the clan forget why they pursue and provide vice, power and pleasure to others, or they never learned from their neglectful sires. These vicemongers become the Setites most visible to other Kindred.





As a result, the Theophidian Path split into two: the familiar Path of Typhon, that teaches followers to revel in universal corruption; and the Path of Sutekh, that teaches followers to push beyond desire and degradation. Some cults teach the Path of Typhon first, then teach the Path of Sutekh when the Setite becomes ready for a higher level of initiation. Other cults talk about enlightenment to make Setite practices more palatable to initiates, then admit that degradation is its only purpose.

Unfortunately, by now neither Typhonists nor Sutekhians can *prove* which doctrine came first. Diplomatic Setites avoid offending their clanmates by referring to the "Path of Typhon Set," without specifying which version of the Path they actually mean. Indeed, their Paths call Typhonists and Sutekhians to commit or refrain from the same deeds: only their *reasons* differ. A Typhonist may switch to the Sutekhian Path, or vice-versa, at no more cost than the character's Path rating dropping to 3. (If a Theophidian character has a Path rating of 3 or less, she may flip-flop at will. Such tergiversation, though, pretty much guarantees that the character will never advance in either Path.)

The clan's creative theology occasionally spawns other variations on the Path of Typhon Set. Some Setites choose a militant path, delaying their own enlightenment to defend the cult against its enemies, forming a "warrior" bloodline. Others pursue their own enlightenment through extravagant hedonism and altered states of consciousness, calling this the Path of Ecstasy. In the Dark Ages, some Setites sought to make their Path more palatable by speaking of a state of "natural innocence" that humanity could regain once it cast out shame. These Setites called their variation the Path of Serpents and

cited vague connections between Egyptian myth and the Serpent in Genesis. In contemporary rights, all Setites—Warriors, Ecstasies and others—pursue their beliefs within a framework of either Humanity or some version of the Path of Typhon Set. Theophidians generally recognize that all the clan's "demi-Paths" merely add commentary to the Dark God's message.

ETHICS OF THE PATH OF SUTEKH

- Gather information—secret and otherwise—and learn how it applies to the resurrection of Set, the true nature of divinity and the origin and fate of the world.
- Subjugate the Beast: Self-discipline and cunning must temper a warrior's rage.
- Immerse yourself in whatever you hate, fear or shun, that it may not hold power over you.
- Tempt, confuse and degrade others, that they may recognize their own limitations and seek to overcome them.
- Maintain a veil of secrecy, for the Aeons delude humanity into fearing its own freedom.
- Acquire power to further the cult's cause and turn the Aeons' dupes against them, but do not love power for its own sake.
- Seek revelation through knowledge, faith and experience.

VIRTUES

Like the Typhonists, followers of the Path of Sutekh uphold the virtues of Conviction and Self-Control.

PATH OF SUTEKH HIERARCHY OF SINS

Score	Moral Guideline	Rationale
10	Pursuing one's own indulgence instead of another's	This shows a lack of self-discipline and compassion. Enjoy your work, but remember that you serve others first.
9	Refusing to aid another follower of the Path	Set commanded his childer to cooperate against the Aeons. Denying other seekers means denying Set.
8	Failing to destroy a vampire in Golconda	Those in Golconda are either ready to leave the world and become independent creators; or they have completely sold out to the Aeons to abate their curse.
7	Failing to observe Setite religious ritual	This is akin to denying Set and faith itself.
6	Failing to undermine the current social order in favor of the Setites	The social order is a snare by the Aeons. Only through Set can Kindred and kine find salvation.
5	Failing to do whatever is necessary to enlighten another	If you balk at any deed that is necessary to liberate another, you have not truly freed yourself.
4	Failing to pursue arcane knowledge	The mysteries of enlightenment and the key to the Aeons' defeat may be hidden anywhere.
3	Obstructing another Setite's efforts	The ranks of the righteous are no place for petty power plays.
2	Failing to take advantage of another's weakness	This would deny the other person a chance to realize their need for Set's saving grace. How will others learn if they do not recognize their errors?
1	Refusing to aid in Set's resurrection	This is complete abandonment of sire, faith and clan to serve the Aeons.



TEMPLES AND RITUALS

A casual Setite may own a statuette or icon of his god from habit, just as a less-than-devout Christian might nevertheless put a little manger scene on the coffee table at Christmas. A reasonably devout Follower of Set, however, finds time to honor her dark progenitor through prayer and small sacrifices of incense, blood and beer. A true Theophidian will not want to begin a night without paying respect to the god who made him immortal.

More elaborate ceremonies take place in the communal temples. Most temples remain open for at least part of every night to serve the faithful who feel the need to honor the Dark God with a larger sacrifice.

SETITE TEMPLES

A typical Setite shrine consists of two chambers, representing Upper and Lower Egypt. In the outer chamber—representing Lower Egypt—the celebrant symbolically removes connections to the secular world. This can be as simple as washing his hands, or as elaborate as stripping to the skin, proclaiming 42 abominable sins, and rolling in urine and ashes.

The inner chamber represents Set's demesne of Upper Egypt. It should be shielded from exterior light. A full-scale temple uses two sets of doors—like in a movie theater—or dense, light-blocking curtains. The worshippers need at least a little light, though. Low, guttering torches are traditional, though some temples prefer candles shining through green and red glass to supply a dim and ghastly light. In the 1990s, several new temples placed tiny lights in a domed ceiling to represent the stars, with the Big Dipper directly over the statue of Set. A brazier (possibly electric) would burn before the statue.

Many Setites cannot afford such a two-room setup in their havens. Poorer Setites can run a curtain or hang a blanket to divide a room, or deck out a closet as a little one-room shrine. Setites who lack a permanent haven may carry an icon of the god in a black fabric-lined case that unfolds as a tiny symbolic shrine.

SETITE WORSHIP

A basic Setite service takes at least an hour. Celebrants assemble in the outer chamber. A priest leads them in a few litanies and exhorts them to purge their minds of everything but Set. The celebrants file into the inner chamber, where the high priest welcomes them. Some small rite—sprinkling beer, perhaps, or burning incense on the brazier—affirms the sacredness of the time and place.

What happens after that depends on the nature of the rite, the participants and the cult. On one occasion, the celebrants might strive to push themselves beyond frenzy into a trance by drinking drugged blood and dancing wildly while lashing each other's naked bodies with whips. On another occasion, the priests might wear masks and re-enact scenes from myth. A Setite service can range from a formal and eerie beauty to an orgy of monstrous debauchery.

Western Setites generally divide their religious ceremonies into three categories. The Cult of Typhon Trismegistus

first defined the categories (hence the Latin names). *Bacchantic* rituals involve frenzied passion and abandon. The celebrants try to suppress the false ego and perhaps gain a revelation from Set through extremities of sensation and emotion. *Martial* ceremonies emphasize Set as warrior and the cult's aggressive aspect. The priest exhorts the congregation to stand together and fight the Aeons. Members brag about their achievements and offer fellow celebrants a chance to join in their current plans. *Plutonian* rites are solemn and meditative. Celebrants reflect on their existence caught between life and death and godhood. Most Setite cults perform Embraces as part of a Plutonian rite.

Setite ceremonies often feature a blood sacrifice. Not only do celebrants offer their own vitae to the Dark God, the priests slaughter an animal for Set. A priest catches the spurting blood in a bowl and offers it to the god with a prayer. She may pour the blood over the statue (called "washing the face of the god") or burn it in the brazier. The celebrants drink the rest of the animal's blood, either as a solemn communion or a messy blood-feast. The cults reserve human sacrifices for special occasions, since disposing of bodies is a bit of a chore. The celebrants might also offer beer, honey or scented oils.

For her personal blood cult, a Setite can design whatever rites and ceremonies she wants. Artistic rituals boost a Serpent's prestige with other local Setites. In most cases, however, a worship ceremony will climax with the mortal cultists offering the Serpent their blood, and the vampire accepting. That is, after all, the fundamental purpose of the cult!

SETITE HOLY WEEK

The Followers of Set celebrate several festivals throughout the year. The two most important are the Murder of Osiris, on the 107th day of the Egyptian year (Nov. 19), and the "Holy Week" sequence at year's end (July 31 - August 4). The Egyptians made the last five days of the year the birthdays of Osiris, Horus, Set, Isis and Nephthys. The Universe was in peril during those five days.

During Holy Week the Followers of Set pray for the doom of the gods and the end of the world. Coteries re-enact scenes from the life and unlife of Set. Serpents tell each other what they did to weaken the Aeons' rule, and make pledges for the coming year. One Setite might vow to experience a new Revelation of the Void before the new year's end; another might pledge to bring a local government official down in scandal. Many Setites prefer to leave their enemies alive (or undead) until Holy Week, so they can sacrifice them to Set on the Dark God's own birthday.

RELIGIOUS ART

Some Setites prefer to keep their shrines stark. They say that painted walls, carved altars and jeweled implements distracts worshippers from the desolate majesty of Set. Other Setites prefer to glorify their god through art. A devout Setite can express her piety in several ways.

In large, old temples, the Setites might carve and paint hieroglyphic inscriptions and scenes from Setite myth and history. The most popular scenes, of course, are those of Set's life

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

The Egyptian government used a calendar of 365 days that began on the day when the star Sirius (Egyptian *Sopdet*; Greek *Sothis*) rose with the Sun. Because they lacked a leap year, however, the calendar moved out of step with this actual astronomical event. The civil year began on the proper day only once every 1,460 solar years — a period called the *Sothic cycle*.

Alone among clans, the Setites define an exact age when a vampire graduates to *Mechuseleh* status. When a Setite survives an entire Sothic cycle of 1,460 solar years, he or she becomes a *Djet Sopdet* or "Eternal of Sirius." Setites honor their Sothic Eternals as genuine demigods whose every whim holds the force of divine command.

and unlife, such as Set in battle or the hunt, the murder of Osiris, or Set ripping out the eye of Horus. Temples that syncretize Set with gods from other traditions substitute scenes from that mythology. For instance, the Cult of Typhon's temples display scenes such as Bacchus among frenzied maenads, Mars triumphant in battle and Pluto on his throne.

The statue of Set may itself become an artistic treasure, though plain black granite and basalt have their partisans. The statue of Typhon in the Cave of Apples is cunningly carved from human bone stained black. The Arena of Thunder's idol of Set is black-enamelled bronze and incorporates a speaking-tube: a hidden priest can read from the *Book of Going Forth by Night* and make the god's own words come from his mouth. On many statues, Set's kilt, headdress and sandals are made of gold and inlaid with faience, lapis lazuli, carnelian and other semi-precious stones.

The ritual implements may be masterpieces of the jeweler's art. Theophidian doctrine holds that a crude clay bowl and a rusty old knife will suffice to honor the Lord of the Desert. In fact, for some rites they are preferable. At a wealthy Setite temple, however, the high priest might cut the sacrifice's throat with a jeweled dagger and catch the blood in a basin of obsidian chased with silver. In India, the Setites of that land prefer to use cups made from human skulls enamelled black and set with gems. Censers, braziers, torch-holders, the priest's rod of office — all provide opportunities for Setites to show their devotion through costly and grotesque beauty.

The plastic arts do not exhaust a Setite's possibilities. The Followers of Set proudly claim a long tradition of homilies, parables, psalms and litanies. A good singing voice may not take a Serpent very far in the cult hierarchy, but it's better than nothing. A fellow who writes hymns that other temples adopt brings great prestige to himself and his congregation.

Not every Setite artist sticks to ancient traditions, either — Egyptian or otherwise. The doctrinal push to break boundaries counteracts the intrinsic conservatism that afflicts the undead. Some Theophidians employ the most contemporary styles, from electronic dissonance to holography and laser light shows, as they seek to express the glory of Set and the Revelations of the Void.

LITANY OF SUTEKH

Hail, thou lord of stars unknown,
Serpent king on desert throne.
Warrior on black winds blown!
Madness-bringer, Duke of Dreams,
Hymns of praise in nighttime screams,
Source of weird and darkling dooms
Carried forth on black ray-streams!
Master of unquiet tombs,
I call Thee from Thy outer glooms!
From Thy features lift the cowl!
Reveal the fairness in the foul!
From inner darkness where they dwell
Let secret lusts uncoil and howl
The prophecies of death and hell —
Prophecies for me to tell.
O, free my soul from custom's jail
And grant a faith that will not fail,
Immortal Set, All-Father, hail!
— *Hymnal of Harjedef, 1927*

THE LAST REVELATION

Cultists seldom receive their cult's full doctrine at once. The Followers of Set believe that most people must be led to the truth by easy stages. First a new recruit hears a comfortable, bowdlerized doctrine, something not too far perhaps from what she believes already. If the acolyte proves sufficiently diligent, loyal and insightful, the Setite priest reveals new doctrines. As the priest explains, some truths are too sacred and arcane for common minds; ordinary folk would misunderstand the dogmas and profane the mysteries. The previous doctrines were...well, not *false*, exactly, but incomplete and with hidden meanings. If the initiate passes the tests and masters the doctrines and practices of this second grade of the cult, he will learn more secret teachings. Certain necessary deceptions, practiced to protect the sacred mysteries from the unworthy, will be explained once the cultist takes the great oath of secrecy; apparent inconsistencies will be explained.

A cult initiate thus slides into a peculiar mental trap. He knows that the cult leader lied to him before. In fact, the leader lies to him still, or at least keeps secrets, because only the highest levels of the priesthood know the cult's full and true gospel. *But he still believes!* After so much effort, the cultist will not easily admit that the whole cult might not be what he thought. Thus the cult leaders draw him on, pointing for the next initiation into the next mystery, farther and farther from the life he knew before the cult.

Personal blood cults often constitute the outer layers of a Setite cult. Many mortals remain content to grovel before a vampire in return for a pat on the head and the occasional taste of vitae. They do not hear about Followers of Set. They know only the Dark God who drinks their blood. They may well think their

vampiric master is Set, or Bacchus, Asarte, the Black Christ, or whatever other persona the Setite adopts. Cultists who show a bit more brains and ambition may graduate to the "inner cult" of the regional Setite temple — and the next layer of the trap. Ultimately, a cultist can win the greatest initiation, the Embrace...

...And learn, perhaps, that she still does not receive the truth. The center of the labyrinth holds — another labyrinth. The cult elders have their own agendas. Who knows what the clan's Eternals really want, to say nothing of Set himself? The Path of Typhon Set exists in two competing forms; perhaps neither one is the final word. A Setite who does not accept blind faith, who pursues the truth about his clan without relent, finds each history contradicted, each doctrine fractured. He ends with nothing but myths and the Revelations of the Void: a handful of broken images and ruined hopes in the desert of his soul.

SETITE DIVISIONS

As the Followers of Set traveled, their doctrines changed. Setites often identified their divine forebear with a local god, both to make their message more palatable and to make themselves seem less foreign. Why should a Greek, a Celt, a Yonuban or an Indian care about an Egyptian god? They might not have heard of Egypt. Instead, the Serpent identifies himself as a Follower of Typhon, Cernunnos, Damballah or Shiva.

After more than a thousand years, some of these divisions became pretty deep. Some "Followers of Set" no longer use that name. Some no longer recognize any kinship to the clan at all: they regard themselves as members of their own clans or bloodlines.

ORTHODOX CULTS

The Followers of Set's emphasis on personal revelation generates dozens of little cults. Really, it makes more sense to see the Setite religion as a framework for generating cults rather than a unified, coherent doctrine.

Setite groups also emerge through interactions with the local culture. Put simply, Setites are not all a bunch of Egyptian émigrés. Since their doctrine is flexible to begin with, Setites easily compromise with local cultures, adding still more diversity to the clan.

A typical cult consists of a "Founding Temple" and several lesser temples scattered hither and yon. Egypt holds most of the really old and prestigious Founding Temples. A powerful cult's Hierophant, or senior priest, oversees the Founding Temple. The chief priests of important daughter temples are simply called High Priests. A priest who manages a small temple by herself bears no special title that the rest of the clan will honor. Of course, if a Setite wants to tell other vampires that she's the Grand Archimandrite of the Elder Temple, that's her business, and she and any other Setites she meets can share a good laugh at the deception.

THE COHORT OF WEPWAWET

This militant cult is a rare example of Setite fundamentalism. Cohort members claim Set's child, Wepwawet, as their

leader. No one outside the Arena of thunder, their Founding Temple at Abu Simbel, can prove whether or not this Eternal actually does lead the cult (or even exists).

The Cohort began as a cult of Warrior Setites devoted to protecting Egypt from southern invaders. It declined after the Purge of Baybars, but rapidly grew in the 1960s when cultists said that Wepwawet had awakened from a long torpor. In the 1970s, the Cohort launched a revival campaign to bring heterodox Setite cults in line with the "true and ancient Theophidian doctrine." It lacked support from other cults, equally ancient and powerful, who disagreed with the Cohort's hostility to other vampire clans. In the end, the Cohort achieved little except to foster ill-will against "Setite fanatics." It even drove the Serpents of the Light to join the Sabbat. This debacle wrecked the Cohort's credibility with other major cults and members drifted away. The shrunken Cohort abandoned many shrines, and many Cohort cells only have a single vampire member. The Cohort leaders hunger for victories and achievements to boost their prestige again.

When not crusading for orthodoxy, Cohort members often seek out other supernatural beings whom they regard as special minions of the Aeons, such as Christian and Muslim sorcerer-priests and the Ventrue. In the 1990s, the shrunken cult began a vendetta with the Society of Leopold. The Wepwawetans have slain and corrupted many of these latter-day witch-hunters and suffered their own losses in turn.

THE SCANDINAVIAN SETITES


Few Setite lineages provoke more surprise than the Setites of Scandinavia; yet the Serpents have dwelled in the High North since the 9th century. All Scandinavian Setites (apparently less than a dozen) claim descent from a single Norse merchant, Arnulf Jormungandsson (formerly Seamundsson), who encountered the Followers on a trading mission to Alexandria. Arnulf's attempts to build a doomsday cult around the monstrous Midgard Serpent did not succeed very well, but he and his childer gained influence in the Scandinavian luxury trade.

By the 18th century, other Scandinavian vampires pretty much forgot Arnulf's Setite lineage. He became one of the primogen of Christiania (now Oslo). In the 19th century, Arnulf played patron to nationalist Norwegian artists such as Edvard Grieg, and the "Hall of Jormungandr" became a fashionably naughty night spot for artists, folklore enthusiasts and assorted poseurs.

The Norwegian vampires stripped Arnulf of his primogeny after World War Two because he cooperated with the Germans too well: the Kindred feel little sympathy for those who place their bets on the losing side. Arnulf remains the Keeper of Elysium in Oslo, however, and a patron of traditional Nordic arts and crafts. Other vampires consider his childer and grandchilder entirely respectable; but then, most Scandinavian vampires also think that Jormungandsson and his brood are Toreador.

CULT OF TOWERET

This cult spreads from a Founding Temple beneath the El Kharga oasis, called the Palace of Veils. The cultists of Toweret



explore the utmost extremities of sensation in their quest for enlightenment. This cult claims Set's child Taweret, the goddess of fertility, childbirth and black magic, as its special patron. The Taweretans emphasize liberation through ecstasy and debauchery. Some Setites consider the Taweretans a little too self-indulgent, but these Serpents hold their own view about the best way to oppose the Aeons. They corrupt people one at a time, but show great skill at picking victims whose ruination can cripple a company, pull down a government or otherwise cause public shock and cynicism at the scandal. The Taweretans never operate in groups larger than three: they argue that the Aeons taint any bond not based on personal emotions.

The Taweretans promote their own version of the Path of Sutekh, which they call the Path of Ecstasy. This Path differs from the "baseline" Path of Sutekh chiefly in that it recommends the Revelation of Ecstasy as its favored route to communion with the Dark God. Ecstatic Setites particularly cultivate Presence for its utility at entrancing other people; many of them also learn a bit of Auspex.

SISTERHOOD OF SEKHMET

Early in the 20th century, a coterie of female Setites hit upon the idea of an all-female Gehenna cult as a way to lead Camarilla vampires to the Dark God and undermine the sect. They noticed that despite talk of gender equality among the undead, most cities had male princes. They set out to recruit female vampires who disliked the Camarilla's glass ceiling. The Setites picked Sekhmet, a fierce lioness-goddess of war, plague and healing. Despite Sekhmet's mythological connections to the sun and Ra, these Setites thought the goddess made a suitable symbol of female empowerment. Other Serpents still wonder why.

The Sisterhood did not really take off until the 1960s. Only a third of the cult's 100-some members are Setites; the rest come from other clans. Most of the priestesses are Setite, but a few initiates wandered off to found their own cult cells with no Setite members at all.

The Sekhmetans recruit through political discontent (as well as the Embrace). The priestesses introduce the worship of Sekhmet as a "woman's religion" suitable for the undead. They make the Revelations of the Void more appealing by calling them ways of getting in touch with an inner "Lioness Power." The cult introduces Set — eventually — as the consort of the Lioness. To the distress of Setite members, this aspect of doctrine does not seem to catch on well, and the Serpentless cult cells ignore Set completely. No recruit has passed all the way to the Path of Typhon Set.

CULT OF TYPHON TRISMEGISTUS

The Followers of Set first expanded into Europe through the Cult of Typhon Trismegistus. The cult became so influential in the Classical era that it left a permanent stamp on the terminology of the Setite religion — such as calling Setite philosophy the Path of Typhon instead of the Path of Sutekh.

In Greek mythology, the earth-goddess Gaia wanted revenge on her grandchildren, the Olympian gods, for usurping

her children, the Titans. She lay with Tartarus — Hell — and Typhon was their child. The Olympian gods fled to Egypt in fear of the monstrous, serpent-legged Typhon, and tried to hide by taking the forms of animals. Zeus, taking the form of a ram, became Amun; Hermes, in ibis form, became Thoth; and so on. Thus the ancient Greeks explained the similarities they saw between their gods and the Egyptians'. Typhon himself they identified with Set. When the Followers of Set decided to convert Greeks and Romans to their faith, they found these divine transpositions already in place.

The Cult of Typhon began in Alexandria and spread through the Roman Empire. After the destruction of the Alexandria temple in the Purge of Baybars, a shrine in Naples became the cult's Founding Temple. Although the cult steadily declined in western Europe after the fall of the West Roman Empire, it enjoyed a brisk revival in the Renaissance. The Cult of Typhon Trismegistus still dominates Setite affairs in Europe.

Typhonists employ a particularly elaborate system of cults within cults. At first, new recruits believe that they join a cult devoted to Bacchus, Mars or Pluto. (The modern neopagan movement lets such cults recruit quite openly.) Each god represents one aspect of Set: the bringer of ecstatic madness, the warrior and the lord of the dead. Eventually, promising initiates learn that all three gods represent aspects of Typhon, the true object of their worship. Only acolytes who show faultless devotion and fully imbibe the Typhonist doctrines of debauchery learn that Typhon himself is but another mask and receive the more spiritual doctrines of gnosis and overcoming desire. Many Typhonist Setites never quite grasp that secret doctrine, and so remain mere tempters and hedonists. The cult's high priests would consider them failures, except they have eternity to learn their lesson and get it right. The priests do not force the true doctrine on vampires who are not yet ready to accept it.

The Typhonist temple in Naples is called the Cave of Apples. Several centuries ago, Alexandrian Setites rebuilt the old Typhoeum, but the Cave of Apples remains the cult's official Founding Temple.

Like many Setites, the Typhonists involve themselves in every aspect of the vice trade. In the last ten years, several Typhonist shrines began sponsoring gladiatorial pit-fights, where jaded Kindred and kine could thrill to real terror, blood and death. The games appall Setites who spent centuries keeping a low profile. Nevertheless, the pit-fights pull in big money, strip away the audience's pretensions of morality and provide splendid blackmail opportunities (hidden cameras record the audience at every fight). Before each night's fighting, all these distinguished Kindred and kine hear a priest invoke Typhon Set's blessing on the games. So what if the audience doesn't take it seriously? Their mere presence at a Setite ceremony draws them closer to the Dark God. Anyone who...feels something...finds a convenient chapel next to the arena.

FAMOUS FOUNDING TEMPLES

Several other Setite temples are old and prestigious enough that many Setites know their names. Most of these are Founding Temples themselves, although their cults differ only in minor details.

Ombos needs no other name than the town it lies beneath. This shrine is supposedly the Founding Temple, the one established by Set Himself. The sultan Baybars destroyed the Ombos temple. A cabal of Setites secretly rebuilt it late in the 19th century, but never told anyone except a few ancient Hierophants. Pilgrims and investigators who go to the village of Kom Ombo never find the Setite temple; instead they find a well-known but ruined temple to Set and Horus. Ancient, powerful magic hides the true Setite temple from everyone except the people invited by the priests.

The House of the Eclipse is buried beneath Cairo. Eclipsan doctrine insists that for the Setites to become gods themselves they must kill the sun-god Ra. Clan rumor holds that the House of the Eclipse guards the clan's greatest trove of magic and occult lore.

The Red Temple of Thebes and the *Garden of Asps* beneath Memphis have glorious pasts but are now nearly deserted. Both cities are ruined capitals of ancient Egypt. A few elder priests remain to guard the temples' archives of lore and magic artifacts.

The Crocodile Temple in the Faiyum is the Founding Temple of the cult of Sobek. Like the ancient cult, the Temple keeps a pool of sacred crocodiles ornamented with golden bangles — but these crocodiles are ghouléd. One crocodile is said to be over a thousand years old, and to give oracles from Set's child, Sobek.

The Labyrinth of Bones lies beneath the city of Tunis. The Setites tiled its walls, floors and ceilings with human bones; the dead of Carthage, looted from Tunis' graveyards for 2000 years. A persistent clan rumor says that the Labyrinth of Bones holds several Brujah Methuselahs, excavated from Carthage and kept in torpor through stakes.

The Descending Aene is an enormous cavern near Tangier, in Morocco. Over the centuries, the Moroccan Setites carved the walls of the central cavern so that the constant wind howls like a human voice. When the wind blows just right, it hums out a hymn to Set.

The Temple of Dogs is much younger than these others, but dominates Setite affairs in the British Isles. The temple is a joint venture by the Taweretan and Eclipsan cults, located on the Isle of Dogs in London (once a notorious abode of prostitution).



SETITES OF WEST AFRICA: CHILDREN OF DAMBALLAH

The Setites spread through sub-Saharan Africa long ago, establishing new cults by syncretizing Set with various tribal gods. The Cult of Damballah, based in Nigeria and Benin, is a typical example of these cults. The Damballans keep their Founding Temple in the town of Oyo, once the capital of a powerful Yoruba kingdom. West Africa, however, is a long and difficult way from Egypt. The West African Setites diverged greatly from their parent clan.

The Yoruban Setites worship Set in the person of Damballah-Wedo, a Yoruban snake-god of the Earth and darkness. Damballah was not an especially good choice, since the Yoruba regard him as a benign creator-god himself, in partnership with his wife, the Rainbow Serpent Aida-Wedo. The Damballan Setites tried to show Damballah in a more sinister, less Demiurgic light by emphasizing his connection with the dead. Unfortunately, the cult leaders decided to keep the identification of Damballah with Set as a "Great Mystery" that only senior initiates would learn. After centuries of isolation and High Priests entering torpor, Yoruba culture washed away most of the Theophidian doctrine.

By now only a few Damballan elders, who achieved the highest initiations of their cult, remember their connection to Set and Egypt. Other Damballans believe that their supernatural powers and undead weaknesses come from Damballah-Wedo and Aida-Wedo. In their myth, Set was a king who stole divine power by cutting out and eating Damballah's heart. This was not actually fatal to the god, but it made him and his consort terribly angry. Aida's curse banished the king from life and the day, while Damballah's curse banished him from the peace of the grave, but the two gods could not take back the stolen magic power. The king, however, could share it with others who accepted the curse as its price.

Despite the legend of a curse, Damballans revere the Serpent and the Rainbow as the source of their power, with Set forming a junior third in their cult's trinity. The Damballans emphasize the liberating madness of ecstatic trance, achieved through drumming, dancing and drugged blood. Like other West African native religions, the gods may possess entranced worshippers — not just Damballah, Aida and Set, but many other Yoruban gods as well. The Cult of Damballah promises that in time, initiates may gain enough spiritual power to become gods themselves.

The Followers of Set restored contact with the Damballans early this century. All attempts to steer the Damballans back to what passes for Setite orthodoxy failed completely. The Damballans gladly learn every bit of Setite and Egyptian legend they can, but re-work it to fit with their West African religion rather than vice-versa. The Cohort of Wepwawet's revival crusade simply offended the Damballans; they broke off all embassies with the Theophidians. Some Setite strategists worry that the Damballans will join the Sabbat like their Caribbean

branch, the Serpents of the Light. So far, however, the Damballans show no more interest in the Sabbat (or for that matter the Camarilla) than in the Theophidians. Whatever their plans and ambitions, they are limited to West Africa — for now.

SERPENTS OF THE LIGHT

The Setite *antitribu* of the Sabbat reject Theophidian doctrine in all its forms. The Cobras accept the myth of Caine as the First Vampire, which irritates more orthodox Setites. All Setites believe that their god-king's return, with the awakening of the other Antediluvians, will destroy the world as we know it. Theophidians consider this desirable; the Serpents of the Light emphatically do not! From the orthodox point of view, the Cobras have sold out to the Acans.

Perhaps the *antitribu* could reconcile with some Setite cults. Some Followers accept the practicality of cooperating with other supernatural powers — for now — and the militantly orthodox Cohort of Wepwawet lost most of its influence. Only 20-some years have passed since the Cobras' founders joined the Sabbat, however, and great bitterness remains.

The Serpents of the Light began as a Caribbean branch of the West African Setites. According to the Cobras' oral tradition, the first Setites came to the West Indies more than 300 years ago, in the heyday of the slave trade. They say that a mortal cultist, captured and sold as a slave, became a sailor and returned to Africa. He pleaded with his undead masters to succor his fellow tribesmen who were suffering and dying on the sugar plantations and mills. The elders of the cult agreed that the cause was just. One vampire-priest smuggled himself across the Atlantic on a slave ship; it arrived in Hispaniola with the slaves freed and the white men in chains. The great priest led a furious slave revolt. The Europeans crushed the revolt — but not the cult that led the revolt, nor the vampire priest. The great priest now sleeps in the earth, but when he awakens he will lead all the faithful back to Africa. His lineage preserves the cult until that night.

The vampires of the islands know several versions of this legend. One vampire says the priest came from the Yoruba tribal nation; others say he was Gu, or Mende, or Kongo. Different vampires give the priest's name as Chuyidi (*orisha* of nightmares in Santería) or Sousou Pennan (a wicked *lòas* in Vodou) or a half-dozen other names. On the other hand, other Caribbean Setites argue that the whole story is a self-serving, "politically correct" modern invention. They suggest that the Cobras' ancestors came to the Caribbean as refugees from home-town power struggles, or to lord it over blood cults of plantation slaves.

Nor should anyone take the names of the Cobras' founders too seriously. The Serpents of the Light take a slipshod attitude to vampiric genealogy. They freely construct "family trees" incorporating any *lòas* or famous vampires they admire (including vampires of other clans) or famous mortals who never became vampires. A Cobra will reliably report his immediate sire; the rest of his ancestry is pure fabrication. For the Serpents of the Light, however, these made-up genealogies tell of the vampire's aspirations and ideals. Indeed, the Serpents of the



Light consider bloodline obsession rather unhealthy: as vampires they possess no real families. They think that vampires who pretend that the transmission of the Blood equals mortal descent should stop fooling themselves.

DOCTRINES

Until recently, the Serpents of the Light had very little contact with the rest of their clan. Their cult began as an offshoot of the West African Cult of Damballah, but over the centuries its doctrines drifted even further from core Setite beliefs.

The Serpents of the Light believe in a supreme Creator deity, but (like other African and Voodoo faiths) also believe that the Supreme Deity does not interact with the world in any way. The Damballans have no quarrel with him. The Voodoo religions say that after death, powerful people can become gods; the Cobras want to do this in the flesh, rather than as spirits. If one of them becomes powerful enough to kill Damballah and take his place as ruler of the earth's dark places, so much the better. They do not believe that the Creator would stop them.


The Cobras borrow gods from other Afro-Caribbean cults. From Palo Mayombe they take Zarabanda, the messenger-god who provides access to the spirit world (often identified with the Voodoo god Legba); El Cristo Negro, the king of the dead (similar to Voodoo's famous Baron Samedi, but more dignified); and La Madre de la Luna, goddess of the Moon and the sea (identified with Voodoo's Yemanya). Santeria provides Chango, god of fire, lightning and kingship; and Oshayin, god of herbs and the forest. Haitian Voodoo supplies Damballah the Serpent and his wife Aida-Wedo, goddess of the rainbow; Ogoun, god of war and metal; and many other gods. Cobras refer to gods as *Loa*, *Saints* or *Mystères* and syncretize them with Catholic saints or other Christian figures. For instance, they identify La Madre de la Luna with the Virgin Mary and Chango with St. Barbara.

The bloodline-cult's leaders have no problem with the myth of Cain. They recognize him as the king from their own origin myth, although they also cast Set in the same role. The Cobras interpret other Antediluvians as brothers and sisters of the king, who persuaded him to share his stolen power but now seek his death and fight amongst themselves. The Cobras accept that the Antediluvians really exist and will devour all their descendants when they awaken. Since they do not want to become an ancient vampire's dinner, they help the Sabbat hunt the Antediluvians and their presumed minions, including their parent clan.

ORGANIZATION

Following the practices of both the ancient Setite cult and many African faiths, the Serpents of the Light cult has many levels of initiation. Some initiations come to those who master Serpents, Obfuscate or Presence to a particular level. Others are purely social, attained by offering sufficient gifts to the bloodline's elders.

At each level, the initiate learns new "secrets." Most of these are fairly meaningless: passwords that let them recognize fellow initiates, magic charms (of no real power) against bad luck or their enemies' witchcraft, and odd little scraps of



mythology. For instance, one such 'mystery' is why they call themselves the Serpents of the Light. A Cobra who attains the 5th initiation learns that they take their name from the Milky Way, which they describe as a great shining serpent encircling the Universe. (The name has nothing to do with their rivalry with their parent clan; the Caribbean Setites became Serpents of the Light centuries ago.)

The four elders who hold the highest initiation are called the *emperours*; the last three initiations come only with the consent of all the emperours together. The leader of a Cobra cell is called the *president*, while a member in good standing is called a *bête serène* or "Serene Beast." A single cell is called a *shantpue*. When a new cell forms, an emperour sends a miniature coffin emblazoned with a silver serpent encircling a golden star, the *madone d'étoile*, for their shrine.

DAITYA: THE HOLY BLASPHEMERS

The Daitya lineage has two stories of its origin. Some scholarly Daitya claim that their lineage descends from Followers of Set who traveled east in Hellenistic times, following the armies of Alexander. These Setites expanded through the Indian subcontinent. They adopted Shiva the Destroyer, Rudra the god of storms and hunters, and the serpent-demon of drought—called Vritra—as the local analogs of Set. Eventually the cult of Shiva completely absorbed the cult of Rudra, and Vritra simply dropped out of Setite practice. These Indian Setites called themselves "Daitya" after a legendary race of cosmic demons who fought the Hindu gods.

Other Daitya do not deny that Greco-Egyptian Setites reached India. They insist, however, that their clan already stalked the Indian night millennia before Alexander—in fact, before the Aryan invaders whose legends form the sacred Vedas. The vampire clan gave their name to the mythical demons. These Daitya only concede that the Greco-Egyptian Setites renewed contact between the clan's eastern and western wings. As for which wing came first... well, who knows?

Whatever their origin, the Daitya became one of the most exalted vampire clans of India. Indian vampires combine the ideas of caste and clan: a vampire's lineage defines her status relative to other clans, and even the range of occupations and activities she may pursue. Indian vampires see nothing strange about such restrictions, because Indian mortals follow the same system! Neither the Muslim invasions of past centuries nor British colonial rule nor the current government's attempts to abolish caste significantly disrupted the caste system. Already in the World of Darkness, the "caste-rejecting," secularized Indians of government and business show signs of forming unofficial new castes of their own...

The Daitya form a *Brahmin* caste of priests and magicians. Humility is not among their virtues; Brahminical doctrine makes the priest-magicians equal partners to the gods in maintaining cosmic and social order. When a Brahmin correctly performs the complex ritual of sacrifice, the gods *must* attend and grant his prayer. Various purity taboos separate the castes.

Brahmins observe the most stringent taboos of all in their food, personal habits, and even who may approach them. Each caste has its own specific duties, that would defile any one of a different caste. In the Golden Age at the beginning of the world, everyone performed their caste duties without fault. In these benighted times, too many people do not.


DOCTRINES

Most Hindu vampires believe that they are demons. Their crimes in their past lives preordained their Embrace. Even demons, however, have their castes and caste duties. The Daitya see their caste duty as a strange inverse of mortal Brahminism. As demons, they must fight the gods and strive to overthrow the moral order of the world. As Brahmins, however, they must strive to keep their fellow vampires within their own particular caste duties as murderers, tricksters, desecrators of sacred rites and all the other abhorrent roles assigned to demons. If a vampire suffers Final Death, but he did his demonic caste duty well, he might win a higher place in his next life.

The Daitya worship Shiva the Destroyer, who forms one third of the supreme Hindu triad along with Brahma the Creator and Vishnu the Preserver. Enigmatic Shiva rules over all the destructive forces of the cosmos, from natural disasters to the flash of enlightenment that shatters a mystic's ignorance. Sex, death and madness fall under Shiva's purview. He roams in the company of ghosts and demons. When he opens the third eye in the middle of his forehead, he annihilates whatever he sees. His wife, Parvati, or Shakti, also takes the form of dreadful Kali, the goddess who devours all life that new life may come. She gives her name to the Kali Yuga, the Final Age of the world before its destruction. When the world reaches an absolute nadir of depravity—when humanity rejects all laws, morals and caste duties—Shiva will look upon the entire Universe with his third eye. Then Brahma the Creator can bring forth a new world, purified and without sin...and the whole cycle will start all over again.

The Daitya strive to bring about this happy consummation. They encourage mortals to violate every sort of religious taboo. They focus on the laws of Hinduism, but as each religion gains adherents in the Indian subcontinent the Daitya study it, interpret it in Hindu terms and analyze its potential for blasphemy. For instance, Daitya theologians interpret Jesus Christ as an avatar of Vishnu: like the god's avatar Krishna, they say, Christ taught a system of reverence for a god-man as a way to achieve union with the supreme Godhead. A dedicated Daitya would scour the Bible for moral commandments, and tempt a Christian to break as many of them as possible. The vampire would lead a Muslim to a different but equally appropriate set of sins, a Buddhist to that faith's crimes and blasphemies, and so on.

This does not prevent devout Daitya from following their own versions of Hindu purity taboos and austerities. A Daitya will not feed from the same vessel as a lower-caste vampire. They meditate, fast and perform other ascetic practices to gain mystical merit, just as any other Hindu could. After all, they aren't stupid. Not only will such austerities help anyone gain a better place in her next incarnation, they grant magical power.



in this existence. According to Hindu legend, ascetic demons have won so much power that they bullied the gods themselves. Some Daitya fully believe these legends; they say that the first vampires are on the verge of attaining just such cosmic power as a result of meditations lasting millennia.

ORGANIZATION

The vampires of India hold no truck with sects in the political sense that Western vampires use. Indian vampire sects truly are religious communities. The Daitya claim leadership of all vampires who worship Shiva. Other vampires, especially those of the "Patiah" castes, dispute that claim! Nevertheless, their intrinsic rank as Brahmins grants all Daitya considerable authority among India's undead.

Like the Followers of Set, Daitya children usually belonged to their sire's blood cult and probably served her as a Retainer before the Embrace. Unlike India's other Brahmin vampires, the Daitya freely Embrace mortals from non-Brahmin castes. The Daitya believe that the 'Third Birth' into undeath supersedes mortal caste limitations.

Also like Western Setites, a Daitya's haven is also a personal shrine. Even the younger Daitya usually insist upon a comfortable subterranean haven with a separate chamber for their shrine to Shiva; a multi-room basement apartment will do. Elder Daitya often lair in genuine underground temples hewn from solid stone, with pillared halls, mural paintings or carvings, and a sumptuous statue of Shiva himself. Although the Daitya may hide the portions of the temple set aside for vampires and their blood cult, the complex as a whole generally includes a public shrine to Shiva as well. In India, the Daitya do not need to hide their worship from other vampires. A Daitya temple could be located virtually anywhere, from a jungle-clad mountain to beneath a teeming city's streets, as long as people live nearby to sustain the vampires.

The Daitya organize in coterie centered on a temple. The most important bond, however, is that to one's guru-Mentor — usually one's sire, but not always. A Daitya remains subservient to her Mentor until she demonstrably surpasses him in some supernatural achievement, such as mastering a discipline the Mentor does not know, or creating a powerful Thaumaturgic ritual. This may well take centuries. (Even the great Sundervere, the world's most notorious Daitya, hints on occasion that he is a mere acolyte to one greater and wiser than himself.) Each temple has complete autonomy, though the oldest temples (with the oldest and most powerful high priests) naturally carry the most prestige.

The various Daitya lineages do not vary in any way reflected in game mechanics; they do not have a bloodline analogous to the "Warrior Setites." Some temples and their associated broods and coterie emphasize development of particular Disciplines, including out-of-clan Disciplines, or Paths of Thaumaturgy. The Daitya elders only treat one lineage as a "bloodline," and that's for religious reasons. Several centuries ago the Naktanchara lineage converted to Buddhism and rejected caste divisions. For this the assembled High Priests of the Daitya temples, in a unique display

of unanimity, declared the Naktanchara forever outcaste and defiled, unto the last generation. It would seem that even professional blasphemers have their limits.

OTHER NOTES

Appearance: Daitya come from the Indian subcontinent; therefore, Daitya all look like pale Indians, Sri Lankans, Pakistani, and so on. Skin tone ranges from swarthy to brown, while nearly all Daitya have black hair. In public, they often wear stylish suites or saris like well-off Indian businessmen or their wives. In private they often wear priestly robes. Most Daitya wear the Shivaite cultic mark — a "V" on the forehead with the point at the bridge of the nose. Hundreds of millions of mortal Indians follow the same custom.

Character Creation: Daitya care little for Physical attributes, but care a great deal about Mental and Social Attributes. They tend to have formidable intellectual and communications Abilities, as befits their role as priest and teacher. Natures and Demeanors both tend toward the scholarly, the mystical and the conservative, although some combinations may seem quite unlikely to Western ways of thinking (for instance, a Deviant Demeanor covering a Traditionalist or Conformist Nature.) Retainers and Herds of cultists are nigh-universal but Daitya have less interest than their Setite cousins in building networks of Allies, Contacts and Influence. The Daitya practice their own versions of the Paths of Typhon and Sutekh, though in game terms most neonates follow Humanity.

Clan Disciplines: Obfuscate, Presence, Serpents

Weaknesses: The Daitya share their Western cousins' special susceptibility to sunlight and other bright light.

TLACIQUE: SERVANTS OF THE SUN

When the Conquistadors came to Mexico, the Kindred of Europe came with them. They found cities as large and prosperous as any in the Old World. The Kindred also found vampires already in residence: Nosferatu, Gangrel... and a whole new lineage not hinted at in the most ancient lore. Did the New World also present a new clan? These "Tlacique" claimed descent from Tezcatlipoca, god of night and black magic, and many of them were very old and very powerful. The Kindred assumed that Tezcatlipoca must be a Methuselah and the Tlacique a very old bloodline — from the Gangrel, perhaps, or the Followers of Set. Whatever their origin, the Tlacique did not merely influence the native civilizations. They ruled as gods. The Tlacique shaped the mortals' whole civilization around cults of blood sacrifice.

The Tlacique intrigued the Kindred, to say the least. The Old World vampires had not wielded such open dominion since Carthage. Each autonomous clique of Tlacique, consisting of just one elder vampire and his brood, ruled one city. As a city's fortunes rose and fell, so did the prestige of its ruling clique. The Aztec Empire grew from a triple alliance of three cities and their cliques, who dominated most of the other cities and cliques of Mexico.

At first the mortal Aztecs treated the Spaniards as honored (if dangerous) guests. The Tlacique began cautious negotiations with the Kindred. The Camarilla might have gained an eighth clan, if not for mortal greed.

Some cliques saw the Spanish as a way to break Aztec power and liberate their cities. As history records, several tribes and cities rebelled against the Aztecs and joined the Spanish cause. They, and the Tlacique, horribly misjudged the Spaniards' power and intentions. The living and undead Mexicans also did not expect the indiscriminate slaughter by smallpox, a disease never seen before in the New World. The Aztec Empire collapsed and the Spanish took everything. The mortal Mexicans became serfs, worked until they dropped to feed the Spaniards' insatiable appetite for gold. Rightly or not, the Tlacique blamed the Kindred for the debacle. The Spanish might have crushed the mortal Mexicans, but among the undead the war continued.

Then the Sabbat came and the Tlacique made their greatest mistake. The Tlacique decided that the enemies of their enemies were their friends: they allied with the Sabbat against the Camarilla. When the Jihad ended, however, the Tlacique and Sabbat finally took a good look at each other.

Their erstwhile allies repulsed the Tlacique. The Sabbat enthusiastically copied many Tlacique rituals of blood and death, but they completely missed their meaning. The Sabbat delved into murder as a ritual of celebration, rather than a ceremony of faith. The Tlacique guarded a divine order; the Sabbat's ideals opposed that very order.

Conversely, the Lasombra leaders of the Sabbat still saw themselves as Catholic (in a perverse and twisted way) and fully supported the mortal Spanish conquest and attempts to Christianize the natives. The Tlacique could serve as allies of convenience, but they were still heathens.

The Tlacique fought the Sabbat in turn, but they had lost too much power and could not change with the times. The Sabbat virtually destroyed the clan and diablerized its elders. Lasombra priests carefully baptized each staked elder before the diablerie, so the vampire would meet Final Death in a state of grace. The Tlacique survived only in remote villages, or by fleeing into the trackless jungles of South America.

Centuries later, less than 200 Tlacique exist, scattered from Boja to Tierra del Fuego. Reluctantly, the remaining Tlacique have begun coming together in the interests of unity. They hope to rebuild their power, locate sleeping elders missed by the Sabbat and eventually retake their homelands. The war has already begun.

DOCTRINES

The Tlacique believed that their descent from Tezcatlipoca entitled them to set themselves over other vampires as well as over mortals. In Mexico, they succeeded; the Peruvian branch of the bloodline had to compromise more with the native Nosferatu and Gangrel. In every culture where the Tlacique held power, however, they pushed the native religion toward increased

human sacrifice. The Aztecs, for instance, routinely sacrificed tens of thousands of victims each year, ripping their hearts out to feed the Sun — while those Tlacique who could stay awake for the daytime ceremonies waited in hidden chambers beneath the altars, and enjoyed blood feasts of epic proportions.

The Aztecs, Incas, Mayans and other peoples sincerely believed that without these offerings of hearts, the Sun would die and the world die with it. The Tlacique believed that they played a role in this cosmic drama as well. Their rituals and consumption of blood preserved the Sun through his nightly death. Unlike the Followers of Set, their divine progenitor was never cast out. Tezcatlipoca was an obstreperous god who twice destroyed the world in fits of pique, but that was just the sort of thing gods did. In the same way, the Tlacique permitted themselves to use their divine powers for vindictive ends, cruelly destroying anyone who offended them, because gods had that privilege. Before the Europeans came, the Tlacique followed a distinctive Path of Enlightenment with some aspects resembling the Paths of Night, Blood and Power and the Inner Voice. The destruction of their cultural milieu rendered this Path impossible to follow, however, so all Tlacique now use Humanity. Like their Sabbat enemies, they seldom achieve high ratings.

ORGANIZATION

The bloodline has not yet stabilized into a new social order. This distresses the elders, who fondly remember the highly structured life and *unlife* of the pre-Columbian cities. The juniors must revere their elders, if only for their experience at surviving in Sabbat territory. On the other hand, the elders are woefully out of their depth in coping with the modern world; even the ones who didn't spend centuries in torpor hidden in rural regions where change came slowly. The real authority in the bloodline passed to the ancillae, vampires old enough to gain some power and prove their competence, but who aren't yet totally befuddled by a swiftly-changing world. The ancillae decide policy; neonates handle the details dealing with really contemporary stuff, and the elders give their blessing, teach Disciplines to their juniors and perform tasks requiring greater magical power.

Originally all Tlacique came from the priestly caste of Pre-Columbian society — the cream of their intelligentsia. That has not been feasible for some centuries. Instead, the remaining Tlacique embraced village folk who carried on native traditions of folk magic, such as peasant sorcerers, shamans and rain-makers. Less than a dozen of the pre-Columbian priestly Tlacique — the true elders of their bloodline — remain active (although they include some dismayingly powerful blood sorcerers). Ancillae and neonates are mostly native people as well, with a few mestizos. In the last 20 years, the Tlacique expanded their range of recruits to include native-rights guerrillas and anyone else they think might help their cause.

Rural Tlacique dwell in houses (or huts) with well-made cellars. Those who master Earth Meld need no haven at all. Urban Tlacique take whatever haven they can get. The elders encourage younger clan members to keep products of native handicrafts in their havens if at all possible.

Learning their form of Thaumaturgy automatically raises a Tlacique's status in the clan. A Tlacique who lacks Thaumaturgy can never win more than one dot of Status. Striking a blow against the Sabbat brings prestige. Reviving interest in traditional art, customs or religion in mortal society also confers merit, but true Status comes only through seniority, demonstrated divine power (Disciplines and Thaumaturgy) and success in war.

OTHER NOTES

Appearance: Elder Tlacique are all Central American natives. Ancillas might be mestizos. The elders recently authorized looking beyond Central America to Central and South American immigrant communities in the United States. (For instance, Dallas, Texas now has a neighborhood of Guatemala Mayans—and a resident Tlacique.) All Tlacique try to blend in wherever they go, so their Sabbat enemies won't recognize them.

Character Creation: The Tlacique look for self-reliant people, either in their Demeanor or their Abilities. Neonates must survive in very hostile country. This conservative clan does not like rebels or troublemakers, and Natures and Demeanors reflect this.

A Tlacique neonate's primary Attributes depend on why his sire selected him. Former shamans, sorcerers and such ilk have primary Social or Mental Attributes (and notably high Charisma, since their "magical powers" are really the power of suggestion and knowledge of psychology, weather, herbal medicine and other such fields). A guerrilla Embraced as a pure soldier, however, will probably emphasize Physical Attributes.

The Tlacique know their own version of blood magic, called *Nahuallotl*. This is their most popular out-of-clan Discipline. Most Tlacique try to learn blood magic, so it is quite acceptable for a starting character to obtain a dot of Thaumaturgy through Freebie Points.

Clan Disciplines: Obfuscate, Presence, Protean, Serpents is unknown among the Tlacique.

Weakness: Although their lineage cannot be traced, the Tlacique really are a Setite bloodline, for they share the Setite weakness. Sunlight inflicts an extra two health levels of damage on a Tlacique, and other sources of bright light (such as magnesium flares or spotlights) impose a -1 die penalty on dice pools for all tasks.

WARRIOR SETITES

Setite clan mythology holds that all Warrior Setites descend from Set's childe, Wepwawet. This is not literally true, but rather a statement of an ideal. In fact, Warrior Setites are simply Serpents who choose to emphasize their divine forebear's martial aspects and fight their clan's enemies. Some Setites speak of a special Path of Enlightenment for Warrior Setites, but (as with the Ecstatic Setites) most modern Serpents regard this Path as a mere attitude or approach to the Path of Typhon Set, without the depth and detail to qualify as a Path of its own. Many Warrior Setites actually follow Humanity: they justify their killings through religious devotion. A few Warrior Setites

learn the Path of Honorable Accord from contacts in the Sabbat, and seek to spread this Path through their bloodline.

Would-be Warrior Setites labor to develop Potence at the expense of Obfuscate. The progeny of such Setites, themselves trained in warrior ways, become Warrior Setites by blood and pass their affinity for Potence to their own childe. On the other hand, a Warrior Setite childe not trained in martial ways may become a normal Setite.

More than half of the Cohort of Wepwawet consists of Warrior Setites. At its height, the Cohort claimed most of the Warrior Setites in the Western and Middle Eastern world. Since then, Warrior Setites turned to other cults, or formed tiny, one-coterie cults of their own. The Cult of Typhon Trismegistus also contains an important minority of Warrior Setites who devote their worship to Typhon Set in the person of the Roman god Mars. Other "orthodox" Setite cults routinely include a few Warrior Setites, but these martial Serpents hold no special status.

The Serpents of the Light do not contain any Warrior Setites—or at least not yet. Among the many little-known Setite cults of Africa, however, a few glorify war-gods whom they identify with Set, producing lineages who would consider themselves "Warrior Setites." The Dairya of India and the New World Tlacique do not produce Warrior Setites at all.

* * *

OPINIONS ABOUT OTHERS

Dear childe:

Your plea for knowledge of the so-called "Cainite" race gratifies me no end. In these frantic, degenerate times, so few seek out the wisdom and experience of their elders! I fear the lust for novelty and instant gratification penetrates even our own kind. The eager curiosity and sober respect conveyed by your missive, however, renews my confidence in our cult, our clan and our purpose. Thank Set, not all the childe of these latter nights are too busy and modern to listen to an old scholar. (Although, it would seem you are too busy to learn Latin and read the treatise I wrote on this subject some 400 years ago).

Your question regarding a shared origin of the Setite and Cainite races is not entirely naive. Our undeniable resemblances indicate similar origins—but not, I stress, a shared origin. An astute observer of all the manifold vampires must notice our differences as well as our similarities. The other (and need I add, lesser) breeds of vampire suffer the effects of bright light somewhat less than we. On the other hand, each lineage possesses certain weaknesses and foibles that mark them as one Blood, just as our abilities mark us as fellow childe of Set.

Each of these other lineages claims descent from a single founder, a mortal who became the first vampire of his or her kind. On this, we have no cause to doubt the legends of the other lineages: neither that each "clan" has a unique progenitor, nor

that said ancestor was originally mortal — not divine, as in our case. Most of the other legends of clan founders, whom the others call "Antediluvians," are fabrications sanctified by millennia of repetition.

The other vampires' shared name of *Cainite* is the first and greatest lie. They base their myth on the Biblical account of Cain(e), whom God cursed for the murder of his brother Abel. According to the Cainites, this curse was nothing less than to become the First Vampire. Caine passed on his curse to three other mortals, who passed it in turn to several more. These wretches, in turn, sired all the various breeds of vampires.

I trust you shall recognize the inconsistencies in this myth. Eternal life makes, shall we say, a peculiar punishment for a murderer. Forcing him to consume blood and thus repeat his crime again and again is idiotic. Making the curse transmissible to innocent people smacks of pure madness. To explain the differences among the various breeds of vampires, the myth complicates itself with accounts that Caine himself cursed various Antediluvians for ill-defined offenses, and that these curses transmitted themselves to the founders' descendants. The legends go on to speak of a First City established by Caine; a Second City of the Antediluvians; the biblical Deluge; wars; and various other catastrophes provoked by crimes against sites.

Self-proclaimed Cainite scholars waste rivers of ink exploring and explaining this cycle of myths. Waste, I say, because our most ancient temples in Egypt preserve eyewitness accounts of the myth's genesis. Not all these accounts come from mem-


bers of our own divine lineage. The legend of Caine the First Vampire dates back no earlier than 2000 BCE. A cabal of elder vampires (millennia old even then, and possibly including some of the Antediluvians) concocted this spurious shared inheritance. This was part of an attempt to regiment their rebellious descendants — hence the repeated warnings of dire punishments for disobeying one's elders. They tried to create an early version of the Camarilla, though with little success.

No doubt you wonder if the truth of the other clans' origins is known, or knowable. Unfortunately, we possess several accounts of the origin of vampirism (in ourselves and the other clans). Personally, I suspect that the legends about the origins of vampirism are just as metaphorical as the ancient Egyptians' numerous and conflicting myths about the origin of the world. I can merely tell you which legend I prefer.

One of our legends says that Set the god became Set the vampire by drinking the waters of Duat, the Egyptian netherworld's version of the river Styx, after his near-fatal wounding by his nephew Horus. I trust that you have heard this legend; if not, many priests know the story. Fewer know the sequel.

Set's return from death terrified the Aeons, the powers whom we name as the Egyptian gods. Set could walk the earth corporeally, something the Aeons could no longer do. Even worse, Set could confer some of his divine power on mortals and make them undead demigods. The Aeons feared that Set would take the world from them.





They fought back by creating vampire demigods of their own. Ra commanded Seker, the god of darkness and eternal death, to take water from Duat and bless it. Then Ra poured the water into twelve bowls and gave it to twelve gods, who each added their own immortal blood. Each god chose a mortal and made him drink the divine blood and deathly water, turning him or her into an undead god like Set. The gods then bade their twelve apostles to sire children, even as Set did, and lead them in war against our founder.

May I repeat: I regard this story as at least partly metaphorical. I do believe, however, that certain spiritual Powers, whom we call Aeons and give the names of ancient gods, cursed twelve mortals with tainted demi-divinity. I believe that these twelve became the Antediluvians and sired twelve "Cainite" clans.

The "Kindred" thus are Twelve and One. This pattern endures through the millennia. Clans and their founders may suffer destruction, but a new Antediluvian always replaces the one destroyed; the iron law of the Aeons demands it. You may see that law in the heavens themselves as you walk the night, for the Aeons bound the clans to the Great Dodecad of the Universe, the Zodiac. Just as the heavens move but do not change, so the clans must remain Twelve forever — until the ending of the world.

Know, then, the names of the Twelve created to oppose us, the gods who gave them power, and their place in the Celestial Chain of the Aeons. I hold with no petty-bourgeois alphabetical order; I shall list them in zodiacal order following the vulgar calendar, beginning at the Equinox of Spring.

LASOMBRA

The sign of Aries the Ram rules the Clan of Night. Aries is a fiery sign; ram-headed Amon chose this clan's founder for the power-lust that burned within his heart. You may know a Lasombra by his lack of a reflection. I know not the reason for this curious trait, though one ancient tale of their kind says that their Shadow King cast his out so that no one could see him approaching from behind. This seems very much in character for the Lasombra. From eight centuries of experience I may tell you, do not permit a Lasombra at your back. He probably has a sharpened stake ready.

The Lasombra also command a rare power over darkness. In a Lasombra's hands, darkness becomes no mere absence of light, but a palpable force and substance of its own. They love darkness almost as much as we, no doubt because sunlight harms them almost as much.

Their fierce ambition makes Lasombra almost laughably easy to exploit — especially if you let a Lasombra think that he exploits you. Keep in mind that the Lasombra seek power over each other most of all. In order to flaunt some scrap of glory before his fellows, a Lasombra will betray anyone. Later, you may collect more favors through assistance to his aggrieved clanmates.

Breaking a Lasombra's pride is no easy task, for their selection and training gives the Lasombra a self-confidence like unto black iron. When a Lasombra breaks, however, he breaks completely, and becomes yours to rebuild according to our dark Lord's precepts.

Many Lasombra adopt a rather studied pose of evil. They claim that their petty harassment of the virtuous serves some "greater good" ordained by the very God they believe has damned them. The rams may butt heads, but through such doctrines they show themselves to be sheep obedient unto the Aeons.

NOSFERATU

Beneath the sign of Taurus the Bull you will find the Nosferatu clan; I shall refrain from the obvious *bon mots*. Do not jest about the Nosferatu. The war-god Mont crafted them to endure and strike the final blow — and they remember insults forever. A particular Cainite proverb states, "The first to die in any war are the Nosferatu." My experience says otherwise.


I grant the Aeons showed cunning in cursing the Nosferatu with hideous disfigurement. Forced to hide and rely on themselves and each other, they learn strength, cunning and ruthlessness. Many Nosferatu easily accept the truth about the Aeons. As one pupil of mine put it, she "always suspected that God was a sadistic bastard."

The Nosferatu are as famed for their curiosity as for their ugliness. They appreciate the ancient adage about knowledge and power. Cultivate Nosferatu as informants, even if you cannot cultivate them as disciples. Few of them seek self-knowledge, but once the flame be lit they will follow its light to our Master's bosom. Lead a Nosferatu slowly and gently; of all their habits of thought, I find their suspicion the hardest to break, because it is so often justified.

TREMERE

I mentioned the death of Antediluvians and the replacement of clans. The Tremere, known in my childhood as the Usurpers and now called Warlocks, provide a glorious example of this. The sign of Gemini, the twins, once ruled an Antediluvian who called himself Saulot the Healer. I know your thought: a vampire, daring to call himself a healer! Before assuming that title, however, Saulot also extolled himself as a demon-hunter. Perhaps he had a guilty conscience due to his earlier role as father of demons. Our eldest clanmates remember a base lineage called the Biall and speak of them as the childer of Saulot's rage. Strangely, no one else seems to remember this. At one time, we guarded the Biall's patrimony as a great secret. Now, it hardly matters. Other vampires exterminated the demon-worshipping Biall long ago.

The Tremere bear the honor of destroying Saulot himself. This clan began scarcely a thousand years ago as a group of wizards who became undead through sorcery, at cost of seriously offending numerous vampires of the Tzimisce clan. The war between the Tremere and the Tzimisce lasted some centuries. Their leader, the arch-wizard Tremere, located the sleeping Saulot and drank him dry, elevating himself to take the Antediluvian's place. The Tremere soon established themselves as the premier sorcerers of the undead. I must admit that in some ways they surpass even ourselves. When their elders act in concert, they wield such power that they can levy curses upon entire clans; I shall write more of this later.



If we recruited the Tremere to our cause, the Followers of Set could overthrow the Aeons completely. This may yet become possible: unlike the older clans of the Dodecad, the Tremere retain a guiding council that wields considerable influence in the clan's affairs. If their "Council of Seven" commanded an alliance, I believe that many of the Warlocks would obey.

A steady trickle of Tremere already join the Cult of Set in secret, drawn by the lore we preserve. The Tremere compete with each other as fiercely as do the Lasombra, and sometimes as fatally. They dare much to gain some bit of knowledge or power denied to their fellows. Oft they imagine they will learn our secrets and skip away, only to find that the Revelations of Sutekh change him who knows them.

Forgive any small offenses a Tremere may commit in his ignorance. Seek his understanding, not his destruction. We of the elders follow the same policy regarding the clan as a whole, from admiration as well as utility. I believe that Saulot was a broken soul, perhaps one of those who bears many personalities in one body. The goddess Bast gave him the power to heal, but gentle Bast is also raging Sekhmet who fires the arrows of plague. Saulot's clan, the Salubri, expressed this duality. Some Salubri became healers; others became warriors. Recall, too, the greater duality between the Salubri whom Saulot claimed and the Basli whom he disowned. No matter how terrible the Tremere might become if they waded upon the Followers of Set, I still prefer them to a mad god like Saulot!

MALKAVIAN

The Clan of the Moon falls within the domain of Cancer, the Crab. Isis, queen of the Moon, tried to grant supreme wisdom to their founder. Instead she shattered his mind and all his descendants likewise. Each Malkavian is mad in some way. Some Malkavians show their dementia openly; others hide it. A Malkavian assured me that they only Embrace mortals who are already insane. Her qualifier? "Everyone is mad in their own way."

Other vampires argue about whether the Malkavians' madness partakes of genius. From experience, I can say that Malkavians often display remarkable insight, cunning and creativity. I could say the same, however, about any bright mortal child. If you seek a novel approach, I suggest you consult the mouths of babes rather than Malkavians. Infants will irritate you less.

Of all the clans, I find the Malkavians the most difficult to guide unto the wisdom of Our Lord. Many of them lack the steadiness of purpose to achieve the requisite spiritual discipline, and many others cannot break free of their own strange obsessions. A few, however, seem to comprehend some of the Revelations of the Void already. These make useful allies, though seldom reliable ones.

GANGREL

The sign of Leo, the Lion, rules the Clan of the Beast. Apropos of their place in the Celestial Chain, the Gangrel are another warrior clan. I find the Gangrel incredibly brave, amazingly tough, murderously powerful as individuals — and

completely ineffectual as a group. They prefer the forests and wastelands to urban unlife. Venture not into their domain, and they will probably never notice you. If you must travel far from cities, hire a Gangrel as your guide and pay him well.

The goddess Tefnut gave the Gangrel their powers. She enjoyed taking the form of a lion and wandering through desert places, until the god Thoth persuaded her to return home. The Gangrel take after her: they love to travel, and with time their appearance and mannerisms become more bestial. Most Gangrel possess shape-shifting powers somewhat similar to our own ophidian metamorphoses.

Do not let the Gangrel's rustic ways make you doubt their intellects or potential for spiritual insight. Many Gangrel slip the Aeons' leash and walk their own paths, scorning all creeds and mortal concerns. Strive to become the Thoth who leads the wanderer home to true wisdom.

CAPPADOCIAN/GIOVANNI

The Clan of Death suffered a replacement from within; they now call themselves the Giovanni, after the surname of the vampire who supplanted his sire, the clan's founder. This coup *de gens* took place very recently, in the 15th century CE. The Cappadocians of my younger nights looked like animate corpses. The current Giovanni look as "alive" as any other vampire, but their bite does not cause the strange ecstasy that one enjoys from the fangs of other vampires. Instead, the Giovanni bite causes intense pain, more even than a mortal would feel from a purely mundane piercing of his flesh.

I retain the clan's older name because the Giovanni usurpers did not entirely destroy the older clan. The Giovanni devoured all the Cappadocians within Europe, North Africa and the Levant, but I believe the older lineages endure in more remote countries. For instance, a colony of Cappadocians who call themselves "Samedi" thrives in the Caribbean region of the New World. I have no *reliable* reports of Cappadocian vampires in further Africa and India. If you should meet any, kindly let me know.

Anubis granted the Clan of Death their powers, and the sign of Virgo holds dominion over them. The Giovanni partake of both natures in full measure. Anubis granted the Cappadocians and Giovanni a remarkable power over the spirits and bodies of the dead. Apropos of Virgo, the Cappadocians were thoughtful but stolid and conservative; the Giovanni show the sign's affinity with money and social position.

Many Cappadocians shared our clan's search for enlightenment and spiritual power, although they quested in different directions. They taught us much about the realms of the dead. After taking counsel with great Ser, their founder Cappadocius vowed to usurp the Creator himself. We do not enjoy such cordial relations with the Giovanni. Their lust for a "respectable" facade tightly binds the Giovanni to the laws of the Aeons. Their ambitions and especially their avarice, however, make Giovanni vampires fairly easy to subvert. Thus you shall bring their necromantic powers to our Lord's service after all.

BRUJAH

The sign of Libra, the Scales, rules the Brujah clan. Thoth, the god of writing and measurement, brought their founder into the darkness. This may surprise you if you have crossed a Brujah. If so, you know that they can be far more aggressive than even the Assamites, and with far less cause.

Many Brujah claim that they know how to build a perfect society — whether for mortals, vampires or both — because of their superior intellects. You may locate these “superior intellects” by listening for screams of terror and the crash of breaking objects. All vampires may succumb to the animal within, but the Brujah require much less provocation. Passionate commitments to peculiar causes or ideologies typically mar whatever intellect a Brujah possesses. You will find Brujah minds almost laughably easy to lure, to break through and reach their passions, but almost impossible to rebuild afterward.

The current Brujah are another lineage of supplanters. Unlike the Tremere and the Giovanni, they stole even the name of the original clan. This usurpation, however, happened thousands of years ago, when the Brujah clan was very much smaller. The supplanter was a child of the true, original Brujah founder.

Brujah himself was a scribe and scholar. Some few descendants of his (not from his child's lineage) still survive in hiding from their brutal cousins. I shall respect their wish for secrecy, telling you this only: the Followers of Set claim several of these True Brujah as allies.

TZIMISCE

I consider this clan one of the most excellent among the Twelve. They do not understand the snares of the Aeons, but evade many of them by instinct. Many Tzimisce pursue visions of transcendence comparable to our own, although they seek godhood within the world rather than beyond it. They prove excellent pupils and initiates. You will require no subtle deception to lead them to our Lord. Simply show a Tzimisce the knowledge and self-perfection that we offer, and he will join the Cult of Set... if you can penetrate the arrogant self-reliance common to so many in this clan.

The elder god Geb, father of great Set, gave power to the first of the Tzimisce and placed their lineage under the dominion of Scorpio: a god of Earth and a sign of Water. Tzimisce vampires possess a unique power to sculpt living and undead flesh like clay. In return, Geb bound them to their native soil. Away from his homeland, or the soil where she passed from life to undeath, a Tzimisce rapidly weakens. To travel, a Tzimisce must carry a quantity of his native soil with him.

ASSAMITE

The Clan of the Hunt owes its origin to the huntress-goddess Neith. The sign of Sagittarius, the Archer, rules this clan and its affairs. This clan, above all others among the Dodecad, masters the bestial rage common to all the undead. They have developed such fearsome prowess at dealing death that all other vampires fear them and seek to restrain them.

Loyalty lies at the heart of the Assamite clan. In undeath they remain disgustingly loyal to the gods they worshipped in life, whether this was Jehovah or Marduk. They equally prize loyalty to their Antediluvian. Assamites love to prove their courage, devotion and honor by stepping into other people's business and picking a fight. Distressingly, their theology made a sacrament out of diablerizing other vampires. As you may have heard, the Tremere once cursed the Assamite clan so that the vitae of other vampires would be poison unto them. That curse recently ended (I know not how); instead the Assamites now suffer from a mad thirst for the blood of other vampires. I very much hope that the Tremere can reinstate their curse, which now looks more like a blessing.

I urge you to stay away from Assamites. Their current wave of bloodlust drives them erratically and uncontrollably. I hear that some Assamites find comfort and renewed self-discipline through Great Set. I also hear that numerous Followers of Set fed the mad thirst of Assamites whom they sought to proselytize. In their current state, you cannot seduce or manipulate an Assamite with any certainty.

VENTRUE

I regard the Ventrue as the most despicable of the Twelve Clans — and the greatest success of the Aeons. What else would you expect from the clan founded by Atum-Ra himself? The Ventrue are the Demiurge's trustees in this prison of a world, thinking themselves the masters because they elevate themselves a little bit above the other prisoners. Ra placed the Ventrue under the sign of Capricorn the Goat, and the self-proclaimed “Clan of Kings” are Judas goats leading vampires and mortals alike to the Aeons' pens and abattoirs. Plague take them!

Their pride, however, provides the key to a Ventrue's seduction, destruction and (perhaps) eventual liberation. They feel the tug of ambition as strongly as the Lasombra, but many of them also feel they must cloak their ambition in a façade of duty, respectability, even martyrdom. Ventrue, like all vampires, retain undignified appetites from life. Help a Ventrue to indulge himself in secret (and his 'shameful' desires may astound you with their harmlessness rather than their perversity), and he is yours. If you can resist a Ventrue's command of the wills of others — in which arts, I warn, they have no equal — you may easily buy some favors, extort others through threats of ruining his precious reputation, and ultimately break his will and reduce him to a groveling wreck. Then you need merely decide if you wish to rebuild his soul as a fellow servant of the Dark God or cast him out to enjoy his final destruction. I prefer the latter course.

RAVNOS

Ptah gave power to the Ravnos and placed them under the sign of Aquarius. The Divine Artificer gave them a shadow of his own creative power. A Ravnos can change the seeming of things, shaping images of objects or beings that do not really exist. The most powerful Ravnos can craft illusions of terrible power, that become utterly real for a single person. Take care

that you never become that victim! This power of illusion hints much at the truth of our world and the Aeons that rule it. I wonder if Ptah realized how much truth he revealed through this clan of liars, or if he intended the Ravnos to become our secret allies in subverting the rule of Ra. Many a Setite forged a useful and amicable partnership with a Ravnos; some Ravnos share our revelatory mission, in their own way.

Unfortunately, most Ravnos fail to understand the lesson of Ptah's gift and waste their unlives in sneak-thievery, confidence games and other petty trickeries. These small obsessions reveal much about a Ravnos' soul, but prove worthless in breaking down a Ravnos' own illusions. One can easily lure and manipulate a Ravnos through her particular, compulsive deception, but actually breaking her habit is always very difficult.

The special problems of breaking a Ravnos' will may now be academic. My informants tell me many stories about Ravnos going mad and destroying each other in their frenzy, or forgetting to seek shelter from the sun. More than half of them seem to have met destruction.

TOREADOR

Under the weak and vacillating sign of Pisces you will find the Toreador, self-proclaimed Clan of the Rose. Nephthys, the sister and faithless wife of great Set, gave their founder undeath in her role as Anuket, goddess of beauty and desire. If she wanted to make something pretty, she succeeded. The Toreador often select their childer for their looks or for their talent as artists. If Nephthys wanted to create effective warriors against us, she failed. I find the Toreador the easiest of all vampires to subvert. Indeed, the Toreador do an excellent job of seducing and corrupting themselves; our efforts are redundant.

In my experience, most Toreador lack fixity of purpose. They are too busy sighing over a painting or madrigal to achieve any real spiritual discipline. They fully equal us, however, at twisting the passions of Cainite and kine, and may parlay this skill into surprisingly wide networks of favor and influence over Cainites and kine. They also move as quickly as any Assamite or Brujah: by the time you realize a Toreador has lost his temper, your head may be several feet from your body.

Sometimes I wonder why Nephthys made the Toreador as they are. Did she feel some loyalty to her husband, despite her services to Isis and Horus (and her alleged "service" in the bed of Osiris), and craft a clan that could never oppose Set's own childer? If this Aeon intended her childer to become our allies, she could have let them and us know it!

THE CAMARILLA

Several centuries ago, after a time of turmoil for Europe's vampires, the elders of seven clans concocted a ridiculous scheme to delude their childer into thinking they had laws, rights, even justice. The elders called their little secret society the Camarilla. Like most true absurdities, it succeeded brilliantly. To this night, most Brujah, Malkavians, Nosferatu, Toreador, Tremere and Ventrue believe that they "belong to

the Camarilla" as citizens rather than cattle. The Gangrel joined the Camarilla as well, but my informants claim that most members of the Clan of the Beast recently came to their senses and severed their ties to that august fraud.

I will not waste your time propounding the theories of Camarilla organization. They mean nothing. Rather, you should study well the minute details of your local Camarilla members. Learn the hidden ties of hatred, desire, fear and obligation that pull each vampire this way and that. Then you will see beyond the illusion of titles and traditions to the true structure of power.

Let us spare a moment of kindly thought for the Camarilla. It suppresses many conflicts between vampires — and as Dr. Freud recently realized, suppressed conflicts fester and erupt in disguised form. The scheming and backbiting within a city's Camarilla provide an embarrassing wealth of secret obsessions and rivalries by which you may lead the local vampires to their enslavement, destruction or revelation — if you feel they deserve the effort.

THE SABBAT

At about the same time that the Camarilla formed, the Lasombra and Tzimisce formed a competing alliance called the Sabbat. Malcontents from many clans joined them. In contrast to the order and safety promised by the Camarilla, the Sabbat declared *freedom* as its ideal. Join me in a moment of admiration for the Sabbat's founders, who succeeded in purveying an even greater absurdity than the Camarilla.

In its first centuries, the Sabbat hid from the Camarilla, going so far as a mass emigration to the New World. In the last century, however, the Sabbat emerged as a powerful and determined foe to the Camarilla in spite of various internecine wars. I dare say the Camarilla will never destroy it. Then again, I dare say the Sabbat will never destroy the Camarilla.

Our brothers and sisters sensibly support both sides. Both Camarilla princes and Sabbat bishops will pay through the jugular for information about their sect-rivals. You may collect astonishing boons; simply take care that neither side suspects that you give the other side a better deal.

The Sabbat's structure itself offers fewer opportunities for subversion and corruption. The Sabbat's blood rituals generate an ersatz loyalty between members. Conversely, when this blood-link fails, these vampires often simply resolve their differences by single combat.

One faction among the Sabbat, however, you *must* strive to destroy. The treasonous heretics who call themselves "Serpents of the Light" found refuge in the Sabbat. Do whatever you can to take away that refuge! I urge you to bribe, blackmail, addict and enslave whatever Sabbat members you can, as agents to use against these villains who deny the divinity of Set.

OURSELVES: THE FLAW IN THE CHAIN

The celestial Law of Destiny imposed by the Aeons carries a flaw. The Zodiac has more than twelve constellations! The

sign of Scorpio also contains the constellation of Ophiuchus — the Serpent Holder. The sign of our clan. The thirteenth sign, carefully ignored by astrologers for 5000 years.

We have our own place in the Chain of Destiny. We are the spoilers, the unknown factor that breaks the force of Destiny itself... and our time may well have come.

I mentioned the strange self-slaughter of the Ravnos. The Eternals of our clan have conducted divinations. They refuse to tell their juniors what they learned, but the priests overhear hints of some great fracture within the Clan of Dreams. Priests at three separate temples tell me they believe that the First Ravnos met Final Death, without diablerie or some other sort of replacement. A priest of my acquaintance at the Liverpool Temple, for instance, read a snatch of her master's missive to another Eternal. He did not understand what phrases such as "the fourfold Ra," "Daedalans" or "Dragon Children" might mean, but he understood one phrase: *the Dodecad is broken*.

If this is true, then the Law of the Aeons is broken as well. Victory over the Aeons' vampire cutspaws seems more plausible than at any time before, and perhaps victory over the Aeons themselves — and the total destruction of this jail in which they hold us.

If you should hear more of these things, please repay my kindness by imparting whatever you may learn.

Psammeticus

Child of Tamhotep

PLAYING GOD

Not every Setite character will be a devout Theophidian or build a blood cult. Their pretensions of divinity, however, play a large role in distinguishing the Followers of Set from other vampire clans. Here, then, are suggestions on ways to make a Setite character something more than a vampire with a snake fetish.

WORLDLY POWER: BACKGROUNDS FOR SETITES

Much of the Setites' reputation as "arrangers" rests upon their Backgrounds. The Serpents cannot equal the political connections of the Ventrae or the wealth of the Giovanni, but they excel at the sheer diversity of their connections. Setites deserve their reputation for friends in low places, but few Serpents restrict themselves to the criminal demimonde. Put three Setites together and you probably have access to every level of society, from muggers to millionaires.

ALLIES, CONTACT, INFLUENCE

Most Setites pursue all three of these closely related Backgrounds. The savvy Setite keeps an eye out for opportunities to do someone else a favor and build up some obligation. Secular Setites recognize the value of having other people concerned with their well-being.

FAME

Most Setites avoid fame in the mortal world. Fame attracts too much of the wrong sort of attention. Some Followers do attract famous people into Set's service because of the social power they wield, but such people are generally more useful as ghouls than as childer. If a famous recruit does prove worthy of the Embrace, he should not mind spending a few years dropping out of society and arranging for the world to forget him.

GENERATION

The Setites respect a lower generation as indicating a closer blood connection to Set, but they don't obsess about it. Diablerizing vampires of other clans may seem like a way to gain greater power for oneself and one's cult: Few Setite elders would recommend it, though (and not just for the obvious personal risks). Diablerie creates intensely bad feeling if discovered, and Setites receive enough suspicion already.

Most Setites count generation from Set rather than from Cain. After all, Setite elders say that Cain never existed! Thus, a Serpent who is "officially" 13th generation would speak of himself as 10th generation in descent from Set. Other Setites will think of him this way no matter how successful a diablerist he becomes — assuming they care at all.

As a final complication, the orthodox cults describe any Setite who survives 1,460 years as a direct child of Set. Devout Setites understand that this is metaphor, but it can confuse vampires of other clans.

HERD

The Followers of Set surpass every other clan at the cultivation of herds — especially blood cults. A Serpent may collect any sort of herd, but many Setites see themselves as priests or even gods. What's a priest without a congregation or a god without worshippers?

A Setite's other Backgrounds may grow out of her blood cult, too. A diverse body of cultists can supply a Herd, Contacts, Allies and Retainers all at once. Note that orthodox tradition enjoins a Setite to guide his congregation to as much enlightenment as they are ready to receive. Other Setites might not respect a Setite who exploited his blood cult without passing on Theophidian doctrine and assisting in cultists' spiritual development.

A few radical Setites question the ethics of keeping a herd, whether as a blood cult or in any other form. They say that it smacks too much of the manipulations of the Aeons. How does it "liberate" people to play magical games with their minds?

MENTORS

Many Setites have a Mentor. A Setite's mentor is usually her sire or grandsire, but a Setite spiritual leader outside the character's direct lineage is possible. Extraordinary mentors might lead large and powerful cults. Setites almost never have mentors from other clans.

RESOURCES

No doctrinal variation enjoins poverty for the Followers of Set. The Serpents collect wealth as one more tool for performing

and collecting favors. Orthodox Theophidians disdain money as an end in itself, as they disdain attachment to any worldly concern, but they fully accept its usefulness! Setite leaders can tithes the members of their cults. More secular Followers find that their Disciplines give them a killer edge in business.

Do keep in mind that a Setite's Resources represent her liquid assets. You can hardly take out a mortgage on your secret temple....

RETAINERS

A Theophidian often selects Retainers from the most competent and loyal members of her herd. Cultist Retainers who understand the message of Set and show the appropriate spiritual development become ghouls while they receive more intensive training before their Embrace. Cultists who show devotion but little insight merely become servants. They may receive some small ceremonial honor, such as leading the congregation in a chant-and-response, but they have little chance of winning the Embrace. The ghoul serves until its death, and its master does not mourn overmuch.

More than a few Setites ghoul animals as Retainers. Setites prefer cobras or other venomous snakes, but Setites might also choose other animals associated with their divine ancestor. These include the pig (Set took the form of a wild boar when he gouged out Horus' eye) and the crocodile. One tall tale of the clan concerns a Setite who kept a ghoul hippopotamus, another one of Set's animal forms.

STATUS

Followers of Set who accept the Camarilla's laws may win Status in that sect... but seldom very much. A Setite character's other Backgrounds better reflect the character's respect and influence within a Camarilla community. Serpents of the Light, of course, achieve Status within the Sabbat by that sect's normal means: personal power, glorious deeds, charisma and the low-down, scam-sucking trade in boons and betrayals that Sabbat vampires swear only happens in the Camarilla.

Most Setites, however, only gain Status within their own clan. Setite Status derives from religious achievement as much as age. Cult leadership counts most of all: two Setite cult leaders may hate each other for differences in doctrine, but each Setite recognizes that the other one *matters*. The most important factors that influence Setite Status include:

Factor	Status Modifier
Base: Setite in good standing with sire and other local Setites	1
Leader of a minor cult or a chapter of a major cult	+1
Important cult officer in a major temple	+1
Leader of a major cult and temple	+2
Elder	+1
Knows Thaumaturgy	+1
Notable Theophidian theologian (4+ in Setite Lore)	+1
Notable esoteric scholar (4+ in Occult or other esoteric Knowledge)	+1
Notable religious artist (4+ in Expression or Crafts)	+1
Locally important favor-trader and power-broker (4+ in two useful Backgrounds)	+1

Note, however, that no Setite can attain clan Status higher than 3 without leading a cult and establishing a temple. An Eternal of Sothis has an automatic Status of 5.

KNOWLEDGE

Even their most ardent detractors concede that the Followers of Set possess an enviable trove of secrets. The clan includes blood magicians of enviable power. The libraries of their main temples hold the histories, myths and liturgies of grim empires unknown to the archeologist's spade. For a thousand years, pious Christians and Muslims labored to burn these demonic scriptures and bury every trace of their authors. If the Setites revealed what they know, every history book in the world would stand revealed as a compendium of lies. Historians need not fear for their reputations, though. The Serpents have no desire to set the world screaming with madness...yet.

The average Setite deals with less exalted and terrifying secrets. Mundane and contemporary knowledge is power, too. Many Setites study Finance, Law or Politics, the better to understand the hidden workings of mortal society. On a more practical level, Setites want to trace the world's hidden currents of power so they can use them: computer access codes and insider business tips are as potent as any sorcerous ritual.

Any skilled manipulator tries to learn about her victim's likes, dislikes, passions and past. For many Setites, this goes beyond finding buttons to push. Theophidian doctrine stresses the importance of looking beyond surfaces to find the hidden truth. A Setite who hunts for the Mayor's childhood friends and library records seeks clues to his soul—to tempt him or use him, yes, but also simply to unriddle another bit of the world. Not every secret a Setite seeks is necessarily part of some hidden agenda for power.

SETITE LIBRARIES

Large, old temples of major Setite cults maintain libraries containing all manner of esoteric lore, from Setite mystical poetry to alchemical recipe-books. The high priests do not let just anyone consult their collections, though—not even fellow Setites. Access to a temple library counts as a Contact for a Follower of Set. Characters may also gain indirect access through a Mentor.



A character who wants permission to use a temple library must earn the privilege. The temple priests will set some test, or demand that the character perform a significant task for the temple. Typical challenges include:

- Obtain a grimoire, lorebook or talisman from a Tremere chantry, in such a way that the Warlocks will never suspect Setite involvement.
- Capture or kill a priest's enemy. (Even more delicious if the character owes the priest's enemy a boon or simply likes him.)
- Deliver a package without breaking the seals and looking inside, despite noises, odors or other hints that the package may be extremely valuable or extremely dangerous to the character.

In the best Setite fashion, these tasks may be tests of personality as well as challenges to the character's strength, courage or cunning. After the test, the supplicant takes part in an initiation rite and swears an oath of secrecy. Only then will he receive access to the temple library.

Setite temples do not loan out their volumes. You read them in the temple, under a priest's watchful eye. Temples do not own copy machines, either. Many Setite volumes would blow the Masquerade wide open if they fell into kine hands. Setite scriptures are often written in Arabic, Coptic or ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic or demotic script, so characters may need a priest to translate.

NEW KNOWLEDGE ABILITY: SETITE LORE

Hesha tossed the papers back to Beckett. "Worthless," he announced. "This scroll is a forgery."

The other vampire's lips briefly tightened. "You can tell that from a photocopy?" he asked coolly. "Without examining the paper? I found that scroll myself in a Libyan tomb."

"It's old," the Setite replied. "But a forgery nevertheless. The writer claims to serve the Garden of Asps, but he uses the liturgy of Abydos." Hesha leaned back in his chair. "Which has its own points of interest, I admit. The Assamites destroyed the Abydos temple in the Persian occupation of Egypt. How old did you say this tomb was?"

This Ability measures a character's knowledge of the Serpents' vast corpus of history, mythology, theology, sub-cults and rituals. Even when this information is not actually secret, it may be hard to learn. The average Setite must study, travel and speak to other clan members for decades before he knows the differences between House of the Eclipse and Red Temple liturgy — let alone any of the real secrets. Many Setite texts employ complex allusions to mythology and philosophy. Interpreting them may require success at a roll of Intelligence + Setite Lore.

Few vampires from other clans ever acquire Setite Lore. The Serpents guard their secrets well. Any non-Setite character who achieves more than a single dot in Setite Lore (the Dark God only knows how) must hide her knowledge well, or Setites are sure to target her for conversion or assassination.

• Student: You know that you assist the Dark God in opposing the Aeons, and you can assist in your cult's liturgy.

•• College: You can discuss broad differences in cult theology and practice, and know much of Set's mythology.

••• Masters: You can analyze Theophidian theology in detail, know the names of most Hierophants and are privy to many secrets. You've probably received initiation into the higher grades of one or more cults.

•••• Doctorate: You know the specific goals of Hierophants and Eternals and have read many of the most secret texts and grimoires. The secrets of the Setites have scarred your soul.

••••• Scholar: After such knowledge, what forgiveness?

MET: Treat this as any other Hobby/Professional/Expert Ability.

TEMPTATION

Other vampires think of the Followers of Set as tempters and seducers — and that's exactly what they are. The Serpents know that one of the surest means to get someone's attention is to find out what the person wants and offer it to him. Convincing someone of your point of view becomes easier if they like you...and much easier if they *need* you.

Setites work very hard at being needed.

As the saying goes, opportunity favors the prepared mind. A good Setite keeps her eyes and ears open. People hide their desires, but they still slip out in jokes laughed at or not, sighs studied or avoided — a hundred different ways. A sensitive Serpent can recognize such hints. Like a good bartender, he's a good listener.

When the Serpent learns what a person wants, she considers ways she might satisfy the desire. Not all the services a Setite provides are illicit. Sure, people want drugs, sex, money and simple things like that. A Setite can go far pandering to such crude appetites. A true artist of temptation, however, strives to satisfy less concrete desires such as ambition, envy or curiosity. Access to a powerful politician, a rival's humiliation, a family member's safety — these and many other things can obsess a person as strongly as any material desire.

Followers of Set have many ways to obtain what other people want. Obfuscate makes theft embarrassingly easy, while Presence greatly enhances haggling. Some Serpents can call upon Thaumaturgic Paths and rituals.

A loyal blood cult provides numerous low-grade operatives who can do all sorts of scutwork. If you need to find 18th-century underwear or a rent-controlled apartment on short notice, let the cultists make the phone calls and bear the pavement. Cultists can also play out little scenes to further their master's plans, such as small but distracting riots or thronging admirers to supply bogus celebrity.

When all else fails, a Setite can ask clanmates for help. A wise Serpent cultivates Contacts, Allies and prestation boons

within their own clan, as well as among other vampires, and lets clanmates know what he can offer in trade. When someone asks a Follower of Set to find a flawless canary-yellow diamond, a lost work of Aristotle, or something else the Serpent cannot herself obtain, she calls up every other Setite she knows and asks if they can procure the item. These Setites can then ask their own Contacts, and so on. The major temples form the nodes of this web of prestation. Not only do temples stockpile all manner of esoteric treasures, they also keep track of cult members with special resources or abilities.

For instance, suppose a Toreador Primogen asks a local and supposedly...reliable...Follower of Set for a warding talisman against blood magic. The Setite passes the commission to his cult's Founding Temple. A few months later, the temple replies: the Hierophant of the Descending Aerie will supply such a talisman in return for a complete Neanderthal skeleton and a quart of werewolf blood. The Serpent knows where he can get the skeleton, and knows a Gangrel huntsman who claims he can find and kill a werewolf. The Setite tells the Hierophant that she's got a deal — and then ponders how to buy the Gangrel's service. In another month the Toreador has his talisman, the Hierophant has her skeleton and blood, and the Setite has a life boon from the Toreador that he can exploit again and again.

A crude panderer immediately asks for payment. A skilled panderer does not. Smart Setites play longer games, for greater prizes. Their first favor is free. Perhaps the second and third favors will be, too. A serious tempter wants her target in the habit of accepting his favors. She wants to make that habit as hard to break as possible.

A vampire can certainly use supernatural powers to create desires. The Setites developed whole Paths of Thaumaturgy devoted to inducing passions, appetites and addictions. Magic, however, carries certain risks. If a victim figures out that the Setite *made* him want something, the Setite very probably gains a bitter enemy. Letting people exploit their own flaws is safer, even if the results are slower.

The Blood Bond is another dangerous ploy. If the victim is already blood bound, it does not work. If the victim suspects before the Setite completes the bond, she probably hates and fears the Setite from then on. Sabbat never stay blood bound for long, and they take hideous revenge.

In any case, orthodox Setites disapprove of exploiting the Blood this way. Their vitae is divine; imparting it to another is a sacrament. Giving the Blood to the unworthy...cheapens it, like using Communion wafers as crackers in your soup. Most Setites wait until *after* someone agrees to join the cult before giving them a taste of Serpent vitae, and then make the Blood Oath part of the initiation.

As a target becomes accustomed to the Setite's assistance, the Serpent can ask for favors in return. When the accountant comes for his weekly racing tip, the Setite introduces another "friend" who needs a little creative bookkeeping done. The vampire who needed help saving his haven from demolition surely would not mind stashing a crate there

discreetly, just for a few nights? The more people (Kindred and kine) who owe the Setite favors, the more help she has in doing favors for other people.

Eventually, the sly Serpent acquires a string of clients who depend on him, perhaps so much that they will do whatever he asks in return. If they lack spontaneous gratitude, the Setite can try blackmail: a prudent Setite obtains pictures or other evidence of a client's improper activities. Blackmail, however, is a delicate art. The victim must believe that he has more to fear from exposed indiscretions than he does from doing what the blackmailer wants — and that the blackmailer has no fear of exposure whatsoever. Here, the Serpents' degenerate reputation actually helps. No vampire would believe that *any* crime could shame a Setite. The blackmailer must also know how much he can demand before his victim lashes out and tries to murder him.

A Follower who settles for mere power, however, will not advance very far in the estimation of other Setites. For other vampires, establishing this sort of power over another person would be the end of a campaign of temptation. For the Followers of Set, such mastery is only the beginning....

REVELATION

Once a Follower of Set has a Kindred or kine in his power, the campaign of temptation moves to a whole new level. Devout Theophidians do not settle for mere obedience. They want to open their victims' eyes, shatter their minds and mold their souls like clay. Even the frightful, body-twisting Trimisce do not ask for so much.

The Setites believe that everyone, Kindred and kine, wraps their true soul in layers of self-deception and social conditioning. More old-fashioned Theophidians speak of the Chains of the Aeons. Setites who prefer the language of modern psychology speak of "character armor" and "false consciousness." Either way, they want it gone, and they believe that Set showed them the way. Tempting, seducing and corrupting a victim is merely the first step in peeling away the shrouds of illusion to get at the true soul hidden within.

Losing one's illusions is seldom pleasant. The Setites say that after thousands of years, Kindred and kine have grown comfortable in their prisons. On the other hand, the Serpents have thousands of years of experience at breaking open souls. Their holiest scripture, *The Book of Going Forth By Night*, describes the Revelations of the Void that free a soul from the deceptions of the Aeons — the Nine Gates of Wisdom that lead to liberation and communion with divine Set.

The **Revelation of Ecstasy** often comes first. The Setite uses extreme sensations — pleasure, pain, exhaustion, whatever — to induce a trance in his victim. Drugs work too, but a Serpent will combine them with some other intense experience to shock the victim completely out of his normal consciousness.

Trance is an intrinsically religious experience. While in ecstatic trance, people often feel like they met God. The solicitous Serpent provides a setting and suggestions so that his

victim feels like she's encountered Set. Indeed, many Theophidians believe that the victim *does* contact their god and enjoy this sort of trance communion themselves.

The **Revelation of Terror**, however, is the easiest of the nine to induce. It involves quite literally scaring the victim out of his wits. For a moment, all the buzzing distractions of everyday life and extraneous thoughts drop away. When the fear ends and the victim realizes that she did not die, she feels reborn as a new person. (This is why many tribal societies, mystery cults, the Sabbat and other groups include pain and fear in their initiation rituals. The Setites, however, make this symbolic death and rebirth far more terrifying than a mere college fraternity's hazing.)

In granting the Revelation of Terror, the trick is soothing and directing the victim afterward, so that he does not simply feel angry at the Setite for frightening him. (Such anger can have its use, though. See the Revelation of Wrath.) One strategy is not to let the victim know that the Serpent arranged the terror, but to show up afterward and immediately lead the victim to some other new experience. Alternatively, the Setite can use the Revelation of Terror in the classic manner, as part of the victim's initiation into the cult. The figure of the god becomes the first thing the victim sees after her terror passes, as the Setite priest welcomes her into Set's grace.

The Warrior Setites particularly emphasize the **Revelation of Wrath**. Anger and hate, they say, take people out of themselves just as much as pleasure, pain or any other feeling can. Most people, however, do not know how to feel a really savage, towering rage. From parents to presidents, those in authority tell people to restrain their anger, play nice and stay quiet. A Setite who seeks to confer this revelation goads his victim into blind, murderous rage — if necessary, directed at the Setite herself! The victim forgets social conditioning, calculation and even survival. Afterward, the Serpent helps her victim understand that in that moment of pure Will, his soul stood bare. The masks of false consciousness can never fit so tightly again.

The **Revelation of Desire** involves leading the victim to take pleasure in acts that revolt him. As the victim indulges his appetites and ambitions, his Setite mentor-panderer encourages him to explore new desires. Setites study their victims' passions and degradations to find the true shape of their souls. The Setite hopes to uncover some desire so appalling and irresistible that satisfying it will shatter the victim's self-image beyond any rationalization or hypocrisy. "I should not want this," the victim thinks. "I cannot want this. But I *did* want it, I enjoyed it, and I want it again! *What am I?*"

A Revelation of Desire often involves criminal acts such as rape, murder or extreme sexual deviance because most people work especially hard to deny such desires (for their own protection, if for no other reason). Other "forbidden" desires are possible, though; conflicts of gender identity are but one example. The Serpents will use whatever desire blasts a person out of her customary identity — and prepares her for a new identity through the worship of Set.

The Revelation of Satiety takes a contrary approach to desires. Instead of whipping up the victim's appetites, the Setite tries to exhaust a desire by over-stimulating it, until enjoyment palls and what once gave such pleasure now cloy and disgusts.

This Revelation does require careful management and discretion. Chemical addictions, for instance, never exhaust themselves. The addict simply develops a tolerance, until she cannot live without the drug even though she no longer gets a high from it.

The Revelation of Despair takes a crueler course. A Setite confers this revelation by discovering what the victim loves and values most in the world...and destroying it or taking it away, so that the person has no hope of regaining his desire. If the victim loves his wife more than anything, the Serpent persuades her to loathe him. If a victim delights most in the beauties of art, the Setite blinds her. The ruthless businessman finds his stratagems in ruins and his money gone. Actually, a Setite who sets out to confer the Revelation of Despair seldom settles for just one loss. She destroys as much of the victim's life as she can.

The most important targets of a Despair campaign, however, are the victim's pride and morals. The Serpent does his worst to prove that the victim cannot possibly achieve his ambitions or live up to his ideals. One way or another, the victim finds all hope and joy turned to ashes. She can achieve nothing, not without the help of a higher power. The Setite stands ready to show her one....

The Revelation of Ignorance attacks the victim's sense of certainty in her life and her world. Simply showing the victim something unexpected is not enough. People adjust to mere surprises. Teaching a mortal about the existence of vampires, for instance, is far too small a revelation for a Setite's purposes, unless the person is a truly rabid skeptic about the supernatural. The Setite must understand his victim's mind well enough to discover what she *cannot* accept as truth — and then make her believe that very thing. The white supremacist learns that he is part black; the idolized mother stands revealed as the mastermind of a vicious crime syndicate. If the revelation granted really is true, this is a bonus, but a dedicated Theophidian will not hesitate to create elaborate hoaxes.

For a variation, the Setite inverts his victim's moral understanding. He shows the victim how what she thought was good actually brings evil, and what she thought was evil actually brings good. Mere philosophical argument will not work: the Serpent must *show* his victim, through direct experience, the impossibility of telling good from evil, help from harm and love from hate. A compassionate social worker, for instance, might see all the ways she harmed the lives of those she wanted to help (even if the Setite must arrange their ruination himself). When the victim understands that the moral codes he believed were all nonsense or a fraud, the Setite will show him a new code.

This is probably the most difficult revelation to arrange, at least if the Setite hopes to shatter a person's identity through one blow. More often, a Serpent combines a smaller Revelation of Ignorance with some other shocking enlightenment. If

worshipping an Egyptian vampire-god seems ordinary and sensible after what the victim learned about himself and his world, the Setite did his job well.

We all like to think that we control our lives, and that what we do not control ourselves some "proper authority" will oversee. The Revelation of Chaos strips away this certainty by attacking the victim's sense of living in an ordered, predictable world. Either he is mad, or the world is! Setites generally combine hallucinogens with real but senseless acts to break down the victim's sense of reality. This may overlap with the Revelation of Despair if the Serpent uses pointless tragedies (such as the "random" murder of a loved one) to convince the victim of the chaos and absurdity of existence. When the victim can no longer tell what is real or why anything happens, the Setite introduces the worship of Set as a new fixed point she can build her life around.

The last lesson is the Revelation of Blood. This is the Embrace itself: terror, ecstasy and desire all at once as the mortal victim dies, rises again and feeds for the first time. Many Theophidians, however, will reserve this greatest of all revelations until the mortal has joined the cult of Set, passed a few of the other Gates of Wisdom and proven his devotion. Such a mortal is not victim, but a true initiate and celebrant of Set's greatest and most mysterious sacrament.

CULT LEADERSHIP

Compared to the mighty elder vampires, neonates may seem feeble, even to themselves. Compared to the mere mortals around them, however, even a neonate vampire is a powerful supernatural force. The Followers of Set recognize this basic truth. Even the least of them can become a bloody god of the night to her awe-struck acolytes. As the Heaven's Gate, Jonestown and other cult suicides prove, mortals can play God using nothing more than a gift for gab. Imagine how easily someone with *actual* supernatural powers could inspire such fanaticism!

Conveniently, the Setites' list of Clan Disciplines includes the two that are most useful for playing God: Presence supplies awe, terror and a supernatural call. A Setite using Obfuscate could walk unseen among mortals to learn their secrets, or literally take the appearance of a god. Used together, these Disciplines can generate an extremely convincing divine encounter.

Admittedly, masquerading as a god requires considerable skill at Manipulation and Performance. Setites can use simple props, however, to make their impersonations easier. For instance, a Setite who wants to play the role of an animal-headed Egyptian god could wear a mask from a costume shop. The Mask of 1000 Faces would make the crude disguise seem absolutely real. Serpents of the Light often seem to metamorphose into a *loa* during religious ceremonies; the Cobra keeps the characteristic props and costume of the *loa* in his temple. Most importantly of all, congregation members expect such a miraculous possession or transformation. This renders even marginal success at *Mask of 1000 Faces* enough to transform a Follower of Set into

the image of a god...at least to the faithful. A disbelieving onlooker may find the show rather less convincing!

Serpentis has more limited uses. Transforming into a snake-man or a giant snake will impress the rubes, but it does not give the Setite many choices: how many snake gods can the average person name? Setite priests rarely use *Skin of the Adder* to impersonate any god but Set himself. *Eyes of the Serpent* can emulate Presence to a limited degree. The Setite catches a mortal's eye with his magnetic, basilisk gaze while he speaks. With luck, the mortal mistakes fascination with the vampire's eyes for fascination with the vampire's message.


Nor do the Serpents restrict themselves to their Clan Disciplines. Cleverly applied, any Discipline can strike mortals with awe. Warrior Setites know how a small display of crushing, irresistible strength can cow uncooperative mortals. Old tradition in the clan recommends Animalism as a way to assert divinity without ostentation, by making savage dogs and wild beasts fawn and lick the vampire's hands. Above all other Disciplines, however, Thaumaturgy — the several styles of Setite sorcery — provides a wealth of ways to bless, curse and bedazzle Kindred and kine alike. The Setite magician-priests believe that through their magic, they show Set's power to the world and assert their own divinity.

Setite sorcerers not only curse their personal enemies, they often supply curses to avenge perceived wrongs against worshippers. The Serpents of the Light in particular often blur the line between priest and professional magician in this regard. They may sell curses and other aggressive spells (love spells, exorcisms of evil spirits and the like) to members of the broader community, just like any mortal *bokor* or *santem* — except the Cobra's magic is more likely to really work!

The major Setite traditions treat the blood cult as a great responsibility. Even the Serpents of the Light agree with their parent clan on this point. No law forbids a Follower of Set from ruthlessly exploiting her blood cult as a Herd while giving nothing in return. The Setites call such a selfish cult leader an "Osiris" because he adopts the greedy, deluding methods they ascribe to their hated enemy. Ignorant Cainites now use this name for any master of a blood cult. A Setite who showed such a parasitic attitude, however, would lose all Status in the eyes of more pious clanmates. The Setites have no Inquisition to enforce standards, but individual Setites can show their scorn by refusing to associate with an Osiris, or by making trouble for her with other local vampires.

No, a true Theophidian regards his blood cult as a genuine congregation. As their priest and stand-in for the Dark God, he takes responsibility for their spiritual well-being. He does much more than show the power of Set in religious rituals while collecting fees in blood. Like any dutiful priest, a Setite takes an interest in his parishioners' lives and unlives. He counsels them in times of doubt and trouble, advising them on how to apply the Dark God's teachings to their present situation. When he judges that acolytes are ready, he guides them to personal Revelations of the Void, advancing their own spiritual development.





Membership in a Setite cult has more tangible rewards, too. A loyal acolyte might become a ghoul, directly serving his cult and god with the god's own power. If a cultist suffers difficulty in business, lust, revenge or other personal matters that she cannot overcome through her own wit and will, she can obtain help from other members of her community of faith. If all else fails, she can turn to her Theophidian pastor, avatar of the god himself. This gives the Serpent a chance to show how Set's power overcomes the obstacles that the Aeons place before the faithful.

SYMBOLS OF FAITH

Unlike most mortal faiths, Setite blood cults must hide from the world and even from other vampires: the Followers of Set have many enemies. They cannot place a "Temple of Set" number in the phone book.

So how do cultists of Set recognize each other? The Setites take their cue from the early Christians, who used the sign of the fish to identify themselves. The Followers of Set cull the legends of their god for esoteric references and images that an outsider probably would not recognize. They work these code-symbols into their dress, their homes and havens, their businesses and meeting-places.

Many vampires know that Followers of Set have a serpent fetish. Therefore, a Setite who wants to hide his clan allegiance does not display lots of snake motifs in his clothes or decor. He does not locate his shrine in the back room of a snake fanciers' pet shop, or a bar called the "Cobra Café," or anything else so pathetically obvious. Explicitly Egyptian themes such as pyramids, mummies and sphinxes are something of a giveaway as well. A Setite uses such symbols only at properties that she wants other vampires to find.

Instead, the clever Setite exploits the fact that Set had many totem animals besides the "Typhonic Beast" whose head forms the clan's emblem. The crocodile, hippopotamus and the black pig, for instance, play important roles in Set's mythology and iconography. The Serpent might buy a tavern, call it the "Safari Room" and place a smiling cartoon crocodile and hippo on the sign.

The Egyptians also placed the Dark God in their sky. They believed that Set dwelled in the Big Dipper, just as they saw Orion as the figure of Osiris. Thus, a Setite could identify herself using a sketch of the Big Dipper, or identify her property with an actual dipper or a reference to "Seven Stars" or "Northern Stars."

Set was the god of the desert, of storms and clouds covering the sun, earthquakes and eclipses. He invented beer and enjoyed lettuce (which the Egyptians considered an aphrodisiac — apropos of Set's violent masculinity). A properly initiated Setite notices any of these references to the lore of Set, especially if they occur in combination. He slips his own Setite references into his speech, dress or actions, and watches to see if anyone responds. After a few such careful exchanges to establish their *bona fides*, the two cultists can talk more openly and the local Setite can arrange temporary quarters for the visitor.

DIVINE POWER

The Followers of Set believe themselves divine. Some gods, however, wield greater power than others. Over the millennia, their low-generation elders created special high-level Discipline powers. The clan also possesses an enormous body of sorcerous lore: the Serpents lack the innate talent of the Tremere, but they've studied blood magic for a lot longer.

ADVANCED SERPENTIS

••••• COBRA FANGS

A character using Form of the Cobra gains a venomous bite along with his serpentine form. Unfortunately, huge black cobras tend to make people run away as fast as they can. This Serpentis power enables a Setite to gain the deadly bite without the full-body transformation, making it more useful for taking victims by surprise. The police do ask questions when someone dies from a cobra bite under unlikely circumstances, so Cobra Fangs still requires some discretion in its use.

System: The Setite expends one blood point, and in one turn his fangs become hollow, more slender and venomous. The vampire injects venom when he bites. He must still grapple with the victim to deliver a bite attack, and the bite does the usual amount of damage; the venom, however, kills mortals within one minute. Bitten vampires or other supernaturally resilient creatures suffer ten health levels of aggravated damage, minus one per dot of Stamina, over the course of five minutes.

MET System: The power costs one Blood Trait and lasts a full scene (or one hour, whichever is shorter). Biting requires a normal Physical challenge between attacker and target.

••••• DIVINE IMAGE

Many of the low-generation Setite elders no longer need the illusions of Obfuscate to appear as a god. Through this Serpentis power, a Setite can physically metamorphose into the form of a god. Male Followers of Set generally take the form of Set himself: a muscular man with the head of the "Typhonic Beast," an animal with a long, narrow snout and upstanding, square-topped ears. Less often, they take the form of the crocodile-headed god Sobek, whom the Egyptians often linked to Set, or the wolf-headed war-god Wepwawet, often identified with Set's son Anubis. Female Setites generally assume the form of the cobra-headed goddess Renenet, wife of Sobek, or the hippopotamus-goddess Taweret, sometimes considered a consort of Set. Both were goddesses of pregnancy and childbirth. Setite doctrine labels all four deities as Set's eldest childer.

While assuming the Divine Image, the vampire becomes stronger, tougher and more impressive. More importantly, perhaps, the Setite's will becomes more powerful as he identifies with a divine forebear.

System: The character expends three blood points and transforms into the Divine Image in one turn. In the Divine Image, the vampire gains two dots each of Strength and Stamina and a dot each of Charisma and Manipulation, but her

Appearance drops to 1. These can push the vampire over his generational limit. The character also gains two full dots of Willpower (to a maximum of 10). The Setite can stay in the Divine Image for a full scene.

A vampire has only one Divine Image form (unless the player buys her this power twice). The character does not know what Divine Image he will manifest. The divine ancestors themselves decide that...along with the player and Storyteller.

MET System: The Setite's player exchanges three Blood Traits for four Physical Traits and two Willpower Traits, the Social Trait *Intimidating* and the negative Social Trait *Bestial*. The transformation lasts one scene or one hour, whichever is shorter. Generational limits do not apply.

***** HEART THIEF

The Serpents power Heart of Darkness normally takes hours to perform upon other vampires, and only works at the dark of the Moon. Some Setite elders, however, can pull the heart from another vampire's chest with a quick snatch of the hand. This does not destroy the vampire...unless the Setite then destroys the stolen heart. Heart Thief is not an easy power to use despite its speed, but few Discipline effects can place one vampire in another's power so suddenly and completely.

System: The character must expend one Willpower point. Removing the heart of a reluctant vampire is a difficult feat, comparable to staking a vampire through the heart: the attacker must receive at least three successes on a Dexterity + Brawl attack (difficulty 9). The victim may use Fortitude to "soak" the attacker's successes, but mundane Stamina has no effect against this magical attack.

A vampire who loses his heart this way takes one unsoakable level of aggravated damage, and receives all the benefits and problems of the Heart of Darkness power. Resisting frenzy becomes easier (-2 to difficulties) and he cannot be staked by wood that impales his breast. On the other hand, thrusting a stake through the removed heart will instantly force the vampire into torpor and exposing the heart to fire or sunlight will burn the vampire to ash; even biting into the heart will cause aggravated wounds to the vampire in question.

MET System: Stealing the heart of an unwilling vampire uses the same Physical Challenge as staking a vampire.

***** SHADOW OF APEP

Only Set and Set's own childer can perform this terrifying power. These ancient monsters can take the form of Set's defeated enemy, Apep. The vampire becomes a giant serpent of fluid, glittering Darkness — not mere shadow, but anti-light, like the black force commanded by Obtenebration. In this form, physical force cannot harm the vampire: not claws or fangs, not bullets, not explosions, not *anything* except fire, sunlight or magic. Physical barriers cannot easily stop the vampire, whose shadowy form can seep through even the tiniest crack. The vampire, however, can still exert physical and supernatural force quite freely.

System: Taking the form of Apep costs a Willpower point; the vampire stays in this form for a scene. The transformation takes three turns to complete. In this form, the vampire takes no damage from any physical attack: fists, weapons or falling buildings pass through the vampire as if she were a shadow. Fire and sunlight inflict the normal aggravated damage, however, and magic still affects the transformed vampire. The vampire itself gains three dots in each Physical Attribute. Ignore generational limits for this purpose, so the vampire could have Strength, Dexterity or Stamina greater than 10. The transformed vampire can use its Strength to make normal close combat attacks and can bite for Strength + 2 dice of damage. The vampire can also employ any Discipline that does not require hands.

MET System: At a cost of a Willpower Trait, the character gains six Physical Traits and becomes immune to all but the specified forms of damage. The transformation lasts a full scene.

ADVANCED OBFUSCATE AND PRESENCE

Low-generation Setite elders may learn special powers of Obfuscate or Presence as well as their clan's trademark Serpents. Such elder Serpents can learn any of the advanced Obfuscate or Presence powers described in *Guide to the Camarilla*. The Followers of Set also developed a few distinctive Obfuscate and Presence powers of their own.

MENTAL MAZE (OBFUSCATE LEVEL 6)

Instead of concealing or disguising the vampire or an object, this power removes a victim's sense of direction. He literally cannot see which way to go, forcing him to move in circles and binding him to an area of the vampire's choosing. The vampire can trap a person in his own home: to the victim's point of view the house folds back on itself, and all the exits lead back inside.

System: The vampire's player must make a Charisma + Intimidation roll (difficulty of the target's Willpower). The difficulty increases by 2 if the character cannot speak to her chosen victims, telling them they cannot escape. For each success, the character may affect one victim. The effects last a full scene.

Normally, the power is used in a multi-room structure such as a house or a good-sized Setite temple, or an outside area about the same size, such as a section of woodland. A much larger area (anything from an office tower to a neighborhood) reduces the difficulty by 1 and increases the duration to a full day. If the vampire wants to trap a victim within a single room, the character must expend a point of Willpower. A character must also expend a Willpower point to use the Mental Maze upon supernatural victims such as werewolves, mages, other vampires or ghouls.

MET System: You must win a Mental Challenge against the target to establish a Mental Maze. Trapping a victim in a single room requires expending a Willpower Trait.



CONFUSION OF THE EYE (OBFUSCATE LEVEL 6)

This power extends the effect of *Mask of 1000 Faces* to another person in a specialized way. While under the influence of this power, the victim perceives one other person of the vampire's choosing as someone else. For instance, the victim might see and hear the city's Sabbat archbishop as a mortal janitor, or a despised Anarch as a primogen whose favor the victim desires. The victim hears whatever the "masked" person says, but unconsciously explains away any inconsistencies in the person's responses. If the "masked" person directly tries to persuade the victim of his true identity, the victim will prove hard to convince and may become angry.

System: This power costs one Willpower point to use. The vampire's player makes a Willpower roll (difficulty of the target's Willpower). If the roll succeeds, the victim sees one person, of the character's choosing, as one other person of the character's choosing. The effect lasts up to 24 hours.

The victim will rationalize or ignore most evidence that the "masked" person is not who he believes. If the "masked" person tries to convince the victim of her true identity, the victim receives a Willpower roll to throw off the Confusion of the Eye (difficulty 9, -1 per success the "masked" person might receive from a Charisma + appropriate Ability roll representing her attempt to convince the victim of his delusion).

MET System: The power costs one Willpower Trait. Disguising the other person against his will requires success in a Mental Challenge against her.

TEMPTATION (PRESENCE LEVEL 6)

This power lets a Setite tempt the victim into some action that he normally wouldn't do. This is usually some sinful action, but that's up to the Setite: Temptation works just as well to provoke unwonted generosity as greed, or chastity as well as lust. The Setite must talk to the victim for at least a minute and allude to the action she wants the victim to perform.

System: To goad the victim, the character must receive a successful Manipulation + Leadership roll (difficulty of the target's Humanity or Path of Enlightenment rating). A simple success results in a change to the victim's personality and goals for a scene. If the number of successes exceeds the victim's Conscience or Conviction rating, the change lasts indefinitely (although the victim may overcome it with time and expenditure of Willpower, like a Derangement).

The Setites have created many variations on this power, such as:

Obsession: The victim suffers an overpowering lust for a certain substance, action or condition. She may fly into a rage (the victim receives a frenzy check) if she cannot possess or experience the object of his desire before his next sleep.

True Will: For a time, the victim is persuaded to act on any passing desire, or according to his Nature, without self-restraint.

MET System: The player must win a Mental Challenge against the target character to change the target's desires for a scene. Repeated challenges can make the change permanent, by winning as many times as the target's Conscience or Conviction.

PHOBIA (PRESENCE LEVEL 7)

By talking to her victim, the Setite can instill an irrational fear of a certain object, substance, person or condition. The object of the phobia can be broad (cars) or very specific (pink '79 Fords) — although the victim must be able to recognize and distinguish what the vampire wants him to fear. The latter example, for instance, would not work on a person who was colorblind.

System: Implanting the Phobia requires success on a Manipulation + Intimidation roll (difficulty of the target's Courage + 3). A simple success confers a Phobia that lasts a single scene. Rolling more successes than the victim's Courage results in a Phobia that lasts indefinitely, although the victim may overcome the Phobia as if it were a Derangement.

MET System: The player must win a Mental Challenge against the target character to instill a Phobia for a scene. Repeated challenges can make the change permanent, by winning as many times as the target's Courage.

CORRUPTION (PRESENCE LEVEL 8)

This terrible power enables a Setite to break down the mental barriers between the target's Beast and libido. As a result, the victim becomes addicted to sadism as he takes pleasure in rage and aggression. The Setite can also reverse the connection, so that pleasure might rouse the Beast to frenzy. These two effects produce a spiral of desire and violence dragging the victim to madness.

System: To corrupt a victim, the player must pit the Setite's Manipulation + Empathy vs. the victim's Humanity (or Path of Enlightenment). If the Setite can accumulate net successes equal to the victim's Humanity or Path rating, the victim suffers the Corruption effect. A character with a Humanity greater than 3 will automatically lose a point of Humanity for using this power (generally not a problem for the few elder Setites who know this power).

A corrupted victim must receive a frenzy check for anything that gives her pleasure, from sex to her favorite food. Like a frenzied vampire seeking blood, the victim will try to indulge her lust in the most brutal and immediate way. Note that Corruption works on mortals as well as vampires (although the human Beast is weaker, resulting in lower difficulties to resist frenzy). Conversely, a frenzied vampire might seek out more than blood in her rage. This may result in bizarre situations such as a maddened vampire smashing into a record store to hear his favorite music and killing anyone who tries to stop him.

The victim cannot overcome the Corruption by expending Willpower: Corruption is no mere induced derangement,

but a fundamental alteration to the Curse of Caine. The Inconnu might know how to remove a Corruption — if they really do know the secret of Golconda. The Setite who laid the Corruption could remove it at will, but the Setites would probably urge the victim to view the Corruption as an opportunity for self-discovery.

MET System: The Setite's player must pit the character's Mental Traits against the target's Humanity Traits to establish the Corruption. The victim receives normal frenzy checks whenever she engages in anything that gives her pleasure.

COMBINATION POWERS

The Setites also developed a few special "combination powers" for themselves. Given the choice, most Setites prefer to study their form of Thaumaturgy rather than to master a comparatively limited single power. Nevertheless, each of these three powers achieves some small fame through its usefulness. A Setite cult might distinguish itself from other cults by teaching a special combo-power. A Setite who develops an original combination power and offers to teach it to other clan members will probably raise his Status in the clan.

TRUE LOVE'S FACE (OBFUSCATE ●●●, PRESENCE ●●●)

Through perfect combination of *Mask of 1000 Faces* and *Entrancement*, the Setite can appear to another person as someone he already loves. The Setite can choose to impersonate someone she knows the victim loves. If she does not know of such a person, she can let the victim define his own "true love" and let the power do the rest. In that case, however, the Setite may have to use all her wits to discover who the victim thinks she is.

System: The Setite character receives a roll of Charisma + Empathy (difficulty 6). Success means that the chosen victim sees the vampire as a loved one for as long as the vampire remains in her presence.

MET System: See *Mask of 1000 Faces*. The player must always expend a Mental Trait to use this power because the character always impersonates a specific person.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn. In MET, this power costs nine Experience Traits.

TYPHONIC BEAST (POTENCE ●●●, SERPENTIS ●●●●)

Warrior Setites are most likely to learn this combination power. (The Setites also have a level 6 Serpentinis version of this power.) The vampire takes the form of the mysterious Typhonic animal.

System: This power requires the expenditure of three blood points; the transformation takes three turns to complete. The transformed vampire gains one dot each of Strength, Dexterity and Stamina, as well as the benefits of Potence. The Typhonic form gains the soak benefits of *Skin of the Adder*: the character's soak difficulty drops to 5; and the vampire can use her Stamina to soak aggravated damage from claws and fangs,

but not from fire, sunlight or magic. The Setite also gains the venomous bite of *Form of the Cobra*, doubles her running speed, and gains +2 dice on all Perception rolls related to smell or hearing.

The vampire remains in bestial form until the next sunrise, or until she voluntarily changes back. Clothing and other small personal items transform along with the vampire.

MET System: This power costs three Blood Traits. The character gains the Trait and damage bonuses from *Skin of the Adder*, but also the negative Social Traits. The character also gains a venomous bite, the Mental Trait of *Observant x2* and three added Physical Traits.

This power costs 21 experience points to learn. In MET, it costs 11 Experience Traits.

WEIGH THE HEART (AUSPEX •••, SERPENTIS •••••)

The ancient Egyptians believed that conscience and judgment resided in the heart: in the afterlife the gods weighed a person's heart, the record of his deeds, against the feather of truth. A Setite who has learned *The Heart of Darkness* can not only remove a vampire's heart to keep it safe, he gains a potential insight into the consciences of others. He can develop that potential through *Auspex*. Like the god, Thoth, a vampire with this power can "weigh" another person's heart to read his character and sins. Such knowledge of another person's character makes tempting, corrupting or teaching him much easier.

System: This power calls for a Perception + Empathy roll (difficulty 8). Each success reveals one truth about the target's character, with particular emphasis on the person's weaknesses, passions and guilts. The first truth is always the target's Nature. Subsequent truths might include any Derangements or mental Flaws, strong passions or deep-laid fears and guilts (although never specific details about specific crimes).

MET System: This power requires a Static Mental challenge with the difficulty of the target's number of Mental Traits. If you succeed, you may ask the target's player a question about his character's Nature or other strong personality traits, quirks or guilty secrets, and receive a truthful answer.

This power costs 24 experience points to learn. In MET, it costs 12 Experience Traits to learn.

SETITE THAUMATURGY

The various branches of the Setite clan employ their own forms of Thaumaturgy. In some cases, these forms of blood magic are millennia older than the Thaumaturgy taught by the Tremere. Each version has its own style. All Setite magic, however, has a much stronger religious aspect than the mechanical, intellectual Thaumaturgy of the Tremere. Setite sorcery is blood magic, but each style employs the trappings and mythology of a religion to evoke and shape the magic.

SETITE SORCERY: AKHU

The Followers of Set themselves use a combination of perverted funerary ritual, alchemy and the classic Egyptian

magic of images and incantations. For instance, an Egyptian sorcerer might create a model of a person, creature or object, write magic words upon it, then pass it through incense smoke while chanting an invocation to a god. Most Setite rituals must be performed in a ritual chamber containing a cadaver stolen from a grave and mutilated according to the instructions in the Setite holy book, *The Book of Going Forth by Night*. The Setites believe that this desecrated corpse drains magical power from the Western Lands of Osiris: they employ magical power that they steal from the gods and from the dead souls in Osiris' realm. The Egyptians called the magic used by the dead *akhu*; therefore, the Followers of Set use this word to describe their own sorcery, to distinguish it from the magic employed by mortals, called *hekau*.

Setite sorcerers employ Paths such as Corruption, the Snake Inside and the Dry Nile to detach mortals from their past lives, but other vampires exaggerate the Setite's alleged obsession with such Paths. In older times, Weather Control was the Setites' most popular Path. Set was the god of storms, after all. Power over the weather matters a great deal in agricultural societies such as Egypt. In the most ancient times, before they hid from the world, Setite priests advised villagers to tithe generously in grain and blood — or did they *like* sandstorms destroying their crops in the night? Mastery of the weather still finds uses in these latter nights, from fogging in airports to raining out night baseball games.

Other Setite Paths include Spirit Manipulation (chiefly to evoke the spirits of the Egyptian underworld) and Conjuring (to offer people their heart's desire...for a time). A few Warrior Setites learn the Path of Mars, which they call the Valor of Sutekh. The Warrior Setites claim that they learned this Path from Set millennia ago, and that the Sabbat's version is an imitation.

SERPENTS OF THE LIGHT: WANGA

The Serpents of the Light draw their inspiration from Afro-Caribbean folk magic (chiefly Haitian Voodoo and Cuban Palo Mayombe). As a general name for their magic, they use the Haitian term *Wanga*, but Cobras may also call their spells *Bilongo*, *Ebo* or *Malice* (a Haitian term for any secret influence). Amulets and talismans are called *Paquets Congo* or *Hands*. A *Wangateur* also employs dozens of herbs, spices and mysterious powders. Other common paraphernalia include rum, candles, rattles, drumming, designs of sprinkled flour called *Vevets* — and blood sacrifice to appease the *loa*.

The Cobras' magic has a strong necromantic cast. Whereas a Follower of Set would carry an Egyptian priest's magic staff, a Serpent of the Light would brandish a *Kisengra*, a human shinbone wrapped in black rags. Many rites involve the *Nyngga*, a cauldron filled with blood, graveyard dirt, human and animal bones, iron spikes, blades and other disgusting ingredients too numerous to mention. Many Cobra sorcerers actually study the Discipline of Necromancy; the Serpents of the Light use *Wanga* to refer to both Necromancy and Thaumaturgy.

Spirit Manipulation is far and away the most popular Path among Serpent of the Light magicians. Those Cobras who practice actual Necromancy favor the Sepulcher Path and seldom learn any other. The *Wangateers* remember the ancient Setite Paths of Corruption, the Dry Nile and the Serpent Within, but give them different names. The Dry Nile becomes Blinding Chango, for instance, while the Serpent Within becomes Zarabanda's Malice. The Cobras value these three Paths for their use in cursing opponents.

DAITYA SADHANA

The Daitya call their magic *Sadhana*, an Indian word for magical arts. A practitioner of *Sadhana* is a *Sadhu*. *Sadhana* Paths are called *Siddhi*, "Attainments"—while rituals are called *Tantras*, "Instructions."

Some of the Daitya *Siddhis* duplicate the effects of Paths known to other vampires. Movement of the Mind demonstrates a Daitya's psychic prowess through literal "mind over matter." The Path of Conjuring shows an even deeper mastery through the ability to create objects (or even living creatures) by will, like a god. As supposed demons caught in flesh, the Daitya employ the Path of Spirit Manipulation to contact and employ their cousins in other worlds. The Daitya also possess a number of Paths unique to themselves, that duplicate the magic powers of Hindu legend: knowledge of the past and future, control of destiny, assuming other forms, instantaneous travel and many others.

Just like a mortal Hindu mystic, a Daitya magician must engage in long meditation and grueling austerities to unlock the mystic power of the Blood. Typical exercises include: fasting nearly to the point of torpor; yoga exercises; breathing exercises, such as breathing in through the mouth and out through the nose at the same time; and exposure to heat, cold and other unpleasantness. Their rituals incorporate mystic symbols called *yantras*; mystic syllables or phrases called *mantras*; complex drawings called *mandalas*; *mudras*, or gestures with a variety of ritual implements; and elaborate sacrifices of blood, butter and the intoxicating plant-derived liquid called *soma*. *Sadhana* rituals demand great courage from a vampire, for the sacrifice is always by fire.

TLACIQUE NAHUALLOTL

The Tlacique too have their own style of blood magic, called *Nahuallotl*. A practitioner is called a *Nahualli*. The Tlacique lost most of their magic in the defeat by the Sabbat. Fewer than a dozen of their blood magicians survive to the modern nights: In game terms, the surviving Paths work the same way as Tremere Paths, right down to requiring a Willpower roll for all Path powers and an Intelligence + Occult roll for all rituals. The Tlacique independently created the Path of Blood and all their magicians begin with it as their primary Path.

Most *Nahuallotl* Paths are named after gods. Weather Control, for instance, they call the Breath of Quetzalcoatl; the Path of Corruption becomes the Secret Ways of Tezcatlipoca. They call the Path of Blood the Flower of the Divine Liquor. The Tlacique also preserve versions of the Lure of Flames (Huehueteotl's Glory) and Spirit Manipulation (Rites of Tezcatlipoca).

As befits religious magic, *Nahuallotl* involves sacrifice. While expending the power in his blood and praying for the appropriate god's help, a *nahualli* sheds a few drops of vitae as a token offering. The Tlacique regard Blood from the tongue, earlobe or genitals as especially suitable for magic. Traditionally, Tlacique blood magicians carry a large cactus spine with which to pierce themselves. In the rituals, the magician adds a sacrifice of the life of an animal—or a human. Every ritual over level 5 involves human sacrifice. Not many such rituals survive, though.

Q. V.

The Paths of Thaumaturgy mentioned in this section may be found in these supplements:

Blood: Vampire: the Masquerade Revised Edition

Conjuring: Vampire: the Masquerade Revised Edition

Corruption: Guide to the Camarilla

The Dry Nile: Blood Magic

Lure of Flames: Vampire: the Masquerade Revised Edition

Moss: Guide to the Sabbat

Movement of the Mind: Vampire: the Masquerade Revised Edition

The Snake Inside: Blood Magic

Spirit Manipulation: Guide to the Camarilla

Weather Control: Guide to the Camarilla





CHAPTER THREE: BROKEN IMAGES

*O thou that drawest toward the End of The Path, effort is no more.
Faster and faster dost thou fall; thy weariness is changed into Ineffable Rest.
For there is no Thou upon That Path: Thou hast become The Way.
— Aleister Crowley, The Book of Lies*

If anything unites the Followers of Set, it must be faith. Orthodox Setite or Serpent of the Light, Theophidian fanatic or neonate *naif*, the Children of Rebellion serve or seek something greater than themselves. Some kneel before idols of their divine forebear. Others barely know their Antediluvian's name. They fervently believe in other things; Anything from forbidden secret lore to the art of the deal. They see some deeper meaning in whatever passion they pursue, and they would like to share that vision.— whether you want it or not.

Every religion, moral code or political ideology defines limits of belief and behavior. Anything beyond those limits

is forbidden. Even the most ignorant vampire, however, must inevitably learn one truth. They are monsters, creatures of the outer dark, breachers of boundaries between the permitted and the forbidden. This realization horrifies many vampires; the Setites embrace it. Some even glory in their transgressive power, regarding it as divine.

Here we explore the range of Setite character as it twists, serpent-like, through diverse societies, histories and professions. Here you will find no gangsta drug pushers, mad priests or pimps. Such simple archetypes are already well known and a bit obvious. The dangerous Serpent is the one you do not see.

Superspy

Quote: *Actually, I do bite.* <wink>

Prelude: Ever since childhood, you wanted to be a spy. You loved spy books and movies and TV shows, everything from James Bond to *Get Smart*. You took lessons in boxing and shooting, languages and electronics. When you graduated from college your government accepted you into its service.

Real spy work wasn't all shootouts in Monte Carlo. Patiently, you served your time in HumInt (Human Intelligence), mostly just talking to ordinary people. Once in a while you discovered a small scandal or found employable local criminals. Diligent effort won you promotions and training in intrusion, interrogation, wiretapping and other juicy skills. Bring on the evil masterminds! Please.

Your big break came in Alexandria. Not only did you find a radical politician's favorite bordello, you planted bugs and cameras in the rooms of his favorite girls! They catered to men with, um, *exotic* tastes — appetites you had to simulate to gain access to their rooms — but you made the sacrifice for your country....

All the while, your sire watched you. How could you have known that the whorehouse was a Setite front? Your sire noticed that you weren't what you seemed and captured you. Despite your training, you told her everything. She laughed. You don't remember what happened after that, but you woke up back in the American embassy as a vampire. Your sire gave you an hour-long briefing on your condition. She explained why you really shouldn't tell your superiors about your transformation — and that despite your disbelief in Set, you would serve Him as well as your country.

She was right, too. You left Egypt, but somehow the Followers of Set always find you. Sometimes you spy on other vampires for them, sometimes on the kine. In return, your Setite contacts feed you information about foreign governments, radical groups and other intelligence targets. You wish you could tell them to go to Hell, but the information is too good! Besides, they've shown you conspiracies and masterminds beyond the dreams of paranoia. When you sabotage, subvert and spy upon this "Camarilla" and "Sabbat," you actually help free your country from the influence of vampires. Don't you?

Concept: Beneath your façade of cool professionalism, you revel in games of deceit and death. Your Mentor is actually the intelligence agency that employs you, while your Allies and Contacts represent the Setite cult. Between your vampiric powers and the information you buy through service to the cult you have at last become the lone wolf who



THE VAMPIRE

Name: _____		Picture: <i>Covert</i>		Generation: <i>III</i>	
Species: _____		Presence: <i>Setite</i>		Culture: <i>Setite</i>	
Appearance: _____		Vampire: <i>Followers of Set</i>		_____	

ABILITIES		
Defense	Skills	Offense
Stun: 0000	Charm: 0000	Presence: 0000
Stability: 0000	Manipulation: 0000	Intelligence: 0000
Stress: 0000	Appraisal: 0000	Will: 0000

ACTIVITIES		
Security	Stealth	Human Skills
Alarms: 0000	Acad. Sem: 0000	Accounting: 0000
Arms: 0000	Code: 0000	Computer: 0000
Bad: 0000	Drive: 0000	Finance: 0000
Deals: 0000	Forgery: 0000	Language: 0000
Deceit: 0000	Forgery: 0000	Law: 0000
Disguise: 0000	Hide: 0000	Liquor: 0000
Disables: 0000	Interrogation: 0000	Medicine: 0000
Identify: 0000	Intimidation: 0000	Music: 0000
Intrigue: 0000	Search: 0000	Politics: 0000
Intelligence: 0000	Search: 0000	Science: 0000

NECESSITIES		
Material	Financial	Victim
Abil: 0000	Beliefs: 0000	Character/Personality: 0000
Contacts: 0000	Friends: 0000	_____
Health: 0000	_____	_____
Resources: 0000	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Strength	Endurance	Speed
●●●●●○○○○	●●●●●○○○○	○○○○○○○○○○
○○○○○○○○○○	○○○○○○○○○○	○○○○○○○○○○
○○○○○○○○○○	○○○○○○○○○○	○○○○○○○○○○
○○○○○○○○○○	○○○○○○○○○○	○○○○○○○○○○

achieves results impossible for lesser agents. You hate dividing your loyalties...but your need to win and be seen winning addicts you as thoroughly as any drug.

Roleplaying Tips: Like any proper superspy you're cool, confident and use lots of flirty double-entendres when speaking to attractive people of the opposite sex. For a "secret" agent, you use Presence an awful lot to make yourself fascinating (aiding your frequent seductions) and the center of attention. You dispatch "enemy agents" with cruel efficiency when you must, but would rather make an ironic quip. Never forget that you must keep your mortal bosses happy enough that they excuse new "eccentricities" such as only working at night.

Equipment: Glock 17L automatic pistol (with screw-on silencer and shoulder holster), electronic surveillance gear, lockpick set in a fountain pen, nondescript car, fake ID, kevlar vest under tailored suit.



SAMPLE BROOD: THE REPAIRERS OF REPUTATIONS

The Followers of Set tempt in many ways, not all of them obvious. The Setites who call themselves the Repairers of Reputations choose a paradoxical course: they suppress scandal. Everyone commits the occasional peccadillo, or makes a fool of himself. For a fee the Repairers will concoct alibis, silence witnesses and discredit accusers. In the true Setite fashion, however, they may extract rather more payment than the client expects.

The Repairers of Reputations operate wherever the Storyteller wants them to. They might set up shop in a chronicle's "home city," or perhaps characters will have to come to them. Wherever a Storyteller chooses to place this coterie, they will entangle themselves in other vampires' intrigues. Camarilla, Sabbat or independent — many vampires eventually need a reputation repaired.

USING THE REPAIRERS OF REPUTATIONS

Storytellers can use the Repairers of Reputations in several ways, but these Setites do not make a very good opponent for physically oriented coteries and chronicles. If threatened with violence, they run away or try to make a deal — and take revenge later (hired assassins with sniper rifles and incendiary ammunition, say, or burning down a haven at noon). The Repairers would rather stay everyone's friends; they don't look for trouble.

Characters will more probably oppose the Repairers socially. The Repairers have lots and lots of friends whom they protect, and who protect them in turn. In particular, if the characters attempt a spot of blackmail, they may well drive their victim to the Repairers of Reputations. In that case, the characters find their own reputations under attack from every angle.

On the other hand, the players may decide that their characters need the Repairers' services. Unless the Storyteller is amazingly lenient, players do have a knack for getting their characters into trouble! Given a choice between dealing with Setites and becoming the star attraction in a Blood Hunt, characters may prefer the Setites.

Anyone who values their good name might hire the Repairers of Reputations. Much of their clientele consists of adulterous wives and husbands, people with gambling debts, government officials drunk in public, and other mortals guilty of similar embarrassments. The clients pay in cash, information about confidential matters entrusted to them, and promises to assist in repairing the reputations of other clients. Some customers find themselves on indefinite retainer, as it were, if the Serpents judge them sufficiently useful and sufficiently desperate. The Repairers keep *detailed records* of every scandal concealed, including videotape of the client asking for help and any forensic evidence that the coterie might have kept out of police hands. Thus do the Serpents build an ever-expanding web of people who owe them favors.

Serving the Setites has its compensations. It's much easier to protect a reputation in advance. If a former client wishes to continue indulging some undignified appetite, the Repairers can

help them do so discreetly... albeit on film. They may invite regular clients to join the Cult of Set. Most customers find it prudent to accept. Eventually they learn not to regret their choice.

Vampires need reputations repaired too. Possible offenses include failure to repay a boon when asked, endangering the Masquerade, poaching on another vampire's turf, bungling an assignment from the prince or archbishop, accidental cooperation with vampires of another sect, or truly extreme crimes such as diablerie. The Serpents handle it all, although the greater the risk to themselves the greater service they will demand in return. After all, if someone catches them covering up a capital offense, they might become a Blood Hunt target.

The brood consists of four vampires. Ahmose Chambers, the nominal priest and leader, actually fronts for his sire Sahira Siraj, who pretends to be Ahmose's child. The other two vampires, the drug queen, Belle Equitone, and the pharmacist, Jim Gander, genuinely are Ahmose's children. The brood also has a single ghoul servitor, the loathsome but technically skilled Topcat.


INFLUENCE

The Repairers of Reputations possess a lot of influence, at least in the local area. Dozens — maybe hundreds — of men and women at every level of society are pleased to help them in small ways. Mortals within the network can create or quash news stories, steer or sabotage police investigations, submit false testimony in court, obtain nearly any mundane commodity (legal or otherwise), search for people in hiding, and do all manner of legwork.

Truth be told, the Repairers wield far greater social influence than any local prince or elder. Other vampires tend to jealously hoard their own power. The Repairers cooperate to collect far more Contacts, Allies and Influence than any vampire could acquire on her own. Rather than waste time with dice rolls, Storytellers can simply ask themselves: Could a dozen ordinary people, who happen to occupy the right social positions, achieve some feat? If so, the Repairers of Reputations can probably arrange it.

Consider, for instance, a murder case. Leave aside the District Attorney and the judge (that's too easy). If a lab technician bungled the forensics tests and contaminated the blood samples — if two or three people, with no apparent connection between them, swore they saw the defendant at times and places consistent with each other, but not with the murder — if one policeman testified to the arresting officer's hatred of the defendant's race, creed or class — a jury might feel bound to acquit. That's what a mere half-dozen people could do. A full dozen could produce a terrifyingly convincing frame-up to exonerate the guilty — or convict an innocent man.

Actual homicide or other major felonies, however, challenge the Retainers' resources. Even they have some small trouble hiring skilled assassins, cat-burglars or other professional criminals. Some former clients might fear them enough to commit murder on their behalf, but such persons are less reliable and never available in large numbers. In such cases, Storytellers should consider the Repairers limited by their actual dots in Backgrounds. They command the loyalty of dozens, but they can only recruit a few *skilled* people as temporary Retainers or Allies at any one time. Still, their power to arrange events through mundane operatives should leave characters thoroughly paranoid. Once they suspect how far the Retainers'



serpentine coils reach, neither players nor characters should ever know exactly what happens by chance and what happens because the Repairers arranged it...and the Repairers are not above lying about current events to make themselves seem more omnipotent.

HAVEN

The Repairers of Reputations operate from a large, two-story building that occupies about a quarter of a city block. It is located in one of the city's older, run-down retail districts. This building contains several businesses. The building's basement holds the Setites' temple and well-protected havens, although two of the Setites also maintain havens elsewhere in the city.

The Repairers' nominal leader, Ahmose, owns all the shops, but not all of them have any connection to the Setites' true business. Some of the storekeepers are Setite Retainers; others are innocents who know nothing of the Serpents or their cult. There's no way to know which is which, without mind-reading, torture or prolonged surveillance. Each Storyteller can decide for herself who's a Setite agent and which businesses contain secret entrances to the Setite temple below.

All the businesses install excellent burglar alarm systems. Ahmose pays his B&O taxes, contributes to the policeman's fund and slips the beat cops a little more on the side, so any alarm will bring a cop car within minutes.

UPPER FLOOR

The building has two businesses on the upper floor, accessed from the street by a stairway between two storefronts.

Shiatsu Massage & Reflexology offers non-therapeutic massages. It also offers prostitution, but not on premise. The men and women who work there arrange their own "contracts" and have sex at the jobers' homes (or in by-the-hour hotel rooms), maintaining the business' plausible deniability. Of course everyone must pay their cut to the manager and, ultimately, to Ahmose.

Worldwide Cinema and Espresso is a micro-theater (400 seats) that shows foreign films and sells designer coffee. Students from the local university come and go at all hours of the day or night.

A second stairway leads to four apartments along a hallway that connects to back rooms of both Shiatsu and the theater. A third stairway leads down to the storage area on the ground floor.

Ahmose and Sahira supposedly live in one of the apartments (it's their mailing address). A secret stairway leads down to the temple complex. Another hidden panel opens onto a shaft with a fireman's pole. (When he saw this, Jim Gander immediately dubbed this the Batpole, to Ahmose's annoyance.)

Another apartment holds Jeffrey Molitor, an elderly retired accountant. Mr. Molitor is deaf and usually neglects to wear his hearing aid, which makes him an ideal tenant for Ahmose. Mr. Molitor will resist questioning with surprising tenacity, to protect his secret: he earns a little extra money by doing the books for Ahmose's businesses (the legal ones, at least) and he doesn't declare it on his taxes.

The other apartments remain vacant. Ahmose says they need repairs; actually he keeps them as havens for guests, Setite and otherwise. They boast excellent lightproofing.

GROUND FLOOR

Each of the ground floor businesses connects to a single storage area running the length of the building. Tape on the floor marks off each business' storage area. The boxes and crates contain perfectly innocent inventory and supplies.

The Sphinx Club is the public face for the Repairers of Reputations. The decor features a large plaster sphinx, neon signs for Pyramid Ale, murals of Egyptian scenes and cobras painted on the doors. The Setites want to make it easy for potential clients among the city's Kindred to find them. Sometimes Ahmose plays host. More often, one of the blood bound cultists performs this duty, and signals Ahmose when a client asks for the Serpents' special services. The club has no direct entrance to the temple, hidden or otherwise, and cultists do not gather there.

The club sells overpriced booze, tacky atmosphere and belly-dancing. Local singers also take the stage. Belle Equitone is the club's default singer. The dancers are quite good, since Sahira trains them; they generate some serious sex appeal. Sahira herself often dances. The show never quite slides into a blatant strip. Patrons can buy a table dance, but not a "lap dance." Ahmose forbids prostitution on the premises. What the girls do on their own time is their own concern (but he still wants a cut).

Worldwide Video is associated with the theater upstairs and has the same manager. In addition to the latest Hollywood hits, Worldwide Video offers a wide variety of foreign films. It has a large section of foreign porn, including pornographic animation.

Laundromat has no other name than that simple word. It stays open all day and all night, and offers dry cleaning as well as automat machines.

Hole In One Donuts offers conventional pastries and coffee. The sign shows a golf club hitting a donut and the interior continues the golf theme, in a pathetic attempt at wit. It too stays open at all times. Local cops eat free.


The ground floor also contains at least two other businesses of the Storyteller's choice.

BASEMENT

The basement holds all the exciting stuff, carefully hidden behind locked and camouflaged doors. One open stairway down from the storage area leads to a small room with concrete floor and brick walls. This holds the central heating furnace and oil tank. The furnace room does *not* contain any hidden access to the temple and haven areas and the walls are foot-thick reinforced concrete behind the old brick. The Repairers of Reputations are not stupid enough to leave 100 gallons of fuel oil where an enemy could use it to burn them out!

In addition to the stairway and sliding pole from Ahmose's apartment, two well-concealed stairways lead from the ground floor to the Repairers' temple. Every cultist necessarily knows the location of both stairways. All four access routes hold the best burglar alarm systems that money can buy, keyed to alarms in the temple below.

A visitor first encounters the anteroom of the Setites' temple. One wall holds lockers for cultists' street clothes and their cult costumes. The shrine can accommodate up to 30 celebrants in as lush or grotesque a fashion as the coterie thinks appropriate.



Locked doors with keypads lead from the antechamber to the vampires' individual havens and the storerooms. The Repairers keep files on their clients, including photographs, videotapes and incriminating physical evidence, some of the latter in freezers. Everything is thoroughly fireproofed with brick and concrete construction, spartan metal furniture, smoke alarms, a sprinkler system and halon fire extinguishers in every room.

The complex also has two emergency escape routes. Twisting and pulling a particular wall sconce collapses a section of wall in the shrine's inner chamber, providing an exit into the city storm drains. The Setites and cultists use this to escape if anyone raids the temple during a service. One minute later, this also detonates a large bomb hidden inside the statue to Set, providing a final sacrifice to the Dark God. Ahmose and Sahira's haven holds another secret escape route. Sahira's plain sarcophagus has a false bottom. When she presses a button inside the coffin, the bottom drops out and forms a simple barge that carries her away into the storm drains — her own River of Duat. Ahmose's fancier, carved and gilded sarcophagus does not contain such an escape route, but opening the lid without pressing a hidden button within the next 15 seconds will trigger a loud alarm in Sahira's coffin. Both coffins lock from the inside.

THE BLOOD CULT

The Repairers of Reputations invite their most promising, or most frightened, recruits to join their blood cult. So far they have 16 cultists. They could double that number with ease, but a larger cult would be harder to hide. Most cultists receive only the most basic Setite doctrine of amoral self-indulgence and obedience to Set. Few receive Revelations of the Void and initiation into the deeper mysteries of war against the Aeons.

The Repairers hold worship services every Thursday night. (Why Thursday? It leaves the cultists' weekends free for their own debaucheries. Besides, nobody expects unholy evil on Thursdays.) Members show up at the business block in the course of an hour. When all the cultists assemble in the shrine's antechamber, they strip, wash face, neck and hands, and don Egyptian-style kilts of black and green. The vampiric acolytes then anoint the cultist's heads with an unguent dosed with atropine, which the cultists absorb through the scalp during the ceremony. The atropine has a stimulant effect and causes pupil dilation, helping the cultists see in the dark.

After a final appeal for Set's blessing, the acolytes open the doors to the inner chamber and the cultists file in to the sanctum. Illumination comes from black-light bulbs in wall sconces and a gas burner placed between the altar and the statue of Set. Ahmose stands by the altar dressed in a black robe and a black and fluorescent green nemys (the Egyptian headdress), carrying a priest's rod of ebony and gold. He welcomes the cultists in Set's name.

The cultists sing hymns of praise to the Dark God. Ahmose leads them in a chant-and-response reviling Ra and Osiris, the Light and the Law. Ahmose implores the god to come while he burns the blood of a sacrificed chicken or stray pet in the gas flame. As the smoke of the sacrifice wreathes both priest and idol, Ahmose activates the *Mask of 1000 Faces* and *Dread Gaze*. When he turns around, the cultists see Great Set in all his dreadful glory.

Ahmose as Set announces himself and demands that the cultists abase themselves. That done, Ahmose switches to Aue and announces that he is pleased—but they must prove their reverence through personal sacrifice, offering him and his acolytes their blood, their life itself. Ahmose strides through the groveling cultists, bidding them rise to accept the bite of himself or one of the other vampires. The Serpents take only one blood point per cultist—at four blood points per vampire, still a respectable feeding.

If the Repairers know that a cultist betrayed them, or utterly bungled some task, Ahmose announces this fact and decrees the cultist's death. He and the other vampires drain the hapless cultist dry. The Dark God has no mercy upon those who betray him!

At the end of the feeding, Ahmose-as-Set says that as the cultists gave their life to him, he shall give his life to them. Ahmose drips a little of his blood into a chalice of beer and passes it to the cultists as a sacrament. (This is not nearly enough to ghoul the cultists, but it reinforces their blood bonds.)

Ahmose then calls out one cultist, names his desire (already well known to the Repairers) and invites him to indulge. The acolytes bring in whatever paraphernalia or people (drugged to remember nothing) the cultist requires. Ahmose-as-Set blesses each cultist as he debauches himself.

When the cultist finishes, Ahmose announces the god's departure and turns off his *Obscure* and *Presence*. Once more he exhorts the cultists to loyalty and secrecy. The acolytes open the sanctum's doors again and the cultists file out and resume their street clothes. The acolytes bring out a snack of juice, coffee and some high-protein, high-iron food such as oatmeal-maisin cookies to compensate for their blood loss. The cultists leave as they came, one at a time, to resume their normal lives until the god calls them again.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The four vampires (and one ghoul) of the Repairers of Reputations work together closely. This unity, indeed, accounts for much of their success at gathering minions and harvesting influence. They do have their differences, though, and their own temptations.

Ahmose is blood bound to Sahira, but he knows full well that he feels dependence, not love. The bond may fade with time and separation, but Sahira will not permit that any time soon. Ahmose believes, with some justice, that Sahira does not really appreciate either his work maintaining the Repairers' business, or his progress at understanding the Path of Typhon.

Sahira views the rest of the Repairers as lux tools. She would sacrifice Ahmose to save her own unlife, and he knows it. She feels some fellowship with Belle because of their shared suffering as prostitutes. Jim irritates her with his know-it-all attitude; Sahira looks forward to teaching him what the Void is really like. She knows about Topcat's obsession with her and takes secret delight in sending him into one humiliation after another. When he's no longer useful, Sahira will enjoy killing him (but she'll make him bathe before she takes his blood).

Belle no longer needs the approval of the other Repairers to assuage his/her insecurities—or so s/he thinks. S/he brushes off any criticism from Jim or her sire, Ahmose. Sahira, however, knows Belle better than the others, and Sahira is the only one that Belle genuinely likes. A few venomous words from Sahira

could smash all of Belle's hard-won self-esteem like a crystal vase, and plunge her back into self-loathing and despair. Sahira will do this when she decides the time is right for the next stage of Belle's training in Theophidian ways.

Jim Gander wants to read *The Complete and Total Guide to All Setite Mysteries*, not realizing that such a book does not exist — and it wouldn't help him if it did. Ahmose warns him that the true Theophidian revelations do not come in books and will hit him a lot harder than he thinks. Jim is not totally blinded by pride in his own cleverness, though. He's figured out that the relationship between Ahmose and Sahira has hidden depths and ponders ways to gain information without their knowledge.

Poor, clueless Topcat thinks that his domitor Ahmose will Embrace him any night now. He works so hard to please the others, especially Sahira. Why don't they like him more? And he's a genuine genius, much smarter than that pretentious dabbler Gander. Maybe if he works harder — shows himself more perfectly corrupt and degraded — does something so wonderfully vile that they will know he understands — they will finally grant him his reward.

SAHIRA SIRAJ

Background: When European businessmen come to Cairo, often they want to sample the East's exotic pleasures. Sahira was one such pleasure. Her father ran a whorehouse and he made Sahira (and her sisters) part of the merchandise. Some men would pay extra for one so young. She did not go to school; instead, her mother taught Sahira how to sing and belly-dance and please wealthy men; how to smile and blush while her eyes remained dead and cold and far away.

The Setite priest, Abdelsobek, needed one such as Sahira to please a particular German diplomat. Sahira performed her task with skill. The diplomat's wife interrupted them, as Abdelsobek planned. As the diplomat's wife screamed, however, Sahira's eyes came back from the cold, far-away place and she smiled a true smile. Abdelsobek realized that this whorehouse's daughter could become much more.

Sahira became Abdelsobek's disciple, ghoul and eventually his child. Now she rules her own small cult, temple and brood. Using Ahmose, Belle and Jim as her fronts, she studies the Kindred of her new city, looking for ways to set them at each other's throats. Sahira loves to watch smug, confident, powerful Kindred and kine brought to ruin. Although she may speak of conferring wisdom, or serving Sutekh by destroying the pawns of the Aeons, deep down Sahira lusts for that moment of satisfaction and revenge she felt in a Cairo hotel-room long ago.

Image: Sahira Siraj is an Arab nymphet, apparently just buckling into womanhood. She has dusky skin, long, straight black hair and black eyes with long lashes. At the Sphinx Club, she wears a belly-dancer's outfit of gauze veils and fake gold jewelry. During ceremonies, she either lies nude on the altar (cultists expect that sort of thing) or stands with Belle and Jim, clad in the same simple black robe. When she leaves the coterie's block, she dresses in jeans and a T-shirt and looks like an ordinary teenage girl. She has a ghoul asp as a pet; it guards her haven.

Roleplaying Tips: Keep your eyes downcast and your mouth shut around Ahmose. Loosen up around Belle and Jim, but remain a little shy and reticent. You say that Ahmose tells you little and

Embraced you merely so you could serve him. Play the Lolita around powerful men, Kindred or kine — a sweet little girl eager for a sugar daddy offstage, a sultry temptress when you dance. When you and Ahmose are alone, though, rip into him for every failure and drill him on what he's supposed to say to his "clients." Topcat disgusts you; send him into every humiliation you can imagine.



Sire: Abdelsobek

Nature: Monster

Demeanor: Child

Generation: 10th

Embrace: 1904

Apparent Age: 14

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Empathy 3, Expression 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Etiquette 3, Melee 2, Performance 3, Stealth 1

Knowledges: Linguistics 3, Medicine 2, Occult 3, Science 1, Setite Lore 2

Disciplines: Animalism 1, Obfuscate 3, Presence 2, Serpents 4, Thaumaturgy 3

Thaumaturgic Paths: The Snake Inside 3

Backgrounds: Herd 3, Mentor 3, Resources 4, Retainers 2, Setite Status 2

Virtues: Conviction 4, Self-Control 3, Courage 3

Morality: Path of Typhon 6

Willpower: 6

AHMOSÉ CHAMBERS

Background: Before World War Two, Amos Chambers worked as a carpenter and thought he was an honest man. Oh sure, he did a little work for some crime bosses, like those false-

bottom crates for shipping heroin. What's a black man to do when he can't get the same fees as a white man? Amos swore to his parents that he'd help his kid brother, Franklin, pay for college and become a doctor — and that took money.

The war changed everyone's plans. Franklin became a medical corpsman and died in the Pacific. Amos became a quartermaster sergeant. His unit ended up in North Africa, duking it out with Rommel. Soldiers like to get treats not available at the PX, and they like to cut loose with the local girls. Amos found a talent for deal-making and arranging other people's fun.

That talent brought him to Sahira's attention. She saw who would emerge as top dog after the war. The action would be in America. She needed a native guide. Amos seemed smart and just amoral enough to serve as her ghoul. Amos returned from a three-day pass in Cairo enslaved to the Followers of Set.

Amos used his position and connections to smuggle Sahira and her sire and broodmates from Egypt to a large East Coast city. He served her well for 12 years. That obliged her, by the tradition of her cult, to teach Amos to the best of her ability, and he learned well. When Sahira struck out to establish her own temple, her sire Abdelsobek suggested that she make Amos her first child. To commemorate his promotion from ghoul to vampire, Amos "Egyptianized" his first name.

Sahira and Ahmose ran small-time operations in a series of cities, taking over brothels and blackmailing prominent jobs before exposing and ruining them. In 1981, Ahmose suggested reversing the system. Why destroy their victims? Why not use them to draw in more blackmail victims, in a never-ending pyramid of extortion? Thus began the Repairers of Reputations.

As the front man for the Repairers, Ahmose receives clients and commands the brood's agents. He also serves as cult priest and oversees their businesses. In addition to the Repairers' network of blackmailed agents, Ahmose has contact with some of the city's organized crime figures and can often hire special help from them.

Image: Although actually a light-skinned American black man, Ahmose Chambers can pass for a dark-skinned Arab. He shaves his head. As the manager of the Sphinx Club, he wears a white suit and a turban with a red brush, and speaks in an Arabic accent.

Roleplaying Tips: You live so many lies you almost forget who you really are. To Belle, Jim and Topcat you are their distant, taciturn master, with Sahira your submissive child-lover. In private with Sahira, the roles reverse and you say "As you command" a lot. To blackmailed former clients, you seem terrifyingly omniscient; to cultists, a living god. When you think of how many of the clan's mysteries you do not know, however, you feel lost and powerless. Where is the real you? Perhaps it lies in this precept: No matter how many roles you play, you vow to survive. This world of horrors and secrets will not destroy you.

Clan: Followers of Set

Sire: Sahira Siraj

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Director

Generation: 11th



Embrace: 1957

Apparent Age: 29

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Brawl 1, Intimidation 3, Leadership 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Crafts (carpentry) 2, Etiquette 2, Firearms 2, Performance 1

Knowledges: Academics 1, Finance 3, Law 3, Linguistics (Arabic, Egyptian) 2, Occult 1, Politics 2, Setite Lore 1

Disciplines: Auspex 1, Obfuscate 3, Presence 2, Serpents 3, Thaumaturgy 1

Thaumaturgic Paths: The Serpent Within 1

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 5, Influence 2, Mentor 1, Retainers 3, Setite Status 1

Virtues: Conviction 2, Self-Control 3, Courage 4

Morality: Path of Typhon 4

Willpower: 5

BELLE EQUITONE

Background: His father's boot slammed into Jonny's ribs. "Dressin' up in girl clothes! No son of mine'll be a goddamn queer!" This time the boot struck him in the shoulder. The shadow of his father's beer gut moved away. Jonny lay in pain.

Too soon, the heavy tread returned. Jonny looked up. His father now held the fireplace poker. This would not be an ordinary beating. Jonny lurched upright, gasping at the pain of his cracked ribs and bruises, and ran. His father pursued, but his belly slowed him. "I'll kill you!" his father shouted after him. "I ever see you again, I'll kill you!"

A teenage boy, alone — Jonny found, soon enough, that to make money he had to give his body to much older men. His pimp didn't mind him dressing as a girl, though. Some customers liked that, sort of a two-in-one deal.

Eventually, Jonny died. Belle, however, survived — both of her. Belle One accepted that she was a whore, though she hated the men who used her. Belle Two dreamed of a better life as a singer, a life of beauty and glamour and maybe even love. (The other selves had no names yet. They only howled in the dark.) Ahmose found Belle when she applied for a job at the Sphinx Club. He would not have given the young woman a job, except Sahira's sharper eyes saw through Belle's disguise. Irrigated, she ordered Ahmose to hire the drag queen. Belle became an...experiment.

Sahira and Ahmose delicately probed Belle's psyche for months, discovering her multiple selves, before they introduced her to the worship of Set and made her a ghoul. They slowly put her mind back together, suturing her fragmented soul with the blood bond and religious fervor. They found desire, rage and deceit. They even called Jonny out of the darkness. At last Sahira judged that they had done all they could, and they welded Belle's souls in the cold fire of the Embrace.

Belle no longer sees herself as male or female. S/he is both, a Belle two-toned, confident of his sexuality in either gender. S/he seduces men and women alike, as either man or woman himself, counting coup with each heart captured and each mind blown. His greatest delight, however, comes when Ahmose bids his seduce some confident, domineering man, to place him in a compromising position so that he may be blackmailed. After the others collect sufficient pictures, s/he reveals his own masculine aspect...while grasping his victim in a...delicate spot and pulling out his straight razor. Then s/he sweetly suggests the man beg for his continued manhood. Most of the time, Ahmose stops his before s/he uses the razor. Most of the time.

Belle also has his own network of informants. S/he combines his abilities at impersonation and conversation with a sharp mind for detail and a wide network of contacts in the sex industry. Given time, Belle can uncover amazing amounts of information.

Image: Belle Equitone is attractive as either a man or woman. S/he has strawberry blonde hair curling to shoulder length and stands at medium height for a man, somewhat tall for a woman. Belle has sufficient mastery of makeup, body language, couture and prosthetics that s/he can completely hide his masculine anatomy if s/he wants. S/he dresses to suit his purpose, anything from the latest men's sportswear to a sultry torch-singer's gown.

Roleplaying Tips: You do not exist; you live only as a series of masks and mirrors, showing other people what they want to see. Play the dutiful child to Ahmose, the friendly sister to Sahira, the slightly irritated brother to Jim and treat Topcat like dirt. It's what they expect. Try to impress everyone else with your grace and charm, and win their hearts. True joy, however, comes when you reveal your multiplicity to a victim and he freaks out. Even their rage satisfies you; it proves your mastery.

Clan: Followers of Set
Sire: Ahmose Chambers
Nature: Chameleon
Demeanor: Gallant
Generation: 12th
Embrace: 1989



Apparent Age: 24

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Intimidation 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge (gender confusion) 4

Skills: Etiquette 2, Melee 2, Performance 2

Knowledges: Investigation (gossip) 4, Disguise 3, Vamp 3

Disciplines: Presence 1, Serpents 2

Backgrounds: Contacts 4, Fame 1

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 4, Courage 4

Morality: Humanity 4

Willpower: 6

JIM GANDER

Background: Jim Gander grew up too smart for his own good. His parents worked hard to pay for private Catholic school; his mother dreamed of him becoming the first American Pope. After school, Jim dodged the local bullies to visit the library, where he found whole worlds of unsuitable material — everything from atheist philosophy to *Lord of the Rings*.

After high school, Jim ran off to become an actor and happily immersed himself in disreputable company. After a few years on the stage, however, Jim decided that eating regularly had its attractions too. Chastened, he made peace with his parents long enough for them to help pay for a degree as a pharmacist. (Why not? Jim had dosed himself recreationally with strange chemicals enough times.) Along the way, Jim met a wide range of occultists and would-be magicians, and had immense fun playing along with them until he could play their "games" better than they could.

Ahmose found Jim working the night shift at a hospital pharmacy. He matter-of-factly blood bound Jim to gain access to the controlled substances he kept. To his surprise, Jim not only figured out the whole "vampire" thing before Ahmose told him, the pharmacist deluged him with disturbingly intelligent questions.

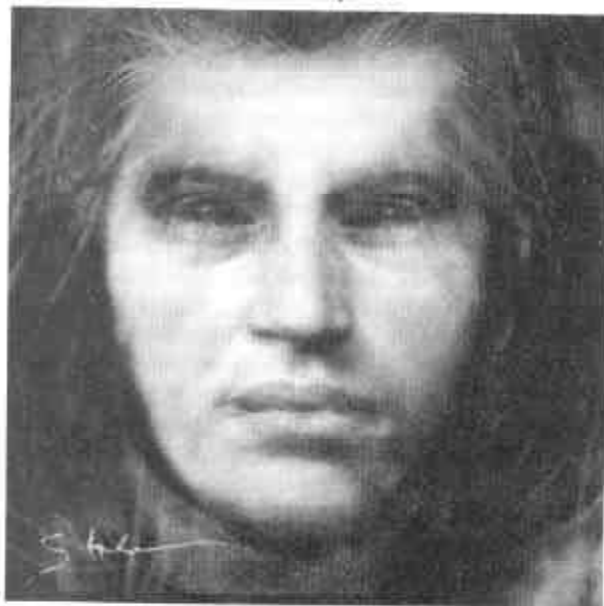
Jim quickly graduated from minion to cultist. When Ahmose outlined the doctrines for novices, Jim extrapolated the advanced doctrines from his occult knowledge. Sahira and Ahmose tempted Jim to break down his inhibitions, and found that he didn't have any. Drugs, crime, perversion, cool! The one thing they couldn't break was Jim's intellectual pride — but he impressed the cult enough that Sahira finally agreed to his Embrace and Ahmose did the deed.

Jim still works the night shift at the hospital. Hunting is easy: he can diddle the inventory (or the whole blood stores as well as the hospital's supply of drugs and medicines. Ahmose finds Jim more useful than he expected due to his expert knowledge of pharmaceuticals — including chemical interrogation. Jim learns about his new supernatural "family" as quickly as he can, and pesters Ahmose for lessons in sorcery. It's only a matter of time... and if no one will teach Jim, he will try to figure it out himself!

Image: Jim is tall, thick and broad; not deliberately athletic, but massive. He has curly black hair, graying at the temples, a fringe of grizzled black beard, glasses, a broad grin and a manic gleam in his eye. His garb varies widely, from a businesslike white lab coat to T-shirts with "Tibetan Corpse Wrestling Olympic Team" or other bizarre slogans and images.

Roleplaying Hints: Jim has a superficially normal, well-paying job and a strange, fantastical inner life. The Setite cult didn't have to shatter his old habits of belief. He had no conventional morals to begin with, only a rational distaste for losing his freedom, whether to a jail sentence or to an addiction. Jim assiduously studies the Path of Typhon, although he hasn't been a vampire long enough to imbibe its tenets fully.

Boisterous humor masks Jim's contempt for the lesser minds around him. Jim believes he can out-think the world and finesse any rules; nothing frightens him more than losing control and not knowing what to do. His hunger for knowledge, for the rules of this strange, secret World of Darkness, equals his hunger for blood. He serves Ahmose any way he can, in hopes of gaining more secrets and more power.



Sire: Ahmose Chambers

Nature: Autocrat

Demeanor: Judge

Generation: 12th

Embrace: 1995

Apparent Age: 33

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 3, Streetwise 2

Skills: Drive 1, Firearms 1, Performance 3

Knowledges: Academics 3, Computer 1, Linguistics 2, Medicine 2, Occult 3, Science 2

Other Traits: Toxicology 3, Setite Lore 1

Disciplines: Presence 1, Serpents 2

Backgrounds: Allies 1, Herd 3, Mentor 2, Resources 2, Status 1

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 3, Courage 5

Morality: Humanity 5

Willpower: 7

TOPCAT

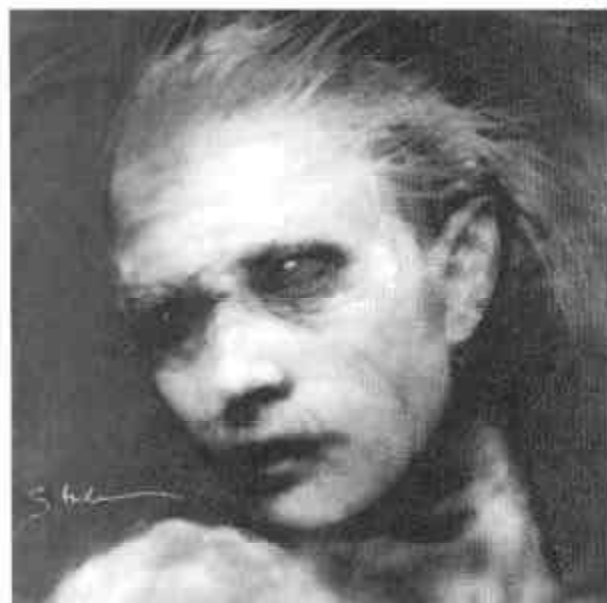
Background: Topcat (a nickname and Internet handle derived from his initials, T. C.) graduated high school at 12; earned a Master's degree in computer science at 16; and had a nervous breakdown at 17. When Ahmose found him, Topcat worked the graveyard shift at a convenience store. He spent all his money on computer hardware, computer games and violently pornographic Japanese animation.

Ahmose first thought to add Topcat's technical skills to the Repairers of Reputations. In his trial period as a ghoul, however, Sahira quickly decided that Topcat lacked the spiritual potential to become a true Follower of Set — not without a lot more training, in hygiene as well as self-knowledge and doctrine. An obsession with adolescent girls in spike heels is one thing, but the fastidious Sahira finds Topcat repugnant. Even the blood bond cannot cure his slovenly habits.

Topcat wants the Embrace, but Ahmose tells him that he's too useful as a ghoul. After all, the Repairers need someone who can move about in daylight. Topcat hacks into databases, plants bugs, and hotwires electronic security systems. The slacker finds himself working very hard at the vampires' command, doing in real life the sort of adventurous, dangerous feats he used to imagine in games. Breaking into buildings, impersonating a delivery man to plant a surveillance camera, and other illegalities terrify him; but the thought of disappointing Sahira or his domitor, Ahmose, terrifies him even more.

Image: The tall and gangling Topcat repels most people who encounter him. He isn't merely unkempt. Topcat doesn't wash, use deodorant or brush his teeth very often. He usually wears grimy jeans and a grimmer T-shirt of some brand that was incredibly popular 5 years ago.

Roleplaying Tips: Mumble most of the time, but now and then blurt out something crude at high volume. (Topcat's relatively high Manipulation basically takes the form of people



doing what he asks if they think it will make him go away.) If one of the Repairers asks if you can hack into a system, remind them that you received your college scholarship from the NSA. Do anything, *anything*, that Sahara asks. Your fondest hope is that you may become a true Setite and master Serpents enough to turn into a snake. Then you can go beyond watching the girls who obsess you. You could slip into their homes unseen, into their bedrooms, into their beds, coil around their lissome bodies... your hands twitch and eyes glaze at this recurring fantasy.

Domitor: Ahmose

Nature: Child

Demeanor: Creep Show

Ghouldom: 1997

Apparent Age: 23

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 1, Dodge 2, Intimidation 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Melee 2, Security 3, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Academics 3, Computer 3, Occult 2, Science (Electronics) 4

Disciplines: Obfuscate 1, Potence 1, Serpents 1

Backgrounds: Allies 1, Contacts 3, Resources 1

Virtues: Compassion 2, Self-Control 2, Courage 3

Morality: Humanity 4

Willpower: 3

SUPERIOR SERPENTS

Not every modern Follower of Set takes the clan's faith seriously. Nevertheless, honor and power within the clan chiefly derive from religion. Pious (or ambitious) Setite neonates could take lessons from the careers of these successful, honored

Serpents... and from one who, despite her age, power and achievements, is nevertheless considered a disgrace to the clan.

KEMINTIRI

As Ra crosses the sky in his sun-boat, Kemintiri dreams.

She dreams of a man: tall and strong, with sapphire-blue eyes burning in a darkly tanned, rawboned face. The firelight smolders in his red hair. He draws her into his embrace, heavy lips meeting hers, moving down to her throat, and Kemintiri stretches at the remembered pleasure in the arms of a god.

Kemintiri dreams of another man: also tall, strong and dark, but dressed all in gold. The sun strikes sparks of gold in his dark brown hair. A plate of gold set with jewels covers one of his eyes. She dares not look at him directly, for fear his beauty would blind her. "I know you are loyal," he says, and brushes the back of her hand with one finger. "You will not fail me." The king of kings, the first and eternal pharaoh, has touched her, has said that he trusts her completely, and Kemintiri sighs within her dream.

Kemintiri dreams of pain. She hangs in ropes while red-hot irons burn her skin. "Traitor," she hears. Who speaks? Sometimes she sees the red-haired man, sometimes the man in gold. She loved them both, served them both, betrayed them both — *but in what order?* She cannot remember. Something about a secret, a key to eternal life.... Both men have lived for thousands of years, their hatred ancient beyond memory.

The memories come faster, a torrent of images. Soldiers marching behind an eagle standard, lords and ladies in high-piled periwigs, a mud hut, a dank tunnel with a crude sign of a fish drawn on a wall. She is man and woman, a thousand faces. Which one is really hers? She must try them all, wear every face, and perhaps she will find her own again.

Kemintiri wakes. She leaves a faint streak of red as she slides from the sheets. A hot shower cleans the blood-sweat from her skin before she dresses: panty hose, sensible shoes, white blouse, a knee-length skirt and jacket of gray wool. The face that looks out of the mirror has straight brown hair gathered in a bun — a plain, non-nonsense face. She forgets Kemintiri. She is Carla Rasmussen, secretary and child to Boltasar Lajos, prince of Cleveland. As she reaches for a golden pin, its glitter makes her think of a golden eye patch. In sudden fury and fear, she hurls the pin away. No, she must not think of such things. They are only dreams!

When Carla catches her cab a half-hour later, she thinks only of the night's busy schedule.

* * *

Kemintiri: Number One on the Camatilla's list of wanted criminals. She murdered the Venetian Justicar Michaelis and impersonated him for more than a year. No one dares guess the number of Kindred she has slain over her millennia of unlife. By piecing together statements she makes to other vampires or mortals, the Justicars believe that Kemintiri holds a dreadful ambition: she hopes to exchange undeath for a different sort of immortality, the endless resurrection cycle of the half-mythical mummies. More than that, she hopes to create a veritable army of undying soldiers and lead them in a war of extermination against all vampires — especially her own sire, the Antediluvian Set himself. The Justicars would dearly love to disentangle Kemintiri's history in hopes of finding clues to her next

move. Unfortunately, Kemintiri is perhaps the greatest mistress of disguise in the World of Darkness, employing sorcery, Disciplines and mundane skills alike to change her appearance. She can look like absolutely anyone, of either gender. The Camarilla's Justicars, Archons and Alastors never seem to discover her impostures until she has already moved on. None of them doubt that Kemintiri plays a chess game of impossible subtlety, with the Kindred's destruction as the final move.

They're completely wrong, of course.

Kemintiri became a vampire some time during Egypt's 19th dynasty. As a mortal, she became a pawn in the endless struggle between Set and Horus. Certainly she loved them both, betrayed them both and was punished by both — but she cannot remember the sequence of events. Did she start by serving Set and attempt to infiltrate the cult of Horus, or the other way around? Did she change her loyalties, or not? Which one captured and tortured her? Certainly, Set himself made her a vampire. Kemintiri now believes he meant to punish her — but is that really true?

Between them, the two warring gods broke Kemintiri's mind. Nothing of herself remained... so she tried to be someone else. Over the millennia, she usurped hundreds of identities, killing each victim so that she or he could not expose her. As each identity inevitably broke, a new set of fractured memories joined the chaos in her mind. Thanks to dozens of unwitting mentors, Kemintiri became one of the most powerful vampires in the world, knowing many unusual Disciplines and sorcerous rituals. Under stress, however, she can forget who she is (or pretends she is), and lash out in deadly panic.

In her "true" form (if such a term means anything for her), Kemintiri stands about 4'6" tall, with dusky skin and long, straight black hair. Sometimes she slips in a role and dresses in archaic garb, picking a style at random from history; for instance, topping a business ensemble with a colonial mobcap or an Arab veil. On top of her other powers, Kemintiri is quite possibly the most beautiful woman in the world: Men (and some women) drop to their knees with instant love and beg to serve her, if only she will favor them with a smile. The chaos in her mind usually spits up something they can do for her.

Unfortunately, when the Tremere exposed Kemintiri's imposture of the Ventrue Justicar, they unwittingly created a new identity for her. When someone penetrates her disguise, Kemintiri now has another identity to fill the void within her: the arch-Anathema, the invincible and incalculable master villain who seeks the Kindred's doom. The role itself doesn't matter. Kemintiri is just as happy being a Caitiff pickpocket as a prince or archbishop. She will play any role, if only someone will tell her who she is.

The Setite clan leaders hold divided opinions about Kemintiri. On the one hand, she is Set's own child (possibly the only one not currently in torpor) and an Eternal of Sothis twice over. For this she is, automatically, a demigod. Her impersonation of Michaelis also threw the Camarilla into a historic tizzy: Public Enemy Number One is an honorable role for a Setite, and many younger clan members consider her a hero. On the other hand, Kemintiri's religious achievements are limited to impersonating a priest in the 17th century. She



has never cooperated with any other Setites, except when she murdered and replaced some other Serpent.

Overall, most Setite elders wish that Kemintiri would go away. The Camarilla's unwitting creation of her "Arch-Anathema" identity made her much more dangerous to other Setites. In that identity, she believes she wants to destroy her own clan most of all, as an offering of contrition to Horus. A few Hierophants order young acolytes to monitor the Camarilla's hunt for Kemintiri. These agents covertly assist the Alastors when they can, but are ordered not to make themselves known. These Hierophants would like Kemintiri captured, if possible. If they could restore her sanity, or at least make her controllably insane, she would become a powerful asset to their cult. If her mind can't be stabilized, well, there's always diablerie. Should the Camarilla destroy her, however, none of the elders will feel any grief.

REVEREND DJOSER JONES

Quote: *I hear you SAY the WORDS, but do you MEAN them in your HEART? Do you feel the SPIRIT of the Dark God MOVING withIN you?*

Prelude: From boyhood, Joseph Jones loved religion. He loved the hymns, the clapping, the confessions and the repentance. He made up sins just so he could confess and renounce them at the tent revival. When he grew up, he became a Baptist minister with his own small church.

Jones strove to set a good example for his congregation and warn them when they strayed from the path to glory. Yet flesh and spirit both are weak; inevitably Jones himself strayed — thinking lustful, angry or covetous thoughts, or drinking more than one glass of wine to calm his nerves of an evening. He prayed to Jesus for forgiveness, though, and felt the Holy Spirit moving within him, granting him absolution. As long as he kept Jesus in his heart, he remained one of the blessed. He no longer confessed his sins, though.

Jones' certainty of forgiveness allowed his sins to grow year by year. When his sire found him, Reverend Jones had a taste for

bootleg whiskey, two mistresses and a bank account full of money rithed to the church. His hypocrisy charmed Sisocharis. Within six months, he taught the Reverend several new debaucheries and convinced him that forgiveness came from Set, not Jesus.

The fallen preacher served his sire as a ghoul for ten years before receiving the Embrace. While Prohibition lasted, Jones' church kept barrels of Canadian booze and the hastily-buried cadavers of three G-men in its basement. Many in Jones' town heard the Gospel of Set disguised as the Gospel of Jesus. After Prohibition, Jones and Sisocharis found new opportunities in prostitution. That required a much larger basement, but Jones convinced the townspeople to build him a bigger church. The mayor and sheriff both endorsed the idea. . . . When the FBI nosed around again, in search of a teenage girl abducted across state lines, Sisocharis and Jones reluctantly moved their operation to a big city and burned the church down behind them, with a body to stand in for Jones. Sisocharis took this as a sign that his acolyte was ready to transcend mortality and Embraced him.

After another ten years, Jones felt himself ready to graduate from Sisocharis' tutelage. Set called him to some greater purpose than vice-mongering. As a token of his ended childhood, Jones Egyptianized his first name, and Djoser Jones set forth to help his fellow Setites retain their holy zeal.

Djoser Jones is an old-time revival preacher, Setite-style. He drives his van from city to city, visiting Setite cults and coteries, conducting high-energy religious services the likes of which his clanmates have never seen before. Jones rewrites classic revival hymns to give them Setite lyrics; he and his two human ghouls accompany the songs with a drum and piano, while the congregants pass Jones' ghoul rattlesnake from hand to hand. Jones supports his "crusade" through free-will offerings and murdering and robbing the occasional well-heeled pimp or drug dealer.

Most Theophidians find Jones' comprehension of their theology . . . dubious. He gives Theophidim doctrine his own odd spin, that Set wants people to sin so he can forgive them. No one denies that Jones knows how to play a congregation, though. Mortal and undead Followers all feel more enthusiasm for their faith after a visit from Reverend Djoser Jones. He has led many slacker Setites back to the Dark Lord's service. Nothing makes him happier than knowing he has led another soul back to Sutekh's grace.

Image: Dark brown hair swept back in a pompadour, a tailored black suit with golden cufflinks, a diamond ring and a golden cross tie-tack make Djoser Jones look like a televangelist. During a revival meeting he trades the cross for a pin in the form of a dragon biting its tail. Jones remains moderately handsome despite a slight puffiness in the face from debaucheries in his mortal days, but the energy in his speech and movement makes him stand out, not his looks. Jones is a compact man — not short exactly, just not the tallest guy in the room.

Roleplaying Tips: Djoser Jones stays in constant motion: pacing, gesturing, clasping shoulders, directing imaginary choirs while humming hymns. Decades of high-octane sermonizing leave a permanent cadence in his voice. Although Jones carries a pistol, he prefers to hide or run away at any sign of danger. If he can't avoid a peril, however, his faith revives his courage — and he tries to convert his enemy, praising Set and pronouncing



himself unafraid to join his god. Most vampires find this sufficiently creepy that they will back off.

Note that although Jones believes he follows the Path of Typhon, he actually remains tied to Humanity. His high Conscience derives from his faith in Set's mercy and forgiveness of his crimes.

Clan: Followers of Set

Sire: Sisocharis

Nature: Caregiver

Demeanor: Celebrant

Generation: 11th

Embrace: 1934

Apparent Age: 38

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Dodge 2, Empathy 3, Expression 4, Intimidation 1,

Leadership 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Etiquette 3, Firearms 1, Performance 4, Survival 1

Knowledges: Academics 2, Linguistics 1, Occult 2, Setite Lore 1

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Obfuscate 2, Presence 3, Serpents 4

Backgrounds: Contacts 4, Retainers 3, Setite Status 1

Virtues: Conscience 4, Self-Control 3, Courage 2

Morality: Humanity 4

Willpower: 5

HESHA RUHADZE

Quote: *Be reasonable, Mr. Bell. I have information that you need. If you cannot make a simple deal without consulting your master, however, I will wait. Do not make me wait too long . . . by.*

Background: The night had much in store for Ruhadze, who would change his name to Heshha after his Embrace in the midnight shadows of a Nubian gold mine.

The harsh Nubian climate and Ruhadze's poverty tempered him at a very young age. To avoid conflict, he and his family

adopted whatever religion had grown to prominence at any given time: Islam, Christianity and even Animism at certain points. By the time he had reached a relatively advanced age for Nubians—his 30s—Hesha had fallen in with a cult that had gained no small bit of notoriety. This was a blood cult, a herd of mortals tricked into believing in the divinity of their Kindred patron. The cult's Setite leader embraced Hesha, seeing in the man a cleverness and intellect that he thought would serve him well in his quest to reincarnate his dead god. Indeed, Hesha's sire grew so proud of his progeny in the modern nights that he renamed himself Abu Ruhadze in the Islamic tradition: "the father of Ruhadze."

After his Embrace, Hesha acclimated quite well to the "Cainite" condition. His newfound toughness was a great boon during the long nights he spent uncovering the hidden lore of Kindred and other chthonic creatures. Mentored at first by his sire, Hesha felt the calling of his clan's legacy. Abu Ruhadze knew he had chosen wisely, and instructed his child in the ways of the Path of Typhon. His progeny proved once again to be a fervent pupil. To this night, Hesha's clanmates consider him a near paragon of the Theophidians, revered for his devotion to the god of the Underworld and his spiritual wisdom.

Hesha's undead travels took him everywhere, and he met a great many prominent Kindred. He has crossed paths with the Kindred archaeologist Beckett no few times, and the two consider themselves cordial rivals. Additionally, his zeal to uncover the next secret or hidden revelation earns him great status among members of his clan: he's glad to dive into forgotten tombs as long as he believes they offer something of worth.

In the modern nights, Hesha continues his tireless quest for knowledge. He has established numerous havens and at least one secondary identity to help him in the trade of cryptic lore. Those who know him also know that he's willing to share almost any secret he unearths—for the right price. Sometimes, Hesha warns, the price of knowledge is the knowing: The World of Darkness contains entities and forces far more malign than mere vampires—dread creatures more powerful than the human mind can comprehend. The Antediluvians think to assume such power, but the Eldest Ones were ancient when the antediluvians were new. Very few vampires of other clans know Hesha's labors to protect the Earth from the Eldest Powers. No one destroys the world until the Setites are ready for their own ascension to godhood.

Image: A dapper Serpent, Hesha now shows no trace of his village past. In fact, he shows nothing that he does not want the other person to see. Hesha combines the bearing of a runway model with the flawless calm-under-fire of a combat veteran. His dark-amber gaze is almost enough to entrance an onlooker without even calling upon his Disciplines. Hesha carries himself with grace and dignity, equally at home at an embassy ball or the catacombs of a ruined temple. He customarily wears perfectly-tailored gray business suits, and a monocle despite the fact that he has perfect vision. Hesha's shaved scalp bears a tattoo of twining serpents, but in public he hides this through Obfuscate.

Roleplaying Hints: No problem is so great that it cannot be overcome by reason. You remain cool and sensible even under the direst of circumstances, whether facing down rampaging Sabbat,



jumping a chasm or opening the tombs of the forgotten kings. Most people and Kindred are but tools to you, and they serve best when willing, so you indebt them to you whenever you can. Even those who aren't your tools have something to offer; acquaintances, old allies and new faces alike all have as-yet-unrealized potential.

Most of the time you affect a courtly, formal charm that makes people think they know you far better than they do. Now and then you astound people with your encyclopedic knowledge of history, archeology, mythology and art, but you don't deliberately show off—not unless you see a good reason for it. You never tell the whole truth; Considering what you know, that is probably a kindness.

Clan: Followers of Set

Sire: Abu Ruhadze

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Conniver

Generation: 8th

Embrace: Unknown; assumed late 17th century

Apparent Age: mid- to late-thirties

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wit 5

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 4, Empathy 3, Grace 3, Intimidation 3, Intuition 3, Leadership 4, Streetwise 4, Style 3, Subterfuge 5

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Crafts (appraisal) 4, Demolitions 3, Drive 1, Etiquette 4, Firearms 2, Melee 1, Performance 4, Ride 1, Security 3, Sleight of Hand 2, Stealth 4, Survival 2

Knowledges: Academics (humanities) 5, Computer 1, Enigmas 4, Finance 4, Investigation (archaeology) 4, Law 1, Linguistics (numerous tongues and written languages, both living and dead) 5, Medicine 2, Occult 4, Politics 4, Science 1, Setite Lore 4

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Auspex 1, Fortitude 1, Obfuscate 3, Potence 1, Presence 3, Serpents 5

Backgrounds: Alternate Identity 1, Fame 1, Herd special (Hesha owns a blood bank), Influence 3, Resources 5, Retainers 5, Setite Status 3

Virtues: Conviction 4, Self-Control 4, Courage 5

Morality: Path of Typhon 8

Willpower: 6

Merits and Flaws: Natural Linguist

SUNDERVERE, THE DEVIL BRAHMIN

Quote: Make peace with your gods and say your farewells. The diamond shall drown in blood, and the rest of the world soon after.

Background: The Indian mastermind, Sundervere, remains a mystery to the Followers of Set despite being one of their Daitya kin. Few Western Setites have ever spoken with the enigmatic elder; he prefers to work only with other Daitya, or with mortal Indians and various strange and secret cults scattered around the world. Clan rumor holds that he and the similarly mysterious Qufur'aim-Heru, self-proclaimed Set's Champion, have an understanding and work together on occasion.

Sundervere first came to the attention of Western vampires in the Victorian period, when he launched several campaigns to destroy the Western vampires residing in Indian cities. Growing more daring, he took the battle for the Indian night to the very heart of the British Empire, where he nearly murdered London's Prince Mithras and briefly subverted the Foreign Office. Sundervere proved himself a master of impossible escapes, returning from seemingly certain Final Death no less than three times before he dropped out of sight in 1922.

Now the Devil Brahmin rises again and his shadow stretches around the world. The time has come to initiate the Great Destruction. Sundervere reads of ill-guarded nuclear arsenals in Russia, and smiles. He thinks of deadly bacilli in genetics labs, and laughs. To Sundervere, however, these technological terrors merely serve as preparations and distractions. All the murderous ingenuity of Marshall pale when the ancient sorcery of India throws wide the Gate and Lord Shiva opens his third eye to annihilate the world.

Image: At first glance, Sundervere is just a small, skinny man in late middle age, with a shaved head, a V-mark on his forehead and a white robe. Then you see his eyes — black, magnetic, burning with fanatical will. The void stares back at you.

Roleplaying Tips: Characters of other clans find Sundervere an epic adversary. The Devil Brahmin does not deign to swat down coterries of mere neonates; characters only meet Sundervere when they earn his respect enough for him to warn them away, and when he has total control of the meeting. Sundervere loves to drop cryptic hints about his plans, interspersed with prophecies of doom and hints about the terrible forces that operate behind the mask of reality. No one ever catches Sundervere lying about any worldly matter, which makes his enemies worry that he tells the truth about spiritual, less verifiable, matters as well.

More often, characters encounter the cultists, vampires and spirits that Sundervere recruits as his agents. Sundervere not only commands the allegiance of several doomsday cults, he may create new ones to order. No more than three of his elite



retainers appear in a single story; these may be other vampires, ghouled mortals or animals, spirits, or whatever else appeals to the Storyteller's demented imagination.

Sundervere accepts defeats gracefully. He doesn't believe in revenge. After all, his eventual victory will destroy his enemies along with the world, while he enjoys eternal power and glory as one of the gods.

Clan: Followers of Set (Daitya)

Sire: Porphyryon

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Architect

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 1227

Apparent Age: Late 50s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 5, Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 6, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 4, Dodge 3, Empathy 2, Intimidation 3, Leadership (cults) 5, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Animal Ken 1, Crafts 2, Meditation 4, Performance 2, Security 2, Sleight of Hand 3, Stealth 3, Survival 2

Knowledges: Academics (legends) 5, Hindu Lore (apocalyptic) 5, Investigation 3, Kindred Lore 3, Linguistics 4, Medicine 2, Occult (eldritch horrors) 6, Politics 1, Science 3

Disciplines: Auspex 5, Chimerstry 2, Dominate 3, Fortitude 3, Obfuscate 4, Presence 3, Serpents 6, Thaumaturgy 7

Thaumaturgical Paths: Karma 5, Conjuring 5, Spirit Manipulation 5, Countermagic 3, Movement of the Mind 3, Weather Control 3

Backgrounds: Allies 6, Contacts 6, Herd 3, Influence 4, Resources 5, Retainers 3, Setite Status 5

Virtues: Conviction 5, Self-Control 5, Courage 3

Morality: Path of Typhon 8

Willpower: 9

Followers of Set™

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 ●00000
_____ 00000	_____ 00000	
_____ 00000	_____ 00000	
_____ 00000	_____ 00000	Self-Control/Instinct ●00000
_____ 00000	_____ 00000	
_____ 00000	_____ 00000	
_____ 00000	_____ 00000	Courage _____ ●00000

MÉRITS/FLAWS

HUMANITY/PATH

O O O O O O O O O O

WILLPOWER

O O O O O O O O O O

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

BLOOD POOL

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

HEALTH

Bruised □

Hurt -1 □

Injured -1 □

Wounded -2 □


Mauled -2 □

Crippled -5 □

Incapacitated □

WEAKNESS

Severe light allergy



Followers of Set™

EXPANDED BACKGROUND

ALLIES

MENTOR

CONTACTS

RESOURCES

FAME

RETAINERS

HERD

STATUS

INFLUENCE

OTHER

POSSESSIONS

GEAR (CARRIED)

EQUIPMENT (OWNED)

FEEDING GROUNDS

VEHICLES

HAVENS

LOCATION

DESCRIPTION

C L A N B O O K :

Followers of Set™

children of the God of storms

The Followers of Set are a clan bound together not only by blood, but by ties of faith. Their priests have access to secrets that would break the minds of lesser vampires; even the youngest Setite childe has passed through the Gates of Revelation. They claim descent from a god, and prophesy the time of his return — and who is to prove them wrong?

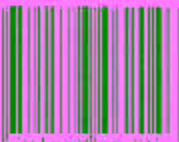
clanbook: Followers of set includes:

- An in-depth look at the Clan of the Serpent: their rituals, dogma and ambitions
- Treatments of alternate Setite faiths, including the voodoo Children of Damballah and the bloodthirsty Tlacique
- Expanded Serpentis powers, clan lore, a new Path of Enlightenment and more

VAMPIRE™
THE MASQUERADE

www.white-wolf.com

ISBN 1-58846-204-8
WW2360 \$14.95 U.S.



0 158846 204 8

PRINTED IN USA

