

C L A N B O O K :

Malkavian



A BRIEF PROCEDURE

It was the consummation of a marriage.

The vows were unspoken, of course. The courting had taken place long ago, in the language of grants and internships rather than doses of clichéd poetry. It had been patient and professional, trust given out measure by measure as he let me further and further into the great work of his... life. First the gift of vitae, then the gift of responsibility - always rationed out with perfect reason, perfect control.

And now...

It would have been unprofessional to shudder as we stepped into the operating theatre, so naturally, I did no such thing. Although I felt certain that he wouldn't have interpreted it as fear - why should I fear this place, almost an old friend? - it certainly would have been forward. The fluorescent lighting was no different, the polished steel table the same as it had been throughout years of procedures, case studies and experiments. The catheter, the plastic drum — new, of course, but hardly unsettling.

No, the difference this time was anticipation. Delight, almost. But a show of such emotion would surely be embarrassing to him, and that would be unforgivable.

The repetitive echoes of his shoes' soles against the floor bounced off the walls. As I slid off my lab coat, I lowered my head and closed my eyes; time for the game to begin again. He had taught me a trick of superhuman hearing some time ago — and I'd been so flustered by how hard it was to learn that I felt sure he'd turn me out before I grasped the secret. But when I finally heard for the first time, that was when the game began.

Clack. Clack. He was beginning his circuit of the theatre - always attentive for the slightest foreign element, the least chance of chaos. Clack. Clack. At the left edge of the one-way mirror now, scrutinizing the seams. Clack. Clack. Halfway across the mirror now. Can he see through the reflection to the observation booth on the other side? He's never said, but he must be able to. Clack. Clack. The far end now. Clack — and a pause. My smile faded. What had he found? And then there it was — the squeak of cloth, certainly his handkerchief, on metal. Clack. Clack. The circuit began again.

I'd be deluding myself if I thought that the vitae-induced sensory amplification allowed for as complex a sensory mechanism as echolocation. But this theatre was home, more so now than the house I'd grown up in or the apartment I slept in; to be frank, I believe last year I'd slept late hours at the lab as often as I'd managed to crawl into an actual bed. We'd run so many case studies in here that I knew every corner, every inch of the equipment better than I knew my own bedroom. And I'd watched Dr. Net-church pace the room just like this before every study, before every procedure.

That was the game. To see him as he must be, to watch every footstep with my eyes shut tight, to see him crinkle his brow just slightly with every pause, with every possible imperfection.

At the risk of dropping all objectivity, it was frankly exhilarating.

Ten more steps, and he'd be within arm's reach once more. Clack. Clack. His pace picking up just a little now, as he becomes more certain that nothing's amiss. Clack. Clack. Clack. Clack. By the cabinet now - and there, the slight touch of skin on metal as he slides his fingers gently along the steel doors, almost unaware that he does so. Clack. Clack. Almost here. Clack. And - a pause? He's testing me, I thought giddily. Don't open your eyes yet. He still lacks one more step, just one.

Clack.

I opened my eyes and raised my head, smiling ever so slightly. His face was immobile, a statue with glass eyes - and then there was just a twitch of movement by one eye. I could have shrieked with laughter, but instead I simply tilted my head a centimeter or so to the side, and raised my eyebrows just so. Precise control. Precise communication. That was the heart of our relationship.

"Well then," he lightly coughed. "If you're quite ready, Doctor, we'll begin the procedure."

"Of course." I forced my hands to remain at my sides, although they ferociously wanted to smooth down the goose pimples on my arms.

He took my coat, folding it crisply and setting it to one side. I sat down on the table and lay back. The cool of the metal rose up against my bare arms and seeped through my clothes, and it was so refreshing — the laboratory's cool atmosphere (a perfect 65 degrees Fahrenheit — I might have giggled at the thought) wasn't cooling me down at all. I must have seemed so feverish to him; how like him, so courteous and concerned, not to mention it at all. Straps of metal and leather closed on my wrists, ankles and brow; it was an interesting feeling. The feeling of physical restraints coupled with anticipation - yes, it was an appetite, but something going beyond sexuality into so much more.

Sex, after all, is a purely physical intimacy. Only clouded through psychological delusion does it seem more than that — a lesson I'd gradually learned from my work. Watching him slice through the layers of tissue and blood down to a subject's very bones - the same thing, really. An intimacy that means only as much as one lets it.

But this - to think of it. An intimacy of body and psyche, and of such intellect...

"Are you comfortable, Doctor?"

So reserved. So gentlemanly. I nodded quickly, refusing to smile like an embarrassed teenager.

"Very good." His fingers, strong and cool as the table itself, closed on my arm. I closed my eyes. There was the quick,

tingling dab of wet cotton — force of habit, or tenderness? Surely the latter - then the stab of the needle. Like a good patient, I held my arm perfectly still as the metal slid into my flesh. Like a good patient, I began to give of myself.

It wasn't the first time I'd let someone draw blood, of course. I was glad to participate whenever the blood drives came to my college; I'd long gotten past any latent fears of doctors and needles by then. It seemed preposterous to develop any sort of personal attachment to my blood, so the issue of perceived "violation" wasn't at all relevant, either. Very simple.

This time, though, I was growing colder and sleepier than ever I'd been before. There was a brief moment when I thought of my blood, all my blood, draining into sterilized plastic, leaving me stiff and lifeless, and I wanted to panic. But the lethargy, coupled with discipline, was master here. A simple sleep, ever-so-brief, I sluggishly reminded myself. He is in control; there won't be any accidents. Relax. And above all, remember — we would never get another chance at a professional, objective observation of the transition from ghoul to... to Cainite.

And relax I did, and I set myself to remember.

Scientific observation began to fail me, though. I would have been disappointed in myself, but as the drowsiness grew, I couldn't muster any focused emotion. My heart rate slowed, my pulse beat lethargically. My mind drifted, and I let it.

Intimacies. They came to mind so easily, while I was in this half-conscious state. And in this state, so easy to see them from outside, to analyze myself objectively. My cravings for an intimate connection to another person were wholly typical of the norm, I suppose. It's even forgivable to confuse intimacies such as blood relation or sexual intercourse with a connection between minds, particularly given the influence of hormones or learned patterns. So, ultimately, I could forgive myself for behaving all too naturally. But when viewed from the outside, with myself as the patient under study, those longings for connection and desperate attempts to please others — Again, I could forgive myself, and not be embarrassed, but I was grateful for my expanded perspective.

And perhaps this half-fugue condition made it possible for me to see exactly when the vitae-induced imprinting took hold. I'd never tried that hard to analyze myself before; amusing that what I'd never looked for came on me intuitively, like a jigsaw piece clicking into place. Six months after Lee had proposed, and in the middle of the Stauffer project. One month before joining Dr. Net-church's team permanently. The Sunday morning when I snapped awake and drew away from Lee so quickly that he woke up confused. The morning of our first real, honest fight.

Two days before I rejected my acquired need for intimacies. Two days before I realized exactly how I was going to spend the rest of my life.

There's a slight, numb sensation in my arm — surely the catheter sliding free. I hear him sigh, the tiny sigh of someone finally giving into temptation just this once...

And then his teeth enter my arm.

Shuddering weakly against the cold metal table, I fall into the dark.

I am not alone.

Emptiness surrounds me, vast and hollow. I feel as though I'm a child in the center of a giant bed, casting about for the edges, but never reaching them. There's nothing to hold onto, nothing I can catch to pull myself free of this immense darkness. It's very like a nightmare - I can see nothing, touch nothing, and yet I both hear and feel voices, no more than distant vibrations. I'm not alone, and yet I can't call out to whoever it is that's surrounding me. I can't hear what they're saying. I'm not alone, but I'm not with anyone, and it's terrifying.

Somewhere, high above me, there is the smell of blood. Then I go from being tiny and adrift to vast and heavy - I am a sea of cold waters filling an immense, dark shell. My throat, now a great emptiness all its own, comes aflame.

With a ripping sound that I cannot hear, but rather feel throughout my infinite self, I come alive.

There aren't words.

Why would we use words, anyway? So imperfect - each word good for the microscopic purpose it was intended for, and nothing more. Trying to capture the feeling of this transition using words is like trying to put an apple in a picture frame.

No poetry, just sensation. An infinite number of colors, all black - the vibrant colors of pain behind closed eyes. A wall of unseen skin pressing against me — fire burning in the recesses of my brain — heat, darkness and noise.

I swallow, and in that swallow he enters into my soul.

The skin tears. I am through, and one - my mind beats around his, is cradled in his. His mind is cool and hard, like a jewel. I press my own against it, savor the cool in the wet heat of the darkness. He is silent — but there is no silence for him to break, had he reason to do so. A susurrus washes around us. It's warm, too — is it the heat I feel? It brings with it a painful twinge.

And beyond? Others? There is his sire, nestled deep into the fissures of my brain. Perhaps I'm hallucinating it, of course. However, I'm not in any state to make a proper diagnosis. I know I shouldn't trust my senses — and yet I am my senses. Although I feel certain I can't literally see anyone, I feel the soft pressure of other people, other thoughts all around, like breath on my neck.

Something else, back there, too — a shadow shaped like a flame. It hurts to focus on that. I have to withdraw.

It's so warm. The heat is overwhelming, but not stifling — I feel spasms of energy, not the slow crush of suffocation. The beat pulses behind my eyes. Just as I'd known it would be, my body is cool, cool against the metal, but the heat -

A body. I have a body. Shocks of pain impale it. I am immense again, a cold mass stapled to a metal slab. My eyes open, and I need to scream at the intensity of the light. My mouth opens silently, and the pain worsens. I feel nothing in my limbs — only the pain and heat in my head, and the painful emptiness in my torso. I'm a frostbite victim placed next to a fire - the agony of need, of life, is too great. I try to scream again, but no noise comes.

The strap around my head loosens, and I blindly twist as much as I can. The cries within are deafening. I feel bats' wings brush against my eyes, and I slam my eyes shut, even though I know it's only stray locks of hair. The straps creak as I thrash against them, and the sound is like icebergs slamming together. The metal against my flesh is arctic-cold, but no sensation at all next to the hunger.

He puts my own blood to my lips, and I guzzle as greedily as any newborn. The cacophony fades slightly with each swallow, and I feel the still-warm fluid seep into my thirsty tissues. Each cell trills as the blood spreads further throughout me, carrying a painful warmth with it. Finally I'm left sucking greedily at an empty tube, trying to drain the last beautiful rivulets. Then the tube is removed, and a cloth dabs at my lips. I open my eyes and the world explodes into view, cold and brilliant in a spectrum of whites and metals. The clarity is frightening. He stands over me, and I see the richness of polished marble and lightless ocean waters layered across him, perfect as a photograph. I want to do something, but I don't know what. Shouldn't I be gasping for breath? No, no, foolish...

His voice, echoing with the same unearthly clarity. "How are you feeling?"

My body is still cold, but it's a small thing. My mind blazes with heat. My tongue is thick, and my first attempt to form words fails - of course, no air in my lungs. Inhale. Then...

"I... I feel... cold." The noises have died, but the heat remains, insistent and rhythmic.

He nods, in that tiny, economical way of his. "Mmm. Mmm-hmm. I'll admit some small worries as to whether or not you'd come through in a lucid state — so few do — but I knew that you likely had more than enough strength. If you don't mind, Doctor, I'd like to keep you restrained for just a little bit more; a formal precaution, you know."

"I understand." A tiny smile slides across my lips - I try to stop it, but it's no good, I feel like I'm drunk - but that's fine. Best to be drunk when you're with someone you trust, someone who'll never take advantage of you. "I'll be glad to wait as long as you need."

"Excellent." He stands up. His cool fingers slide across my brow, ordering the errant strands of hair into a regiment. I wonder what those fingers would taste like. "If you have any requests, an orderly will be in the next room; just raise your voice. I'll return soon."

And then it's the most wonderful thing. I hear Dr. Netchurch leave the room, the clack of his shoes on the tile, the door closing and locking afterward - and yet he hasn't left at all. The room is so still that I can make out the faintest whispers of his voice, blowing like fallen leaves down in the back of my skull. I close my eyes against the fluorescent lights and sink into the warm blackness; and his voice grows just a little louder. Maybe there are other voices in it. I don't know yet. But I have time to listen in the darkness, until he comes back and undoes the straps and helps me up and we walk out of the laboratory into this incredible new existence, this marriage of minds enfolded in the loving cruel heat of our Blood.

Words can't express.

But then again, who needs words?

CHAPTER 1: THE TOWER OF BABEL

*Another [arrow] was called Madness, and
as it struck the earth
I saw each gripped in fever
And those things in their blood
which were darkest
Gained in power a thousand fold
— From the Ericyes Fragments of the Book of Nod*

He limped, then lurched, then staggered as if he were drunk. One foot fell in front of the other, dragging Daniel forward along the long, light-less stretch of asphalt. Once he slid to the side, his feet flying out from under him, and his shoulder smashed into the guardrail — but he clutched at the cold metal for support, yanked himself upright again, and began walking once again.

Occasionally a pair of headlights would sway carefully around a bend in the road, pass across Daniel, then speed rabbit like past him with a shriek of rubber.

*The voice continued to batter at him, at the inside of his skull.
Listen.*

Daniel dug his fingers into his temples, as if trying to prevent the sound from reaching. But no blood was flowing under the skin, and there was nothing to cut off. His teeth ground together with the sound of cracking porcelain.

Listen.

He pressed the heels of his palms into his eye-sockets, grinding them there like pestles, but nothing came of it. He wept blood, and it came away on his hands. Still the pulse of the voice rang in his skull.

Listen.

All that I have wrought, I have wrought for you. You must carry this.

It has taken nights — nights upon nights — for me to sift through the visions, the scrawls, the shrieking. Years. Decades. More. Thousands of nights to fashion our story into a rigid form. You have one night to listen. You *must* listen.

Sobbing tears of blood, Daniel slid down the bank and wrapped his arms around his shins. Quietly and slowly, he rocked back and forth as the pulsing voice rolled round and round in his head.

Now.

There are 13 families of us, each with its own progenitor.

Of the lot of them, only three define themselves by the blood of their ancestor, even by feeding off the very name of that vile god. Only three choose to answer not to the direct name of their forefather, nor to use a secret word coined by an elder to mask their own names. Only three call themselves true children of their divine progenitor. There are Hassan's childer, who share the disease of their grandfather's blood. There are Set's childer, who share the disease of their grandfather's faith.

And there are us.

We are a sprawling, fractured, decayed family. We are more ancient than any lineage of kings, yet more inbred than any withered aristocracy. We are fragmented, scattered, slivers of a broken mirror that cast bitter reflections. We are children of a mad god. We are Malkavian.

Daniel's eyes snapped open. The shivering stopped. A faint heat, no more than a mirage, circled around the base of his skull.

You *know* what we are. You know the words, the keys to power — even though you haven't been taught, you recognize them. But you do not know why we are what we are, why we have been blasted with the curse of knowing.

You must learn more. A terrible time is forthcoming, when he — the creature and god in your blood, hiding in your mind — when he will again draw himself together. And you must be ready.

Daniel began to tremble again. Although the unlit road and its surroundings were little more than shifting shades of darkness, a greater blackness seemed to draw over his vision.

No. Not yet. You cannot know why I chose you yet. You must be ready first.

His fingers dug grooves into the ground.

THE BIRTH OF MADNESS

Our story, of course, begins with Malkav. Yes. *That* sticks inside your ribcage, catches at your throat, makes your stilled innards quiver. Malkav. The name of a god made flesh. The name makes you cringe. You and I and all of our brothers and sisters, even those who haven't been told what the name means — we all share a shudder when his name is invoked and it is all *his* doing.

Listen. We rarely invoke the power of Malkav's name; perhaps you know why already. It isn't for us to discuss *him* over cocktails as others might speak of Plato or Hitler. What is there for such as us to say? You might as well describe a hunger pang or a burst of half-remembered lust, because *that's* what *he* is. Part of him lives in you, deep back in that dark partition dividing your brain — that warm, wet throbbing that can't be addressed or reasoned with, only tolerated. The pulse that echoes with every word I speak, with every burst of imagery that flashes across the veins of our shared

understanding. I speak to you through him.

I suppose, though... I suppose he wasn't always that way. No, not at all. The dismembered god was once whole, after all.

MALKAV

The story of Malkav Our Father Our Blood begins with Caine. All our stories begin with Caine, damn it all. They have to. Caine was the first creature created with the shackles of human senses who then threw them off and gazed into the next layer of creation. Do you believe in Adam and Eve? Slaves, both of them. Do you believe in Lilith? More fool you. Do you believe in evolution? A clever story, but it cannot explain us, can it?

No, no matter what you believe, it must be that Caine was the first to place one foot in the grave and stand across the threshold of death and look on two worlds at once. Someone had to be first across. Was it indeed the first man to break the virgin earth and seed it and wait for his food to ripen? Was his name Caine, the murderer of his brother? Was his name Utanapishtim, the man cursed with immortality? Or something else?

None of us can remember; none of this saw this time. And it is... probably best that we don't. If his name were spoken, the power of it would cling in your mind and gnaw at...

No. Forget that. Caine. Call him Caine. He was the First.

The First was a beast of ashes, wet with blood, mad with thirst and grief. He was soulless, and he was alone. He was diseased, and he longed to share his disease with others, for he did not want to suffer alone. So he built a city, in lands that had yet to see the great waters of the Flood wash over them, and there he finally rested, and took three children to his bosom. In time, they too grew lonely, and they took children of their own.

Malkav... Malkav was more than a man in life, or so the texts say. The records are... conflicted, but there is a tiny thread of agreement that runs through them. Some fragments mention an angel, a messenger, a chosen one — and that is perhaps what he was. He was chosen to bear a vision given to him by his sire, or perhaps he was chosen *for* his vision.

The records become even more convoluted when discussing Malkav's sire. I have seen it written that his sire was Ynosh the Law-giver, who loved Malkav for his wisdom and seated him at the right of the throne as his vizier. I have read tablets proclaiming that Irad the Strong chose Malkav for his own, selecting a child of strong soul and heart to match his own strength. I have heard that Zillah the Beautiful saw a light burning in Malkav's eyes that matched Caine's own desire, and so she drew him near to her in Caine's absence. The songs of Malkav speak of love, and of thirst for wisdom, but they do not agree — they do not agree.

I think that, at the last, Malkav's sire must have hated him. Perhaps he knew that Malkav could see what was going to happen. A fragment of verse from Nineveh laid a trail that I traced back 300 years, and the collected shards hinted that one of the Three had taken one of the Thirteen, and was beating or torturing the child for something that the child had said... or refused to say. And that, according to this fragment, was when the Thirteen rose up against their sires.

The rest is... uncovered easily enough. The Three were cast down and destroyed; records are unclear whether they were obliterated outright, or if some of their children managed to drink their essences. And the Thirteen drew up a truce, and they dwelt one next to the other. For a time.

THE CURSE

Voices, more of them, rushed into Daniel's bones.

"... he/Caine cursed him/MaIkav, when that one defamed his image and doomed him to insanity, forever..."

"... Caine learned much under Lilith, but she did not teach him all she knew. When he abandoned her, in spite she went to the firstborn of his grandchilder, and told him a secret that broke him, that destroyed his mind and tainted his blood..."

*"... Behold my most foolish childer,
who claims madness for his pleasure.*

*Let him become mad in truth, so
that all may fear his company..."*

"... Then [Malkav], hidden from the sight of his siblings, drank deep of the hoarded blood of the Three. But it was too much for [Malkav's] veins, and his heart was like to burst. His eyes were opened, and the Truth rushed inward..."

*"... [Malkav] seized his parent in his hands,
hands that could break stone,
and he bit like a dog into the neck of his parent.
And [the elder] screamed like a thousand jackals,
Like the vulture that dies with an arrow in its breast.
Like the lion that slays its child,
And [Malkav] drew in the scream with his breath,
And he began to weep.*

*He wept for many nights,
And he wailed, and tore his hair like a woman..."*

When was the curse placed? Who struck Malkav with the gift of visions that burned? I would — I *have* given so much, and yet the answer, the true answer, continues to flutter out of reach. The memories of us all are tainted, washed

with fever here. Whatever event slashed into Malkav's mind, leaving this great, terrible, livid wound, it so scarred him that he could never tell the same story to any two of his childer. The only times the stories agree are when a childer's story agrees with his sire's, or when a scholar quotes the *Book of Nod* — but even the *Book of Nod* might not be true. Surely if any other of Caine's grandchilder had been with Malkav when the Sight struck him, they would have been stricken as well. The power of the thing...

The power of the Sight is the power of the world itself. It is more than a disease that runs in the blood — it is a connection to the chaos that pools in invisible places. It is the vision to perceive the world's true angles, to pierce illusions.

Many of the myths agree that Malkav had sired childer of his own before the Sight came upon him, and that as his blood burned with the fever, so too did theirs. I believe this. There are other stories — stories of Nosferatu and all his children becoming blasted of visage at once; of the nameless Methuselah offering the souls, or the remnants of souls, of himself and all his childer to the demons of the Pit; of the gnawing obsession that descended on Arikel and all her line at once. The powers that were loose in the old world could easily infect an entire bloodline; the Reawakening is just a side effect of —

I outpace myself.

The Sight, then, surely came on all of Malkav's childer just as it came on him, and each newborn that they Embraced since then also woke with it pulsing behind their eyes. Malkav's blood, wherever it might be, had been infected with a... closeness to the streams of madness that run through the world. The Sight affected his visions, in some cases making his prophecies more accurate than ever before — but it was a heavy burden as well.

MADNESS IN THE OLD TIMES

Count yourself lucky, childer, that humans have turned to small mercies in this time. They are proud of their learning, and like to make much of their compassion. In the Western lands, the madman is, if not tolerated, at least not sought out with chains and staves. A lunatic on the street, shouting the gospel of mother Moon, is ignored by his brothers and sisters. When they try to cure him, they do so with medicines and games.

Not so in our grandsire's time. The mad were not "diseased" then; they were "possessed." It was best, they said, to drive the demons from the body by flogging, or to starve the fleshly host so that the demons would grow weak and flee in search of a more fitting vessel.

Such was our lot. Many of Malkav's grandchilder were quickly slain if they wandered too far from his protection. The other king-childer of the Third Generation would have slain Malkav himself — but they did not. Perhaps Caine forbade it. Perhaps it was because the Curse and the vision that assailed Malkav also brought him closer to a few of them, and so Malkav was never completely alone. Truly alone, yes; but not completely.

BROTHER SAULOT AND BROTHER SET

A parable:

Two among the Antediluvians were Malkav's brothers. One was Saulot, who in life had loved his body and the bodies of others, and strove to perfect his immortal flesh. One was Set, who in life had lusted for eternity and striven to bestow eternity on his beloved ones, and strove to master his soul of night. As brothers they would come to Malkav, and would strive to console him, though there was no balm for his wound, no elixir to soothe his fever. So, failing in their ministrations, they would instead talk of things, of long nights and the frailness of kine, of life and death and the secrets that lay between.

And so it came to pass that Malkav would say things that angered Set, who would reply with harsh words, seeking to anger Malkav in turn. For Malkav would claim that all things would be revealed, in brief and contradicting glimpses, but revealed as true all the same by the mind and its perceptions, as a flickering torchlight illuminating a rough cavern wall. Yet Set would argue otherwise, complaining that only in the depths of one's soul would the truth be known, and that humans in their imperfections could perceive some of the greatness of the universe, but only through undeath could they perceive the things that remain unseen.

Finally, the two glared long at one another, and turned to their brother Saulot, and demanded that he judge between their arguments. Is the answer not, demanded Set, that man is wisest in the hollowness of despair, and ultimately finds his answers within his own soul? And is the answer not, countered Malkav, that wisdom comes from without, from the eyes that see too much, and ultimately from the mind?

And Saulot scratched at his brow, and he hung his head, and he admitted that he did not know. And he was shamed by that answer, for if the answer was not of his making nor in his possession, then surely would he hunger for it.

So then Saulot rose to his feet, and said, "Though I have no answer for you, I shall find one." So saying, he gave his sword to Set, bidding that he keep it for him; and Set in return offered Saulot a staff of thorn-wood, and wished him safe journey. To Malkav Saulot gave his crown, but Malkav had nothing to offer in return — so he bit into his finger, and drew an eye upon Saulot's brow in his own blood, and wished him safe journey. And Saulot, knowing that no safe journey could ever yield the answer, strode forth to the lightening horizon, and was never seen by Malkav again before Malkav was rent asunder.

THE METHUSELAHS

From Malkav comes nightmare. He had been given the power to create, but like all other Kindred, he could build

things only in his own image.

And with his own image broken from what it had been, and his eyes opened to things that his childer could no longer see, he knew that his creations were his no longer. They were no longer in his image.

Not one could resist him. Not one.

The blood we know, the gods and heroes and monsters of our kind — all pour from Malkav after his fracturing. Ask the ghosts of the land, listen to the seething pools of Malkav's mind, even question the eldest of any clan, and always you find the same answer. Those who came before were destroyed. Those who came after — are us.

He chose a number for his new children. We don't know which it was. It was eight, or 12, or 20, or 36. It was one of those. And his own childer did not exceed that number, for they were chosen one at a time and all together.

I fear — and you fear, as well, for you must — I fear when the time comes that one of his childer is destroyed utterly. For numbers are sacred, and *he* may awake then to rectify the count.

THE PLAGUE-BRIDE

Who do we know that are *his*? Only a few. One is named — without a name, but named — in fragments of lore and memory, a faraway voice that thrums from Mesopotamia.

She was smooth and fair and kind. She was a temple harlot who soothed Malkav just as Shamhat tamed the beast of the wilds. She cooled his forehead with water and oils; she brought him nourishment when he thirsted.

An old song that names Zillah as Malkav's sire claims that Malkav loved Zillah, and that he eventually joined with the others to destroy her. If this is true, then perhaps he saw something of his beloved yet ultimately unattainable sire in this sweet woman. And he took her for his own... and eventually, for such was his curse, he discarded her. Her mind was broken into razored shards by his touch, and he pushed her from him in regret — if indeed Malkav could ever feel regret.

But her story does not end there. There are many tales of our forefather rending apart his own childer in fits of rage. He did not destroy her in like fashion, though. I have touched drifting memories of her face, of her gentleness, and of her hunger. Her voice flits around tales of the Plague-Bride, the Methuselah who wears *his* fever like a crown.

It was Malkav's sweet harlot who began the creed of infection, you see. She loved our Father terribly, and came to love the portion of him that resides in her, and in all of us. And her sense of charity never dimmed.

She is the Plague-Bride. She appears in our stories and memories as a willing Typhoid Mary, bringing the gift of Malkav's disease to those she takes pity on, though her gift is sure to destroy them. She visits newborn childer at times, and dabs at their brows and eases them through the fit of the Becoming. I hear legends of Crazy Jane, and I wonder if the long-vanished Jane Pennington is the one responsible, or if Malkav's rejected bride is the one stalking our visions. As with all of Malkav's childer, we have never heard of — we have never *felt* — his bride's death.

NISSIKU, THE CLEVER PRINCE

Another was a creature of Uruk-of-the-City-Squares, a man who knew Enkidu the wild man and who kept court with Ninurta the warlike and Erra the pestilent. He was a being of great cleverness and humor, prominent among the Igigi, who ruled in the land between the rivers by night. Nissiku was his name, and his name meant "the clever prince."

The name was well-chosen — or perhaps the name chose him. Nissiku was born a trickster, or so it's said. He was a charlatan who feigned oracular ability, or perhaps he was a nobleman who enjoyed playing at fits of delirium, or perhaps he was only a madman with the gift of charm. The songs are so vague, but they agree on too many things...

He came into the family; he was one of the first. When he drank from Malkav and was reborn... perhaps he drank too deeply. His Sight reached beyond reality, and his too-clever fingers were able to follow. I hear tales of the Clever Prince reaching through the skin of the world and drawing forth the cold, sharp-edged things that lie beyond the soft, loving mirage. Malkav abandoned him soon after his rebirth, it's said; I wonder if the father didn't see too much of himself in his childer.

A thousand names and faces bob like flotsam in Nissiku's wake. I hear the Gangrel mutter "Iktomi," and I think of Nissiku. I hear the Nosferatu grumble the name "Malk Content," and I think of Nissiku. Iktomi, Malk Content, Devil Hanse, the Babylonian, Fool-Eater, Old Man Hate — they all catch at the same memory. I am certain that the Clever Prince has survived to modern times; though I have no proof, I can feel the moth-winged brush of his laughter on the back of my vanished neck. Somewhere out there, he is quietly walking to his next destination, his eyes fixed on the back of his next target's neck, ready to seize the Lie with both hands and pull it apart, releasing whatever is straining at the boundaries. He has work to do.

THE EATER

Names. Always, it returns to names. *Malkav* — the name of madness. *Caine* — a word for a monster whose name is the name of the greatest curse ever spoken, a name so terrible it would blister your flesh worse than the sun and devour your body with hunger should it ever catch you.

Consider yourself lucky, childer. We are blessed among the bloodlines, for to us names have less power. A thing that has one name to the whole world may have another name to you, or to your cousin. We are more free from names, from being one thing at all times, from being logical and sturdy and imperishable. To be dependent on names such as the others are, that is a weakness.

One of the childer seized upon that weakness, you see. The power he stole, that he ascended to, that he *devoured*, was the secret of eating names — of swallowing them entirely and feeding on the power they grant. He could eat the

name of a person, and that person would falter and die, and everything that lived in that person *he* would digest and incorporate into himself.

I *know* that this story is true, for I have heard him. Sometimes, in the silence of the mind that comes on you when you search for a precise word that you cannot quite remember, you could hear him. I did. Others did. We heard him, far away, chewing on things that become forgotten; heard the scrape of teeth like knives against the paper-skin of names.

I haven't heard him in years. Perhaps he caught me listening, and withdrew to continue his feeding more quietly. Perhaps he sleeps now, digesting the power of a name that we should all know but now cannot recall. Perhaps he tried to devour a name too great or wicked for him, and choked on it. There's no telling, of course. No finding him until he chooses to find you. For of course, when he learned this great secret of eating names, of biting chunks of reality itself free from the world and gulping them down — the first name he must surely have eaten was his own.

THE SEVERING OF MALKAV

Again the dry voices began, fluttering with brittle paper wings.

"... Though this city was as great as Caine's, eventually

It grew old.

As do all living things, it slowly began to die..."

The Chronicle of Caine speaks truly here. Cities *are* living things, and they grow sick over time. The Second City had taken ill, and the poison in our blood, in all 13 bloodlines, bore fruit. The rulers of the city grew restless, and their kine were slowly maddening under the burden of service. Long cracks grew in the heart of the city... and finally the heart broke. It broke because once more, a child had risen up to devour her sire.

And then there was war.

Such a smell, of blood spilled out, wasted, glutting the earth — of fires burning with fat and skin and hair and dried bones — such a smell, and yet...

The memories are... fleeting, frustratingly vague here. No complete, whole images of the war haunt the weavery. The records do not agree if the Ancients made war on one another, or if the kine rose up against them, or if at last a third party such as the Moon-Beasts cracked open the walls. The Thirteen fled, each in a separate direction. Never again were they to sit and drink with one another; now they were rivals and enemies.

It was in this flight, near the city of Petra, that Malkav was lost.

Daniel's world winked out. There was a great, vast, hollowness — and then the world returned, and the voice with it.

We cannot say whose hand it was that stretched forth and caught Malkav as he fled. Was it one of his brethren — Set, perhaps, or a jealous Toreador, or perhaps Assam experimenting with murder for the first time? Was it the angry Children of Seth? Or the monsters that have since sunk beneath the land in slumber? Impossible to say, for anyone who might have been with him was caught alongside him, and...

He was caught, and he was torn by talons, slashed by bronze knives, torn by teeth. His blood poured out upon sand and stone, for whoever it was that caught him feared his blood, and that which pulsed within his veins, and they were afraid to drink it. But they took his flesh and they pulled it asunder, and then they took the gobbets of his body and drowned them in rivers, hurled them into the ocean, buried them beneath stones.

Of course, anyone literate in the tales of Egypt will tell you that you cannot truly kill a god in that manner.

No, Malkav did not die. His blood pooled within the earth, and it surged with life. I am told that his children came to the rock where he was hacked apart, and they lapped up his blood, and carried it with them. And somehow, he gestated inside them — somehow he gestated inside *all* of them, all of us. His mind, broken and scattered, took root in the minds of his childer. His nerves, no longer made of tiny fragments of flesh, link those of his blood one to the next.

I have seen this story only in tales, in visions and scrawled ravings. But the tellers often, *too* often end this tale by proclaiming that Malkav's flesh was never touched by the light of the sun, and thus he can never be truly destroyed. This much I believe — for I could feel him within me when I had a body, and I can feel his touch on my fringes now that I do not. He has not left.

Remember. This is a tale, a legend, a myth. But that does not make it true, and that does not make it untrue. This is a story that was carried to me on the murmurs of ill blood, echoed by black humors. This is a story that pools within you. Remember.

THE GROWTH OF THE CLAN

And that was it. One brutal act, and no longer were they — *we* a tight-knit family, a handful of children and grandchildren clustered at the feet of our patriarch. Our grandsire, focus of all we knew, was gone: torn apart and scattered. We could no longer rely on our father-god's protection, and many were soon destroyed. This was a pattern that would haunt us forever more — if ever it were possible to choose childer by whatever whim took us, it was no longer so.

And at the same time, the loss of Malkav gave birth to the Family Malkavian. Without a demigod to hide behind, without the central guidance of their — *our* sire, the Methuselahs rose up as demigods in their own right. One giver of law became eight—12, 20, 36?—and each lawgiver begot lawgivers of his own, each bound by the demands of the tyrant within his own skull. The mirror was broken; the shards vomited forth countless reflections. They heard voices;

they followed their visions; they Embraced childer, and they allowed their childer to roam where they might. It was time to go where the humans were — everywhere the humans were.

THE OLD CITIES

More than any other, we are creatures of the cities. I have said before that cities are living things. They are. They beat and pulse like living minds — the streets mapping the neurons, the folds in the brain, as riders and pedestrians hurry like impulses from one place to the next. And the older a city becomes, the madder it grows. They are our places.

There was room for the family in Mesopotamia, along the Mediterranean and in North Africa. The strong grew fat, and the starvelings found what they could. The ones who came before, the ones fresh from the mouth of Malkav and his childer — they squatted outside the beerhalls of Uruk, they wrapped themselves in smoke and watched Sennacherib heap skulls like small white hills, they drew forth shivering secrets from the minds of the priests of Memphis and Thebes. They sang strange tales of the Pandavas in India; they let their shadows fall across the banquet tables of Persian princes. They were few, but they followed the humans to wherever they chose to build cities.

Greece — Greece is a place that beats in our memory. There the kine began to paw at the mud in their eyes, to delve for the truth hidden from them by their lying senses. They cast about them, staring at the universe with new found eyes, questioning the walls of reality itself, wondering if perhaps the Normal, the Visible was instead the Lie. Hippocrates began stalking illnesses within the body, and he even went so far as to suggest that the root of consciousness resided within the brain. It was... I believe it must have been a great temptation to kiss the greatest thinkers of the time with the Sight, and to see what would have come of them. But this was a moon-touched land, where many of Caine's get congregated, and where.. other children of the moon also hid in her shadows to catch prey. There would, logically, have been no opportunity.

We were few then, still the grandfathers and grandmothers-to-be of the clan, but ah! We were terrible.

Who were they — who were we then? There was Cybele, she who wore the earth as a blanket and drank up the blood of her faithful as if it were rain. The Dionysian, too; he claims to have been part of the Eleusinian mysteries of the time, guiding the populace in their rites to return Persephone from the Underworld, although he has been repeatedly known to lie. Lamdiel, the sunblind yet all-seeing prophet, stalked the baked and lifeless wastes so near to Jerusalem. With the strength of the fever burning in their limbs and the wisdom of the Sight shining in their eyes — they were terrifying.

But there were other, older things in the world as well. I have heard faint vibrations, shadows of their shifting coils that shake the earth. You may have heard them turn in their slumber; you may yet hear them do so.

Older things in the earth. They are mentioned in frightened cries that echo along the Cobweb, cries that tell of our flight from North Africa.

I wish that I knew more about the exodus — I fear the knowledge, but I crave it nonetheless. I have heard that in Carthage, a small family of Malkavians vanished, into Baal's fires, it's said. I have remembered that stragglers trickled out of Egypt, muttering in the tongue of nightmares. Their shrieks spoke of something that came on us, that sank bloodied teeth into our skulls as if to devour our diseased minds. Was this — this ancient, this beast — was it something that hated us for our perceptions, that feared that our sight might be enough to pierce its veils? Was it one of the eldest among us — one of Malkav's own, striving to consume all our infection into itself?

I do not know. Nobody I ever spoke to knew. The scrape of long nails in the dark, a soft keening in the back of the throat — we have nothing else of our pursuer. Or pursuers.

The family fled Africa. Few would blame us.

ROME

Of course, the family could not keep themselves from Rome. As I said, we are creatures of cities, of the living stone minds. Rome was an orderly mind, a great mind, with a hint of decay lingering in its alleys. The elders among us felt delight in walking the streets, tarrying as they would, watching Rome blaze with thoughts of whatever it is cities dream of.

Perhaps Rome dreamt of blood.

The smell of blood and smoke choked Daniel's nostrils He rocked back and forth, trying to gag, but his body refused to go through the motions.

The name Camilla surfaces again and again when I dream, or watch, or pry into the time of Rome. Camilla... the prince. His hands were iron—well-oiled to keep the rust away — and his law was the same. But Camilla was sufficiently clever to keep some of the family close to him, and to allow them such freedoms as they required. Like all good princes, he required soothsayers — would that Julius had learned from his example. So we prospered, and we were allowed to take many childer, and so we did. The family did... quite well for itself in Rome.

Whatever a vampire, whether battered on the blood of nobles or lean and hungry as a Colosseum leopard... whatever a vampire wanted, the Empire provided. The citizenry was as strong and flavorful as one could ask from any city full of kine, and more were shipped in from the provinces every night. It was... there are impressions of comfort, before the flashes of ruin begin. It began to chafe only when the kine and Kindred alike became too content in their laws and ways. And... and that was nothing that patience wouldn't cure. A change was due sooner or later.

CARTHAGE

As word continued to cross the Mediterranean of the city the Brujah and Hassam's brood had built, a grave fear

settled on the undying of Rome. Fear... or envy, perhaps. Either one would have been... was enough.

Carthage... Its name drips from the lips of every patronizing Brujah elder who counsels returning to a covenant with the kine, and every rigid Ventrue elder with warnings against the infernal. Over two thousand years have passed, and still they remember Carthage. If was more than a private scuffle between rival clans, rival princes. It was the first of the grandchilder's wars against one another.

Fear, and envy. They clutched at the vampires who nested in great Rome. They pulled at withered hearts, and slowly the premonitions of a terrible conflict drew so thick that even the blindest of Cainites could make out their *smoky* outline.

Eventually, the Prince of Rome went to a seeress named Tryphosa, who was one of us. Camilla believed greatly in her powers as a sibyl, as well he should have; her sight reached farther than any other's. She received him in her decayed hall; she scabbled in the dirt, searching for patterns, and finally she spoke to him.

"Woe to you, Camilla, if you remain within your walls and strike not at the hive that is Carthage! There the father's mouth drips with the blood of his children, and the children's hands are stained with the flesh of their mothers! Their gods of Baal-Haamon, Tanit and Melkart demand the lives of Seth's children, offered up unto the flames! Overturn the stones, for if one remains atop the other, then they shall grind out measures of blood that shall drown even Rome itself!"

Her words are all we have. As deeply as I reach, I cannot find her vision itself; perhaps it is mired in the darkest recesses of the weavery where only the eldest's reflections endure, or perhaps it was burnt away with her death.

But her words were enough. Camilla struck as though he strove to destroy Gehenna itself. And the carrion crows of the family Malkavian flew behind him — not before him.

The exception, as I have heard it told, was the Dionysian. If the fragments have it right, the Dionysian came to Carthage long before the war was ended. He may even have entered the walls before the wars ever began. But it was almost certainly his power that bled from one wall to the other, setting loose the furious passions of kine and vampires alike. His was the power to bring an entire city to not — and he used that power. The defenders of Carthage became maddened and frenzied as he walked from wall to wall, and ultimately they fell.

We watched the siege-fires burn; we took food and childer from among the people who had been made slaves, and we rested on the rubble like carrion crows when his soldiers had finished.

And perhaps, Tryphosa was content.

Not so Scipio. The leader of Rome's forces was a... a strangely cunning man, one who gladly attacked under a flag of truce when it suited his purposes. His perception was, perhaps, unwelcome at the last. For, as he stood heartsick and weary by burning Carthage, he gazed out over the tumbled, bloodied, burnt stones and murmured to himself, "And someday Rome."

His observation somewhat flies in the face of the presumption that mortals are by nature blind.

DEATH OF AN EMPIRE

The kine were populous, and close-packed, and arrogant. Their sickness was breeding quick and strong; it was far too late to lance the boil without releasing a plague. The empire of the wolf-son was doomed, and its doom was writ on the faces of Tiberius' line.

Those of other... bloods look at us and think they see patterns. Malkav's infection quickens in our veins, and madness festered in the lineage of the emperors; so, they reason, Caligula and Nero and all their kind must have been intertwined with us. They see the pattern, yes, but miss the weave. The crazed emperors and tribunes and soldiers — or had you thought that only the royalty of Rome was fevered? — drew us, but we didn't need to compel them, at least not on any grand scale. There were... games, yes. But it is too simple, far too simple to claim Nero and Caligula as ours. Far truer, I believe — I half-remember — that the others scabbled desperately to keep hold of the dynasty, only to watch the corrupt, crazed old fools fall away from their hands and into the net already woven by the mere presence of our family.

Caligula. The human blister. He was the first sign of Rome's end; the first of their dynasty to openly challenge the Lie, but to do so without any vision. He was blind, and his blindness was contagious. Nero and the fire were another symptom of the slow, cancerous descent; the year of the four emperors was a third. There was life in the old government yet, but it was waning quickly. The nest of Cainite shadows squabbled to regain control, but their quiet wars were, in the end, but another tumor in the increasingly cancerous empire. The Call beckoned to the family again and again many a time during Commodus' bloody time on the throne, and we quietly watched as the army broke down. More than two dozen emperors dead in a mere five decades, and all but one slam outright! Oh, a spark of hope lit the Patricians' eyes when Diocletian and Constantine almost, *almost* seemed to have the empire in hand — but no. In the end, it was all useless. I can still taste the futility... like wet ashes resentfully clinging to the tongue.

A few mournful cries echo in our history, lamentations of the final gathering in Rome. The fall of the great city, I have gathered, was cause for a conclave, but it was one that drew a poor fate. The Malkavians who answered that final Call were slaughtered while they held court, seared by fire. Perhaps rival Cainites who blamed them for Caligula, Commodus and the rest finally caught them to enact futile vengeance. Perhaps there were... wolves among the Vandals. That portion of the Cobweb is burnt and dark, and whatever they gathered to achieve, guard or hide has vanished from our knowledge.

THE LONG NIGHT

As Rome's fires burned out, I believe... I have gathered that some mourned. Some who were outside the family, that is. To think...

They must have been crocodile tears, I imagine. Yes, the sprawling feast of pleasures and resources had all been eaten. But a new time had come on the land. Those who were clever enough to run across the land and find other cities, new and old, the growing, living things dotting the face of the Earth — they became kings, and sometimes even gods. I'm certain the bitter mourners eventually cried themselves out and left their hermitages to join the long time of prosperity that followed.

Prosperity. Not quite the correct word. The Church had power, and it stretched out its long arms to bring its bans to all corners of the continent. But in the shelter of its shadow, our race did well enough for itself.

What can I say of the Long Night? This was my time; my age. It was a time that belonged to all of us. The proud grandchilder of Caine ruled dominions in whatever manner they chose, answering to their sires and none other — if their sires were to be found. There were a thousand domains across the land, and a thousand lords to rule them. I... A lord could make a simple gesture, and kine would turn on their brothers and sisters and children. He could whisper the slightest command, and the torches that lit the night would gutter and die at his pleasure. He could call for his horse and hounds, and the hunts would ride through forest and valley, the blood of our... his prey shining black in the swollen moon's light.

It was... a time when vampires were free to kill as they saw fit. And in times such as that, there are always repercussions.

THE DEATH OF BROTHER SAULOT

It is said by some that Malkav foresaw the death of his beloved brother, Saulot the Wanderer. I... I cannot see for myself. The Babel-tongued cries that come from the ancient age, those that speak of him — they can reveal only so much. If ever our father-god spoke such a prophecy, the words he used have burned to ash and scattered. And yet... and yet, I find it easy to believe that Malkav *did* see death on his quiet brother's brow.

Some of our... histories, our memories, speak of the children of Ceoris. They were a quiet, secretive lot in their infancy. Their eyes burned when they touched our flesh, but they never stared for too long — they were, after all, merely younglings, and we *are* very frightening to the young. Instead, the clever creatures scented out the tracks of our mendicant great-uncle, tracked him to his bed — a bed where he'd lain inviolate, untouched by the hands of any other bloodline — and then they proceeded to devour him.

Or perhaps they were devoured in the process. The records are... vague, and the voices conflicting.

It seems a contradiction, and yet... I wonder. A few of the echoes speak of Saulot in words and impressions that flood me with unasked for thoughts of the Eater — echoes of Saulot as a devourer, a thing that could feed on the very land itself, or perhaps even on souls. It would seem appropriate if he could devour souls. He was so very hungry for enlightenment.

And the childer from Ceoris? His hunger entered into them, and... and it may be that it has continued to gnaw away at their insides since then. There are... flickers in the Tremere's auras that are inexplicable, even invisible to most. It makes me shudder to think of it, but I cannot help but believe that whatever hunger it was that Brother Saulot had... picked up on his journeys to the furthest East, now our newest sibling had absorbed it in full.

That is why the crime of Tremere and his childer never drove us to war. Though Saulot was almost like family to us all, the family abstained from siding with the Gangrel and the Tzimisce who were howling for the Usurpers' blood. Some joined in the battles, of course; but for my part, and that of a sibling or three, we wrapped ourselves in shrouds and sat on the darkened Carpathian mountainsides, witnesses to the savage bloodshed and nothing more. I... we felt would have been presumptuous to condemn the Usurpers. Creatures of insight that they were, Tremere's brood were in fact the ideal heirs to Brother Saulot's legacy. They are what he would become.

I could be wrong, of course. I could always be wrong. And yet, if the Tremere were really meant to be destroyed for their affront, shouldn't they be no more than a memory by now?

THE FIRST CRUSADE

God willed it, or so they said. God willed them to rise up and recapture Jerusalem from the Muslims. God willed them to leave their homes and wander barefoot into death. God willed them to slaughter Jews in the Rhineland as an appetizer for their war. God willed them to sack the Holy City and violate its people.

If God willed it, then perhaps there's some truth to the story of God willing *us* to be as well.

The fall of Jerusalem in 1099 — the city's screams echo in our minds even now. The bloodshed, the rape, the madness — it all cut bloody stripes into the land itself. And like spilled wine, Malkav's blood, his madness, ran into those channels and pooled there. So much blood, so much insanity — yes, the very earth shrieked out, and we heard it. The Call had come, and we came to see.

The others, children of other clans, they saw us flocking there. To this night, they claim that Malkav himself must be buried under the Holy Land, and that his dreaming, blinding fever is the spark that ignites all the ills of the region. They are... ignorant, foolish even, in believing that Malkav's reach is so limited — but it is undoubtedly a sweet ignorance for them, so it seems only compassionate to leave them there.

PLAGUE

Have you seen, in your dreams, the age when a third of all Europe died?

A choking stink of rot, of unimaginable putrefaction mixed with the smells of sweat and shit and vomit blasted out of the darkness, swirling in Daniel's mouth and nose and stomach. He tried desperately to vomit, but his body didn't seem to remember how.

I... I am sorry. I did not mean to call forth so much...

No. You should know. The plagues that blanketed all the world we knew — they may yet come again when the moon bleeds and the earth cracks. They came twice already; the numbers demand a third. You should know.

Remember — there are connections, patterns without as well as within. The plague of the 14th century was more than death. It infested the spirit of the kine as well as their bodies. It drove them to flog and flay themselves, mortifying their flesh in the hopes that their penance would stir mercy in the heart of a pitiless God and move him to stay his pestilential hand. It drove them to turn on their neighbors with staves and blades, punishing the outsiders among them for the supposed crime of poisoning wells. It drove peasants to turn on their lords and masters like rabid dogs, only to be savagely put down in return.

Such is the nature of pestilence. Should the third plague come during your time — and I cannot believe that it will not — it might not ravage your body. And yet... it might, if the babbling of my sire is true, and a pestilence which will blast and mortify the flesh of the unliving waits below the earth to be unleashed at the time of Gehenna. It may be the curse of Nosferatu himself...

No. Listen. If the plague comes, you may... you may remain unharmed in body. But the poisoning of the spirit which comes on the kine is far deadlier. I lost servants, companions and even a childe during the Black Death; he drank from a human maddened by the plague, and the fever caught in his brain and drove him into the sun. We are not immune. We deserve to be afraid.

THE ANARCHS

...And after the plague... yes. The second wash of fever.

Younglings are so convinced that they know so much. Even if their eyes are sewn shut, they are sure that their youth affords them a clearer perception of the world around them. That — *that* was the anarchs. Still-cooling childer still learning where best to bite their prey. They shouted to the world that they would tolerate no more of their elders' laws. They pounded one another's backs, congratulating each other on their perspicacity. And they stretched out their hands to us, sure that we angels of illumination and fervor would come and join their side.

We are not a faction. We are not a political unit. We are the Family Malkavian. And never... never have we stood as one with any group or individual, living or dead, since his death. Never.

Remember that. Your own cousins will strike you down and feast on your vitae should it prove necessary, necessary as they see it. The ties that bind us are inescapable; they do not compel our loyalty nor our fraternal obedience, merely our... intimacy.

So. So that is how it ran back then. Yes, there were cousins and nieces and nephews and childer among the anarchs. Yes, there were elder aunts and uncles who looked at the rebels and saw an irritating itch that demanded scratching. But many of us looked at the anarchs, looked at them from the front and from behind and from the sides and from above and below, and we saw an accumulation of angry young Cainites who were pouring all their faith into an empty sack. We — I say *we*, because I was there, and I did my work alongside others of the family who felt as I did — we tried to take them by the heads, pry open their eyes and show them that their sack was *empty*.

I... I have no better words for it. Forgive me.

And... they reacted angrily. They called themselves betrayed. They complained of our hypocrisy — *they* complained of *our* hypocrisy — and warned us to confine our attentions to the elders.

That, of course, stirred the fever within me... us. If there is one thing that I — and we — cannot tolerate, it is the belligerent idealization of ignorance. One cannot exist for years with the Sight and remain generous toward the willfully blind.

If written in a textbook, the following years would likely be summarized by some well-meaning historian as a conflict between our family and the anarchs. If you were there, however, it was harder to see such a unity of purpose. How much more difficult it would be for mortals to piece together the larger picture! A thousand separate yet so similar incidents — a mild visitation of visions in Cologne, a more vicious prank involving fire in Bonn. Gradually — *too, too gradually* — one anarch after another began to tabulate all the tales of Malkavian... criticism they'd heard. One in particular — a filthy Gascon — spat blood and brought a stable down around his ears when he realized just how much energy he and his colleagues had spent on what was, after all, a very small rivalry. Had he survived another three years, he would have been even more livid to see the next thing that came to pass.

The Camarilla.

I could not see the threads in the pattern then. I couldn't know just how unified the family was then, or why. Even today, I cannot tell for certain. Perhaps it was merely coincidence, a natural resentment for the anarchs' devotion to blindness that many of our family shared. Perhaps there was a group of elders, or even a Methuselah, who sent waves of gentle guidance outward, convincing much of the clan to act as one.

I will never know, for this is where the Tapestry becomes scarred and pitted by fire.

THE BURNING

At last there came a time when the humans would have no more of us.

Fire flooded Daniel's nerves; his back snapped taut as a bowstring, and he tried to shriek. But there was no air in his lungs, and he couldn't think to draw in more.

Vampires had ruled the night for far too long, and the kine no longer believed that they had anything left to lose. They rose up against all of us, and suddenly the family found itself at the front, with nowhere to hide.

Our suffering was... biblical. What Inquisitor could tell a case of demonic possession from a broken, babbling mind? What Inquisitor would care? The most harmless of idiots were sent to the fire along with the most diabolical of killers. Where once we'd quietly hidden among the broken outcasts, now we were in dire peril. The madmen and madwomen burned, and we burned with them.

The Cobweb, the nerves of Malkav — that was all that saved us. Voices of damnation hurried along the winds of the night, whirling in our ears, calling out premonitions of wood, iron and fire. Had it not been for Malkav's gift, we surely would have been destroyed. But panic filled the weavery, and as it came on us, it compelled us to run. It saved us. Some of us.

And yet, for its charity, the Tapestry burned. Whenever one of the Family, however young, was burnt upon a pyre, one of the weavery's threads snapped forever. Elders died in dungeons and at stakes, and as each one vanished into ash, his scream seared a great wound into the Cobweb. We sobbed at the pain; we tried to hide, but we could not escape the pain that filled our blood.

We needed to adapt, or we would die.

BIRTH OF THE CAMARILLA

It was impossible to miss the stench of fear that arose from our kind, all our kind. The smell mingled with the smoke of the fires, the incense, the sweat.

Something happened then that very few of us could see. Even I had to piece together the story many years later, and it took as many years to do so. As the elders, in their panic, struggled against the Inquisition in any way they could, and their abandoned or sacrificed pawns began to congeal into the first of the anarchs, a few of rare vision gathered together with a new idea. The new idea, of course, was unity — but you likely already understand how reluctant we undead are to accept the concept.

I can imagine the first meetings. Such terrified creatures, demigods with their temples tumbled down around them, vicious as cornered dogs, forced into each other's company for survival. I wonder just how many "diplomats" died, were ground to dust to mortar the Camarilla's bricks. It must have been a great many, for the Camarilla — the mighty Camarilla — nearly failed. The elders involved were splintered and sharp-edged, and had little reason to trust one another. And because our get, our cousins were so often easily rooted out and sent to the fires, we might almost have been excluded from their cabal of secrecy. Yes, the last of our line (barring *his* childer, of course) might well have been thrown as a sop to the Church, destroying the family, the Tapestry, all of it.

But it is always a mistake to underestimate the insight granted by the infection.

UNMADA AND VASANTASENA

A faint scent of spice, mingled with the smoke of burning dung, floated around Daniel's shuddering form...

They came from the Orient — a holy man and his exquisite disciple. He was a Brahmin, a seer who nightly mortified his dead flesh to gain wisdom. She was a rajah's daughter, a woman with fires burning behind her eyes. They acted of an accord, whether it was that of father and childe, of soulmates, of lovers — or something greater. They were the ones who called us together.

The two came among the great and terrible of our family, untouched by the thorns of their hosts' fevers, and spoke with them as cousins might. Their words were sweet and bore their vision well. No Western vampire outside our own fallen bloodline could have reasoned with us Malkavians half so well; they cannot understand our very language, they do not see. But Unmada and his childe carried the taint within them. They understood us, and in turn they brought us to understand them. The family drew closer together because of their words. The elder Lunatics of Europe came quietly to the lords of the other clans, and they offered their support. The others were... hesitant, and understandably so. They feared to clasp hands, lest the filth-smeared razors of our Sight slash them and leave them burning with our disease. But better to have the Malkavians with them than against them.

As I heard it, there were... anarchs who watched the new found unity of Malkav's get and were filled with scorn, or perhaps fear, and they swore they'd have nothing to do with anything we had chosen as our own. And yet, blessed be the light of inspiration, for many others heard of our pledges of support.

Perhaps they reasoned that if even isolated, fractured monsters such as ourselves were convinced of the situation's gravity, then there was no other recourse.

An oath of blood and fealty, and it was that simple. The Camarilla was born. The mad cousins of Clan Malkavian, the despairing philosophers of Brujah, the desperate Toreador and Nosferatu, the wild ones of Gangrel, the very much hated Tremere and the faltering Ventrue. A hundred years ago, and the meeting halls would have run with spilt vitae and eddies of ash — now desperate times had forged an alliance such as our midnight world had never seen. As the "Founders," as you will hear them named, called on the Giovanni and Lasombra and Tzimisce and Ravnos to join with them, a sort of... optimism was born. A kind of hope that this new pact would not only preserve us all, but in time offer

us full control over the kine once more.

Of course... it would have been too good to be true, and such things can never be real.

THE CONVENTION OF THORNS

I was there. This I saw.

Know that for the Camarilla to survive another decade, it was required to catch the anarchs by their withered balls and bring them to heel. War — war in earnest this time, organized steel-hard and knife-sharp. The Camarilla's lords set out a hunting, their hounds at their heels. They scented out the anarchs' spoor and tracked the rebels back to their strongholds, capturing all they could and butchering all they cared to. After... some years of this, the Founders had seized enough of the anarch and Assamite leaders — for the Assamites had been shedding blood and bringing death, too, but this had too little to do with what you need to know to drive to go too much further into this — that they could force a halt to the chaos. The shadow war was all but over, and the only thing left, in quaintly mortal fashion, was to dictate the terms of surrender.

The gathering took place in a tiny English village named Thorns, and the agreement was named for Thorns, and it grew barbed and sharp by nature. Names and patterns, never far from one another. The elders drew up their treaties and offered them to the anarchs (and, yes, Assamites, but as I said, that... matters less). Of course, the treaty demanded that the anarchs bond themselves by blood to the elders. The anarchs had little choice but to agree; they certainly could not expect someone to speak for them.

And yet, someone did. Maybe it was pity that drove her; maybe it was, as some say, enlightenment. But Vasantasena stepped forward and condemned the Convention and its treaty. When the elders prepared to enforce the blood bonding of the rebel anarchs, she stepped forward to address the fledgling Camarilla once more.

"We are a wounded people, and this agreement is no balm to soothe us. This is a thorn in the heart of all Kindred."

The words, born of a different voice, rustled deep behind Daniel's ribcage. The prick of the thorn touched at his own heart, and the lump of dead muscle in his chest almost fluttered.

That is what she said. That, and much more. She spoke of bloodshed that would beget more bloodshed, and the need for mercy that would beget more mercy.

I was there. I saw it all.

When she finished her speech, blood staining her cheeks and wrists, the elders among the Camarilla looked on her. They did not smile. Cold... the bonfires still burned, but all Vasantasena was offered was cold.

Some say that she vanished from the Cobweb, then and there — that nothing was ever heard over the weavery from her again. I refuse to believe that she could sever herself from the chains of blood; she must still be bound to the Tapestry somehow, however faintly. But she has abstained.

She withdrew from the council, and did not speak up again. But — and this much I did not see with my own eyes, but I caught the shadow-scent of something on the wind on that night — Vasantasena was, after all, a rajah's daughter. She would not be so easily denied. She crept into the dungeons where the anarchs were being held, and she chose a band of disciples from their ranks. They followed her on her flight as best they could, and —

And, yes. They joined with the Lasombra and the Tzimisce, and they were among the first of the Sabbat.

CLAN HERALDRY

Although the fact is not well-known (some might say "suppressed"), the conventional symbols that represent each clan were chosen, long ago, by Malkavians.

The first of these was an autistic child from Styria, a boy named Pelinka. His sire, Daguienne, took him before his fifteenth year, presumably from pity. Then again, it's entirely possible that she'd already known of his unusual savantism before she drained his blood and gave him Malkav's gift.

He was unlettered and mute, and might have seen a knight's shield twice in his life. But he could draw — from memory, it seemed — marvelous symbols that would have made any scribe weep with envy. His sire gave him paint and paper and ink and blood, whatever he required, and in return Pelinka drew up manuscript illuminations and coats of arms as resplendent as any king could commission.

Finally, as something of a curious jest, Daguienne asked her childe to draw up her own family's coat of arms. His answer startled her. As she looked on the device in question, she saw nothing of her own personality reflected there — instead she saw images that reflected her, her sire and every Malkavian she'd ever met. Somehow, Pelinka had seen her *true* family by watching her, and had tapped into the symbology of her shared wisdom and madness.

Of course, Daguienne couldn't let an opportunity such as this pass her by. Half of a mind to try a prank and half-consumed by curiosity, she gave her childe an exacting challenge — to draw up coats of arms for each of the clans, as a series of "presents" to her elder allies.

Daguienne visited him once a night for 12 nights, and each time he had a new design for her before sunup. Without ever meeting a Brujah, Pelinka produced a badge of war and broken chains. Without ever seeing even the crudest representation of Egyptian art, he drew a cartouche with unholy Set inside. Each time his sire described a clan in even the most cursory terms, he tapped some unknown font of knowledge and symbolism to produce something appropriate.

When they were all completed, Daguienne took the collection with her to a conclave of elders, and presented it as a whole to the assembly. They were largely delighted, and although representatives of all 13 clans weren't present, those that were present agreed that even the clans in absentia were well represented. The only one who took the heraldic

devices personally was the Toreador, Rafael de Corazon, who didn't care much for the idea that a Malkavian had produced a work insightful enough to challenge the work of any of his own childer. But public opinion wasn't with him, and Pelinka's creations were soon popularized throughout much of the clans.

Pelinka's designs finally fell out of popularity after the Convention of Thorns, for the split between "loyalist" and "*antitribu*" was so bitter that few vampires liked having any reminder of their clans' failed unity. It wasn't until much later that at another conclave, another Malkavian decided to mark the seating arrangement with a broken mirror here, a wilted rose there, and so on. But that's another story...

THE SPLIT

The agreement may have held, but it could not compel goodwill from beasts such as us. Each childer of our line within the fledgling sect was reminded — scarred — that we were only barely tolerated by our brethren. In some ways, the hatred was almost worse. Now that the Cainites were forced to become the Kindred, to work more closely with one another in the interests of maintaining the Masquerade, many elders who might previously have let a Malkavian be instead found themselves arranging the Lunatic's demise.

Our history is filled with memories of Malkavians who dared too much. The weavery is filled with shallow slashes, wounds remaining from the Final Deaths of foolish neonates. Few elders appreciate a prank that forces them to reexamine their place in the patterns of the world; none of them appreciates a prank that is done poorly. Remember that. A prince of Macedonia — I could not uncover his name — was targeted by a fool of our blood, a fool who went too far. In return, the prince gathered together all the Malkavians he could find in his domain, had them hurled into a well, and then poured fire down on them. For centuries afterward, we shunned Macedonia.

Word passed from one great-uncle to another, and eventually it was decided that some sort of gesture might be required in order to gain further goodwill from the others. We pondered the matter in whispers and visions, all the usual methods of family communication, until finally we came upon an answer.

Now. Some thought that the *anritribu* developed their powers of infectious insanity as a response to the violence of the Sabbat. Perhaps some still believe this, but they must be much fewer since the... stirring. Others now believe that the Malkavians of the Camarilla deliberately forsook their deeper connection to Malkav's power, letting the delirium atrophy within themselves as a gesture of friendship — that they cut themselves off from this power before joining the Camarilla.

They, too, are wrong.

It was a sacrifice, you see. Many of our elders decided that the Camarilla offered a better chance for survival. And for them to survive within the Camarilla, it might be for the best if they were somehow to... dampen the virulence within themselves.

So that is what they did.

The history of the other clans fails to record the two months in which most of the Malkavians of Europe simply — weren't to be found. They left their haunts and havens to go on pilgrimage, following a great Call that led them to Domazlice. There were so many of them, too — for the elders had sent out the Call, and few could resist hearing it

The elders — they were strong and wise and terrible.

A wash of heat... a high-pitched, discordant tittering... the slick grating of teeth... firelight and hollow whispering...

The Dionysian had shed the earth he slept under; his laughter drew us to the revel. Addemar, wrapped in his hermit's robe, scowled down on the gathering. Tryphosa rocked back and forth, whispering riddles into the air. Brude's pale skin glistened with sacred patterns and holy script, and the Black Hag squatted in a pile of bones, drawing her teeth across a scarred, fleshless femur. And amongst them all stood the wise one, the mortified one, the Easterner — Unmada.

Six Methuselahs.

Daniel cried out noiselessly.

Six Methuselahs. Six. A great, merciless power, swollen between them, taut and bloated by their proximity. Their fever hung in the air, and it would have flayed any mortals luckless enough to attend the gathering. They pulled at the fabric of the world to release a Call that all of us could hear. Then they gathered their might, drew down the power of the flow of Malkav's splintered consciousness...

Daniel, half-conscious, rocked back and forth as invisible, relentless waves crushed him.

...and they changed us.

They *changed* us.

They set blocks in the minds of all the Malkavians gathered there — and it was nearly all the Malkavians in the world. Nearly.

Some... some, of course had resisted the Call — and some had been set apart. We could not renounce the fever entirely, you see, only some of the gifts that spring from the fever. However, we could not let those gifts die. Some of us, the strongest among us, had to retain the Sight in full. And whether they'd been deliberately chosen or had avoided the Call entirely, the unchanged joined with the Sabbat. Those who were altered, who'd received the blocks, joined with the Camarilla.

And...

And the others never really noticed the difference.

Impossible. It still seems impossible. The crushing weight of their power, the pain... it still seems impossible that we could have concealed this, that we could have forgotten for so long. And yet, *they never noticed*. If the Camarilla "true-

bloods" tended to use their gifts for more subtle... less splintering effects, the outsiders, in their remarkable blindness, simply presumed the reason to be a newfound taste for subtlety — *subtlety* — nothing more.

With that great work completed, the bloodline was preserved. The greater portion of *us* would have better odds of survival until such time as our gifts were needed again, and the smaller portion with the greater Curse would be able to survive if necessary. Eventually, most forgot that the gathering had ever happened at all.

Still, it would probably be best not to be too confident in any one explanation. A few of us share a trickle of doubt — the thought that it may have all been a tremendous prank on the part of Unmada and his childe. Perhaps they are waiting somewhere for us to strike our brows and cry out that we've finally gotten the joke.

In the end, though, whimsical or not, it was an impressive prank. The children of the Sabbat proclaimed themselves the heretics of the clans, the "anti-clans," the creatures dedicated to the downfall of their very progenitors. And they accepted without condition that the Malkavians who joined them were also "*antitribu*," also rebels — just as the Camarilla accepted that the Malkavians who joined them, apparently free of the infectious qualities that plagued so many of their brethren, were the "true" descendants of Malkav.

And now the jest is revealed. We have yet to see if our distant cousins have learned anything by it, however.

THE GREAT PRANK

The feat of replacing Dementation with Dominate, nearly clan-wide, was certainly unprecedented — only the Tremere's curse on the Assamites is comparable, and that involved sorcerous rituals such as the world hadn't seen. It certainly wouldn't have been possible without the presence of the Cobweb linking Malkavian to Malkavian.

Even so, it's entirely possible that the six Methuselahs credited with this work weren't sufficient to work such a massive change. Certain Malkavian apocrypha hints that perhaps the great reworking succeeded because one — or possibly even more — of the Fourth Generation invisibly lent their power to the Methuselahs present, in order to insure success.

The other theory, a theory that is never repeated aloud, is that Malkav himself sensed the six's efforts and *willed* the change to take effect. But this theory is kept very secret, for its ramifications are terrifying: one, that Malkav has such power even in his current unverifiable "lost" state; two, that he might have been *conscious* at the time; and three, that he could work such a tremendous change in all his childer while still dreaming. The implications of the last possibility... well, if true, then when Malkav wakes, the entire clan is *his*.

AFTER THE INQUISITION

THE RENAISSANCE

I can... imagine that the Kindred were somewhat surprised when the Inquisition's fires finally guttered out, and the vampires drew back to draw a... figurative breath, and they suddenly noticed that humanity had become most interested in bettering itself. Down in Italy, Petrarch had started asking more and more questions about his country's past, and... and suddenly popes and princes and emperors were all interested in the answers.

I mention the Renaissance... not because it was an important time to the family, but because our more distant relatives as a whole linger over memories of the age, savoring them like a soup bone. The elders who played at sophistication sharpened their fangs on Machiavelli, and discovered that this interesting Alighieri person had been composing some poetry. Most remarkable — most *frustrating* — of all was the incredible way that they began to claim that they'd been involved in these advances all along — as if they'd been sipping vitae in Boccaccio's studio instead of cowering under bridges, hiding from Inquisitors.

I would grind my teeth at the thought, had I teeth and a jaw left to me.

There was something that... left marks, scars on the family in this age, though. The institution of the asylum had gained a certain amount of... popularity by then. It almost seemed as though every fashionable city was in need of one. Cudgels and whips and chains — the medicines of choice. For those who could not see the Normal for the fractures in their looking-glass, the preferred means of treatment were a healthy flogging to drive the ill humors out, and then a prolonged stay in a filthy cell.

The childer of Malkav taken during this time... well, there were those who had never seen the inside of an asylum, and there were those who had. The privileged among us — of the time, of course — were artisans, visionaries with strange preoccupations of drawing forth art from the Sight. They were almost popular in the courts of the princes as something of a novelty. If a childe was selected from the ranks of the refined, then she was welcome to sup nightly with the other luminaries, regaling them with her off-kilter songs of a world beyond the vision of even the greatest thinkers of the time.

The others... the others were savages. Like the worst of the previous age, the ones who were first to burn in the Inquisition's fires. They saw little of princes' courts and Elysia; they skulked amongst the dirt and blood and filth, alongside the more unfortunate mortals of the time. More than a few became shadow-killers, daggers in the hands of their elders, a neat tool to provide an ending to a particular gentlemanly intrigue. Some of them were disposed of when they became inconvenient — others were... kept. I believe they are still in use today.

THE DEGENERATION OF THE "ANTITRIBU"

So if the Camarilla Malkavians were the "real" *antitribu* of the clan, and the Sabbat's own were the "true" bloodline, an interesting question arises: Why are the Sabbat Malkavians so fucked-up? Were the Malkavians prior to the split just as psychotic and deranged; do the "*antitribu*" represent the purest state of Malkav's bloodline?

The answer has something to do with the Sabbat itself. The traditions of the Vaulderie, the Rites of Creation, the suffering of each human at a blood feast — over time, the practices of the Sabbat have fed the Malkavians' madness until it's grown beyond what the clan once was. Too much of a good thing, really.

In a way, this means that neither line of Malkavians in existence today is fully of the same blood as Malkav's own childer; both are in their own way *antitribu*, even with the resurgence of Dementation among Camarilla Lunatics. But then again, given the virulent nature of the clan, who's to say how many times the bloodline has changed from sire to childer?

And then again, it's entirely possible that among the Inconnu hide the "truest" Malkavians of all...

THE NEW WORLD

Were you born after a mortal set foot on the moon, on our moon? Then you cannot conceive what it was like for the kine when they suddenly saw past the walls of what they *knew* and discovered that there was *more*.

Europe *shook* with the news of a whole new land, of immensities beyond their imagination. Oh, and we trembled with excitement as well. Our shared blood boiled into an excitement that hadn't been seen since the Inquisition. It was as if we'd been sharing a small jest, and suddenly all the world was in on the secret. Humans had dared to walk where the dragons were, to look at what they thought they knew and see something else entirely, waiting there for them. To some of us, the worlds they had been seeing all along had suddenly taken physical form. There *was* a world beyond the senses, beyond the immediate.

And waiting there was death.

Impatient and reckless, a few of us chose to follow the first colonists. The new country beckoned them, a place with so much more to see and touch, and new people to whisper to and pry into. And the temptation was that it was safe, a land where a few vampires could be the lords.

They were right. No vampires awaited them. But the New World was not lacking in wolves.

Very shortly thereafter, we resolved to wait for the cities.

MOB RULE

Come the latter half of the 18th century, human hate and frenzy was calling the madness again, and again the madness pooled in France. Starved kine sliced tender flesh, tore out hair and nails, raping and killing and mutilating and finally executing whomever they could catch — who was born into the upper class, of course. And with that pooling came the Call once more, and we descended on Paris. I was there. I fed well on the corpses that littered the streets, on aristo and peasant alike. I watched the primogen of Paris flee like dogs, and I helped myself to everything they'd left behind. Eventually the fever lifted, and the country returned to... propriety, to order, to the Normal. But the scars are still there. Something of us — of *him*, even — remains in the City of Lights, and perhaps Gehenna will bring it to the fore once again.

Subconsciously, we — or one of us with superior will — must have decided that it was a superb time for a conclave. Quite coincidentally — of course — a Parisian doctor, amidst all the chaos, resolved that perhaps the poor wretched lunatics under his care might do better if they were allowed some more freedom of movement. He was right, of course. As the Reign of Terror proved, lunatics are much happier and much more sated when allowed to run free for a time.

THE 19TH CENTURY

"...webs of smoke and steel will smother the heart of the land amidst flames as the people cry out in their labors..."

Faster and faster the wheels seemed to turn. When news of the New World had flooded the courts, the world had suddenly seemed so much larger — now humanity was doing its best to grow into the world. Fury and energy and excitement, cities bloating with mortal life even as other mortals carried the seeds of new cities off into the wilds. The boundaries were being set, and the kine were resolved to fill them.

The childer of the Sabbat and the Camarilla began a dirtier, more energetic feud in the American West and in Mexico; it was only a taste of the bloody wars that drifted in shadow only a century into the future, but their viciousness was... notable at the time. Cousin fought cousin for a space; I felt the deaths of three of my own close relatives, slicing into my consciousness as the Cobweb's strands vibrated. But we were fortunate; we avoided slaying one another *en masse*. There is no long-standing truce between the "tribu" and the "antitribu" — don't be fooled by my account — but an unspeakable, persistent instinct hangs with us, an instinct to preserve the strands of the weavery. Logic, of course, dictates that one never knows when a cousin's insight might prove useful — but when logic fails in the face of something *greater*, the instinct is sometimes all we have.

The Industrial Revolution thrust itself up from the ground like an iron oak full-grown overnight. Cities swelled like cancers, like boils fat with oil and smoke and rust. Again, the elders of the other clans were ill-prepared for the frenzied changes that came on the world. Twenty years was no longer an idle time to sleep and outwait a generation — it was enough time for the world to change anew. I could not give a number to the vampires, scions of all the clans, who found

themselves taking more and more children, simply to have thralls who could explain the latest technological and cultural developments to them.

And with the swell of the cities, the lost, abnormal and insane had even fewer places to go. The village idiot had it fairly well off — at least his community was small enough that the residents felt a responsibility toward him, and they might find themselves inclined to listen to his observations now and again. Now the population was too large and too busy to let the touched wander where they would. The world was mad for building institutions — prisons, hospitals, and of course asylums. It was simply necessary, or so they reasoned, to put the troublesome and dependent... somewhere else.

And then, of course, the Dix woman brought the asylums into the public eye. American, oddly enough; who would have guessed that an American woman would change so much where the finest European physicians left off? She was a schoolteacher and a nurse, and finally she decided to be a reformer. Oh, it wasn't as casual as my words might imply — the woman did teach Sunday school to female convicts, and thus she discovered how easy it was for the state to throw criminals and madmen into the same prisons in order to remove them all from the public eye.

She was somewhat unlike the crusaders of previous ages; she actually managed to do the family some good. Her asylum reforms proved beneficial — largely — for diseased humans, to be sure. But her insistence, her advocacy of the notion that the mentally ill required an environment all their own for proper treatment, swelled the number of inmates in each asylum. As each one was refit, it was soon filled to capacity and often beyond.

This proved... convenient, for those of us with interests in the asylum business.

THE AGE OF VICTORIA

But in England, a strange collection of years had begun, a peculiar time that stays in the heart of the Kindred. Even today, the kine, with their books and moving pictures and nightclubs — even they recognize Victoria's time as a time when vampires emerged into the greater picture, if only, they presume, fictionally so.

Most assume this is all due to a single book. No. Sensationalistic fiction cannot explain the vibrations along the Cobweb's strands that hum with the fevers of the time. It cannot explain why the collective host of vampires, creatures from every clan, lick their chops to remember the Victorian age. It was a vampire's time in fact as much as, more so than fiction. It was a Malkavian's time no less.

First, you must understand that the kine burned — quietly, and furiously, like furnaces hidden in the basement. They had taken the Normal to their breast, and they had nursed it and fattened it until it bloated. The Normal demanded that the kine wall off the animals within them, that they submit themselves to the cold, stony caresses of order and propriety.

Remarkable.

But deceive themselves they did. They did their best to wall off their animal sides under a back-and-plaster facade of genteel calm — and went astray only when they were certain that the Normal wasn't watching. And when they chose to secretly break from the acceptable — they did so with such fervor that the fever caught at them, played around the edges of their beings like ashes swirling around a fire. The poetry of Rossetti, Tennyson, Swinburne; the writings of Wilde and Pater — mere shadows of the passions that burned beneath the marble like Victorian breast. The pressure... like a stopped teakettle. When the cracks started to appear, and the emotion began to leak out — it was remarkable what the kine would do to themselves, and to others. This is why we remember the time. This is why it sings to us.

So many cracks, fractures, breaks... Spring-heeled Jack did his bloody business, and so many Kindred were convinced that because he was clever and quiet and obviously mad, he must have been one of us. There was a token blood hunt called on a caricature named "Lord Fianna," but it never amounted to more than a sweet little gesture to pacify the drawing-room infants.

God had died, or so Nietzsche claimed. The universe was revealed as a cooling corpse, or so ran Clausius' theories. The bones of great dragons were pulled from the stone, vast and ancient things from an age that common sense — and you know that *common* is often another word for *worthless*, with the blindness that...

An age that common sense claimed could not have been real. And so many, so many mortals decided that the things they saw, the bones of the great beasts, were placed by a God to impede their vision, to test their faith in a world invisible — that the *true* way was to disbelieve their senses, their very logic, and follow what they *knew*.

If I believed in a God, I would believe in that one.

Remember this: When Nietzsche died, he was largely considered to be deranged. The laws of propriety rule that a mortal man cannot stray too far from what is acceptable and still be... sane. Despite the knowledge granted them by the transition through death, our distant cousins are still in the grasp of propriety. They still believe that our infection, our Sight is a frailty — that by outstripping what is Normal, even for our kind, we are somehow broken and useless.

Do not believe them.

Finally, the wheel turned again, but not, perhaps, for the better. It turned to mark a century of wildness, growth and fever; the one last century we had remaining to us. The one last century before... Gehenna.

The words were carried on a rustling, trembling, cold wind. Panic clutched at Daniel, and his legs began jerking. His fingers scraped for purchase, but caught only soft, yielding things that pulled apart. Invisible hands clamped around his wrists, his ankles, his dead heart. He struggled, desperately trying to break free, to flee into quiet darkness, but the grip was unrelenting

Hold on, damn you! You have to hear the rest!

Hold on!

Hold on, Daniel!

He stretched open his mouth and strained, but the scream wouldn't leave — it just squatted in the back of his throat, choking him

MODERN NIGHTS

So many changes, in a mere hundred years.

An eye-blink after man created mechanized wings, he was using them to kill. Barbed wire, poison gas, machine guns, shrapnel — the dying cried out in anguish, and their cries echoed across all of Europe. The Cobweb shuddered.

Desperation blossomed. The gold-paved streets of the United States tarnished, and the ribs of the Western world cracked. A world that had thought it had outgrown famine and poverty learned otherwise. As the poets noted, a great hollowness had crept into the heart of America, and it devoured what it found there. Many of your cousins today were taken in this time; sometimes we deemed it a small mercy to liberate them from the demands of their hungering flesh, and sometimes we were drawn, moth like, to the power of their desperate emotion. I have. I had a childe myself from the Depression.

I wish that the part of me who remembered her had not drifted away. All I recall is her thin, pleading face.

Such a short space of time... Even as America fought to rebuild itself, to solder its cracked spine whole again, the pulse of the world beat faster. I cannot fault the New World, or even the elders of the land, for failing to recognize what else was coming.

A small man took power in the Old Country, a small man who might have seemed most unassuming if you met him casually in a cafe. He, like us, was easy to underestimate. When we saw him for the first time, we feared him, not knowing why. We counseled our brethren among the clans to keep well away from this man and his circle, for their hands dripped with blood yet to be shed, and their eyes were lit with a madness that we could not rein in. And when the tanks rolled forth and the slaughter trains began to run, we cried out in terror, afraid that his fever, a fever with the power of a demigod, would catch us all alight. We feared for ourselves, for we knew that we'd been proven right. To our Sight, it almost seemed as though Gehenna had begun.

Once more, the Call came — but it was a broken, many-throated voice. So many slaughterhouses, so many lost lives, so much suffering... it was too much sensation, and it burned like the sun. Rather than flock to Germany, we fled. Madness pooled there, but only the strongest could walk amongst the monsters already gathered — the human monsters — and survive.

When the war finally ended, it was in a merciless blast of light. A pillar of white... the sky tore apart, and the earth below... it seemed the beginning of the end, the beginning of Gehenna.

If you were human, you could believe that the sign was premature, for a near-lifetime has passed between that burning and tonight. But you are immortal, and a decade is like a pulsebeat, and you can see.

REAWAKENING

For a few decades, our communal worries were at ease... somewhat. The world kept turning, more swiftly than ever before, and humanity exploded in fertility. The cities grew thicker and denser and madder than ever before, and it was really all we could do to keep up. Technology spread like an epidemic across the Western world, changing the way people lived their lives every few years or so. None of the Kindred could see the teeth of Gehenna as they began to close.

There was something of a backlash against institutionalization later in the century. The fever to reform was burning again, and once more the conditions of asylum living were dragged into the public eye. The asylums, now, were not the only targets — halfway houses, work-release programs, and so on, all flourished with the new desire to "normalize," to bring the ill-adjusted and unstable back into the "mainstream." Citizens demanded more from their institutions, and not all of those institutions were able to comply. So the criminal, and the retarded, and the unstable began to trickle onto the streets — and it was an interesting thing, adapting to this change.

The true measure of the kine's compassion was taken once the inmates were disgorged from the asylums. Still unable to fully fend for themselves, the mentally ill were shunted into boarding houses and nursing homes, where their caretakers were... much more lax. Those that were less fortunate found themselves on the streets, or in temporary shelters — and there were quite a number of them. In the early 1980s, an American president decided that his country was spending too much on mental care, and so released further waves of the unstable onto the streets. And the madness bred and multiplied.

The outsiders didn't react so well to this. To their way of thinking, every half-wit stranded on the streets was another potential resource for our family. They began to suspect our bloodline of extensive preparations to expand our power base drastically. More than a few princes and archbishops quietly sanctioned their underlings to feed as freely as they liked from the homeless and mad — not only would such people not be missed, but it would hopefully undercut the "grand Malkavian plan."

Given all this paranoia, it must not have seemed quite so coincidental to them when the Reawakening came.

1997. It was if all our minds were so much heaped dry tinder, awaiting a fire. That was when the connections came alive. The conditioning blocks secretly placed after the Convention of Thorns so long ago came loose. The madness flowed from mind to mind, opening the secret eyes in each one. Where the infection had merely lain dormant in the *Camarilla antitribu*, it now burst forth in full bloom.

We tell those in the Camarilla that it was the fault of the Sabbat "*antitribu*" that we were affected with this plague. Those few in the Sabbat who noticed any change at all demanded much less explanation. They already look on the family as almost contagious — and rightly so, it seems. Just another outbreak of disease, brought back under control easily enough, that's all. And that's all they need to know.

Why did the Reawakening come on us? Perhaps it had something to do with Malkav shifting in his bodiless sleep. Perhaps Ravnos' death-scream was so sharp that it reached back through time to caress us all...

Yes, Ravnos. You remember.

THE WEEK OF NIGHTMARES

Do you remember?

A gibbering howl from a thousand throats...

... wet, tearing noises like sodden, spongy bones pulled apart...

... cries of ape-throated demons shrieking themselves raw...

... flashes of fire burning against eyelids, outlining a giant of sooty skin who slices nine of his ten heads away and devours each one...

... the stench of blood and butter sizzling in the depths of a bonfire...

Do you remember the Week of Nightmares? Do you remember the reports of hurricanes in India? Or is it your own fevered dreams that linger with you?

The demon god of lies woke hungry in far-off Cathay, feasted, and finally died. When he sprang from the earth, he was thirsty for the blood of his own, he was boiling with fury, and he was mad. Such insanity and such thirst; his shrieks for blood echoed in all of our heads, and we fled from him. The creature we name "Ravnos" had awakened, and there was very little anyone could do to resist his horrible nightmares.

We clutched at our skulls, and we cried out for release from the nightmares. His fever — an echo of his fever — burned across the Cobweb, touching each of us with licks of heat and fire. How much worse his own grandchilder had it, for they died in each other's mad, bloodied embrace. At last the cries and the visions and the pain ended, and we shook with fear. *You* shook with fear. Nobody needed to explain to you that something terrible had happened.

The Antediluvians are real. One of the Thirteen woke, raged, feasted and finally died, and all his get died with him.

You didn't need any explanation.

You know what is coming.

GEHENNA

"So, too, our Grandsires will rise from the ground

They will break their fast on the first part of us

They will consume us whole"

The time grows nearer and nearer still. The hideous eye has opened in the heavens, and its awful red light colors our sight. We see crescent moons everywhere — for we are the Clan of the Moon, after all — and wonder which one marks the last Daughter of Eve, and which are deceptions planted to mislead us. The blood runs like water, and the potency in it withers. The time is upon us.

We are haunted by visions. Not a night passes that cousins do not wake from their day's slumber streaked with bloody tears, crying out against the prophetic nightmares that have come on them. The visions catch at you, too — I could never have found you if you weren't marked. Our curse has come on us a hundred fold in these Final Nights, for we are the ones doomed to see what is coming.

The Prophet of Gehenna — he warned of all this. And now he is fallen, eaten, subsumed. The time is coming.

He was blessed with the vision of Octavio, who saw. But alas, the memories that he carried were lost with his Final Death. He was extinguished, and his visions guttered out — they have vanished utterly from the weavery. When we arrived to bear his dust home, we found some of his last scrawls, a few scraps of foretelling that he'd hidden within his writing —

But they are incomplete, and the prophecies that remain are in the possession of a child of Set.

And as you can see, the patterns are whirling and clicking like gears; and like gears, they fall into place once again.

This is why I chose you. This is why you had to hear all this. You must be ready. The Ravnos were not ready, and they were devoured. The others are not ready, and they will be devoured as well.

You must see the patterns. You must learn from what has come before. You must be able to look into the future, and to divine the final signs. You — we — we have the Sight.

You cannot look away.

At last, he uncoiled; his stiffened limbs cracked and fought as he pulled them free of himself. His mind was a boil; his movements were strangely, smoothly precise. A faint pulse of heat, some half-remembered ghost-fever flickered in his forebrain. He flexed his fingers reflexively, and was only somewhat aware of the odd stickiness that clung to his skin; a portion of his consciousness then noted that he was greedily licking the still warm fluid from his hands.

Daniel sat quietly, no longer himself. Like some form of fleshy mantis, he meticulously licked each finger clean, then daubed the remains of the blood from his face. Then he lurched to his feet in one swift jerk, and then, like a drunken puppeteer's marionette, he staggered away.

CHAPTER 2: INSIDE BEDLAM

If you find you are falling into madness — dive.
— Malkavian proverb

I keep on dreaming during the day. I thought that was supposed to stop — not that any of the others ever talk about dreams, so I don't really have anything to base that assumption on other than a little common sense. At least, I think it's common sense. I'm 20 years dead. I shouldn't have dreams.

But then again, it's not like I can really call what I... we do during me day "sleep." Sleep is a restorative. You're supposed to wake up with more energy, but that doesn't happen unless...

That's the part that bothers me most. When the sun goes down, I can usually feel it. Partly it's the return of my strength, however much of that I may have; mostly it's the hunger. Waking up hungry... it hasn't gotten any better with time. But even when what's left of my innards are clawing at me, I think that's better than when I wake up around midnight or so, and I'm not hungry at all.

The others keep saying, at least when they think I don't hear them, that everyone in my... family is insane. Mad. I've never thought of myself as insane, not when I was alive and not when I became... this. But it's so hard to be sure. What happens when I'm dreaming? Am I actually awake, and doing things I can't remember?

Are they right?
Am I insane?

THE FAMILY MALKAVIAN

Saw Fitzgerald, of all people, last night. He looked rather better than he has any right to, all things considered, but there was something around the comers of his eyes. I can't really say what it was, but it felt... strange. I can pick a killer out of a crowd from 20 yards away, and I'm used to smelling that on Fitzgerald; it's just in his nature. But this extra something didn't seem like his nature as I'm used to it; it was like a bad spot in a potato, or a touch of blight. Probably something he just picked up over the last several years — God knows I've changed myself, and plenty. It still makes me uncomfortable, though. I know I can't trust Fitzgerald very far, and even then only on family matters, but this new wrinkle is... disturbing.

It was a stupid idea, all things considered, but I ended up asking him about dreams and whether they were something I should be worried about or not. I thought he'd blow me off, but he actually sounded pretty interested. Maybe I told him more than I should have, because by the end of it all, he'd kind of guessed what I was getting at, what I wanted to know.

Go to the heart, he said. If there's any sort of disease in the blood, you'll only be able to find it at the heart of the family.

So that's what I've got to do. I *think* I'm sane. I don't believe that my rationality was stripped from me when I was turned. Anything that's happened between then and now is no more or less than what's happened to any other of our kind, blood relations notwithstanding. If anyone's seriously, provably mad around here, it's our elders, and that could be senility as much as anything else. So I *think* I'm sane.

I'm a little frightened, though. I know I'm not depraved like Becker or Drew or whoever Ringall's friend was back in Waterford. I can see how Fitzgerald or Pearl might be a little touched, but they're not really any worse than most of the withered things that flit around in Elysium or the local Rack. But there's no telling how old either of them are... they lie, after all. And I know that there's not a Kindred among us who wouldn't stoop to slander, so it's not like I have to believe those stories about Malkav's blood — but I have to wonder.

That's a good sign, though. If you question your sanity, that's a good sign that you're probably sane after all. I can't remember where I heard that.

THE EMBRACE

Start at the root. That's the sensible thing. Find a pattern.

Unfortunately, it's so hard finding patterns here, when you're talking about the family. Most of the rest don't like talking about their... their Embraces. Some have a different story every time you ask them. So it's hard to see where the common threads lie.

What little I could get to come together came together in Philadelphia, where I managed to get into Pack's mind for a while. He was crystal clear after a few sips, much more so than for any of those self-proclaimed "sane" clans it's been my misfortune to associate with.

I wasn't happy to hear about the "reality busters" at all. I'd never met one myself, but the fact that they were out there explained a lot. These creatures, for whatever reason, are textbook stalkers. They select their targets a long time in advance, then systematically start rearranging their victims' (yes, *victims*, there's no need to kid myself here) lives. Maybe they start by rearranging their victims' apartments. Then they graduate to hypnotizing friends and relatives into temporarily acting strangely or forgetting about their prey. Inducing hallucinations isn't beyond them, either. Basically, it's like *Gaslight* all over again, only the point is to somehow soften up the victim for the Embrace, to get them "used to" their new reality or something. Sounds like bullshit tome. That's probably how Becker and Pearl got their hangups, come to think of it. Pack didn't know where this tradition got started — I hate to think of some would-be guru starting

this whole movement, and then instructing his childer to do likewise. No wonder so many other vampires think Malkavians are insane. They've seen these assholes' work.

Then, too, there's the fact that we sometimes work in groups. I have no idea how usual that is — if the Brujah or whoever have "coming-out parties" for their new childer, I've never been invited. But I've assisted in — what is it, four? — sirings over the years — never providing blood to the infant, of course, but always there for moral support, extra muscle, whatever. It seems right; after all, an Embrace is a family event. But look at the patterns — is that a common habit, or specific to us Malkavians?

Wait. Largely unimportant, either way; that's just methodology. Motive, now — no patterns at all, not that I can see. If there are any, I'm sure they're not specific to our bloodline. I've heard about cults of enlightenment — isn't there a better term? — and how they keep on trying to focus on our supernal perception and such. But how's that any different than those Tremere freaks? Everything else — well, as near as I can figure, it has to do with advancing a sire's specific agenda or cause. There's no overall agenda to the family; if there's some sort of conspiracy among our line, I haven't been notified of it.

...Even then, there was the part when Pack began talking about "the infection." It was a strange way of putting it, too; I mean, you can't just accidentally make a vampire. I've never made one myself. There's nothing contagious about it. About us.

Still, he was completely convinced. If I'd focused hard enough to look right through his face and down into wherever he keeps himself, I'm sure I'd see the same conviction. He's absolutely sure there's some kind of disease in us, and that we can't help spreading it along. He says sometimes we deliberately help it along. And that attitude bothers the living hell out of me.

I mean, when I was Embraced...

Hmm. Strange.

I've got to start sleeping better. I can't tell my dreams from my memories right now.

BEFORE AND AFTER

The *Book of Nod* claims that Caine forbade the Embrace of "those who are diseased, insane, or full of ill humors, or they will taint the Blood." The Malkavians, of course, ignore this tenet freely. On the other hand, they don't always flaunt it.

Basically, it doesn't matter whether or not a candidate for the Embrace is mad beforehand or not, neither from a rules standpoint nor from the clan's perspective. The Curse is the Curse, and all Malkavians wind up in the same boat. Sometimes the derangement you had in life is the one you wind up with in undeath; sometimes it's replaced by another affliction, and sometimes you retain your previous dementia and gain a completely new derangement post-Embrace.

The most obvious example is that of mental disorders that stem from chemical imbalances or other problems that just don't exist in the vampiric body. If a vampire's endocrine system doesn't work at all, it would make sense that any side effects of a damaged endocrine system wouldn't manifest in an undead form. However, sometimes such a disorder remains after the Embrace; whatever mark it's made on the person's intellect is apparently quite deep. These disorders can take a very different form in a vampire than they would in a human; for instance, a pedophile in life might become a Malkavian with an almost Ventrue-like compulsion to feed only from children, or a strangely passionate jealousy that drives him to assault vampires who somehow "threaten" children.

The practical upshot is that the Lunatics who were clinically insane before they became vampires tend to suffer a little more than those who were sane before the Embrace, but that's really neither here nor there, is it?

THE GNAWED

I wonder. Was Pack talking about the ones who come through... wrong?

I should've thought of them sooner, I suppose. I'd kind of written them off as failed experiments; I mean, I'd seen two of them birthed and dragged away, and I suppose it's no wonder I didn't try to think much about them afterward. Sometimes the mind just doesn't make it.

If there's some kind of latent disease in us... Kindred, then maybe that's how it comes through. Those two poor bastards... The girl in El Paso, in particular. She just kept shrieking and shrieking, even after we'd fed her. For hours. And she fought like the devil, too. Strong enough to lift me off my feet at least once until we secured her better. And she just wouldn't stop — she just screamed and screamed, even while Fitzgerald stood across her and stared into her eyes, and I could feel his mind reaching out from where I was.

"She's Gnawed," he said. "Nothing left but bones." And me, I didn't ask any questions. I held her while he drove the stake in, and I helped load her in the van, and I watched him drive her off.

Funny. They took the kid away, too. I asked then if he needed to be put down — how would a catatonic feed himself? — but no, just a shake of the head for an answer.

Where do they go? I'm afraid to ask. It would be all too easy to drain them dry once more without a prince ever finding out, and the corpse wouldn't be any different from a mortal's. For whatever reason, someone farther back along than me must need them as they are. Maybe they're kept as private feeding stock for elders; I know that I've been tempted by the smell of another kin's blood. I keep getting these flashes, though, of great pits with iron bars, part zoo cage and part asylum. The thought of those psychotics' cold hands clutching at stone, thrusting through the bars,

pleading for release... and why would they be kept there, and not killed outright, if someone wasn't planning on releasing them someday?

My imagination's kicking up something fierce. It's my fucked-up rest cycles. If I'd ever seen such a thing, there's no way I'd forget it.

GATHERINGS

The Call came tonight. I didn't need that; I have too much to figure out already without having to spend time with the rest of the family in this city. In whatever city this is... it's so damn hard to tell at night, from the ground level. And my dreams keep fucking up my recollections, so I'm no longer sure which city came first and which came second.

It wasn't the first time, of course. I mean, it wasn't the first time the Call had come for this gathering. I'd heard it a week ago, faint like an echo, about a thousand miles away. I was already on my way, though — I didn't come here for the gathering, I came here on my own business. But the Call came again in a few days. It was louder, of course — loud as whispering gets, but louder than that cobwebby sound it was before. And tonight — again, still whispering, but practically in the same room. I mean, comparatively; I know it isn't actually in the room, it's in the blood —

And it would have been a major breach of etiquette to miss the gathering, but I went because I didn't want to hear the Call fluttering continuously all night in my head. If the gathering's on in the city you're in, you can hear the Call all night — probably it's reinforced from having six or 10 or 50 of us in one place at one time. I understand some of us — Ringall, for instance — can ignore the Call, or don't hear it as loud as I do. Lucky bastards.

Becker was the one who'd called the gathering. Which, of course, meant we were in St. Louis. Funny how I just remembered that — how it becomes easier to remember cities by who's in charge rather than the landmarks and the food. Hadn't seen the Gateway Arch yet, and of course I don't eat. So. Becker.

Never any telling what's going to go on at a gathering, and this wasn't any different. Ran for at least an hour without any direction, before Becker started addressing us all. At least nobody obvious from any of the other clans showed up. Yeah, yeah, I know the spiel — anyone who wants to come and open their eyes is free to come get an eyeful — but I just don't feel comfortable with some half-decayed Nosferatu or swish Toreador looking down their nose at the family.

I wonder how much goes unspoken at these meetings? Sometimes it seems like the gatherings are called for no point whatsoever, except for a few of the older ones to contact each other and plot in full view of the rest of us. Mindgames, played with the family. When we are called on business purposes, it's usually some crusade or another — show this prince the other side of reality, smite that anarch down for his trespasses, drive these mortals completely bugfuck.

Funny thing is, I don't think I've ever seen one of those crusades voted down. It's like only the interested parties would ever hear the Call in the first place, but I know that's bullshit. I've disagreed with the crusades myself now and again, really. Heaven only knows why I wound up going along with them. Self-preservation, I guess.

St Louis has its share of freaks, too. At least it's not Philly.

THE CAMARILLA

In trying to discover exactly what I am, I seem to be uncovering quite a lot of what I'm *not*. Um... that doesn't really make sense, but it's hard to...

Right. Back to the basics. I've spent almost all of my nights in Camarilla cities, and that's hardly surprising; most of the family has wound up in the Camarilla, after all. It's really not so much a matter of choice for most of us, I think; I mean, you don't get to choose which sect your sire or grandsire sided with back in 1400 or whenever it was.

They sort of... seem to like it there. It's not for me — sometimes I just get that itch at the back of my skull when I've been in one place too long, or the dreams start getting a little worse, and that's a sign that I've just gotta *go*, y'know? — but the system seems to suit 'em. There's a lot more talk about human endeavor, art and thought and the like, in the Camarilla — stuff the Sabbat just doesn't seem to appreciate, or so the stories go. People are more receptive there, at least to open discussion. Question the prince and there's still a good chance he'll mark you down in his ledgers as a potential challenge to his authority, and with that usually comes some form of retribution. But at least it's not guaranteed.

I don't know if it would be fair to say that the Camarilla trusts Malkav's line. Most of the vibe I've gotten is that they would rather have the family working for them than against them. It's not really much of a matter of trust; it's an arrangement of practicality. I imagine we're much like the Tremere to the rest of them — not someone they'd prefer to have on their side, but with talents that they can use.

They sure don't like Malkavian princes, I'll say that much. It's probably that same damn prejudice toward some imagined "infirmity" — but a Malkavian in power is presumed to be nothing more than a figurehead, ably manipulated by someone behind the throne. Oh yeah, but we're too unstable for even that; we can't be trusted to jump any which way, so we're not even any good as puppet governors. Bastards.

It sure is amusing when the occasional family member takes power and does a good job of it. They probably don't expect that to happen too often — or maybe they're afraid that it *will* happen more often than they'd expect.

They don't like to talk about Antediluvians in the Camarilla. A point of etiquette? Or fear? It's an attitude that seems largely exclusive to those outside the family, though. Pack didn't have any difficulty discussing matters of heritage, and neither did Amy-Lynn. It's hard to ignore legends of the founder when you've got something in your head that sometimes pulses with what you can only assume is his shifting consciousness, or memories of his old dreams.

THE SABBAT

I swear, I could get in so much trouble for this. If word got out that I was talking with Sabbat, then I'd be banned from the city at best, and devoured at worst. And on the other hand, any Sabbat pack who caught me in their territory would probably nail my intestines to a lamppost and drag the rest of me three streets over. This is a sure mark of desperation, which I am *not* taking as a good sign.

But I'm good. I know what I'm doing. I've done worse than this before.

I don't know what it is about the Sabbat, but those of the family who've sided with them are the ones who turn out the worst. It sounds like the reality busters have a real foothold in the "antitribu" culture, because it really seems that they're making sure anyone they Embrace is good and crazy beforehand.

I was lucky to run into Pearl, really; maybe it's because she's a good bit older than me (and it's the younger generation who really seems to get it in the ass in the Sabbat, probably on account of there being so damn many of them), but she's just about as stable as you could ask for. From the Sabbat, that is. It was one of those serendipity things; that, or maybe she had lookouts watching for me. I'm thinking the former, though. We *do* tend to find one another "accidentally" an awful lot.

Okay, so it might have been a mistake to turn the conversation around to politics. But I needed to open the door, to get her started. Once we'd shared a few stories and I'd agreed with her enough to relax her (but not so much that she'd get suspicious), then I could ask the questions I *really* wanted to ask. It turned out all right, though.

I listened between the lines, focusing on the things she'd never form into words. Her tongue bent around in such a way that it became pretty obvious that whatever she's doing, it hasn't been cleared with most of the ranking princes and such of the Sabbat. Something covert, something unspoken between cousins... I leaned in, and listened more closely.

She talked about the silliness of vampire sects making war on one another, and behind her words was hiding a scene of fire and earth, of the ritual mass Embrace of 10, maybe 20 newcomers all at once, all of our family. She laughed and talked about the trip to Amsterdam she wanted to take someday, and in her laughter was a tale of entire packs, all of the clan, all bound to their superiors second and the *antitribu's* purpose first. She mentioned that sometimes she missed Chinese food, and something... huge was looming behind that little anecdote.

And then she seemed to guess that I was seeing what she was leaving unspoken, and the conversation stopped there.

Before we split up again, though, I bit the bullet and outright asked if she'd seen any sort of signs of madness in the blood... stuff that couldn't be explained away by particularly harsh Embrace rites.

She laughed in my face.

What a bitch.

"I'm sorry," she said, "but that just sounded so fucking funny coming from you." Then she left a nice tip on the counter and she got up and walked out.

What the hell is *that* supposed to mean?

AUTARKIS

I think I've got more cause to worry.

"You don't know how lucky you are," Hector said. He said, "Most of the rest of us, we need protection and a solid hunting ground. I don't know how you do it, moving from city to city like that."

Shit. He's got an excellent point. I *am* one of the lucky ones. I can usually find someone to vouch for me in any Camarilla city, and I know enough to keep my head down in Sabbat territory. I've got a bank account large enough to fund the occasional red-eye or to hire someone to drive a truck one or two cities down the road. (Can't remember the last time I made a deposit on that I sure as hell picked the right funds when I made those investments way back when, or maybe I've got the most steadfast accountant in the world plugging away for me.)

At least I'm not fully alone, though. Blood runs a little thicker than... well, the blood in the other clans, it seems. Except maybe the Tremere, but, well. Sure, some of the family have tried to do me in shortly after introductions, but I think I was getting treated much the same as any other person would have been. We put up with each other a little better, probably because of the shared burden — I mean, the basic prejudice that other clans have for us, what with them thinking we're all crazy and stuff.

(Am I? I still don't think so. I'm still questioning.)

Not a hell of a lot of autarkis out here, though. You kind of get isolated from the rest of the family, and that can get scary. Plus, there's that latent terror that if you stay too far away from others of the clan, maybe a little too much of the madn — the supernatural qualities left over in the world will come pooling into you. We draw strange shit; all the lunatics come out of the woodwork around us, and all the strange accidents start happening near us. Better to have company.

THE COBWEB

Here's kind of an obvious thought. I wonder: Most of our bad reputation must come from the Network. I mean, what is it that LeRoi called it? Yeah. The "Malkavian Madness Network," as if it were some sort of radio station or television channel or something. That's not *our* name for it, of course.

Come to think of it, we don't really have a name for it. The connection is the clan; the clan is Malkav; Malkav is the

connection. Or at least, that's the story.

Well, that's not specifically true. We have names for it, but they're all different. Metatron; the Mouth of God. The connection. The Cobweb. The nerves of Malkav. Babel. The weavery, some say. "Our name is *Legion*, for we are many" — and from that, the Legion-mind. I've heard Gnostic blathering about encoded sephiroth, stories about racial memory so advanced it allows us to remember things that are still happening — actually, I kind of like that last one. Racial memory — if that's true, it explains a lot. For me, that is.

When you get right down to it I wouldn't be surprised if over half of us had no real idea that the Network exists, or at least in the form that I understand it. It just doesn't need an explanation, at least if you're living — um, wrong word — with it.

I'm actually surprised that none of the other clans seem to have something like this — or at least, if they do, it's odd that nobody has ever, ever let slip. It seems so obvious that if you're all connected with the blood ties, that you should all have this link of some kind. Like, say, the blood bond. Hmm — hadn't thought of that before. Is the Network something similar to that?

It's not like the messages come every night. I hear a flutter of a voice maybe once a week or so; more often as a gathering approaches, of course. Rosegarden's a lot worse off than I am, though; she says she gets those voices every couple of nights. She *was* the first one to the gathering back in '92, so I guess she's right. On the other hand, take Becker; he almost has to be physically fetched if a gathering's coming. Completely blind to the connection, and kind of fucked up for his trouble.

Pack says he thinks that it's Malkav's little clever stunt on all of us; that he's wired us to be his security system, so he can spy through our eyes and run his portion of the Jyhad all the more effectively. That's bullshit. I refuse to believe that Malkav is still out there and awake, much less plugged into all our eyes. If he were awake, there'd be no way we could *not* know about it.

Unless... he woke up during the tide a couple of years back?

I kind of feel a little better — no, no, I guess I don't. I should feel better, though, because the "voices in your head" thing comes from the connection, and maybe that's where we get some of our bad publicity. But I can't shake the feeling I'm missing something. It must be because of that shit-eating grin of Becker's, and that habit Drew has of slicing away bits of his skin now and again — as long as they're part of the family, it's hard to say with any conviction that we're not all that bad off.

And if they weren't driven mad by overexposure to the Cobweb, then where did it come from?

MALKAVIAN PRACTICES

PRANKING

All right, relax: There's an outside chance that all of this — my sleep schedules, these "somnia-bulistic feedings" or whatever they are — is just a prank.

If that's true, it's neither fanny nor appreciated. I suppose whoever's doing it — *if* they're doing it, don't get unnecessarily paranoid — is probably trying to get me to doubt my sanity, to question my role in the clan, to figure out just why it is that I belong. Maybe it's working, then. Maybe.

I don't see as how I was being particularly obtuse before, though. The pranking — that's something we direct at people who are a little too secure in themselves and their perception of "their place in things," not —

Huh. Okay, look again at that. Maybe I *am* being pranked.

The best ones are always subtle, that's true. Matter of pride. Get the target thinking that maybe he's going crazy, or maybe he's just opening his eyes for the first time. Make him wonder which it is. Make him think about the fact that even he's made of skin and bone that can burn — get a feel for his own mortality. Get him thinking outside the box.

"Practical joke" is just such a bad term for it. It goes so beyond pratfalls. God, what was that howler that Netchurch stuffed in one of his theses? It's not even really meant to be funny, really, not even to us — well, the better pranks are, but that's not the point. Painting all the marble in Elysium in those bright colors that the Greeks used to favor; you don't really do that to see the faces of the Toreador. Well, maybe you do, but it's more to see that slow seeping realization that they've become such creatures of habit that they —

Getting restless now. I'm getting that kind of itch, I guess because I've been thinking about this so much. Who's set for a little eye-opener around here? Keslo? Maybe.

Takes a lot of guts to go after the big targets. Maybe I'm soft, but I get real nervous when the local cousins start putting an entire clan in their sights. It's only happened twice, sure, at least as far as I've seen—but God *damn*, if it wasn't just about the same thing each time — and this in cities a few thousand miles apart. The cousins were in character, so to speak, the minute they walked into the gathering space. Even the locations were kind of atypical, although they made a sort of sense if you think like a bastard. The children's library seemed like a really stupid place to hold a gathering, but when everyone started acting like the local Warlocks, it was kind of funny in hindsight.

It must involve some serious surveillance beforehand; I can't speak for anyone else, but I know that Canterer never spoke with a clipped Dover accent before the Oakwood Street gathering, and she hasn't used it since. She wasn't playing the part of anyone I saw in the Elysium, either — probably one of the lesser lights.

Damn, but I wish they'd provided nourishment that wasn't a little spiked. I really wish I could remember exactly what I was doing then, and who I was hanging with for the duration. I feel they might've scammed me into playing a

part, too, but I don't remember anyone approaching me about it or giving me my instructions. Fucking memory lapses...

Nobody said anything afterward, or really called it to anyone's attention, but I get the feeling that both times this happened, the gathering was being watched. Probably by a member of the appropriate clan each time. That makes sense; what's the point of putting on a fancy show like that for *our* amusement?

Thing is.. if I'm being pranked, a lot of cousins must be in on it, and it's going on outside sect boundaries. I've had these dreams and lapses on both coasts, and even outside the States. I have to wonder why they're bothering.

PROPHECY

LeRoi is really starting to act like a dick. I have *told* that motherfucker *repeatedly* that I'm not going to go scurrying back to help him out with his little Elysian schemes, that I'm on a goddamn *mission* here. I *said* to him, "Use this number only for emergencies, got it?" And what does he do? He promptly calls me up, not even a year into my fact-finding mission, whining about he's starting to get these bad feelings, and that I need to start getting all oracular for him so he knows which way to jump.

"Look," he said, "there's really nobody else I can trust. And you have the Sight — that is what you call it, too, right? You have the Sight, and it's strong inside you. I know you don't think of yourself in that way, but you have to believe me. You can see. The... the you inside, it has vision that you have yet to tap. And I need that vision."

Yeah. I'll admit it. I've got the Sight. I'm one of the family, so that means I'm not completely fucking blind. But I swear to God, I have no idea why he thinks I'm the Delphic Oracle all of a sudden. There are family members out there who make a living at foretellings and interpretations, sure. Personally, I think they're pranking the outsiders half the time, and that's damn sure why I'm not going to any of them to run some dream interpretations for me. Odds are, they're in on the prank that's running me ragged out here, so that'd be useless.

I guess it must have something to do with the family's history, but I still don't get where this whole "Malkavians as seers" thing comes from. Admittedly, it's a lot less widespread than the whole "crazy" rumor — or maybe it isn't, and the outsiders who want to court a seer's services just keep it under wraps. Maybe it's because of that Umeda guy who started foretelling the Camanlla's birth, or whatever the story is. It might have something to do with fishing information off the weavery, but that's just ridiculous — how in the world are you supposed to deliberately fish around in what essentially amounts to a pack of voices speaking in tongues in your head every now and again? It's not the goddamn Internet.

I suppose there are reasons that it's us, and not the Toreador or the Tremere. The Toreador just don't focus enough on the ugly and the broken; what little Sight they have is so fine-tuned that it's not really that useful. And the Tremere? I suppose it's easier to trust the neighborhood "Lunatic" than it is to put your faith in a butchered cat and some star charts.

Anyway, I gotta admit that I was really damn pissed — maybe more pissed than LeRoi deserved, *maybe*, but he's just got to realize that I've got something that needs doing here. I guess it was a little spiteful of me to feed him that cock-and-bull story about lying down on his own funeral pyre, but he'll get over it.

PRANKS AND PRESTIGE

Contrary to popular belief, the purpose of Malkavian pranks isn't to gain clan prestige. In fact, there's no guarantee that the architect of a particularly inspired prank will gain any regard at all amongst his peers. Pranking is actually part compulsion and part intellectual exercise; to the Malkavians, it's as natural as teaching a child to read or pointing out a brilliantly plumed bird to a friend who doesn't see it. It's almost a method of sharing — sharing the ability to see more of the world for what it is.

Any vampire who's a compulsive creature of habit is ripe pickings for a prank; for example, if he goes hunting in a cycle of the same three clubs each Friday, a Malkavian who knew him would probably try having his car towed, barring him from entrance or otherwise disputing his routine. Vampires who are overly set in their ways are just ripe for picking. The exception is the fellow Lunatic whose derangement makes him a stickler for order; such a vampire isn't really due a pranking, as he *already* sees "something other than the cave walls," and his behavior is just a reaction to the greater reality that other clans don't see. Twisted logic, to be sure, but nobody ever accused the Malkavians of anything else.

A final note: Being a Malkavian, and being expected to prank somebody every now and again, doesn't grant the equivalent of diplomatic immunity. There's an unspoken agreement between the Malkavian elders and the elders of the other clans that only *so* much "levity" will be tolerated. If an idiot childe decides that it's a good idea to pull down the prince's pants in the middle of Elysium, and the prince decides to exact immediate retribution, the other Malkavians probably won't lift a finger on the prankster's behalf. The shrewdest Lunatics know when to say when.

REALITY BUSTING

With what Angheliki said the other night, it's kind of tempting to assume that pranking is part of what gives the family our... reputation. Pranking doesn't really explain it all the way, though. Maybe there are more reality busters out there than I'd thought.

No, not necessarily. There doesn't have to be that many of them for word to get around—I mean, those damn Tremere still talk about the demon Salubri until sunup, and has *anyone* seen a Salubri in the last 200 years? So if the

Salubri are just about the equivalent of a vampire urban legend — and if they're supposed to have three eyes, it's hard to take 'em seriously — it's feasible that the "Lunatic" label might've sprung out of the stories of Malkavians who like to drive other people mad.

Driven bastards, I'll give them that much. At least if Ringall is any example. They *do* have a point in that we can see things that mortals and even most other Kindred can't. I doubt that madness is the key to opening those doors, though. After all, insanity is an internal thing, right? It's not connected to any outside forces — crazy humans aren't hooked into the Cobweb, right?— it's purely in your own head. It's something trying to get out of you, not the world trying to get in. Ringall disagrees, of course. And if I didn't know better, I'd say *he's* crazy.

Wait. One problem there. The reputation for... insanity, it's old. It would have to have started back with the elders, and I've never even heard of one of the older ones playing at this kind of game. I bet that doesn't mean they wouldn't do it. More like they do it the long way, over time. If that's true, then I guess the only people who could pick up on it would be other elders. So it makes sense. It *does* make sense. Maybe I've found the answer.

ELDERS AND CHILDER

God, I don't know *what* came over Hoxha tonight. I'm lucky he had that ghoul handy.

Okay, I'm going to have to force myself to say it, but I honestly don't recall ever meeting an elder uncle that wasn't just a little fractured. Time grates on the old ones, I guess. Maybe it's not so much a pattern of insanity that the others talk about, but more a pattern of senility. Or maybe it's just because of the time period they were taken. Combination of both, even.

They don't fit real well into all that Freud/Jung stuff I was fed in college. Years on years of convincing themselves that they're crazy, without any of the terms of modern-day psychiatry — no wonder they're bent in ways I can't really empathize with. If you listen to the others, you can hear them talking back and forth about Malkavian seers, kind of pretending that they don't believe all the stories but not doing a real good job of covering it up. The elders, that's probably where that reputation comes from. If you get the Sight and you deal with it every night for centuries, yeah, that qualifies as being a prophet or something. No wonder they sometimes figure that they're given their visions by God or some substitute. Angheliki's sire was something like that, or at least I think she said so. It's kind of rubbed off on her, anyway.

And there's Marleybone, the Puritan. He's got that Biblical fixation that would give me goose pimples, if, well. I heard that it was the same with most of the older ones. Comes of growing up in a time when the Church is what you eat, drink, sleep, breathe; wasn't there a study about how multiple personality disorder as we know it wasn't recorded until a certain century? And then everything else before then that was even close was cases of "demonic possession."

Urgh. I'd forgotten Mantius.

The ancillae tend to be a little more recognizable. I suppose it's a byproduct of modern medicine; they're able to cope with the mental shift into becoming... *this*... without having to believe that the voices in their heads are demons or something. And the ancillae of the other clans are fond of quoting Jung and Freud when they think we aren't listening.

This is also, God help us all, where the serial killers start popping up.

Okay, I know they're not exclusive to the family. I've heard stories of that Nosferatu organ collector in Detroit and the Gangrel who kept slicing single mothers into thin strips. Not to mention the Sabbat... But yeah, the family's had its share, from what I've heard. Drew's borderline, but I doubt he has the same kind of *need* to kill — he doesn't try making his own opportunities. Maybe it's got something to do with the Industrial Revolution and what city life became; Jack the Ripper didn't crawl from the woodwork until the 1800s, and he's the earliest serial killer I can think of. The elders, when they kill — they just think differently. Products of a different time.

I'm totally against giving the Embrace to maniacs, but apparently others disagree. And God, the stories are getting frightening. Cities are so huge and dense, and the TV keeps flooding the kine's heads with stresses and superstitions they wouldn't have had before, and religion is fighting with science, and people don't know *what* to believe — and that's the latest generation of vampires we're getting. Overdosed on stimulation, with so many different visions of the world competing that they snap and start carving out their own visions — things I could never imagine. The youngest childer, they *frighten* me.

What's really funny is how the modern world seems to think that being crazy is no real drawback. It's the in thing to have a therapist. Prozac will make you feel better. There's no real emphasis to just buckle down, to just *cope*. People are willing to admit that they're dysfunctional, repressed, oppressed, chemically unbalanced — anything to shift the responsibility for their actions onto the convenient little scapegoat of being "just a little out of whack." And they'll gladly suck down any chemical or undergo just about any "treatment" that doesn't involve too much work on their behalf. Pretty soon, people won't be learning to cope at all — just to take their medication on a regular basis.

Not me. No way. I'm not crazy, and it wouldn't be an excuse, anyway.

THE "ANTITRIBU" PERSPECTIVE

We are torn, torn in two, There is a great weight of filial loyalty that presses on our collective breast; for, after all, are not the insights and enlightenment given to us by our collective father Malkav?

And yet, should he stir to wakefulness, the gift he has given each of us would tear loose from our very skulls, fly from our very veins. He would pool into consciousness, rise from our scattered bodies — but where would that leave

us? Even if what they say is true, and his body remains whole and unguarded somewhere, we would all lose part of ourselves to feed his activity.

It is the sacred duty that we hold, the task of all true children of Malkav, that we spread his mad seed as far as possible, amongst as many of us as we may. If we are fruitful, and we are strong, then we can spread his blood and disease so thinly that, he will remain in slumber. If we reduce his soul to finely minced gobbets, so small that we will at last be the infection's master rather than slave, then we can devour his essence, his delirium, his wisdom, all the fragments of his divinity that have been left in our blood. There is a term, so very modern, yet so accurate that I regret it was not coined sooner:

Bite-size portions.

Even our wayward children in the Camarilla know our purpose, and they share it; after all, why is it that they do not destroy every last one of the infirm and broken amongst themselves? No, they agree to keep the line sound. For every foolish, squawking madman that is condemned to Final Death, they Embrace two more. Such is wisdom. Such is the means to mastery.

We are really not so different, you see. We are all Malkav's get. And we will yet be Malkav.

— Drozodny, pack priest, Malkavian *antitribu*

POCKETS OF MADNESS

I swear to God, I think the alley outside is whispering. There's nobody in it at all, and I've looked so hard I'd see an ant take a piss at the other end. Maybe it's ghosts; they say we can hear them, now and again. We. Vampires. Not Malkavians. We're not some different species of vampire. Not like the Nosferatu.

Maybe I'm not making it up. Pack was fond of talking about how Malkav's illness transcended not only distance and bodies, but even the blood. He said that it could even get into a house, a street, a city — that it would pool in some places that had the kind of psychic indentations necessary. Like water rolling downhill.

Hill House. Standing by itself, not sane. Unpleasant thought.

Now I have to wonder what such a place would be like. I've heard of the Well of Mirth, but I'd presumed that its waters caused hallucinations because of some fouled chemical composition, but that doesn't explain why the German cousins hold it almost sacred. Maybe they know something I don't; maybe the water's only part of the answer.

Would a place like that, a mad place, would it drink blood that was spilled there, soaking up the power in the vitae? Would it need to? How would it power its broadcasts of delirium? I mean, the street down in Paris where they dragged out those daughters and —

...

Am I remembering this?

CLAN TRADITIONS

Stabbing into the heart of the clan again. Fitzgerald, the bastard, keeps on playing keep away with the answers. Everyone's playing some kind of giant game, and I can't find out what exactly they're working toward.

It's all about the tools. The methodologies. Thought that was unimportant, but I see differently. Now. They have agendas. Of course they do, we all do, but there's patterns. Always patterns.

Infection. They like to use that word a lot. It's like we're all playing this giant morbid joke on the rest of the world. Like we want to be the guy who scrawls "WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF AIDS" on his one-night-stand's bathroom mirror or something. It seems like a pretty fucking juvenile stunt when it all comes down to it. But most everyone I know is too smart to buy into that whole "Embrace everybody until the world's full of vampires and we, uh, have nothing left to eat" line. Drew. The bastard. That's what he proposes.

Whatelse? *Anarchy.* No government, no Sabbat or Camarilla or anything. Self-empowerment for every last vampire in the world. Only it's a long, slow plot, way beyond what those adolescent anarchists consider apropos methodology.

And the slaughtering of the sacred cows — what's the word — *Iconoclasm.* Dash people's treasures to bits and force them to sift through the shards to find what's important. The tricksters gather here, under this. Iconoclasm is their icon. Pearl. She's one of these. She's here to destroy.

And that leads to *Illumination.* The need to teach. To open up the doors of the mind. Ringall, that's what he wants. And lots of other cousins with him. They don't want to illuminate *me*, though. They don't want to tell me the truth. What makes them think that I'm somehow in the know, just because I've got the family blood?

So many cousins and grandparents and aunts and uncles — so many perceptions and truths. God, I must be floating on the Network, I must not have realized it... so many ideas, so many traditions, so many goals...

Take it easy. What else is there? What about Rosegarden...? Yeah. *Detachment.* That's it. Use the material goods; don't let them use you. Don't get too attached. Don't get attached at all. Withdraw. Break the chains of the body, of flesh, living or dead. Transcendence can't come if you're shackled to things; nothingness can't find you then, either.

Flashes. I can see the divisions. Marleybone—he stands for *Divine connection.* He and the uncles and aunts and cousins like him, they find a link between themselves and the sublime. The elders call to be chosen; the young ones want to be the ones who choose.

I understand too much...

Can't shut it out. That's another trap. *Ignorance.* If I decide to ignore what I've learned, I fall with these ones. Zen

psychotics. Rejection of thought and rationality, nothing left but physical action. Malkavians on autopilot. Terrifying. No guilt, no shame — no choice. You can't be punished for your choices, because you didn't choose, you only acted. You can't be faulted for your reflexes. No ideas.

Nihilism. The ultimate breakdown. I can feel them out there. I don't dare reach out for them; they're so cold, my fingers would freeze and snap off. They're the ravens waiting for Gehenna, the hounds at the gates. So many more of them in these last few years before it all ends; they must sense the finality as it's coming, and give themselves over to it. Most of them young, younger than me; the elders, though, the ones who've been waiting for centuries and centuries, and are grinding their teeth against whetstones, they're starting to *move*...

Come on, *think!* Where do I fit into all of this? What's my agenda?

THE REAL CLAN TRADITION

Traditions are nice, but you really don't have to have any.

SALVATION

Is it possible? I've dug up so much else. Found so much. Found I'm not whole. No, I *am* whole! But I feel so weak.

I don't know how to classify those rumors of redemption. I mean, you hear them the fast time, and you want to believe them. Then, later on, once you've heard some of the other insane bullshit — no, don't use that word, they're not necessarily crazy — but once you've heard some of the theories that go rampaging around the family, and some of the anecdotes, you learn not to take just any rumor at face value.

But the word. The name. It rings, and it rings *right* — like I've heard it before. *Golconda*.

It'll purge the infection, they say. If you free yourself from the Hunger, you free yourself from the demands that your mind forces on you. (Who are *they*? I don't know for sure. Voices on the Network.)

All the powers of the Sight, but the ability to drink it all in at once. The ability to stare at the sun without blinking.

I swear, I wish I could believe in rumors right now.

THE WORLD OUTSIDE

Twenty years dead. *Twenty.* I'm sure of it. It's the Sight, that's what's causing me problems. I can see textures — I couldn't do that before I can almost tell colors with my eyes shut, by touching them and feeling how much heat they reflect. It's living — no, wrong word — with that kind of perceptions that's making me think I remember things that I couldn't possibly remember. A hyperactive imagination. Like dreams —

NO. Mustn't think like that. I don't dream when I'm awake. I do not hallucinate.

I am only 20 years dead. I can remember only 20 dayless years, and 31 sunlit years before then. I cannot remember the 19th century, or any time before. It's my imagination.

Listen to me. I'm rationalizing. I don't actually believe everything I'm saying, do I? No. I don't want to believe that I'm insane, but I still wonder. That's a good sign, wondering. Wondering whether I'm sane or not. By rights, that should mean that I *am* sane.

But they aren't memories.

ASSAMITES

Listen here, child. Here's a secret. For free.

You see, Assam or Hakeem or Mustafa or whatever those blood-parched devils call their primordial god-monster father, he's a severed god, too. Just as was Malkav, he was hewn into bits and scattered into the mouths of his younglings. The same thing. Only — and this is an "only" you should pay careful heed to, O best beloved — Assam did not settle into the minds of his childer.

Where did he go? Well, what does an Assamite love best? Learn this, and you learn where their own forebear dwells.

But that's why they're not the beasts they once were. He stirs in them, just as Malkav stirs in us. And oh, I feel sorry for us all when the Assamites start vomiting up their father-god into a communal vessel so that he can stand on bare feet under the night sky once more.

BRUJAH

Good animals, the Brujah. Good animals. Not herd, by any means, not wolves or cats. Dogs. Angry dogs, but smart dogs. They can watch you take out your keys, and they know you'll be opening the door. They can watch you unlock the door and work the handle, and they know what you're doing. But they never think to work the handle themselves. And they probably don't have the thumbs to do it, either.

We could probably give them thumbs, but we'd likely get in trouble with the other animals for that.

This is scaring the piss out of me. Why is this stuff coming to me?

CAITIFF

I think I shall start a collection, and I think I shall collect Caittiff. They are raw, unformed, they are untainted by the Traditions, the fetters of blood. They have no prejudice, no confidence. They acknowledge their own ignorance. They are in need.

FOLLOWERS OF SET

Encounter one Setite, and what you might see is a vampire with a poignantly acute eye for opportunity. Encounter two, and you see a partnership in vice. But look at all of them, the whole bloodline, and what do you see?

Us.

Faith, madness, the same. For a very good reason, a terrifyingly simple reason. Remember. Upon your death and rebirth, while you were drifting in the void, Malkav's blood called out to you. You looked to see where the voice came from. To use a simple metaphor, where other vampires were still scrunching their eyes shut, refusing to look at what lay between worlds, you looked to the left, and you saw.

Now you see, when a Setite is brought across the threshold, Set's blood calls to him. The not-quite-dead, not-quite-undead child hears the voice, and looks to the right.

And he sees.

Keep that in mind. No bloodline understands us and our insights better than the Followers of Set, and no clan excels so greatly at keeping the heart of their knowledge a secret, hidden under layers of propaganda and slander worn like cloaks. They are our great co-conspirators, even if they shall never admit it. Further, they are irritable regarding the subject, so remember not to press the point.

GANGREL

What a bunch of preteens. Hanging around in their leather jackets, too cool to talk to anybody else. Too cool to care. And if you don't pay enough attention to them, then they just make this big show of stomping off and sulking, trying to convince us that they don't need us, that they're so big and tough and cool and mighty that they don't need anybody. And they keep looking back over their shoulders as they go, but only in little glances so you don't see that they're looking.

What they want is, they want us to go running after them like some jilted cheerleader, plucking at their sleeves with tears streaming down our faces, begging them to come back, telling them that if they come back and stay with us then we'll never ignore them again, that we'll always be faithful and true.

Fuck 'em.

GIOVANNI

Children of a dead god. Eaters of the dead, of the dead who ate corpses themselves. Feasters on corruption. They have spent too much time dead, dead like stones.

Are corpses afraid? They should be. The people on the outside, the people that they let in only when they feel like it, are pounding very hard on the glass. I hear them striking at the glass. I heard the glass crack. I think they're coming in.

The Giovanni should be afraid. The glass is cracking. And the people on the other side hate them.

LASOMBRA

They don't know. They really don't.

I can only guess that they think they're the ones in control. They gesture, the Void moves in that direction, they presume that they are giving orders.

I suppose that the honey guide believes that it orders the ratel to destroy the beehive, kill the bees and feast on the honey, all purely so that the honey guide has its choice of leftovers. It would probably like to think that the ratel is obeying its commands.

So it is with the Lasambra. Strings run from their hands off into the blackness, and they believe that they are the ones who do all the pulling.

NOSFERATU

It's very hard not to like the Nosferatu. For all their creeping and skulking, they are so very, earnestly sincere. The younger ones treat me with pity that I don't require; the elders treat me with respect. We play a little game together, a little game of conspiracy. It wasn't my idea or theirs to begin the game, but since the others liked to leave both of us out to one side, we started our game for something to do.

It's particularly charming when they try to creep up behind me when they think I'm not looking, as if I'm going to drop something absent-mindedly or reveal my ankle as I hop a mud puddle or something. They get very offended when I notice them, though, so I usually pretend they aren't even there.

They really are a little too attached to their fleshly bodies, though. It's vain of them to disfigure themselves as they do. Perhaps someday they'll grow bored with their mortifications and then we can chat like adults.

RAVNOS

I held Delizbieta's hand as she died.

Poor child. Her only crimes were being descended from a monster that gnawed itself hollow long ago, and being ignorant. When it woke, she was unprepared.

I should have reached her sooner. If she'd been ready, she might have survived. But she couldn't endure the pain of her clan's broken minds. She wasn't accustomed to it.

The cross is broken now. The devil's tenth head has been severed. The demon king has bled out his life, and Golden Lanka is toppled and burnt.

Beware. Beware. Delizbieta's fate is my own. We must be ready — we cannot be ready — we must be ready, or we will die their deaths for them all over again.

TOREADOR

It isn't such a difficult thing to understand the Toreador's obsession, if you try. Think — they too have the Sight, even if their lenses are some what fractured. They see beyond the realm of human senses; they run their fingers along the weave that so many others blindly ignore. Even their fetes and dances and social games — those trace out a greater pattern, the sigil of their own identity. They know who they are.

Their fault lies in their weakness, regrettably; a Toreador would rather slice his own flesh than slice a beautiful section of pattern. They can see beyond the Lie, but so many prefer the Lie's beauty to the things, ugly or not, that lie beyond the paper walls of perception.

I loved a Toreador once, most ardently. I loved him because he could speak to me, because he understood the compulsions that the Sight brings.

Of all the things that have withered and broken from remaining too close to my accursed self, I miss him most all.

TREMERE

The Warlocks are half-awake. They cast out with childlike fingers, feeling the texture of things. They touch and they taste and they smell the world, looking for the connections. They see that the moon changes, and that the tides change, and that women's blood shifts, and they see a pattern. They see the bright new star that bleeds in the vaults, and they see the blood falling on concrete, and they see a pattern. They believe that all things are connected.

That is where they draw short. They believe. They do not know. Yet.

Watch the Tremere. They do not see as far as we do, but they see things that are so near as to escape notice. Watch them, and listen to what they believe they have learned. Eventually, they may notice us imitating them — and then they might become wise enough, to imitate us.

They are very close.

TZIMISCE

Diseased. Filthy, diseased, crawling things. Plagued with the infection of flesh. Disgusting. Dirty. Diseased. Weeping sores. Slice them away. Slice their bodies away before they are lost in the meat.

No. Don't touch the meat. Let them boil in their prisons. Don't touch them, the filthy, crawling creatures. Keep away from them. They share their infection. They think they have carved out their cancer, but it grows. It grows in them. It waits until Gehenna to eat their flesh. To consume the corrupted, stinking meat.

CAN'T THEY SEE?

VENTRUE

They sit on their thrones because their thrones are barbed. Hooks and wires spring from the chair and pass into their flesh, and not one of them will relinquish his seat. If one were to do so, then the barbs would pull away his skin, and he would be left naked — and they do not so much fear having others see their nakedness as they fear beholding their own selves unmasked.

Even when a throne is vacated, its hooks and jags and barbs glistening with bits of the last king, the Ventrue will vie far the empty chair. "We are the finest," they say. "We can govern you. We can protect you from the Sabbat, from the Lupines. We can make things safe for all of you."

I don't know how they can protect me if they can't protect themselves from the chair.

LUPINES

What was that last bit? Lupines... Does that mean some kind of werew... the... oh Jesus, it... I... hrrk — AAH! Hnnnggh...

...they are the Lilin, the monsters begat of an angry mother and the demons of the field! They are our scourge...

...my arms! My arms! Please, spare me! Please...

...fools, all of them... should have known (that if you build a wall, something on the other side will want it to come down...

...AA-ANG! SYKORA! From the West he rises, from the corpse-seas, the Waksha-water... girt in black, robed in violet! AA-ANG! Master of the profane! SYKORA!...

... you can hear them crawling under the ground; you can hear them scratching at the door; you can hear them creeping across the roof. they are all around us. they want to kill us. oh god why am i out here where they can find me?...

... Daisy? Henry? Don't leave me. Don't leave. Please — DONT LEAVE! DONT GO —

...hhh...hkkh. Guh. D — Dammit. God. If these are the scars they leave on the weavery, what must actually meeting one of those monsters be like?

MAGES

Never listen to an idiot's ranting. It'll only make you angry. Stupid, stupid cow, bull, steer, whatever. No different from the rest of the herd. So damned convinced that reality is something that you can touch and hold and fold and spin like clay. Idiot!

Backwards. He had it all backwards. So ready to accept that reality is what everyone tells you it is — worse, worse than that! Moron!

Reality is immutable. There is no change in reality, there is only a change in your perception. Move your hand in front of the mirror all you want — you're not moving the mirror. You're not even moving a real hand, other than your own. You're just swallowing the mirror's little speech.

Break the mirror. Break the mirror, idiot. You'll never get anywhere if you think that moving the reflection around is going to change anything. You can't change the reflection.

Look beyond the mirror. Look at what the world is.

GHOSTS

Have the dead begun to rise from the cracks in the earth yet?

I cannot see for myself, but I feel certain that the dead must be walking by now. I had... visions, once, long ago. Can you tell me if they have torn themselves from the grave yet?

I knew a dead woman once. She was so sad and so faint, I thought that surely if I were to tremble while she touched me, her fingers would snap off and drift away. She was hunted, and I could smell her pursuers on her — I could smell their obsession. The dead are obsessed, you know. They've forgotten everything they knew, forgotten their sense of perspective — only the obsession matters.

I knew a dead woman. She didn't tell me anything about the fires burning in the underworld, even when I asked about them, when I told her that I saw them burning.

That was so long ago.

Now even my memory deceives me. I cannot hear her voice — what I hear is howling, a howling so loud it deafens me, drives me into hiding. The voices are so loud; she must have been torn to pieces, evaporated, erased by their force. Surely the howling has broken the earth by now; surely the dead are walking once more.

Are you certain you cannot tell me? I want to know...

FAERIES

Gone. And we cannot, could never follow.

HUNTERS

God *damn* it, what is this world coming to? LeRoi's dead, and the guy who did it was just this freaky little office worker with a can of kerosene and a match! He just stood there by the body while it was burning; he should have split a long time before I got there. It didn't make sense. What was he thinking?

Uhn... was I trying to forget? Something... something was hanging over his shoulder. What the hell was that? Are there creatures out of the invisible side of things now coming across, out into the three-dimensional side of things?

Was I just hallucinating?

Dammit, it's been one fucking hell of a night if I think that seeing things that aren't really there would be the lesser of two evils.

And... wait... LeRoi died a month ago...

THE HUMAN ELEMENT

Lost five hours tonight. There's a suitcase full of money in my trunk. I swear, I really need to talk to someone who *isn't* in the family, but who could I find to understand?

I... we... the family, we're not always so good with humans. We can't even really talk like equals to the others, the outsiders, the... (don't say "uninfected," don't say it, don't)... the other clans. The other families. They treat us like pariahs, and then they play ignorant to the things going on right in front of them just to try to make us think that we're hallucinating.

So humans? Harder and harder.

I mean, I had a family. A real family by birth, not by this liquid fostering. I know I had a family. I lost their pictures a long time ago, and there's these strange people in the house we used to live in, and I've changed my name so many times that I can't remember where I left my original papers, but that doesn't mean they didn't exist.

And I still have... well, friends might not be the right word, but plenty of acquaintances. Have to maintain some distance. They can sort of smell that there's something about me, I can tell; it's that way they look at me while they're kind of freezing in place, like a rabbit who figures if he doesn't move, the snake can't see him. But that's kind of a vampire thing, I guess, although I don't know how folks like Carmelita manage to avoid that predator/prey reaction. Must be some kind of Toreador family secret; whatever it is, she's good, because I've never sensed her work to overcome that "here I am, I'll goddamn kill you" kind of projection that the rest of us seem to give off. Not even a little bit.

But yeah, I've got acquaintances. I still talk to people, even if they get a little unnecessarily attentive around me. And it's not just me. Look at Reeve; she's in so many social circles outsiders tend to think she's a Toreador at first glance. Pack keeps a girlfriend or five; not like he's a Mormon or anything, he just makes sure he's always got someone to fall back on, because it's hard keeping people close to you without destroying their lives. It's hard when you're not even alive yourself.

Well, there's... options, of course. I don't keep a ghoul, and I've never had one. Rosegarden keeps, what, nine of them? She likes to be nurtured. Or so she says, even though she doesn't need a damn bit of nurturing, the psychotic — *No*. Not psychotic. Don't obsess.

Ghouls. Right. You wouldn't think that people would want to stay near us, but they do. And it's not always a matter of the blood doing the binding. Sometimes it's the whipped-dog syndrome; all that built-up shame and guilt they've got, and they somehow sense that we're going to make their lives difficult, and they welcome it. Pack's women are like that — well, that or they're attracted to his aura. He does tend to project "dangerous bastard." So do Reeve, Pearl, Fitzgerald (fucking Fitzgerald, setting me on this fucking chase, making me fucking dig up all this fucking rot in the family) — they're all dangerous. You don't need the Sight to sense the sharp edges all around their personal space, and some people go for that. Some people want to get cut. Pearl's right. People can be such fucking cattle at times.

No, shut up. Where were you? Ghouls. I don't want one; I'm mobile. A new city every month or so, at least as long as I'm on this chase. But then again, I'm kind of the exception in a lot of ways. I... kind of have these flashes, like I'm remembering these guys who used to... but that's part of the dreams, and I think I might be getting them through the... the links.

But ghouls are... kind of popular among the rest of us. We're a family that likes to adopt. Sometimes the servant you take really does wind up inheriting the mansion; sometimes the help's like part of the family. Of course, Drew speaks for the other side — I pity the poor bastards who have to go limping back to him. You'd think the ones that survive would learn something, but they never do. They never do, really.

WHERE THE MALKAVIANS ARE

Dear God. I shouldn't have looked at the calendar. I'm missing days, *weeks* out of my life. (Life?) Maybe it's all the traveling. We're not supposed to move from city to city much. Don't do that. Lupines. Traditions. Maybe this is what jetlag does to vampires. Maybe you just oversleep a lot if you travel like I've been doing. And maybe you don't get hungry if you... no, *that's* not it!

Where have I *been* all this time?

Okay. One at a time. United States. Lots of cities there. Lots of Malkavians there, too. So damn many people, all coming to the States and trying to hold on to their cultures, reject their cultures, maintain family traditions, break with family traditions — it's a mess. Cities blown up out of control; people trading their sense of identity for whatever the TV's selling. A hive. Buzzing with kine, and with us. From what the others say, the elders tend to collect in New England — I don't know what's up there that they find so important. The Gnawed, maybe that's where they're shipped. The American Gnawed, I mean. There are princes among the family here. It's a good place for a cousin to be a prince, because the cities grow up and then start withering at the core, and some of them die off so fast. There's archbishops in the family here, too; I've heard the Call pulse out of Miami from hundreds of miles away, so Contreras must have something going on in her favor. Yeah, the States are a good place to be if you're in the family. It's easy to fit in over here, no matter how messed-up your relatives are.

Europe. I've been to Europe. Grand gatherings — more often in Europe than anywhere else, but they move. The grounds of St Mary's or Bicetre; Vienna, in the shadow of the Lunatic's Tower; Marseilles, at the tumbled gate to the Library of Valentinus; old Charenton; even Thorns. A lot of places in Europe that are almost holy to the European cousins, or even to the rest of us. The others are superstitious and don't allow family members into positions of too much power over there, but there's still a few cities with a cousin in charge, like in Ravenna. Europe's... good to us. The strands — widely spaced, but strong as steel. The others keep their distance, but stretch a protective hand over us. They don't want us to turn on them.

Africa... no. I've heard that sometimes the Call comes up from there, but it's faint — there probably are only a few of us there to amplify it. I'm... I'm kind of afraid of going to Africa, but I don't have any idea why.

No, not Africa. I'd sooner go to Mexico, and that's a pit. The cousins down there — there's nothing keeping them in check. They run wild, wilder than you'd expect from a Sabbat city. The things I heard behind Pearl's speech... they kind of bubble up when I think of Mexico. And I get the feeling that there's something older there, too, something old and hateful. Maybe there's more grooves in the land; maybe that's one of the places that's gone strange from the power.

Further on south, to South America? Um. Not quite family territory down there. Sometimes there are echoes of old blood spilled, and fire — but they're so old and faded. The Call doesn't come up much from South America; rumor from both Camarilla and Sabbat sides claims that a couple of the grandparents have decided to set themselves up down there. Not lots of room for newcomers to make their mark.

India. That's where they're fighting over territory, all the cities that went missing their princes in the Week of Nightmares. I *know* I haven't been there. The Call went out — I didn't hear it from here, but I know people in Europe who did. It must be a nightmare if Malkavians are flocking there from hundreds of miles away. I think Vasantasena's going back there, too — although I don't know *why* I think that. I don't even know who she is. I remember her face, but...

Asia. No. Stay *out* of Asia. That reality doesn't belong to us. It's being shaped, folded, *eaten*...

Australia... lots of ghosts there. Lots of blood spilled. Strange craziness brews up in the cities down there, and it spills out from the Outback, I think. When I... was it me? Someone else? When I went there, I couldn't sleep peacefully for so much as an hour. The dreams, countless dreams, always beating in my skull — no such thing as a peaceful day's slumber in Australia. Ghosts and dreams, and bloodstains that creep around the corners of the buildings down there. Other vampires can survive well enough down there, but those of us with the Sight, those of us in the family — it's harder. I've even heard something like the Call when I was down there, but it wasn't right. It was like something was mimicking the Call, trying to bring me over to it, but it *wasn't* one of the family. I'm sure of it. Something very real lives in the dreams down there. I wonder what would happen if it got into a waking dream, like those that...

God. Oh. God. I can't have been to all of these places. I can't have all of these memories. Something is going on here.

Were they feeding me these memories? Is it Pack's fault? Fitzgerald? Rosegarden?

Where is this coming from?

Oh God. It's an hour until dawn, and the last time I remember being awake was 10 days ago. I just woke *up*. I don't know where I am — I don't recognize any of this furniture. I don't recognize this room. I don't know who this woman on the floor is.

I have to go and hide. The sun will be up soon.

But I'm afraid. If I go to sleep, I might never wake up again. I don't want to go back into the dark forever.

Please, whoever you are. Please stop doing this to me. Please, just let me be awake and see my friends and drink when I'm thirsty and do what I need to do. Just to get by, that's all I ask. I don't deserve this. I'm so young.

Please. Don't put me away again.

Please.

THE ANATOMY OF MADNESS

The Malkavians are a very misunderstood clan, and that's partly because people tend to believe that if you've seen one Lunatic, you've seen them all. That's completely untrue, of course — the murderous psychopath isn't representative of the obsessive scientist, and *he* doesn't reflect the half-dreaming artist, and *she's* like the fervently religious ancient only by virtue of blood.

This is what makes the Malkavians so difficult to define — and difficult to roleplay, too. It's a difficult balancing act between portraying someone who is believably, convincingly unstable and roleplaying a madness so debilitating or aggravating that people wonder why the Lunatic hasn't been done in yet. Obviously, only functional Malkavians make it past the fostering; but at the same time, they're all bent somehow. And given that this is a storytelling game, a Malkavian character's derangement needs to be not only believable, but evocative. Nobody cares about the Malkavian who believes that the earth is flat — that has nothing to do with the themes of **Vampire**. So with all this in mind, how do you roleplay an insane vampire in a way that's satisfying to you, your fellow players and your Storyteller?

THE REAL THING

There is no single cause for mental disorder. Many disorders are biologically based, whether it's due to biochemical imbalance, actual abnormalities of the brain, aging, injury, drug abuse or disease. Heredity can play a part in this; so can simple bad luck. Obviously, disorders of this nature are almost impossible to treat on a purely psychological level; medicines and other physiological treatments are often necessary to achieve any real progress.

On the other hand, many disorders have their root in outside influences. Some are almost exclusively triggered by environmental cues — typically traumatic influences such as abuse. In fact, scientists used to believe that almost all mental disorders came from environmental influences, and it's only recently that hereditary and organic causes became more commonly recognized.

Mental disorders technically include everything from small, relatively minor anxiety-related disorders, through more severe ailments such as autism and ADD, to wholly incapacitating disorders such as catatonia. There are frankly far too many variants to list here, but it is worthwhile to bear in mind the true scope of psychopathology.

ROLEPLAYING A LUNATIC

Of course, when you're roleplaying a character, particularly a vampire, realism has to take a back seat to drama and story. Choosing and roleplaying a derangement shouldn't be a choice that depends on "what is most likely" — it should depend on what's most appropriate.

First off, there are plenty of mental disorders that are just plain unplayable; delirium, dementia, catatonia and the like don't allow much room for a functional character. (What's more, from a story perspective, the sire would be likely to deem such a creation a failure and start over — after disposing of the botched material, of course.) Psychosexual disorders can be inappropriate, both because it's all too easy for such a derangement to be too disturbing to fellow players, and because Malkavians, like most vampires, don't have much desire for sex as we know it (Of course, some troupes might be perfectly fine with such derangements in play — if so, more power to you.) Finally, some disorders just aren't sufficiently gripping. A phobia of the number 13 or of trees is technically fine, but it just doesn't really go

well with a honor story.

Naturally, few Malkavians think of themselves as "mad," just as few elders of any clan — no matter how cruel — think of themselves as "evil." Many clan members do recognize they are somehow far removed from what all of humanity, and most of Kindred society besides, considers "normal." However, they ascribe this to possessing a certain... understanding about the world and all it holds, not to a disease or infirmity. Some accept that their understanding is going to be branded as madness by outsiders, but they also tend to view themselves as the only ones thinking and seeing clearly; it's the rest of the world that's living a lie.

(Ironically, some Malkavians recognize that there is a certain amount of insanity inherent to the line, particularly where the Methuselaha are concerned. A few clan legends hold — somewhat accurately — that Malkav's power and insight were so great that when he took childer, their minds shattered from the experience. It's only the continued dilution of Malkav's blood and the visions that come with it that allows the youngest generations to be embraced while "still retaining their sanity" — or so the rationalization runs.)

It's important to understand that a Malkavian's reality is contextual: This is the heart of their insanity. You can't codify a schizophrenic's delusion as a matter of faith or belief; he doesn't *believe* that he absolutely must pull the eyes from his victims to prevent them from controlling him, he *knows* that to be a fact. Within the context of a Malkavian's derangements, reality works differently. Reality is *different* for them, because they see it through a fractured lens. As a result, it's good to avoid words like "belief," both in character and out of it. Try to avoid saying things like "My Malkavian believes that the world is the rotting corpse of God," even out of character — instead, phrase it in terms like "My Malkavian sees the rot of the world, and he knows that the whole planet is God's corpse." Even a little change in wording like this will do wonders for conveying your character's utter conviction to your fellow players.

Of course, it might also help things not to discuss your derangement with other players unless absolutely necessary. Let them piece it out over the course of play. There is one thing to bear in mind about this approach, though — if you don't tell your fellow players what your character's madness is, it's doubly important that you talk it over with your Storyteller, to make sure that you aren't going to be causing undue conflicts between players. Conflict between *characters* is fine — but you don't want to drag in a derangement that makes other players uncomfortable, because that kills the spirit of the game.

Another thing to keep in mind is the time frame of a Malkavian's former life. Vampires who predate Freud and Jung might behave in patterns appropriate to modern psychology — but they're as likely to manifest signs of "possession." Truly young neonates, brought up by dysfunctional parents and embraced in the high-speed, technoshock world of the 21st century, might be even crazier than their elders. Hannibal Lecter would be out of place in a Poe story; it's similarly disorienting to have characters running around whose derangements are at odds with the flavor of their times.

Pop culture references are also mood-wreckers. It's theoretically possible that a schizophrenic Malkavian might believe he's a character in a bad detective novel, or that he's a Jedi Knight — but if you drag one of these guys into the game, not only is nobody going to take your character seriously, but they might not even take *you* seriously. I mean, come on... a *Jedi*?

Finally, it can't be stressed enough that a little bit of research and inspirational reading goes a long way. By this we don't mean watching *The Matrix* and deciding that your character's going to emulate Lawrence Fishburne, complete with a schizophrenic delusion about all of humanity being living batteries for robots or some fool thing like that. Read an introductory-level psychtextbook, or *Catch'22*. Go to a surrealist art show, or browse through an art history book — a *lot* of artists were at least slightly cracked. Read some philosophy; many philosophical doctrines (particularly Nietzsche and Descartes) make damn good schizophrenic derangements with just a little modification and a whole lot of belief. Theology offers similar inspiration.

Anyone can portray someone who believes something unusual. The trick is making the personality match the derangement so that your fellow players honestly, truly believe that a person like your Malkavian could exist.

DERANGEMENTS

One of the most trying parts of playing a Malkavian is selecting a proper derangement, one that's both easily enough roleplayed to be more fun than chore and realistic enough to make your character seem genuinely, convincingly mad. A textbook on psychology can be of some help, but as mentioned before, many of the illnesses therein are far from appropriate for undead creatures.

Please note that the following notes are by no means comprehensive: they're just a few generalizations meant to flesh out the derangements given in the **Vampire** rulebook to provide fodder for more "realistic" Malkavians.

Schizophrenia does indeed imply a sort of "split" in the victim's personality, but not multiple personalities. The most common disassociation is between feelings and ideas; in other words, a schizophrenic might talk about a tragedy in a light-hearted manner, or feel uncontrollably morose when discussing a pleasant memory. Lots of people say "schizophrenia" when they mean "multiple personality disorder," but that doesn't make them right.

Multiple personality disorder is typically more common in females than in males, and it's been theorized that many cases arise from abuse. The personalities need not have separate identities to the point of different names and genders (although that's still a possibility); a vampire with this derangement could have three personalities that all answer to the same name, but are remarkably different. One of the personalities might be "stronger" than the others, the one that comes to the fore in order to deal with stressful situations that the other personalities "can't handle"; such a personality might be much more angry and resentful of its role. The shift between personalities is often abrupt, and usually

triggered by a stressful situation or environmental cue.

Obsessive-compulsive disorder isn't just about compulsive behavior, although that's part of it. The "obsessive" side comes in with patients who manifest recurrent obsessive thoughts, strong enough to interfere with their daily lives. Obsessive thoughts often relate to violence or contamination, and they tend to intrude on the victim's thought patterns; they're not a pleasant experience. Compulsions, on the other hand, are repetitive and rather more intentional. In many cases, a sufferer will indulge in a compulsion (counting, cleaning and organizing are particularly common) in response to an obsessive thought. And yes, obsessive-compulsives become very tense and agitated when prevented from indulging their manias; in humans, this can lead to depression, but in vampires, the tension leads to a state of frenzy. Obsessive-compulsive disorder is usually chronic, and it can indeed take over a person's life.

The formal term for manic-depression is bipolar disorder (formerly manic-depressive psychosis). A person with this disorder can be predominantly manic or generally depressive; not all sufferers receive "equal time" for their mood swings. A manic-depressive's speech and movements sometimes speed up or slow down according to her current mental state; in either case, it's possible that further hallucinations can strike.

Ultimately, though, remember that Malkavians have little to no chance of fighting off their ailments, even temporarily. Most of them don't even have any idea that they're unwell — well, they might realize it in the abstract sense, and even philosophize about it, but they never really believe that they're deluded. Spending Willpower to resist the effects of a derangement should be a rare thing for Malkavians, as rare as an ordinary person's decision to resist cashing that paycheck, or to resist eating dinner when they're hungry and not on a diet. They just don't see a need.

NEW DERANGEMENTS

DESENSITIZATION

The vampire with this affliction is a virtual emotional amputee. As a derangement, desensitization inhibits the vampire's ability to feel any sort of strong emotion whatsoever, whether joy, sadness, anger or love. The afflicted just can't make the appropriate neural connections (well, for want of a better term).

The power of Dominate or the blood bond can still hold a vampire so afflicted in check, but even though such supernatural compulsion governs the vampire's actions, it has less of an effect on her psyche. Even when blood bound, the vampire goes through the motions of love and devotion like a distracted actor half-heartedly playing a part. She will still throw herself in front of a car to save her "loved one," but she will do so without so much as a word, a tear or a smile. When she frenzies, she does so in a chillingly silent paroxysm of violence; when struck with the Rotschreck, she scuttles away like a cockroach instinctively fleeing the light.

Vampires with this derangement find it difficult to truly believe in their own ideals, and so make all Humanity, Path, Conscience or Conviction rolls at + 2 difficulty. They also suffer a one-die penalty to any Social dice pools that require some show of emotion or warmth, and cannot purchase the Performance Ability at all.

DISASSOCIATIVE BLOOD-SPENDING

One of the less obvious derangements, this affliction inhibits a vampire's conscious control over his own vitae. Vampires with this derangement have a tendency to unconsciously spend blood points to raise their Attributes at unusual and inappropriate times — increasing their strength in the middle of a round of drinks, upping their reaction speed while trying to compose a letter, and so on. These vampires have even been known to spend blood points during the day while they sleep, waking up even hungrier than usual and never knowing why.

If a character has this derangement, once per session the Storyteller can rule that the vampire has just spent a blood point to raise a given Attribute, or that the vampire wakes up an extra blood point low. The Storyteller is even within her rights to tell the player that his character's missing a blood point, without elaborating exactly when and where he spent the blood, or what for. After all, the vampire wouldn't know where it went. Players are also welcome to roleplay this derangement, of course (and it can be fun to start randomly spending blood in the middle of a tense scene, just to worry the other players), but the Storyteller has final control over making this derangement a drawback rather than a simple quirk.

MASOCHISM

A person with this derangement closely associates pain with pleasure. In vampires, who no longer enjoy sex in its own right, masochism tends to be linked to the pleasure received by drinking blood or receiving the Kiss. Masochism is usually linked to deep feelings of shame, and masochistic vampires have a tendency to be repulsed by the actual process of feeding from mortals. They are only fulfilled when they're suffering, presumably as some sort of penance for the pleasure they feel when feeding.

Vampires with this derangement begin to have difficulty operating when they become wounded. Once a masochistic vampire drops below the Bruised health level, he must make a Willpower roll, difficulty 6; failure indicates that he takes no action next turn, instead delighting in the sensation of pain. Furthermore, the masochist must make a Self-Control roll, difficulty 8, in order to use blood points to heal himself, no matter how temble his injuries.

MEMORY LAPSES

This derangement isn't like amnesia in the classic sense. It's not that a portion of the vampire's memories has been permanently blocked off — it's that the vampire tends to lose random portions other memory at inopportune times. The memories fade in and out, and can return as quickly as within a few minutes, or they might not come back for decades.

At least once per scene, the vampire suffering from memory lapses will forget something relevant for a time. This might be as simple as forgetting where she left her keys (which can be a real problem when you're locked out of your

haven and the eastern sky's getting brighter), or as complicated as forgetting an entire Ability — and even the knowledge that she once had that skill. ("Why are you looking at me like that? I've never touched a keyboard before in my life.")

Since this derangement requires particular attention from the Storyteller, players should double-check that it's okay to take this for a character. Yes, the player can ad-lib minor memory lapses as they come along, but sooner or later the lapse has to get more serious. It can be hard to determine just when forgetting how to use a gun will be dramatically appropriate, and when it'll make the other players organize an impromptu lynch mob. Storyteller discretion is particularly advised.

POWER-OBJECT FIXATION

The vampire afflicted with this derangement has invested much of her self-confidence in an external object, to the point where she believes she cannot function properly without its presence. Such a derangement is often linked to some past trauma in which the object in question played a major role — although not always in the obvious way. For instance, a victim might fixate on his dead fiancée's engagement ring if holding his fiancée's hand was his only source of comfort during hard years, but another individual might focus on the belt her father beat her with as her source of strength.

Victims of this fixation lose two dice from all their dice pools if somehow separated from their object of focus. It is hard to hide this fixation from careful observers; in times of stress, the vampire must make a Willpower roll to avoid cradling the object to her torso, rubbing it obsessively or otherwise physically comforting herself with its presence.

This derangement sometimes spawns other related derangements over time. The fixated person may, for instance, develop multiple personalities related to the object — the aforementioned abuse victim might develop a bullying personality much like her abusive father's, and so on.

REGRESSION

When confronted with stressful situations, a character with this derangement has a tendency to mentally revert back to a childlike state. Regressives are notable for poor senses of cause and effect, flawed interpretations of morality, and a general tendency to avoid confrontation. They do not, however, usually believe themselves to be actual children who've lost their parents — more typically, regressive vampires continue to think of themselves as the same people they always are. Of course, they're notably much more self-centered, fearful of the unknown, and reliant on strong "parent" figures, but this is a nuance that the vampire in question tends to miss.

Vampires with this derangement are at a permanent + 2 difficulty on all Self-Control and Instinct rolls; children have very little sense of discipline for the sake of discipline, and aren't sufficiently self-aware to master their own Beasts. The regressive is no different

[Storytellers beware: This derangement, improperly used, leads to Malkavians who are cute rather than creepy; you know the type. The ones with teddy bears and bunny slippers. When properly used, a regressive should be terrifying — a supernaturally powerful creature with no real sense of right or wrong — so feel free to crack down on players who tend to play this derangement more for laughs than for horror value.]

SELF-ANNIHILATION IMPULSE

This derangement is more common among older vampires, although there's nothing stopping a neonate from acquiring the affliction. The afflicted vampire feels a deep sense of revulsion for his flesh, and is literally terrified of the thought of "living" forever, or of continuing to exist inside a cold, dead shell. This revulsion is entirely unconscious, however; on a conscious level, the vampire is wholly unaware of his "death wish," although he may demonstrate a morbid streak.

Whenever the character is confronted with more-or-less direct evidence of his immortality — such as visiting the churchyard where his mortal daughter is buried, or watching a ghoul die — he must make an immediate Willpower roll, or begin to undertake some sort of potentially deadly behavior. This behavior might be as direct as storming into Elysium and giving the prince a piece of his mind, or it might be more subtle, such as breaching the Masquerade by talking to a reporter.

In any event, the pursuit of self-destruction is not a conscious decision, and it's not open for debate. The character will doggedly go about his "chosen" task until it's completed, resisting any attempts to talk him out of it. He may even consciously believe that the actions he's undertaking are perfectly safe. The compulsive behavior lasts only for a scene or so; however, depending on the nature of the threats he's called down on himself, the consequences can last quite a bit longer.

SYNESTHESIA

This derangement has little to do with logic and more with sensory interpretation. The afflicted vampire's sensory input is somewhat "scrambled"; although he's still capable of receiving sensory information, the information each sense provides is processed in terms of a different sense. In short, the synesthetic "hears" colors, "smells" textures, "tastes" sounds and the like, and is hard-pressed to think of such stimuli in any other fashion.

Although the synesthetic is presumably accustomed to the unusual sensory input, his real problem lies in communicating what he senses to others. A character so afflicted has difficulty expressing concepts as simple as "cut the red wire" — he's much more likely to say "cut the sandpaper wire" or something similar — and even has similar difficulties comprehending speech from others. Since the associations vary from individual to individual, there's not even any guarantee that another synesthetic would be able to understand the vampire.

Apart from the aforementioned difficulties in daily communication, the synesthetic receives + 2 difficulty to any Expression and Performance rolls that don't involve creating purely surreal art, poetry or the like. The synesthetic may

spend a Willpower point to correlate her sensory input in a "normal" fashion for a turn — or rather, at least to be able to communicate "normally" in terms of colors, textures, smells, tastes, temperature or sound. The character would still hear a ringing noise and think of it as a spicy smell, for instance — he's just able to focus enough to associate that spicy smell he hears with what other people call "ringing."

THE CAITIFF QUESTIONS

"But if a Malkavian's Embrace automatically carries madness with it, does that mean that there are no such thing as Caitiff sired by Malkavians?"

Actually, no. Malkavians are as prone (if not moreso) as any other clan to discard a new childe just after the Embrace, and leave that childe to find its own way in the world. Such childer are usually as insane as any Malkavian, but never develop their talent for the clan Disciplines, and have no connection to the clan.

"Are all Malkawan-sired Caitiff mad?"

No. Sometimes the blood runs a little thin, and a childe comes through the Embrace, still sane? These childer are always abandoned as Caitiff, as their sires instinctively recognize that the new borns are somehow... flawed and unsuitable. Therefore, a player whose Caitiff had a Malkavian sire can choose to take a derangement or not — or, more interestingly, she can leave the choice up to the Storyteller.

"Would a Caitiff who inherited his sire's insanity have access to the Madness Network?"

It's *possible*. However, Malkavians don't much care for eavesdroppers. By and large, any Caitiff demonstrating a connection to the Madness Network is hunted down and killed, almost instinctively. If the Storyteller chooses to allow a Lunatic-sired Caitiff access to the Cobweb, the Caitiff *must* have a derangement, and cannot purchase any dots in Malkavian Time (she's presumed to have access to the Talent, but uses only her Wits in the appropriate dice pool). A vampire with a dot or more of Malkavian Time is by default Malkavian, connected to the clan's Disciplines and communication network whether her sire hung around to teach her or not.

THE MADNESS NETWORK

Unless the Storyteller would rather not open this particular can of worms, it's presumed that all Malkavians are hooked up (to varying degree) to the supernatural, disembodied neural net that some call the Madness Network (or the Cobweb, the Tapestry, the weavery and so on). This doesn't mean that they're in constant telepathic communication, though, nor that they're continually bombarded by one signal after another. For what it's worth, Malkavians spend a very low percentage of their time tapped into the Network. Many hear only a faint fluttering two or three times a year. For the vast majority of his nights, the only company a Malkavian has within his skull is his own dementia.

The precise nature of the Network is actually in question; the Malkavians seem convinced that Malkav's hand is in it somewhere, but that doesn't mean it's true. The legend of Malkav existing only in psychic form in the minds of all his grandchilder is one popular theory; so is the thought that he created the network to be able to spy through the eyes of any and all his progeny, even in his sleep. Only the Fourth Generation of the clan is likely to know for sure, and they're not available for comment.

The Cobweb isn't something that comes with Dementation — vampires outside the clan can learn Dementation, but they can never hear the Call. A few scholars have compared the Network to the blood bond, theorizing that it's a blood-transmitted sympathetic link with much stronger (if different) effects; of course, it doesn't touch Malkavian ghouls, making such comparisons of limited use.

Whatever its true nature, the Madness Network does come across as largely unknowable, even to Malkavians. As such, it's a perfect vehicle for the Storyteller to do as she likes — it can provide anything from plot hooks to *deus ex machina* revelations. You could fill a book with rules governing how the Cobweb works, and even then there'd be possibilities left out. Ultimately, the Network is fully under the Storyteller's control — if she even decides to use it at all.

THE PARTICULARS OF INSIGHT

If the Storyteller would rather not mess around with the concept of the Madness Network, another possibility might be to allow Malkavians to purchase the Insight Background given in **Time of Thin Blood** (pg. 74). Although designed for thin-blooded vampires in particular, it's hard to deny that any oracular ability that works well with *Auspex* and *Dementation* is just about tailor-made for Malkavians.

Some Storytellers might even allow Malkavians access to the Network and Insight both, but this is very much up to the individual's discretion.

NEW TALENT

MALKAVIAN TIME

Gentry tried to struggle, but the splintered wood in his heart held him down like a drug. His eyes were stone inside

their sockets as he rolled them toward the creature that squatted like some roosting bat beside his head. "How...?" he finally choked.

The frail vampire's response was a slight shrug. His tone was flat and cold "Lita told me you were out here, and you'd probably be getting rid of her here."

Gentry darted a fervent glance at the dram, where a few of Lita's wet ashes still clung to the lip. "But... "

The fingers that closed around his face were quite cold.

This Malkavian specific Trait represents a Lunatic's particular connection to her clan's shared sub-consciousness; needless to say, it's quite supernatural by nature. It allows the Malkavian to "plug into" the floodwaters of the Madness Network and filter out messages, impulses, shared visions and knowledge of upcoming clan gatherings.

The Storyteller is usually the one making any Malkavian Time rolls, at least with regards to clan gatherings. The Storyteller rolls the character's Wits + Malkavian Time in secret, usually about a week before a significant gathering. With one success, the Malkavian receives an impulse to immediately head to a specific locale — but only when the meeting's just starting. Three successes allow the Lunatic to have about a night or two's forewarning, and a general idea of the meeting's purpose. Five successes give the Malkavian warning a week early, and a very clear vision of the meeting's focus. Six or more successes can actually be detrimental — at that point, it's entirely likely that the poor mad vampire has dipped too deeply, and is starting to receive pulses of his elders' derangements...

It's theoretically possible to actually, consciously *send* messages along the Network, but that doesn't mean that the Network is any sort of replacement (or even poor substitute) for a cell phone. For the most part, "sent" messages that manage to make it farther than a few feet are unconscious screams that channel a Malkavian's extreme emotion or pain. For this reason, Malkavians with more than three dots in Malkavian Time can often hear a clanmate's death-scream, so long as it's in the same city.

Despite the difficulty, it is possible to send deliberate, personalized messages from one person to the next along the Network, even without Dementation. It's tough as hell, but a Malkavian can always try. To make the attempt, the player rolls Wits + Malkavian Time, difficulty 9. Success allows the Malkavian to transmit a message to one person within city limits (longer ranges are possible, but only at the Storyteller's discretion); the message can consist of up to two words per success.

Note that a Malkavian needn't have any dots at all in Malkavian Time to receive those hideous little broadcasts along the clan's frayed neural network. In fact, it often drives newly Embraced clan members... well, madder than usual when the messages start filtering into their brains without any hint as to their origins.

- Your "cousins" are usually surprised when you manage to make it to a gathering.
- You've become accustomed to the occasional Call.
- You can sometimes hear echoes of messages that might not be intended for you.
- When one of the family dies, you know.
- You are the undisputed local authority on what is necessary.

Possessed by: Malkavians. Just Malkavians. **Specialties:** None.

DISCIPLINES

Elder Malkavians are no different than the elders of any other clan when it comes to Disciplines — they just as readily seek to expand their senses and powers over themselves and their environment. However, the elders of clan Malkavian, as intimately connected to madness as they are, are capable of producing Discipline effects that would never occur to a sane vampire.

Players have the option of choosing to be one of the few Malkavians who weren't affected by the global "reawakening" of Dementation, and thus retain Dominate, Auspex and Obfuscate as their clan Disciplines. So far, the childer of these "offshoots" have been mostly split in their affinities for Dominate or Dementation — so there's ample reason to play a Malkavian with Dominate if you feel so inclined.

Some of the following high-level powers can be purchased as Dementation or another Discipline. These are powers that have as much to do with the Network as the vampire's personality. When the power of Dementation was sealed off from the Camarilla Malkavians centuries ago, they learned to "make do," imitating their elders' Network-specific abilities with Auspex and Obfuscate. They might not have had Dementation, but they always had the Legion-mind.

The following Disciplines are recommended for Malkavians only; it would somewhat diminish the effect of the Madness Network if just any Toreador or Tremere were able to dispassionately tap into its immaterial ganglia. Call it one of the "perks" of Malkav's Curse if you will — the Malkavians have certainly lost enough in exchange.

[Note: Mind's Eye Theatre rules follow for most of the Discipline powers available. Some of these powers just don't work as well in a live-action environment, being more suited to a more personal environment with immediate access to a Storyteller. Please don't take it personally.]

BABBLE (AUSPEX LEVEL SIX OR DEMENTATION LEVEL SIX)

One of the more classic powers among elder Malkavians, this is the ability to communicate at great distances by using the power of the Network. The Malkavian with this ability can link a number of people together, allowing them all to converse at will — however, everyone involved must carry on their conversation out loud. What's more, each person hears their fellows as if the other people were standing next to them; thus, if Rosegarden were in the comfort of their own quiet haven while Pack was in a crowded subway, Pack could murmur quietly and be heard, while

Rosegarden would have to raise her voice for Pack to hear her over the crowd.

System: The Malkavian may communicate with as many other people as he has points of Willpower, to link with unwilling targets, the player must roll Charisma + Empathy, difficulty of the target's Willpower. He may add more people (up to his Empathy rating) over and above his Willpower score only if those people have derangements and don't resist the Babble.

MET System: Without cellular phones or walkie-talkies, this power's an outright bitch to simulate in live-action. Considering the difficulties of long-range challenges, it's recommended that this power be restricted to Storyteller use — for example, a Narrator approaching a player with a message transmitted via Babble.

THE CALL (AUSPEX LEVEL EIGHT OR DEMENTATION LEVEL SIX)

Although many clan gatherings happen spontaneously, the Call arising from a general subconscious need shared by a city's Malkavian population, it is possible to send the Call deliberately. Both Auspex and Dementation offer the ability to send the Call, although it's a much easier art to perform when expressed through Dementation.

System: To send the Call, a Malkavian (and only a Malkavian) rolls Perception + Empathy, difficulty 6. As always, other clan members will hear (and attend if they so choose) only if they make their Malkavian Time rolls.

Successes Malkavians reached

- 1 All within three city blocks
- 3 All within a three-mile radius
- 5 All within a 10-mile radius
- 7 The city's entire Malkavian population
- 10 All within the greater metropolitan area
- 13 All within 300 miles
- 15 All Malkavians on the continent
- 20 Every Malkavian in the world

The Call as broadcasted is not a verbal thing; it merely conveys an impression of a place and a time. There is no sense of purpose, nor even the name of the gathering point; still, neither is really necessary. The Call is so instinctive that if an American Malkavian who didn't speak a word of French were visiting Paris, and heard the Call, he'd be able to follow his impressions and visions to the gathering place as readily as any native Lunatic.

MET System: In live-action environments, this power has an effective "delay"; in other words, a character must announce his intentions to send out the Call to your Storyteller, who in turn should notify the various Malkavians in play of this Call. After all, you may not know all of the Malkavians in the city, but they'll still hear it (via the Storyteller). A good method is to alert your Storyteller a few days before a game, who can then place a note on all of the Malkavian character records before handing them to players for the evening's session. Success is considered automatic, but the character cannot reach farther than the city limits — a Call that echoes from city to city is best left as a plot device in the Storytellers' hands.

SIBYL'S TONGUE (AUSPEX LEVEL SIX)

Elder Malkavians have a well-deserved reputation as seers and prophets. The power of the Sibyl's Tongue takes this predilection one step further: The Malkavian so blessed can call on her advanced Auspex to go deliberately questing into the Legion-mind for the answer to a particular question. If some Malkavian somewhere knows the answer, then the sibyl has a chance of making the connection to that Malkavian's memories and drawing forth the information.

Failure carries a penalty, though. To open oneself to the Legion-mind and deliberately tread naked into its waters — that's dangerous stuff. Whenever a Malkavian uses this talent, she runs the risk of having the clan's collective mad thoughts invade her head in a rush. The process is... highly unpleasant.

System: The Malkavian must focus for a turn to attune herself to the Network. The player then rolls Wits + Investigation, difficulty 8. If the roll is successful, the Malkavian gets the answer of her choice; the more successes, the less cryptic the reply. However, the answer must be something that some Malkavian somewhere knows (excluding Malkav himself, of course).

If the roll is failed, then the Malkavian is in trouble. The stew of psychoses that makes up the Network invade her personal headspace, at such a speed that it's impossible to filter out what she wants. She immediately gains two additional derangements for the duration of the scene. If the roll is botched, then the effects are even worse — one of these additional derangements settles into her mind permanently.

At the Storyteller's option, particularly dangerous questions might inflict an extra derangement even if the roll is successful, and have even more severe penalties for failure. This is especially true of questions that require tapping the mind of a Methuselah — a place nobody, no matter how well-prepared, wants to go.

MET System: To activate this power, the player must expend one or more Mental Traits; the more Traits expended, the more accurate the reply, subject to the Storyteller's interpretation. Make a simple test (anyone will do; you don't have to tell the other person what you're doing). If you win or tie, your Malkavian is able to tap into the Cobweb and dig up the information that you want. If you lose, though, your Malkavian gets lost in the psychoses and gains two more Derangements for the next hour or scene — a good system is to just grab two at random from a deck of prepared Derangement cards of the sort that you'd use for Dementation (see **Laws of the Night**, p. 146). In either case, the Mental Traits are spent and gone.

If a Storyteller is not available to narrate this power, or if you just want to speed game play, the Malkavian can use it

to gain access to special Lore and information that he might not otherwise have. Spend two Mental Traits and make the test described above. If successful, you gain access to one special level of Lore Ability above what you'd normally know. Thus, if you use this power with an Expert Ability of, say, Noddist Lore x2, you can temporarily go up to Noddist Lore x3 — long enough to fetch one snippet of useful information or make one challenge. This rules variant is subject to Storyteller approval, of course.

SCRAWL (OBFUSCATE LEVEL SIX)

The Malkavian is able to tap into the recesses of his madness and encode his irrational thoughts within a written form. His writing appears no different than any other graffiti (although it may be distinctly irrational, like the scrawl on the walls of a madman's cell); however, other Malkavians are able to look at it and filter out the message hidden within. In essence, the contagious madness of Malkav's blood acts as a medium for communication. If the writer so chooses, he can leave a message that can be read by all Malkavians, or by a specific Malkavian.

System: No roll is necessary to write encrypted messages; however, if the Malkavian is leaving a hidden message for a specific Malkavian, he must personally know either the intended reader, the reader's sire or one of the reader's progeny. There is no roll necessary to read the message, either.

Non-Malkavians with Auspex 6 or higher, if they suspect a hidden message or pattern, can attempt to pierce the scrawl's meaning; doing so requires a Perception + Occult roll, difficulty 9. However, failure inflicts a temporary derangement on the reader, as he discovers exactly the wrong pattern in the writer's madness.

MET System: This power can be tricky to simulate in live-action. If you trust to the honesty of the players in your game, you can leave a special Scrawl card (a 3x5 will do — a special color is a good choice to indicate Scrawl instead of a regular item or note) with "Scrawl" on the front and your note on the back. A slightly more secure, but intensive, method is to leave a "Scrawl" card taped to the surface with a note to see a Storyteller; that prevents non-Malkavians from peeking, but can tie up a lot of time if players have to go looking for Storytellers.

If Scrawl causes too much difficulty during play, Storytellers shouldn't hesitate to restrict its use to downtime sessions between games (for passing hidden messages between Malkavians), or to not allow it at all.]

PHANTOM HAUNTER (OBFUSCATE LEVEL EIGHT)

This frightening ability taps into the victim's actual self-image and grants the power found therein to the Lunatic. The Malkavian using Phantom Hunter can reach into his target's mind, draw forth the image of the person who has most shaped (or fucked up) the target's self-image, and then become that person in all respects. If the victim was most traumatized by her Embrace, the Malkavian might appear as her sire; if she was most affected by her overweening mother, then her mother suddenly confronts her; if a friendly priest managed to pull her back from the brink of self-destruction, the Lunatic might wear that priest's face. The phantom isn't necessarily accurate; as it's shaped by the victim's memories, the phantom might even be an outright caricature of the real figure from the victim's past.

Although the change is largely illusory, it's more than skin-deep. Once the Malkavian has assumed the persona of the phantom, he gains whatever knowledge of the victim that the victim believes the phantom would have. If the victim believes her father suspected her of slipping off to have sex with her boyfriend on Sunday mornings, then the Malkavian learns of that little habit, and can use that knowledge believably. Since the phantom's knowledge depends on the victim's belief, then the Malkavian can wind up lacking information that the actual figure would ordinarily possess, but can also gain knowledge that the real-world counterpart wouldn't know. It all depends on what the victim *thinks* her phantom tormentor or benefactor knows.

Of course, assuming this form and faux memories exacts something of a toll on the Malkavian. Spending too much time acting (and thinking) like someone's personal bugbear can temporarily imprint the Malkavian with behavior patterns not his own.

System: This power requires a Manipulation + Empathy roll, difficulty of the target's Willpower. Each success allows the Malkavian to assume the phantom's persona for one turn. While this power is in effect, the Malkavian can destroy his target's confidence by using the secret knowledge so gained; any Dementation, Presence or Dominate attempts against the victim are at -3 difficulty, and the victim loses one temporary point of Willpower each turn that the "phantom" continues its rebuke.

However, the Lunatic must make a Willpower roll, difficulty 6, every turn past the first in order to retain full control. Failing a Willpower roll means that the Malkavian is oversaturated in the conjured phantom's persona, and continues to be haunted by the phantom's habits and prejudices for the rest of the night. This can be treated as either mild multiple personality disorder or mild schizophrenia; in either case, the Malkavian temporarily loses some of his own self-image to the phantom's own personality. If the Willpower roll is botched, the phantom personality remains for a month or longer. In any case, the Malkavian no longer has access to the phantom's appearance or "memories"; the vague impressions of personality are all that remain.

MET System: Phantom Hunter is a particularly difficult Discipline in live-action play, because it relies on the good roleplaying of the person you're facing. If your subject doesn't want to cooperate, you won't be able to get any information without the intervention of a Storyteller — which is to be avoided. *If* both parties trust to role-play the effects of this Discipline, they are certainly encouraged to do so.

In game terms, use of Phantom Hunter requires that you make a successful Social Challenge against the victim. If you win, you get a free retest on your next use of Dementation, Dominate or Presence against the victim. Once you've used the retest, you can either let the power and knowledge gained fade away, or you can spend a Willpower Trait to

keep the power active for another retest. (This is expensive in terms of Willpower, but more certain than just making a new Social Challenge to reactivate the power later.) Note that you can still only claim one retest on any single challenge of the above Disciplines through the use of this power.

Example: Uruq decides to put a little mental mojo down on his long-time enemy Anya. He defeats her in a Social Challenge and proceeds to rip into her with Advanced Dementation, Total Insanity. He fails his test to activate the Total Insanity, but he makes a retest with Phantom Haunter, and succeeds. He spends one Willpower Trait to keep the power active and under control; he follows up with a nasty subconscious Dominate command through Mesmerism. He fails that initial test, calls for a retest with Intimidation, fails *that* (bad night), then makes a retest with Phantom Haunter. He fails even that one, so he cannot make another Phantom Haunter retest on that challenge, and can keep the power active only by spending yet another Willpower Trait.

CHILDMIND (DEMENTATION LEVEL SEVEN)

This dread ability allows the Malkavian to give another person the equivalent of a psychic lobotomy. By focusing the power of Dementation, the Lunatic can strip away much of a target's power of reasoning, reducing his victim to a childlike state.

System: The Malkavian must make eye contact with his victim in order to use this ability. Once eye contact is established, the player rolls Intelligence + Empathy, difficulty of the victim's Self-Control or Instinct.

The player can choose to reduce the victim's Mental Attributes by up to seven points, as long as the victim is left with at least one dot in each. The Storyteller is under no obligation to reveal the victim's actual Attributes, however; the player must guess which Attributes to reduce and by how much. The victim also gains the derangement of Regression for as long as the childlike state lasts.

For example, Hoxha, played by Ben, uses Childmind on Lauren-Bess. Hoxha (and by proxy, Ben) knows that she has a reputation for being intelligent and cunning, so Ben announces that he intends to drop her Intelligence by three, her Wits by three and her Perception by one. Lauren-Bess normally has Intelligence 5, Perception 3 and Wits 3; she's rather more intelligent and a little less cunning than Hoxha guessed. Her Intelligence falls to 2, as does her Perception. Her Wits becomes a 1, as the power cannot reduce any Attributes to zero. Lauren-Bess still retains some of her acuity and is as intelligent as the average person, but her decision-making faculties are severely impaired, and she will still regress to childlike behavior under the proper stimuli. At least she's still somewhat functional some of the time...

The number of successes determines the duration of the Childmind's effects.

- 1 success One turn
- 2 successes One night
- 3 successes One week
- 4 successes One month
- 5 successes One year
- 6+ successes One year per success past 5

MET System: Make a Mental Challenge against your subject, after establishing eye contact. If you win, you can strip away the target's Mental Traits with your own force of will. Each Mental Trait that you expend, up to seven, automatically tears away one of the subject's Mental Traits. Traits lost in this fashion reduce the subject's current *and* total Mental Traits for the rest of the night. The target therefore can't regain the Traits through the use of Willpower or similar methods, and his overall mental state is indicated by his new Mental Trait total. Thus, a normally brilliant Tremere (with twelve Traits) could be reduced to just average brainpower by tearing away seven Traits, reducing him to five. If the Tremere had already used up multiple Mental Traits previously, he might well find himself without any remaining temporary Mental Traits. Even if the Tremere spent a Willpower Trait to refresh his Mental Traits, he'd only go back up to five Traits, not his usual twelve.

SLEEP OF REASON (DEMENTATION LEVEL SEVEN)

This macabre power gained its name from a Goya print that has achieved remarkable popularity among the clan. The Malkavian with this ability can reach into his victim's mind, pull forth whatever hobgoblins he finds there, and set them buzzing to the attack.

System: The player rolls Wits + Intimidation, difficulty 6. The Malkavian must spend one blood point for each hobgoblin he creates, up to a maximum number determined by the successes on the roll. Thus, if Fitzgerald were to get five successes on the Wits + Intimidation roll, he could create up to five hobgoblins at one blood point each.

The hobgoblins can appear as almost anything, but they're usually caricatures of whatever insecurities or bad memories the target might possess. Since they are born of the victim's frailties, the victim's mental resilience determines just how powerful the hobgoblins are.

Each beastie's statistics are as follows:

- Strength: 10 - victim's Willpower
- Dexterity: 13 - victim's Willpower
- Stamina: 12 - victim's Willpower
- Health levels: 13 - victim's Self-control + Courage

The hobgoblins have no Mental or Social Attributes of their own, and as creations of the victim's own psyche, are immune to any mental powers the victim uses against them. A victim cannot use Obfuscate to hide from his own persecutors, nor can he Dominate them into leaving him alone. Other vampires can affect the victim's hobgoblins with

these Disciplines, but the difficulty to do so is the same as if they were using those powers against the victim himself. In any event, the hobgoblins will ignore all other beings save their target unless compelled otherwise, and cannot damage anyone other than their victim.

A hobgoblin can attack with a bite, punch, claw rake or whatever attack is reasonable for its form. All of these attacks inflict Strength + 1 lethal damage; however, this damage is purely psychic in nature, and will disappear at the end of the scene. The malicious little beasties can fly as quickly as their victim can run, and can find him wherever he runs. If not destroyed by the end of the scene, the hobgoblins melt back into the ether from which they sprang.

MET System: Activating the Sleep of Reason requires that you spend one Blood Trait and one Mental Trait for each hobgoblin that you conjure, to the maximum allowed by your blood expenditure limits of Generation. The hobgoblins harass and perhaps attack your subject, with the following statistics:

Physical Traits: 5 + (victim's total Negative Physical Traits)

Health Levels (all "Healthy"): 13 - victim's Self-Control / Instinct +

Courage (halved if the compressed scale is used)

Attack: Strike for two levels of lethal damage

Hobgoblins created with this power affect only the intended victim. They melt away within an hour, or after their target is destroyed.

DENY (DEMENTATION LEVEL EIGHT)

This highly disturbing power offers a very compelling argument that the Malkavians see more of reality than anyone else does. The Malkavian using Deny is able to focus away from a certain object so completely that the object ceases to exist in the Malkavian's perception. However, the power of Dementation is so strong that for all intents and purposes, the Malkavian is right. The Malkavian may step through a locked door that he "doesn't see" as if it were an archway; a sword that he refuses to acknowledge will fail to cut him, passing right through his body. Those few elders of other clans who've seen this power in action cannot find a suitable explanation for how exactly it works. Perhaps the astral plane is somehow involved, or perhaps elder Lunatics simply function in more than three dimensions — who can say? There's certainly no explanation forthcoming from the Malkavians...

This power cannot be used to "deny" the existence of living creatures, undead or spirits; it works only on inanimate objects. Some fragments of old stories hint that the Eater and perhaps even Malkav might have the ability to use a similar power against living creatures, but such a power is beyond the scope of most elders in existence today.

System: The player spends a blood point and rolls Willpower, difficulty 8. If successful, for the duration of the scene, the Malkavian cannot recognize or interact with the given object in any way. It's as if the object just didn't exist for the Lunatic. Of course, this does have one or two drawbacks; if a Malkavian has successfully "tuned out" an opponent's weapon, he won't be able to understand why his friends are reacting as if their foe were armed. (They're probably hallucinating, come to think of it)

The aura of "non-interference" doesn't extend further than anything the Malkavian is holding; the Malkavian can swing a fire ax through a "denied" door to strike the opponent on the other side, but if he were to fire through the "open archway," the bullets would hit the door as usual (possibly to the Lunatic's consternation). The Malkavian cannot help other vampires or living beings to tune out the ignored object, even if touching them; the power only benefits the Malkavian and his personal effects.

MET System: You simply expend one Blood Trait and one Willpower Trait to deny the existence of one material object for the next hour or scene. If you Deny a sword, for instance, it cannot hurt you; a stake would not paralyze you; a suit of body armor would not stop your fist. You may Deny only one object at a time.

MERITS AND FLAWS

There are, of course, plenty of existing Merits and Flaws that are particularly appropriate for Malkavians. Most Mental Flaws from the main rulebook work nicely for Lunatics, as do Acute Sense, Infamous Sire, Medium, Oracular Ability (particularly appropriate), Cursed, Eerie Presence and Grip of the Damned. Still, the following might also offer an idea or two to add just the right finishing quirk to the Lunatic of your choice.

ABANDONING THE FLESH

As the frame story of Chapter One indicates, it is indeed possible for a Malkavian to "download" herself, her consciousness onto the shared madness network. This isn't quite a form of immortality, though, as what remains on the Network possesses a rudimentary sort of sentience, as much an echo of the vampire's personality as anything else. There's no evidence to suggest that the network remnants of a Malkavian's personality have any sort of strong ambition or self-awareness, other than being a collection of ideas and memories that fire off when appropriate stimuli present themselves. Whatever "intelligence" remains is incomplete, somewhat broken and rather difficult to reason with — after all, it no longer has the context of a body and a separate set of memories. It is somewhat further outside the bounds of reality, bodiless and indistinct.

And, of course, quite mad.

Diablerie, naturally, can theoretically work nicely as a quick ticket into the Network proper. This is really only possible when the diablerist is himself a Malkavian, although Storytellers might allow a particularly powerful elder to

flow through a weak-blooded diablerist onto the Network, likely inflicting his drinker with the Curse of Malkav in all its glory as he passes. Of course, there's still a chance that he is consumed utterly...

Ultimately, though, there is no system for this process; no character should be allowed the last-minute chance at escaping Final Death unless the story demands it. For that reason, a Malkavian can shunt himself onto the Tapestry *only* when the Storyteller deems it appropriate — and the Storyteller is triply advised to be very, very, very conservative with this sort of thing, treating it with all the respect and caution due, say, Golconda.

Finally, this particular tidbit of lore is not common knowledge at all; it's preserved as one of the greatest secrets of the clan, and it can't be accessed through the Network itself. Anyone willing to make this final plunge will have to somehow come up with the idea in the first place, and then do the legwork to make it necessary. Nothing is *ever* easy for the Malkavians.

IMMACULATE AURA (1-PT. MERIT)

Whether because of your iron control or some fluke of chance, your aura does not give away your insanity. The aura doesn't shift or swirl at all, even when you're confused, frenzied or in a psychotic fit.

BENEVOLENT BLOOD (L-PT. MERIT)

Your blood still carries the Curse of Malkav, but its effects have been lessened just a little bit. Any ghouls you create suffer none of the usual deranging side effects of drinking Malkavian blood — they can be loaded to the gills with your blood and not come one step nearer to gaining a derangement (They might still be driven insane by life with you, though, depending on how demanding your reality is.) Of course, any childer you Embrace will still gain a derangement after the Embrace as usual — although your vitae is easily diluted by mortal blood, the pure stuff carries the Curse as one would expect.

DEADENED NERVES (4-PT. MERIT)

Whether it was a condition you held in life or an odd side effect of the Embrace, your nervous system is missing a few connections. You have very little tactile sense, whether pleasure or pain. The downside of this is obvious: One of your senses is greatly impaired, which can keep you from noticing important warnings (a blade at your back, for instance — or in it). You suffer a +3 difficulty to all tactile-related Perception rolls, and the Storyteller may call for a roll to notice even the blatantly obvious; you might not even notice that you've been shot if the bullet doesn't knock you down outright.

However, your deadened nerves also protect you from pain, allowing you to ignore your wounds until your flesh is literally blasted from your bones. All penalties for wound levels are halved, rounding down; in other words, you suffer no penalties until you reach the Wounded level, where you deduct only one die from your dice pools, and even when Crippled you can still act at a mere two-die penalty.

If the Storyteller is willing, it might be particularly rewarding for the Storyteller to keep track of the character's health levels, and not let the player know exactly how badly his character has been wounded. Even if the Malkavian stops to give herself a quick look-over, the Storyteller puts things in the most general terms (i.e., "There's a number of holes in your chest, but you have no idea whether the bullets are lodged inside or not," "Your left arm refuses to move, although you're not sure why," and so on). This is a fair amount of extra work on the Storyteller's behalf (particularly if in the interest of secrecy, the Storyteller makes all the Malkavian's soak rolls in secret), but can add a lot of tension and verisimilitude to the game.

MET System: Bruised characters with this Merit have their full Trait levels for all tied challenges. When Wounded, they need not risk additional Traits to attempt challenges, although they still automatically lose tied challenges.

DISEMBODIED MENTOR (5-PT. MERIT)

The voices in your head may tell you things, but by God, they're useful things. You have a personal guide and advisor (bought as usual through the Background: Mentor) who exists largely in your own skull. He may have been a Malkavian who uploaded himself into the Network, or perhaps he's an imaginary construct with access to the shared memories of the clan. Either way, it's exceedingly hard for your enemies to cut you off from your mentor's counsel, and it's usually pretty easy to call on his advice when you need it. Unfortunately, this Merit also has its drawbacks; your mentor can find you whenever he chooses, and can be a real distraction when you're trying to do something he finds irrelevant. You're not freed from the obligations of your relationship, either; you find yourself running errands for your mentor just as often as any other pupil would, if not more so.

MET System: This Trait isn't appropriate for live-action play, as it would require the constant attention of a Storyteller.

SYMPATHETIC BOND (5-PT. MERIT)

For whatever reason, you unconsciously cause a peculiar supernatural form of feedback through the links of the blood bond. Although you're not immune to being blood bound (and cannot take the Merit: Unbondable), if you *do* become bound to someone, your regnant also becomes blood bound to *you* to an equal extent. Even if she was already blood bound to another, she now has the unenviable position of being regnant to two vampires at once. This can obviously lead to some unplanned and quite twisted codependent relationships.

STIGMATA (2-4 PT. FLAW)

You constantly seep blood from phantom wounds; even though your flesh remains unbroken, you bleed. The bleeding is fairly slight, but is incessant, costing you an extra blood point each evening (marked off just before dawn). If you bleed from visible locations (such as the palms, a common place for stigmata), you are at + 1 difficulty to all Social

rolls, although certain vampires will probably take your reputation as a seer more seriously.

The 4-point version of this Flaw indicates that you bleed from your eyesockets; this obviously makes it almost impossible to travel within human society unveiled, and very much disturbs other Cainites (the difficulty of all Social rolls is increased by +2 rather than +1). In addition, the constant bleeding interferes with your vision, adding one to the difficulty of all visual Perception rolls.

MET System: This Flaw is worth either two or four Traits. In both cases, you lose an additional blood Trait each evening just before dawn. The two-Trait version also gives you a one-Trait penalty on Social challenges; the four-Trait Flaw gives you a two-Trait penalty on those challenges, and a one-trait penalty to visual perception challenges besides. Needless to say, this Flaw, particularly the four-Trait version, is probably best left to games that take place on Halloween or well away from ordinary civilians; if you think they react poorly to people dressed like vampires, imagine how they'd react to someone with fake blood smeared down their cheeks.

INFECTIOUS (3-PT. FLAW)

Your bite transmits the madness of your clan. Whenever you feed from a mortal, the power of the Kiss holds them in place as normal. However, your mortal prey gains a temporary derangement for every three blood points you take from them; the madness lasts for a week or so. Malkavians with this Flaw are often the ones you hear about infesting asylums; it's the most low-key place for them to feed.

MET System: This Flaw is worth three Traits; the prey gains one derangement per three Blood Traits drawn.

RECOMMENDED SOURCES

To be honest, there are countless books, stories, films and the like out there that dwell on deception and perception; most of these offer a little insight toward what it's like to see things that nobody else sees. The following sources are particularly recommended for looks, satirical and otherwise, at what living in an alternate state of reality is like.

• Films

I Shot Andy Warhol — Dysfunctional and obsessive behavior aplenty; well-acted to boot.

Jacob's Ladder — Plenty of surrealism and hallucinations; something for would-be schizophrenics to check out

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest — The book is also good, but the movie is lightly praised. Life among the mad isn't something to envy, that's for sure.

The Shining — See this movie. Now.

The Sixth Sense — In addition to being somewhat supernatural in scope, this film very believably portrays the power of delusion with an added twist at the end.

Twelve Monkeys — Well, actually, most of Terry Gilliam's films are excellent studies in sudden "reality shifts", but this one in particular showcases the multiple loose ends and outside influences that dominate a Malkavian's existence. What can you trust?

• Books

Bradbury, Ray. *The October Country*. Although it's rare that the word "madness" crops up in any of these stories, it doesn't have to. The mood is masterful, and nobody does a better job of portraying people who are firmly (yet subtly) convinced of something very irrational — or who become so. Excellent ideas for staging a schizophrenic.

Burroughs, William S. *Naked Lunch*. If you don't have some ideas for roleplaying a hallucinatory Malkavian after reading this, there's no help for you.

Chase, Truddi. *When Rabbit Howls*. The autobiography of a multiple personality disorder victim; very much worth reading, and all the more chilling because it's non-fiction.

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. This manual establishes the common language of psychopathology; highly technical, of course, but with volumes of information on diagnosis, symptoms, multiple disorders and so on. You're sure to find something interesting inside.

Ellis, Bret Easton. *American Psycho*. Pop-psychology, to be sure, but nasty and brutish enough to inspire at least one homicidal Malkavian.

Eco, Umberto. *Foucault's Pendulum*. A very involved trip into mysticism, paranoia and madness. Yes, it's dense, but so are the layers of most Malkavians' psychoses.

Faulkner, William. *The Sound and the Fury*. Plenty of material here for decaying families, as well as characters that are on the brink — fucked up but not yet completely dysfunctional.

Heller, Joseph. *Catch-22*. Satire about madness and war; not the most serious look at mental illness, but a good read nonetheless that summarizes the futility of remaining sane in a world that has no use for sanity.

Jackson, Shirley. *The Haunting of Hill House*. What looks at first to be a simple story about a haunted house instead becomes an exploration of the psyche and its fragility. A must-read for any budding Malkavians.

Joyce, James. *Ulysses*. Even if you don't get very far into the work, it doesn't take that long to pick up the stream-of-consciousness style. Probably more useful for Storytellers than players, as it'd be hard to speak in character in such a fashion for an entire evening.

Kafka, Franz. His most famous work, "*Metamorphosis*," is an excellent study in what it's like to wake up one morning and not be part of the normal world anymore. However, there's more to Kafka than that one story, and much of it is fleshcrawlingly appropriate.

Poe, Edgar Allan. Poe's life itself is good source material for obsession and deterioration, but his fiction is equally useful for inspiring gothic elders in the throes of dementia.

Sayers, Dorothy. *Gaudy Night*. A murder mystery founded on the oddly simple theory that if everyone around expects you to be unstable, it is virtually impossible to hold on to your stability.

Shea & Wilson, *Illuminatus Trilogy*. All right, so it's gooby and comical, but even so, it's not a bad reference work for pranking.

Shatter, Peter. *Equus*. This play is a must, whether you read it or go see it. It explores obsession and borderline sanity, serious mindgames between doctor and patient, and an interesting viewpoint on how Malkavians might view what the rest of the world calls "normal."

Thompson, Hunter S. *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. Something of a field guide to states of altered consciousness; although it focuses more on drugs than good old-fashioned psychoses, most of the people in the book "just ain't right."

CHAPTER 3: SHARDS OF A BROKEN MIRROR

The Normal is the good smile in a child's eyes — all right. It is also the dead stare in a million adults. It both sustains and kills — like a God. It is the Ordinary made beautiful: it is also the Average made lethal. The Normal is the indispensable, murderous God of Health, and I am his Priest. My tools are very delicate. My compassion is honest. I have honestly assisted children in this room. I have talked away terrors and relieved many agonies. But also — beyond question — I have cut from them parts of individuality repugnant to this God, in both his aspects. Parts sacred to rarer and more wonderful Gods.

—Peter Shaffer, *Equus*

There are no stereotypes among Malkavians. They're harder to classify than the inmates of any mental institution — because, after all, the institution doesn't have any inmates of the kind that can't readily be detected as insane. The Malkavians, on the other hand, range from the obviously psychotic to the almost invisibly deranged. Some are benevolent, others sociopathic; some are retreating, others singularly aggressive. The only thing that unites the members of this teetering, decrepit family — apart from their demented blood — is the fact that they remain stoically, resolvedly, if ever so barely functional.

The Malkavian who manages to survive in the perilous modern nights of the Jyhad is a dangerous creature. Those that don't... well, you never hear about them.

The following Malkavians, whether new to undeath or terribly old and clever, are all survivors. Each one struggles with the forces that assault him within his own mind; each one has access to insights and talents that allow him to hold his own or more in Kindred society. Like all the rest of their ilk, they shouldn't be underestimated. After all, you never know what angle they're going to choose next to approach something — including your throat.

ART DEALER

Quote: *It's very visceral, isn't it? The artist, poor man, is of course highly disturbed. It was certainly unfortunate for his parents — but I'm sure you'll agree that the art world has benefited tremendously. Go on, don't be shy — look deeper.*

Prelude: As far back as you could remember, you loved art. You tried your best with crayons, modeling clay, pen-and-ink and crafts of all sorts — but alas, you weren't fortunate enough to be born with true talent. Instead, yours were the gifts of intelligence and a discerning eye — and no small measure of stubbornness. So what you lacked in vision, you decided to make up for in education. Even if you couldn't create art that would communicate on the soul's level, you could certainly do your best to bring it to others.

With your dedication and intelligence, you wrestled a scholarship to a university with a celebrated liberal arts school. True, your family could have afforded to send you without it, but if Daddy had actually had to break out the checkbook, he would have been the one to choose your major. You majored in art history (trying the occasional painting course in vain), with a minor, oddly enough, in psychology. As your studies progressed further, you became more and more fascinated with the way that artists — usually a troubled lot — used art to try communicating the things they could never say. Unfortunately, your grades weren't all they could have been; the professors just weren't willing to accept your ideas about collective ur-minds and the like.

You have no idea exactly when your sire started stalking you; you remember a few late nights in the art building when you were getting a little paranoid even without the benefit of getting high. She finally caught you at one of the receptions, dragging you into one of the restroom stalls and bringing you across. She explained herself later — on the nights she felt like explaining anything — in long ramblings about shared consciousness, garbled lines of communication and failed attempts at expression. For your part, you felt a quiet thrill — at last, someone who understood.

Concept: Malkav's blood has only heightened your belief in a communal level of human consciousness, one that can't be communicated in ordinary terms. With the help of some of the family's old contacts as backers, you opened what has become one of the most successful, if controversial, art galleries in North America. You deal exclusively in art created by mental patients — after all, only the unstable have access to the deeper levels of consciousness. With luck, it'll help others find something new, if perhaps a bit disturbing, about themselves. At the very least, it gives the psychopaths something new to do.

Roleplaying Hints: Keep on the go — time, ride and the trendy wait for no one. Speak with patient authority and quiet enthusiasm — unlike many other dealers, you fervently believe in the statements your artists are making. And always, always, keep on top of things. There's always going to be some idiot Toreador bitch who thinks her clan has a monopoly on visual communication, and you've got to be ready to keep her in her place.

Equipment: Dramatically striking clothing, cell phone, portfolio of reproductions, cigarettes and lighter, latest art-world periodicals

Derangement: Bulimia

COLLECTOR

Quote: *Through there? Oh, I'm afraid there's not much back there; that's my workspace, and it's a mess right now. Nothing to see, really... unless you're particularly interested in children's shoes? Right, I didn't think so.*

Prelude: You were something of an introvert growing up; not that you had a choice. Your mother, always concerned about your health, never let you leave the house — she tutored you at home. As a result, you spent all your time upstairs in your spotless room. She was always there, too; she had money left by your father, so she had the groceries and other things delivered, and there was no need to leave.

The most excitement you remember having in your entire childhood was the time that you managed to get up into the attic, not long after your grandmother's death. You spent hours up there, quietly sifting through all the chests and trunks and baskets of unwanted things, until your mother found you and rushed you downstairs at once, complaining about the dust the whole time. The excitement stayed with you, though — you'd never seen so many things of so many sorts all at once. If only you'd been allowed to look through them longer, there was so much more you could have learned.

When your mother died abruptly, your world broke apart. She'd taught you so much, but not how to get by in the outside world. You spent the days after her death wandering the town, soaking up all the sights. There was so much to see, so much you'd never found out about — and it proved too much. The civil services people soon took you in, and somewhere along the line you were noticed. Your sire and his cohorts were good enough to teach you the rudiments of interacting with other people and holding down a haven — but, of course, they couldn't teach you *everything*. You now know how to get by — to understand everything else, you're going to have to be your own teacher.

Concept: You're constantly trying to make sense of the world around you, and for you to do so, things need to be organized. You can't order the world yourself, but at the very least you can choose a certain sort of thing and catalog all its variations. However, you have yet to fixate on collecting one particular item for more than a few months — if it looks like you're not getting the answers you want, it's time to move on. As a result, you're always moving from one obsession to another, be it insects, quarters, oddly shaped oak leaves, human left hands, or whatever. Surely your next collection will hold a few more insights that the last one couldn't.

Roleplaying Hints: Roleplaying hints? You're a completely normal person — a completely normal person with a hobby, nothing more. You don't spend every waking moment obsessing over your hobby, and you don't discuss it with people who don't share your interest. It's your business, and you certainly don't want to bore people.

Equipment: Studio loft, latest "collection," jeweler's loupe, panoply of wide and varied craft supplies and hardware tools

Derangement: Obsessive/Compulsive

COMPOSER

Quote: *Would you please... Would you please try to lower your voice, please? I'm having some difficulty hearing.*

Prelude: It was the classic tale of a talent that demanded immortality. Your childhood was devoted to the pursuit of music from as far back as you can remember; your fifth-grade recital was enough to secure doubled funding for your school's music program. By your senior year of high school, you had your pick of scholarships, you were the talk of the neighborhood, and even the biggest dickheads in your class didn't dare hassle you for fear of what the school board would do to them.

Yours was a talent that spoke to the ages. It drew your sire, an immortal who'd forgotten what art really *was*, to you. As a performer, you were talented; your private compositions were genius. By all means, someone had to preserve your ability for all time.

Regrettably, the vampire who chose to do so was mad.

The Embrace drove a thousand cracks through your soul. By the time you were coherent and functional once more, they were already holding your empty-casket funeral — arrangements had been made, of course. You hardly noticed — the music flooding your head had increased in pitch and tempo, but it was somehow...different, almost wrong. And yet, at the same time, it was clearer and more insistent than ever before.

This pleased your sire to no end. He became the ultimate patron: providing you with a haven and a helpmate, arranging covert recitals and recruiting musicians to play your new overtures, and finally stepping away to leave you to work unhindered. Now your occasional concerto draws Kindred from around the city and beyond, and there's talk of producing a motion picture built around a soundtrack of your devising. You entertain all the offers politely and seriously, but always only with half an ear.

Concept: Like any composer worthy of the title, you are haunted by music. It's possible that some of what you hear is fragments of memories filtered in through the Madness Network; then again, maybe it's just pure inspiration. You aren't drawn quite by choice to the courts of vampiric society, but you often have to justify your existence to the prince by providing him and his hangers on with new entertainment. Thankfully, your skill is such that you never leave him bored — quizzical, drained or disturbed, perhaps, but never bored.

The music you create is far from ordinary; it's the work of a mad Mozart. Those who listen to it in its entirety are exposed to notes that are... subversive, you might call them. Subtly and mercilessly, your work insinuates itself into the listener, roosting in their skulls, never fully leaving them. Pity the poor monster who attunes himself to one of your recitals with Auspex...

Roleplaying Hints: Half-listen to the people talking to you; always devote at least a portion of your attention within. The music ebbs and flows; when it's at "low tide," so to speak, you're as accessible as any Kindred, but when it's in full flood, you need a pen and paper and damn the consequences. Smile politely, offer pleasantries, and grit your teeth in the hope that your admirers will go away and leave you to the mercy of the music.

Equipment: Satchel full of sheet music, small soundproofed attic apartment, synthesizer

Derangement: Manic-Depression

EMT

Quote: *First, do no harm. First, do no harm. First, do no harm.*

Prelude: You were no stranger to violence growing up, although your father did his best to keep his "business" far away from you. He didn't want you to have to do the things he did for a living, or to have a price on your head, so he worked damn hard to make sure that you were sheltered from the reality of his "family obligations." It didn't quite work out that way; you saw Uncle Julie shot down when you were 10. That was the day you became completely ashamed of who you were.

Your family wasn't a safe place to go for solace, so you turned to the Church. You desperately wanted to believe in a world where compassion and mercy and peace actually meant something, and so you *did* believe. Once you graduated to college, you majored in medicine; it seemed only appropriate that you give back to the community, since your family was taking so much away. When you got your residency, your father was very, very proud — but that didn't mean anything to you at all.

It was on a late-night shift in the ER when you were taken. You pronounced the John Doe dead on arrival — imagine your surprise when he walked into the bathroom out of nowhere and opened your throat. When you came to, you were in your own apartment, and he was there with you, somewhat apologetic. Just like your father.

Since then, you've fled the city you grew up in; you're desperately trying to hide from your sire and family members both. You managed to get a job as an EMT on the graveyard shift, where you do your absolute best to keep on helping people. You tend to feed by using Obfuscate to slip into the hospital's morgue, rather than preying on the people you have a responsibility to save. Every time you bundle a broken, bleeding body into the back of the ambulance, the temptation is horrible — but you'll continue to resist. Your very soul is at stake.

Concept: All you ever wanted to do was help people. Now you're a creature that's forced to prey on people to survive. Well, not if you can help it. Your remarkably high Humanity score means that you're constantly conflicting with your predatory nature, but when lives are at stake, you usually manage to pull through. On the times that you've actually fed on fresh human blood, you could feel the voices of the people you were devouring in your head — it disturbs you to no end, and you force yourself to choke down stale blood rather than eat everything a living person is.

Roleplaying Hints: Always work to heal, rather than to harm. You're not squeamish, no matter what others might think—you're compassionate, and there's a difference. You're desperately ashamed of what you are, but you refuse to believe that you're incapable of doing some good even in your current condition. Every now and again, you consider trying to find your family and reconcile with them — but the feeling always passes.

Equipment: EMT card, cramped apartment, medical texts, first-aid kit

Derangement: Sanguinary Animism

METHUSELAH'S PAWN

Quote: *It's not my fault. It wasn't my decision. There's... there's something else going on here. You've got to believe me.*

Prelude: You grew up strictly blue-collar in a large family. With four siblings, and you stuck firmly in the middle, you had to work extra hard to earn your parents' attention. Even then, it was never undivided — you had to share with the rest of the family.

In high school, you tried harder than ever before to get people to listen to you. You volunteered for project after project, particularly things like the school paper and yearbook. Your impressed guidance counselor started pushing you toward a career in journalism, and you were more than happy to head down that road.

And journalism might've worked out for you; you did well in college, you did well with your first job at a paper, and you soon moved to television. Unfortunately for you, you got a little too overzealous investigating a strange series of kidnappings, and came to the attention of the party responsible. The *thing* — and there's really no other way you can think of it — decided that your talents for investigation and communication would be highly useful to it, particularly if you acted as its catspaw in Kindred society. The rest was a foregone conclusion.

You'd always subconsciously hoped that you'd be important to someone, that someone would finally pay attention to you, want you on their side. These nights, you wish that you could have stayed neglected forever.

Concept: You're a puppet who can see its own strings — very aware of your lack of control, but powerless to do anything about it. Your sire has chosen you to act on its behalf in Kindred society; although you have a fair amount of leeway to pursue your own goals, its orders take priority. You don't see the elder thing that sired you in the flesh very often, but every once in a while, the compulsions come filtering into your head from outside. When that happens, you have little choice but to obey.

Roleplaying Hints: More than anything else, you crave time to yourself, but every time you think you're alone, that hideous, overpowering presence starts crawling into your brain. When under orders, speak with the warm, strong voice others tend to associate with television journalists; when on your own, your voice tends to falter a little, and your defense break down. You really wish you could meet someone who understands, someone you could confide in — you might be a little too prone to falling for people that you think might offer some consolation.

Equipment: Notepads, pocket tape recorder, nice clothing, Saturn four-door, sizable apartment, icepick

Derangement: Self-Annihilation Impulse

MORTIFIER OF THE FLESH

Quote: *That all you got?*

Prelude: You were an athletic one right from the start. Most of your childhood was spent racing around parks, empty lots, even quarries and construction sites. When you discovered wheels in the form of skates and skateboards, you were even harder to catch. Nothing felt better than exercise and speed, in that order. Wall-climbing, skateboarding, street hockey — you were mastering "extreme sports" even before the phrase "extreme sports" came into fashion.

With that came fights, of course. The jocks who thought that football, basketball and wrestling were the only "real sports" were more than happy to try beating up a skinny street punk who thought he was hot stuff. Although you could never do much about the odds, you learned ways of getting back at any of the bastards you caught alone. Eventually they caught the hint and started leaving you alone — which was almost a disappointment. Even though it hurt, a good fight was always another great way to get that hit of adrenaline.

Eventually, though, one of the wipeouts was bound to be serious — and it was. Skateboards and mass transit just didn't mix. Flat on your back, gasping oxygen in the back of an ambulance, you wondered if your time had finally run out. It had. You never reached the hospital—your ride was intercepted.

When you came across, it was horrible. Somewhere between life and unlife, you lost most of your sense of feeling. Not only was it impossible to get your usual kind of rush, it was impossible to get much feeling at all. You might have gone unusable if your sire hadn't immediately given you something to do. To his surprise, you came back from the task he'd set for you completely successful, and with some added insight to boot. There was still some feeling left — it just required a certain kind of... extreme stimulus to come out.

Concept: In life, you were an adrenaline junkie. In undeath, you're a sensation-seeker of an entirely different sort. When you lost the exquisite joys of the flesh, you had to turn to more extreme measures to make your body react. And while self-mutilation is a good way to start your night, it's your freelance capacity as a legbreaker and cleaner that really provides you with ways to get creatively hurt. The problem is figuring out how to keep your reputation from preceding you — those folks who've heard about you figure that with the things you do to yourself, you'd be even worse to them. They cave way too easy, and that's just wrong.

Roleplaying Hints: They say you're more suicidal than homicidal; that's not strictly accurate. You want to win your fights, but you want to feel like you've been in a fight afterwards. Let your opponent have the first shot; then take him down. Be exactly as brutal as you need to; you're no sadist, you're a professional. The real experiments in pain you can save for your own unliving flesh.

Equipment: Straight razor, .38 automatic, hammer, carpentry nails, canister of table salt, freezer tape, brass knuckles, roll of barbed wire, motorcycle

Derangement: Masochism

OCCULT SAVANT

Quote: *Look at the map. It's real simple. He's leaving his apartment here, at the Keter point. He's going to ultimately wind up at the drop point here, at the point of Malchut. What we need to do is to catch him just outside the gas station on Cedarwood, here — at the point of Gevurah. Or, if we're lucky, the influence will be Pachad. Either way, the focus will be against ten. Got it?*

Prelude: You didn't even *like* to read when you were still alive. You were a real child of the '90s, with an attention span that couldn't digest anything that wasn't presented in colorful 30-second chunks. Your parents despaired of you ever making something of yourself; then they just stopped caring at all. Which suited you fine; all you wanted was music, TV and dating, all at a speed that wouldn't bore you.

The Rites of Embrace changed everything — *everything*.

You and your girlfriends were coming home from a late-night movie when you were caught. The other car just rammed into yours attopspeed; you were thrown free, which is maybe why they found it expedient to take you rather than feed on your corpse — unlike the others. You were semiconscious when they dragged you away, and you never really came out of your delirium.

The things you saw during the Rites of Embrace — they changed you. You emerged from the earth starving, but no matter how much blood they gave you, the hunger remained. When the others discovered how ravenous you were to learn things, they introduced you to a templar with an extensive library. And under his tutelage, your unique talent bloomed.

Now you devour all the occult esoterica you can dig up, assimilating it as quickly as possible, filing it randomly in your head and spitting out your "results" as needed. Your knowledge has proven useful and useless to your pack in equal turns; sometimes you're dead-on and sometimes you're completely off. You can't be convinced that your logic is faulty, though. It's not your problem if the universe isn't keeping up with you.

Concept: Your nights are devoted to the pursuit of hidden knowledge, but the way you apply your findings is... eccentric, to say the least. You see connections where other occultists would say no connections exist, and ignore other, positively blatant, connections. Even if someone were to offer to teach you Thaumaturgy, your encyclopedic but off-kilter "understanding" of the universe's patterns might grant you outstanding mastery of the power — or prevent you from ever understanding so much as the basics. You're almost *beyond* such magics, really.

Roleplaying Hints: The patterns are all around you. Lots of them are evident, but lots more can't be pieced together without study, observation and all the right questions. You try to explain the patterns you see to your packmates, but your habit of jumping several sentences ahead makes you fairly hard to understand. If they think you're full of it, take no notice; they'll come around eventually.

Equipment: Cramped apartment packed with books, customized tarot deck drawn on index cards, stacks of legal pads filled with cryptic scribbles, sketchbooks, chalk, pendulum

Derangement: Obsessive/Compulsive

SENSEI

Quote: *Of course I hit him with the car. He might have been the Buddha. Is he still moving? Ah. Then I'll put it in reverse.*

Prelude: In your neighborhood, there weren't a whole lot of options open for bettering yourself. You tried a few of them, but none of them really took before you started joining in some self-defense classes at the Y. Suddenly, there was a lifestyle that attracted you — strength tempered with wisdom. The strength to take what you deserved, and the wisdom to tell you how.

Once you were old enough to hold down a part-time job, you enrolled in a dojo to learn the real thing. However, you were still a good way from black belt before you hit a serious wall. Your sensei said that you lacked the spirit and self-discipline to progress any further; your frustration didn't help much, either. You tried cramming to learn all the "right" answers to his philosophical questions, but even *that* didn't work.

You're not sure why you were Embraced at that point; perhaps your frustration was so intense that your sire couldn't resist its savor. It didn't matter, though. The death of your body was a breakthrough. Suddenly you saw that there was so much more — and you took the first step in understanding that you knew nothing.

Concept: You practice a peculiar brand of Zen Buddhism; like others of the faith, you attempt to break through the barriers of intellect to achieve enlightenment, but meditation and koans are not sufficient for you. You deliberately practice the nonrational in thought and deed, often in ways that any living Zen practitioner would find extreme. But the more you practice, the more that you become able to see — and the more you are inhibited. You cannot decide whether the Sight is the path to understanding, or whether it is an anchor around your neck. Until the answer is made plain, you have no choice but to act. As a result, you're far from a sequestered hermit, but an active—if barely understood — player in the city's Kindred society.

Roleplaying Hints: You're equally capable of reflecting and meditating on a course of action or koan, or acting without conscious thought; and your personal conviction requires you to alternate between one and the other as quickly as possible, to throw off the bounds of rationality. You don't even use your martial skill on a regular basis anymore; it's just as important to pull a gun and shoot your opponent after exchanging a few blocks and feints. You're willing to teach others, but your own internal struggle makes you inaccessible at times; sometimes you offer a koan as advice, sometimes you speak rationally, and sometimes you just strike your student as hard as you can. Such is the road to understanding.

Equipment: Loft over a small dojo, "prayer bead" string of beads and teeth; compact car, hardwood *hanbo* stick.

Derangement: Desensitization

TALK RADIO HOST

Quote: *Look, caller, I don't mean to cut you off here, but don't you think you're being a little naive? Look at the world around you — look at the skin that's been prepared to keep you in your place. Now, maybe you're happy to go on living in this facade that they've provided for you, but I want a little more. I want the truth!*

Prelude: You grew up privileged — private school, household staff, parents buying off your traffic tickets — all that. Nobody ever really chewed you out or forced you to learn some discipline, and you weren't hungry a day in your life. It wasn't until college that you ran face-first into the real world.

All of a sudden, your parents couldn't buy the deans off any more, and your grades started to fall. Oh, the rumors floating around were innumerable. Most blamed your family's sudden economic loss on bad debts, gambling, a disastrous day at the stock market... all sorts of things. You, on the other hand, didn't believe a word of it. There was no way your parents could have been responsible for their misfortune. Someone else must have had a hand in it, must have had it in for them. At first you thought it was the liberals in government, but the more you immersed yourself in conspiracy-theory literature, the more possibilities started opening up. You didn't have the resources to get to the heart of whatever was going on, but the least you could do was warn other people. So you swallowed your pride and took two part-time jobs, one of them at the college radio station. It went well for you — if there was one thing in your favor, it was your skill at oration — and eventually you landed a late-night talk segment. It proved so popular that soon you were able to move your act to a professional radio station.

Your Embrace came out of nowhere, in the form of a seemingly random attack when you were walking to your car. Your first few nights were tense and horrible; you never saw your sire once. The only communication you received were odd messages on your answering machine, instructions shoved under your door in blank envelopes, the occasional terse phone call — it's no wonder you didn't take well to vampirism. Eventually you got the hang of hunting; the secrecy and double-talk you'd already mastered.

Concept: The small hours of the night, the "midnight of the soul," the wide, bleak stretch when people's minds start

running away with them — that's your time. You can reach people with your show, get inside their heads when they're that particular kind of receptive. You don't know who your benefactors are, but for now you'll play their game and push their agendas—until you can make a move on them and push an agenda of their own.

Roleplaying Hints: You have a definite need to educate, to get people questioning the big lies they've been fed by the Powers in Control. Be brash and confrontational, provocative without being completely obnoxious. Use humor when possible, insults when necessary, and twisted logic as appropriate. Give your audience what they want — and something extra on the side.

Equipment: Cramped apartment, stacks of conspiracy literature and journals, personal tape recorder

Derangement: Paranoia

THIRD-SHIFT PRISON GUARD

Quote: *You seem like a clever guy; clever enough to know not to make any trouble. I think I could use a guy like you. You might want to think about that; there are some real side benefits to having someone like me watching out for you in here.*

Prelude; You grew up tough, and more than a little bent. The tiny Deep South town you were raised in never seemed big enough to you; once you'd proven that you could lick any man there you wanted too, it was time to see about proving that you could make it in the big city, too.

Unfortunately, once you got there, it turned out that you were pretty small-time after all. Moving in and setting up an operation wasn't nearly as easy as you'd thought it'd be — although your competitors were as lacking in formal education as you were, they knew a lot more about the territory than you did. You were pretty lucky to get off with just a few thorough beatings instead of a bullet in your skull. That wasn't how you saw it, of course. In your mind, someone needed to die for the royal crime of fucking with you.

Would've worked great if the cops hadn't shown up. They were already staking out your victim, and hey, you were a bonus for them. The judge wasn't a sympathetic sort, and pretty soon you found yourself sharing a cell with a three-time killer.

Surviving prison was the toughest thing you ever did. Plenty of bruisers liked to pick on the hick, so you got used to being on the receiving end of a beatdown. Once in a while you caught one of your tormentors alone — sure, you went to solitary, but he went to the infirmary. It's a wonder you ever made parole. In fact, looking back on it, somebody must have been pulling strings — the same guy who picked you up the night of your release and gave you one damn attractive offer.

With a little bit of bribery and some new paperwork, you found yourself inside prison walls again. However, this time you're the one who's got the real power. Guards, prisoners: They all know not to mess with you. This is your domain now.

Concept; You've got it pretty much made. Nobody really cares about most of the prisoners under your jurisdiction, so they're an easy source of meals. Those that do know something about your nature — fellow guard and prisoner alike — are your willing helpmates, glad to do your bidding in exchange for a shot of blood and an evening on the outside. You're a very effective broker in muscle, and many of your peers are willing to pay handsomely for your boys' services. Yes indeed, unlife is sweet.

Roleplaying Hints: Speak softly and swagger just a little bit. Project an aura of quiet confidence; you don't need to resort to brutality in order to keep your charges in line. Size up everyone you meet; you're real good at evaluating potential resources. Never be afraid to volunteer a potential favor, and never let them forget what they owe you.

Equipment: Uniform, nightstick, taser, standard issue revolver, prison blueprints, keyring, keycodes, hidden stash of cigarettes, drugs and pornography

Derangement: Megalomania

SAMPLE BROOD: THE MOIRAI

They take their name from the Greek Fates, and follow in the Fates' footsteps. They are soothsayers who provide dire warnings when least expected, yet who remain silent when specific questions are posed to them. They are troublemakers who ferret out the dirty secrets of vampire elders, almost on a whim, and expose them to the rest of the city's Kindred. They are disliked and even hated, and yet they're also deemed as near-indispensable.

And they are very much the epitome of what many vampires think of as "Malkavian."

The Moirai are presented as a possible resource for the Storyteller, to be plugged in as extra supporting cast for a chronicle, a source of plot hooks, or even as potential background cast for a specific character. There aren't any references to specific cities; the Hyde and its denizens can be dropped into the city of your own chronicle as needed. And although presented as Camarilla-oriented, the Moirai can be easily tweaked to fit Sabbat or sect-independent chronicles.

Come and meet them.

HISTORY

The Moirai are a fairly new phenomenon in the chronicle's city; they've been active for only a few years, but they've proven the value of their insight many times over since then. What isn't particularly well-known is that the Malkavian

tradition of small broods dedicated to communal, "enlightening" pranks and prophecies has been around for a long time, possibly even for millennia. Every vampire is used to Malkavians croaking out little snippets of insight, pointing out things that nobody else can see. What makes the Moirai unusual, though, is that they do so as a very effective whole. When a vision needs to be shared, the whole coterie puts in a communal effort to adapt that vision so that other Kindred can see it.

This particular brood came together 25 or so years ago, when the itinerant Emmanuel Moncrief and his child answered a peculiar Call. When they found the young Lunatic making the broadcast, they were rather surprised to find that she had no idea she had called them. After a long evening of very tense conversation, the three of them puzzled out that the Call hadn't come from any of them at all — it was as if instinct and chance alone had put them together.

The three struck a truce to cooperate until they'd discovered just why they'd been brought together — but strangely enough, after only a few months, the three had forgotten that they'd ever cared about that answer at all. They were together, they worked well together, and they kept receiving communal visions along the Cobweb — wasn't that enough? And they had a purpose — a purpose that had somehow chosen them, instead of the other way around. Moncrief supplied the name "Moirai" as an explanation, almost as if prompted to do so. Faye still wonders if the name, and maybe even the purpose, wasn't something Moncrief somehow inherited from his sire. There's no telling either way; even Moncrief himself doesn't seem to know for sure.

After 10 years or so, the Moirai had to move on. They settled in another city across the continent, where they plied their trade of warnings and revelations until forced (or was it compelled?) to move on once more. Along the way, they picked up a fourth member, the enigmatic young Jack. Just as with Lizzie, Jack just seemed to fall into their laps, and just as with Lizzie, it was a comfortable fit.

Eight years ago, Moncrief, Faye, Lizzie and Jack settled in the chronicle's home city to ply their trade. They established their haven in an old theater, and within nine months had delivered two prophecies to the prince. The prince ignored the first warning, dismissing it as Malkavian babble — and nine nights later, two of the city's more prominent ancillae had vanished. They were last spotted at the airport, slavishly following in the wake of a rather soft-spoken Giovanni who'd convinced all Elysium that his desire to remain in the city was genuine. When the Moirai's second warning came, the prince did his best to decrypt the garbled message; he succeeded in doing so, and was able to avert a blood feud between two of the city's prominent clans before it ignited.

A year after that, the Moirai screened their first "biopic," a short film that showcased the rather scandalous liaisons of one of the city's primogen. The subject took it badly, and suffered the harpies' jibes for months, but the prince forbade any action against the standoffish Malkavian brood. The elders decided that the film was in rather less poor taste than its subject material, and agreed that the Moirai were too potentially useful to punish for... well, for doing what everyone knows Malkavians do.

Since then, the Moirai have continued to offer the occasional dire warning or scandalous report, usually to mixed reception. They also added a member three years back, a youngster named Garcia with a heady amount of vision. They continue to watch the rest of the city very, very closely, and there seems to be little that escapes their prying or revelatory visions. Nobody is sure if the brood is going to move on soon, or if they've chosen to remain in the city to watch Gehenna unfold. In fact, not even the Moirai themselves can say for sure.

HAVEN: THE HYDE

The Hyde Theatre stands in one of the decayed sections of downtown, on a block that the city council keeps planning to renew and refurbish but never seems to get around to doing so. The brick exterior is covered with constantly changing gang tags, and the broken frames where movie posters once hung are now filled with cheap photocopied flyers advertising various struggling nightclub acts. Once it was a fine old building, but there are only vestiges of its former glory remaining.

The Hyde was built in the late 1940s by a factory owner looking to raise his social standing by having his name associated with the arts. Jonathan Hyde wasn't quite as wealthy as he would have liked, though, so his theater — designed for stage productions, not motion pictures — had to be rather more modest in form than he'd hoped. The theater did fairly well in its first few years, but more out of novelty value than anything else. As the '50s came into full swing, the theater began losing business quickly, and even community theater groups found it difficult to break even on a production. Finally, Hyde had to sell the theater at a loss. The new owner decided that although the Hyde wasn't quite the playhouse it tried to be, it would make a fine moviehouse — and with some modest refurbishments and a brand new movie screen, it was set to go.

This worked out fairly well for a time, but ultimately the Hyde proved equally unsuited for drawing movie crowds. It simply wasn't able to keep up with the newer movie theaters — as more and more multiscreen theaters began popping up, they drew more and more business away from the small moviehouse. The management (which had changed a few times since the first buyout) tried to counter by running foreign and "art" films that couldn't be found elsewhere in town, but the public just wasn't interested. Finally, the Hyde closed its doors in 1988; and apart from a brief but doomed effort from a well-meaning but anemic historical preservation society, it was largely forgotten.

Forgotten by everyone but Emmanuel Moncrief, that is.

Eight years ago, when Moncrief and his disciples followed their communal vision to the city, they happened across the abandoned theater almost at once. It sang to them. Moncrief promptly bought the Hyde at a bargain price; its owner was only too happy to sell it off, and didn't ask many questions about his new buyer.

It proved perfect as havens go. There are few windows on the main floor; the entrance was bricked up long ago, and even if a hole were knocked in the bricks, the sunlight would never make it all the way down the long corridor (lined with broken frames for movie posters) to the ticket booth. There's ample space for a vampire to sleep on the stage, in the projection room, in the theater seats, backstage, even behind the concession counter or in the ticket booth — the sun just isn't a worry in most of the building.

Moncrief and his friends welded shut all the fire exits but one upon taking possession of the theater, and that one stays locked and barred except when the Malkavians are entertaining guests. To get in and out, the brood commonly wriggles through a pair of small windows in the restrooms; in case of emergencies, they've also knocked a hole in the ladies' room floor that leads below the streets. The Hyde doesn't have full electrical hookups — there are one or two sections that are permanently blacked out — but most of the wiring is in good condition. More importantly, the sprinkler system is fully functional; Moncrief has made sure that the theater isn't a total firetrap.

There's only one amphitheater in the entire building, but it's a sizable one, with a respectable balcony and massive curtains that still hang along the walls. The gold paint has begun to flake very badly along most of the decor, but the red velvet curtains lining the walls are more or less intact (if mildewed and dusty). The seats are old, but not entirely uncomfortable; the leg room is a little tight, but undead legs don't cramp. The old stage is somewhat battered, and creaks audibly whenever someone walks across it; on the other hand, the Moirai have kept the lighting well maintained, with even a few functional spotlights up high. The picture screen stretches across the stage's midpoint of the old stage; it's torn in several places, but is still servicable.

Backstage is off-limits, even when the Moirai are entertaining guests. Only close personal friends are allowed backstage, and the Witnesses have precious few of those. Faye and Lizzie sleep in one of the backstage wings, surrounded by the leftover clutter of half a dozen previous owners. In particular, Lizzie has gathered a collection of mannequins and dressed them in the old stage costumes she found stored away in the Hyde's recesses. But for some reason, her sense of interior design is very... disquieting. The mannequins seem to be in a sensible enough arrangement, but visitors slowly start to sense that the dummies' angles and facing are somehow... wrong, somehow unwholesome by just a few degrees. Slowly, subtly, the mannequins' blank stares engender a sense of claustrophobia, even paranoia. For their part, Lizzie and Faye don't seem to mind at all. But anyone that Lizzie lures back to the heaped pile of old velvet in one corner for some "play" is likely to leave the building feeling rather haunted, and might suffer from night terrors for some time thereafter.

The projection room is where Jack sleeps away his days; it's a litter of film cans and ragged paperbacks, as much like a rat's nest as any Nosferatu haven might be. A battered and jury-rigged — but functional — projector sits in the center of the room; Jack isn't satisfied with "art" projects alone, and enjoys running the occasional massmarket movie in the theater. His collection leaves something to be desired, and is missing a few reels from several films — but the brood doesn't mind much, as they're not really inclined to spend all their time watching movies anyway.

Moncrief takes his repose in one of the tiny offices neatly hidden within the theater's winding back passages. Almost all of the offices are crammed with mildewed crates and props used for prior "projects," but several very real weapons — swords, axes, sharpened staves, a genuine steel scythe and even a grenade or two — are hidden amidst the debris. Moncrief's "bedroom" is fairly cluttered as well, but has a desk clean enough for work, and a section of floor behind the desk that's clear enough to stretch out for the night. Moncrief maintains a small apartment across the street where he can shower, do laundry and entertain guests (i.e., feed) as necessary, but he prefers to keep his haven nicely secure.

And for his part, Garcia has yet to stake out any particular area of the Hyde as distinctly his own. He usually throws his sleeping bag either behind the small concessions counter, or between rows of seats on the balcony. It's really all the same to him.

As security measures go, the Hyde has the aforementioned welded and bricked-up doors, as well as the variety of potential weapons stashed throughout. At any given time, there are certainly one or two other defensive measures in place — but those change constantly, depending on the brood's whim. The Moirai might string up lengths of carefully maintained razorwire just below the access windows during the day. There might be human or animal ghouls on patrol. It's even possible that Moncrief has picked up one of the Gnawed, or some sort of *szlatcha* to act as a watchdog. It's this added element of unpredictability that makes the Hyde — like any Malkavian's haven — dangerous ground for the uninvited.

INFLUENCE

The Moirai's influence over human society doesn't extend much further than the influence each individual brood member commands. They have a few contacts that keep the electricity and water running to the Hyde, and a couple of cops in their pockets to keep an eye on the block. Apart from these bare necessities, the Moirai don't tend to dabble overmuch in the human power structure — it's just not a great concern to them.

Of course, the brood's influence is much greater when it comes to Kindred society. Despite their rather tangential relation to the prince and to Elysium, the Moirai enjoy a fairly generous helping of status among the vampires of the city. They're something like harpies, something like oracles and something like a Greek chorus — their role is providing information and criticism about outside threats and internal affairs alike. Of course, they offer their "counsel" at their own discretion, and that discretion is governed by their own twisted logic — other Kindred would be well advised to refrain from actually relying on their help.

Like many other Malkavians, the Moirai are notable for dragging other vampires' secrets out into the light, as well as

doing the requisite amount of soothsaying. However, they've gained a reputation as a coterie because they deliver their oracular pronouncements and "muckraking" efforts in a collaborative form. If one of the brood has something to tell the local Kindred, the others tag along to add their voices. What they're particularly renowned for, though, is their habit of creating "film projects."

The Moirai "studio" doesn't create a film frequently, as it's a fairly involved process; although they can throw together a presentation in a few nights, they prefer to work on their projects over time. The films themselves can be as simple as a lone narrator — such as another vampire's prize contact — alone in a bare room, or they can be surreal pieces of nastiness, drenched in cryptography and symbolism. However, the Malkavians themselves don't have much control over what form a film's going to take, or so they've claimed. Apparently, the subject matter and "style" of a project comes on the brood in the form of a shared vision, a vision that they're bound to follow — or else be set upon by their own nightmares and obsessions.

When the Moirai have another "show piece" ready for consumption, they add a flyer of their own to the other flyers stapled to the front of the building. The flyers announcing a new Moirai production are as cheap-looking as all the other handbills surrounding them, and they're phrased in veiled language. They do, however, usually refer to a movie house in town and a reference to the vampire who's going to rent the place out to host a "private party." The host always has something to do with the latest work's subject (and he might even be the focal point of the satire), and so far, the host has always agreed to foot the bill for the showing. Failure to do so would imply that he has something to hide, of course; worse, refusal to participate would draw the ire of a Malkavian coterie, which could have very nasty long-term effects.

The Moirai productions aren't all that common; there's typically one every six months or so, although they can come closer together if the Malkavians have something in particular to say. What's more, sometimes the brood shows up as a whole and delivers its latest pronouncements in person — sometimes the old ways are best or most convenient.

But although the Moirai enjoy a healthy amount of influence, their power is far from absolute. Every edict, augury or spilled secret runs the risk of wearing out the city elders' patience — potentially lethally. It's a very fine line the Witnesses walk, which has ensured that they speak only when they can't hold their tongues any longer.

THE VAMPIRES

The five Malkavians who've been drawn together are about as tightly knit as you could reasonably expect. Their bonds are largely unspoken, and not nearly as potent as the blood oath — but potent enough to unnerve outsiders. The Witnesses are united by a common set of visions that pass from one to the other like a contagion, instilling the group with a shared need to observe — and to reveal.

EMMANUEL MONCRIEF

Background: The origins of Emmanuel Moncrief are rather hard to piece together — an interesting achievement, given that Moncrief hasn't been a vampire for so much as two whole centuries. It's presumed that he was either Embraced in Europe just before coming to America in the mid-1800s, or that he was a first-generation American before his Embrace. His occasional reference to "old Rufino" points to his sire being Rufino Olevarez, a notoriously neutral Malkavian who played both sides in the Sabbat-Camarilla struggles of the century. It's certainly questionable whether or not Emmanuel Moncrief is his real name — but he's never been known to use any other alias, and he certainly has a reputation for painfully scrupulous honesty.

Moncrief has demonstrated the skills of an expert physician, an erudite scholar and a gifted poet. He's apparently able to draw on a steady source of money as needed, through either skullduggery or previous investments. He isn't particularly adept with modern technology — but then again, few elders are. And, of course, he seems to have developed an interesting taste for the short-subject film. Curiously enough, Moncrief denies having ever been to Hollywood to learn his art; he even denies studying under any human film expert at all. Most presume that this is probably an ego issue, but then again...

The most interesting thing about Moncrief is that he has the acute senses of a carrion crow. Perhaps it's his Malkavian insight that leads him, but Moncrief was reportedly present for several key points in the last century and a half. He was present at several major battles of the American Civil War and both World Wars; he was in Lawrence, Kansas the night they buried their dead, and he was in Memphis the night Martin Luther King, Jr. died. In all cases, he was apparently nothing more than an observer. Those vampires who learn this much tend to get fairly worried, for if all this is true, then what has Moncrief come to observe in *their* city?

Image: Moncrief almost reminds some people of a Mephistophelean carnival barker; although his features aren't particularly pointed and his dark hair isn't particularly slick, he gives off a faint aura of mildly sadistic showmanship. He speaks in almost completely unaccented English, although he's been known to adopt a slight casual drawl when appropriate. He distinctly avoids archaic clothing, preferring instead immaculate white suits in the latest fashionable cut, typically accented with an appropriately colorful undershirt or tie. His demeanor is faultlessly civil and insightful — and yet, he tends to leave the faint impression that he's enjoying a private joke at *somebody's* expense. Most people he deals with fervently hope it's not at *theirs*.

Roleplaying Hints: Be quiet, modest and deferential as needed; you're aware of your status, and don't see any need to laud your position. You prefer simple euphemisms when discussing the Moirai and your work — "our little project," "a minor note," "something of possible interest" — you'd rather let the work speak for itself. Similarly, if delivering a

warning in person rather than through a "production," you phrase it in rather understated terms; if they don't understand the importance of your warning, that's their fault, not yours. Savor the "biopics" when you get the chance to make them; there's something in you that greatly enjoys watching other Kindred squirm, and you see no reason not to indulge that portion of yourself.

Sire: Rufino Olevarez **Nature:** Bravo

Demeanor: Trickster

Generation: 9th

Embrace: 1830

Apparent Age: Mid to late 30s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Dodge 3, Empathy 4, Expression 5, Intimidation 4, Leadership 3, Malkavian Time 5, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Crafts 3, Etiquette 3, Firearms 3, Melee 2, Performance 4, Security 1, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Academics 4, Finance 3, Investigation 3, Law 3, Linguistics 5 (French, Spanish, Italian and German, among others), Medicine 4, Occult 2, Politics 3, Science 2

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Celerity 1, Dementation 3, Obfuscate 4, Presence 2

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 4, Generation 4, Influence 1, Resources 3, Status 3

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 4, Courage 3

Morality: Humanity 6

Derangements: Schizophrenia (hallucinations), Fugue

Willpower: 7

SHARED VISIONS

The Moirai's peculiar tendency of receiving shared visions is what makes them as effective as they are. In effect, the brood shares an unusual bond, probably acquired by spending long amounts of time with one another's dementiae. In game terms, whenever one of the Moirai receives a vision or other flash from the Cobweb, the others make immediate Malkavian Time rolls at -1 difficulty to share in the vision.

It's entirely possible that other all-Malkavian coterie or packs might develop a similar rapport, given time. This is entirely up to the Storyteller's discretion — although admittedly, it's not that likely to come up. There aren't many troupes out there where all the players play Malkavians, after all... or at least, as far as we know.

FAYE

Background: Every vampire more than a week past his Embrace knows the foolishness of trusting a first impression. Upon meeting a barely pubescent vampire like Faye, a Cainite knows better than to presume that she's as young as she seems. Most Kindred who meet Faye spend some time watching her, observing her habits, and come to the conclusion that she's probably a few decades old — an ancilla, barely, but one who's still too inexperienced to truly think like an elder. After all, she *is* still under her sire's wing.

It would be mean-spirited to hold these observers' mistake against them. People *do* have a tendency to underestimate Faye.

Faye Sharpless was born in 1886 San Francisco, just in time to see the *fin de siecle* with her own eyes. Although her family did their best to shelter their little girl from the altogether too rambunctious outside world, that only heightened her curiosity. As the turn of the century drew nearer, Faye grew more and more restless, dying to see how people would express their passions and fears at the birth of the 20th century. The day of New Year's Eve, she slipped out of the house and began wandering the streets to see for herself.

She never came home. Her bright-eyed face got her into exactly the wrong sort of party, and she realized far too late just why the gentleman at the door had let her in so readily. However, just as the twisted celebrations were about to reach their peak at midnight, she was whisked from her "companions" by another party guest, one who couldn't resist this little gift from Providence. Emmanuel Moncrief slew Faye Sharpless just before the first stroke of midnight, and as the twelfth stroke was fading away, she had been reborn. All of the actual feelings and fears that had so excited Faye were gone, replaced by a gnawing cold with a tiny, dense core of hate.

For the entirety of the 20th century, Faye has been Moncrief's companion and silent partner in crime. Her sire released her from the blood oath several decades ago, mostly as a favor to her, but she decided that she had no particular emotional stake or personal goal that required her to make her own way. She's participated in most of Moncrief's pranks, and played several of her own, but not from any real sense of humor. She serves the Moirai out of duty, and she listens to the communal visions because it's expedient. And to be honest, the others are quite happy this way — they don't care for the thought of Faye developing powerful ambitions.

Faye's one of the Moirai in every sense of the word, but when left to her own devices, she's a very dangerous creature to cross. Where Moncrief prefers to drop a firecracker on an anthill to see the little things scurry, Faye would rather just crush the insects one by one when they stray too far from their territory. Her most recent show of honest

emotion was a vicious display during the 1999 New Year's Eve celebration, when old memories of the painful night other Embrace filtered through. She quietly decided to take revenge on the revelers who'd hurt her, even if she had to use a substitute or two in their stead. The police closed the case after three months of fruitless investigation.

Image: Faye looks every inch the part of "elder's toy"; she dresses as others would expect Emmanuel to dress her, and she maintains the look of the consumptive waif to perfection. Her dark hair was cut shoulder-length when she was Embraced, and she wears it in appropriately youthful-seeming coils; a pageboy bob one night, or a cutely ruffled bird's nest the next. During the Moirai's "public appearances," she tends to stay close to Moncrief, often with one of his long-fingered hands resting paternally (or possessively) on her shoulder. She is noticeably gaunt, and her collarbones show through her almost translucent flesh in a way that many Kindred find quite enticing. She remains expressionless and quiet in public, smiling coquettishly only when her Emmanuel is openly delighted. When on a private errand or hunt, however, she lets a very adult glee show through just before she takes what she wants.

Roleplaying Hints: The party is long over, and you've been left to pick at the remnants of the banquet table with the rest of the rats. But there's no longer enough to go around, and you'll be damned if you let a bunch of rats take whatever they like. That's all they are, really — rats. And sometimes you have to run their warrens and mazes with them, and curtsy to their rat kings, and smile just a little so they won't all come after you at once. But they're rats — just rats. And you'll kill a rat if you get the chance. The only exception is your small circle, the Moirai — who are rats just like everyone else (but you), but they're *your* rats. You'll protect them from the others. So long as they don't bite you.

Sire: Emmanuel Moncrief

Nature: Monster

Demeanor: Child

Generation: 10th

Embrace: 1900

Apparent Age: 12 or 13

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 4, Expression 3, Intimidation 4, MalkavianTime 4, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Crafts 2, Etiquette 2, Firearms 3, Melee 4 (knife), Performance 3, Security 2, Stealth 5, Survival 3

Knowledges: Academics 1, Investigation 3, Law 1, Linguistics 1 (French), Medicine 2, Occult 1, Science 1

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Celerity 2, Dementation 3, Fortitude 1, Potence 1, Obfuscate 4

Backgrounds: Generation 3, Herd 1, Mentor 3, Status 2

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 3, Courage 5

Morality: Humanity 4

Derangements: Desensitization

Willpower: 8

LIZZIE

Background: Not all Malkavians are Embraced to serve a greater purpose. Not all Malkavians are brought over from spite or desire or even pity. Sometimes, the only culprit is proximity.

Elizabeth Ann Morrow grew up all over the United States, the daughter of a career military man. Her father was distant and unmovable; her mother was meek and unambitious; if not for her brother David, she probably wouldn't have laughed very much at all. Even so, the constant moving from place to place and from school to school took a gradual toll on her childhood. She could have been worn down long before her time, but neither her father nor her brother let her give up so easily.

Like most of the country, Lizzie wasn't ready for Vietnam. She wasn't ready for David to enter the service just like their father wanted. She wasn't ready for her brother to be shipped off to 'Nam. And the night that her father called back home with the news that David had been killed, Lizzie shattered.

Lizzie can't remember all the details of what happened next; all she knows is that she ran away from home the night she received the news, and that she wasn't even close to prepared for life on the road. She remembers truck stops, and hitchhiking, and flashes of pain and sorrow — but very little else. She doesn't remember much of the stranger that began obsessively following her, no matter how quickly she tried to get away. And she remembers only a little of the shabby motel 20 miles outside Austin, where she was drained dry and yanked across to the other side.

Even in her wretched state, Lizzie managed to master most of the basics of being a vampire — and a Malkavian. Although she never regained full lucidity, these days she's more or less in control of herself. Her time with the Moirai has strengthened her self-esteem a little, although she remains very vulnerable emotionally, and has a bad tendency of fixating on other people she meets for support. The other Moirai tend to be protective of her for this very reason; the thought of emotionally starved Lizzie in the thrall of the blood oath is all too chilling.

As one of the Moirai, Lizzie has had ample opportunity to sharpen her acting skills, even though a Moirai production is much more like performance art than drama. She receives visions as readily as any other Moirai, and her ability to put other people at ease is very useful for drawing out information.

What's more, Lizzie is the one usually given the task of bringing back food to the haven; it's relative child's play for her to convince drunken party goers to sneak into the old theater for kicks. Her power of Dominate also makes her the

designated one to make the prey forget exactly what happened in the theater — she's fond of implanting memories of gigantic rats with sharp teeth. Her skill at luring in prey for her friends has earned her the nickname of "our little fishhook," at least from Jack. For her part, she thinks that's pretty funny.

Image: Lizzie is a charmer. Her features are so remarkably expressive that when she smiles, people fall in love, and when she weeps, people would do anything to make her feel better. She has the remarkable gift of being completely, empathically convincing; when she pays attention to a companion, he feels like he's the most important thing in the universe. When she doesn't want to do something and says so, listeners are convinced that the task must surely be anathema.

For all these reasons, it's no wonder that no two people see precisely the same girl when they look at Lizzie. Most can agree on her frizzled brown hair — save when she's ironed and/or dyed it for the clubs — or on her petite frame — save when she's angry, and seems to gain several inches. Her eyes are just the right shade of hazel that they can seem blue, green, gray or even light brown, depending on what the viewer's expecting.

Roleplaying Hints: You are genuinely, honestly, sincere in your emotions. You can't really feign happiness or sadness; that's just not in your nature. Of course, you *use* your emotions instead of being led around by them, but you really, truly mean it when you say you're sorry or you're delighted. That's why you're so convincing. This can be very disconcerting, particularly since you can be something of an emotional chameleon at times — if one of your friends is depressed, you pick up their depression all too easily. You're starved for emotional connection, constantly hoping to make a special bond with someone who will always be there for you. Your brood is wonderful, but you still want... more.

Sire: Mourning Ivan

Nature: Conformist

Demeanor: Celebrant/Martyr

Generation: 12th

Embrace: 1970

Apparent Age: Anywhere from a mature 14 to a youthful 35

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 1, Dodge 2, Empathy 3, Expression 3, Intimidation 1, Malkavian Time 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Drive 1, Etiquette 2, Firearms 1, Performance 4, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Academics 2, Computer 1, Linguistics 2 (French, Spanish), Politics 2, Science 1

Disciplines: Auspex 1, Dementation 2, Dominate 3, Obfuscate 1

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 4, Generation 1, Herd 3, Resources 2

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 4, Courage 3

Morality: Humanity 7

Derangements: Manic-Depression

Willpower: 6

JACK

Background: Jack's human life isn't open for discussion. Even his broodmates don't know much about the person he used to be before he was "brought over." Whenever his broodmates have pressed the subject, he blows off the question with a curt reply about being "born dead, and killed again." Whenever outsiders try to get too inquisitive, they get nothing but a sullen stare. He's never shared his last name, or details of his sire — he simply showed up on Moncrief's doorstep one night, claiming to have heard a Call. As it so happened, Moncrief, Lizzie and Faye had all heard something close to the Call — only without words — for the three nights previous. So they took Jack in, assuming that that's what was meant to happen.

Despite Jack's secrecy, there are a few things that Moncrief has pieced together about the youngster's past. Jack was apparently Embraced fairly recently, but he's shown such resistance to Dominate attempts that he's clearly of potent blood. Jack must have received the basic education about vampirism, because he knew to call himself "Malkavian" long before he met the rest of the brood, and he takes to the Moirai's double business of visions and pranking as though he'd been trained for it. Jack's occasional fugue states make Faye and Moncrief wonder if Jack doesn't have some sort of ongoing connection to his sire — in fact, they're starting to wonder just how much of Jack's knowledge is taught and how much is being implanted into his head from an outside source. It's a paranoid theory, of course — but among the clan, it's all too possible.

The most disturbing thing about Jack isn't something that's visible, though: Jack has no particular ambitions at all beyond survival. This might seem almost harmless next to the megalomaniacs or obsessed killers of the clan — but since Jack isn't motivated by anything but stubbornness, there's really nothing that's completely beneath him. He'll set up someone for Faye to murder if she asks, or he'll blow an asshole away himself if need be — after all, what does it matter? At first, Moncrief saw Jack's lack of goals as a positive aspect, something that would make Jack easily molded into the perfect Moirai. Now Moncrief isn't so sure, and he finds himself wondering if Jack's an explosion waiting to happen.

Image: Jack has a common face to match his common name. He looks very much the part of any older vampire's

idea of "young rebel" — leather and denim clothing, slightly spiky hair, the odd piercing and so on. If you're being honest about it, his look is rather early '90s, but that's not usually cause for comment. However, his features and demeanor are so unassuming that most Kindred tend to assume that he's the Moirai's ghoul manservant, if given somewhat freer rein than most ghouls enjoy. It's very easy to see Jack as a rebel without a cause or even much backbone for rebellion — which is how he likes it.

Roleplaying Hints: You're a greedy bastard, although it's not something you admit to yourself. Really, you're just trying to get by. That's all there is any more, right? You do what's expected of you — you help keep all the electronics running, you work the cameras and sound, and you generally contribute modern technological know-how where Moncrief and his pet tend to get weak. You like to think of yourself as pretty normal as vampires go, but that's just a facade for what you *really* know, deep down — that there's nothing normal about vampirism, and that you're a monster whose strings are being pulled by some unknown force. It's an unpleasant thought, and that's why you don't think about it. Really, you don't think about a lot of things. You just act on whatever seems to work best at the time. Sometimes that gets messy, but... well, hey. There's the breaks. **Sire:** Unknown

Nature: Rogue

Demeanor: Conformist

Generation: 8th

Embrace: Unknown; presumably within the last 15 years

Apparent Age: 18

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 1, Athletics 2, Dodge 1, Expression 2, Malkavian Time 4, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Crafts 4 (electronics), Drive 3, Firearms 3, Melee 1, Performance 2, Security 4, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Academics 2, Computer 2, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Politics 2, Science 3

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Dementation 2, Obfuscate 2

Backgrounds: Contacts 2, Generation 5, Resources 1

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 4, Courage 4

Morality: Humanity 5

Derangements: Fugue

Willpower: 6

GARCIA

Background: Garcia is the latest addition to the Moirai, and in many ways he's the one who still has the most to lose. Unlike his broodmates, Garcia still has living family members, right in the city, and he's also kept his emotional attachments to them. He's the most human of a brood that's mercilessly driven to interfere in vampiric affairs. Worst of all, he can half-see his own fate — and he wishes he couldn't.

Eduardo Antenio Garcia had a fairly fortunate up-bringing; his father owned a successful real-estate business and was readily able to provide for his large family. Although Eduardo's father was a disciplinarian, the responsibilities he demanded of his children were less crushing when there were six children to bear them all. Eduardo fell between the cracks, retreating into his own imagination while his siblings did their best to live up to their father's demands. And in an attempt to make the most of his imagination, he turned to painting.

Unfortunately, Eduardo's craft never caught up with his talent. No matter how hard he tried, he never managed to work a painting until it was just right — his inspiration came and went at dizzying speeds, leaving him with piles of half-finished canvas. His father forbade him from wasting his time any further, and Eduardo moved across town in response. He kept struggling with his paintings, trying desperately to capture at least one of his visions before it fled — but to no avail.

Maybe his obsession lit up like a beacon to the Malkavians — because they found him soon enough. He met Lizzie while he was working a night shift to make ends meet, and somehow he... stuck in her mind. For reasons that she still doesn't quite understand, Lizzie Embraced him and took him home to the "family." He proved remarkably tractable as young childer go, and was a contributing member of the brood within weeks.

These days, Garcia — now bereft of his personal name — has a little more respite from the visions that used to haunt him. Every time the Moirai finish a project, or uncover a new prophecy of things to come, Garcia sleeps a little more easily for a few days. But the visions have been changing of late, and Garcia has begun waking up with the mephitic smell of Gehenna lingering in his mind. It's only a matter of time before the pranks and prophecies stop being an effective release — and what will he do then?

Image: Garcia is a fairly unremarkable young Hispanic man, somewhat short and squat but not commanding at all. He tends to wear simple, very casual clothing, and favors a Buffalo Sabres baseball cap. At the base of his neck is a tattoo of a cross, a relic from his human life. He speaks softly, almost in a mumble; racist elder vampires are all too willing to believe that this is because he just doesn't speak English all that well, but it's really just a side effect of his none-too-assertive personality.

Roleplaying Hints: It's all very confusing, really. You pretty much understand what this vampirism thing is all about, but it's real hard to make sense of all the visions you keep getting. You tend to confuse your broodmates with your biological family — you know you have a family, but they fade in and out and it's hard to tell who they really are.

The most persistent thing that nags at you is a sense of foreboding, but you just can't put your finger on it. It makes you nervous, and you don't like to talk about it. Nobody would understand, anyway. They never do.

Sire: Lizzie

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Fanatic

Generation: 13th

Embrace: 1997

Apparent Age: 20

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Empathy 1, Expression 4, Malkavian Time 5, Streetwise 1

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Crafts 2, Drive 2, Firearms 1, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Academics 1, Computer 1, Linguistics 1 (Spanish), Medicine 2, Politics 1, Science 2

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Obfuscate 1

Backgrounds: Allies 1, Contacts 2, Resources 1, Status 2

Virtues: Conscience 4, Self-Control 4, Courage 2

Morality: Humanity 8

Derangements: Memory Lapses

Willpower: 6

USING THE MOIRAI

Although the Moirai have been presented here as fitting into a Camarilla city, there's no reason they can't be adapted to serve as a Sabbat pack of advisors to the archbishop. The Malkavian *antitribu* are somewhat infamous for creating their own tribal packs, and in this case it would be fairly easy to assume that the archbishop tolerates the Moirai because they prove useful.

One of the Moirai's primary uses is as blackmailers or brokers in secrets; like a Greek chorus, they can pop up at the beginning of a story with a warning for one or more characters. They might also pass on an elder's secret to the characters, either out of necessity or curiosity. In either case, they're much more likely to appear when they're unasked for; they see it as their role to drag out the tidbits that nobody's talking about. Although individual Moirai might make good allies or contacts for the characters, the Witnesses as a group refuse to dispense information at another vampire's beck and call. They answer to a higher authority.

Malkavian characters have several more options open to them; any one of the brood might be a character's sire, or perhaps a "sibling" with a common sire. Lunatics with sufficiently high ratings in Malkavian Time might even be considered as potential candidates for joining the Moirai. However, as the Moirai are more loyal to one another than they are to outsiders, a character probably couldn't maintain strong ties to the other players' characters. Unlife among the Witnesses is a very demanding existence, and a player's Malkavian might be better off refusing such an offer. *Politely.*

Of course, the Moirai act as a frightening collective from time to time — but they are individuals, and they aren't soulless. Any one of them might make a beguiling romantic interest for a character — although a character dallying with Jack or Faye will probably have a much more interesting (and dangerous) time of it. Lizzie in particular has a hunger for attention during her manic cycles, and is very receptive to solace and comfort on her downswing. This might stir up an interesting series of relationships with the rest of the brood, however; what if another Moirai becomes jealous, or doesn't think that the character deserves an "in" with the Witnesses?

In any event, such a romantic relationship won't protect a player character from being the subject of a biopic "project" or warning if the Moirai decide that he's in need; no matter how strong the personal relationship, it's impossible to convince these vampires that what they're doing isn't good for all concerned.

On the subject of romantic subplots, it's also possible that one of the Moirai could become a romantic rival for a character. And there's no telling how this rivalry might manifest itself; Malkavians are capable of great subtlety, and the denizens of the Hyde are no different. If Jack or Faye starts stalking a character's paramour, they're not likely to leave simple, pasted-together "Stay Away" messages for the character's benefit — they're more likely to arrange small incidents or accidents while the couple are together. The whole idea is to make the "interloper" unconsciously associate their paramour with bad luck and strange happenings, eventually driving the two apart. If the character doesn't get the message, then the stalker will take things to the next level — as creatively or even gruesomely as the Storyteller sees fit.

POWER PLAYERS

DAWN NAKADA, ARCHON

Background: Dawn was just a girl when her parents were sent to an internment camp for the crime of being Japanese-American during World War II. She hit puberty while in the camp, unfortunately attracting the eye of a less-than-dutiful guard in the process. When she disappeared from the camp two months later, her family blamed the camp officials, even petitioning after the end of the war to have the culprit brought to justice. The guard in question was

eventually tried and quietly sentenced. Nobody ever guessed that he had been an unwitting blind for Dawn's true abductor, the vampire Julius Abrogard.

Dawn was reeducated at her sire's knee in the art of acting, etiquette and manipulation; he was planning to visit Japan once the war was over, and wanted to use her as another potential blind. Unfortunately, his plans never had a chance to materialize; while he was on another recruitment trip to San Francisco, a Tremere rival slew Abrogard by sorcery and quickly covered up the evidence. Dawn was left waiting in Abrogard's haven, but not for long; when he failed to return after three days, she decided to put her newfound skills to work for herself.

Although Dawn's ethnicity was a drawback in moving freely through postwar America, it was nothing that a little Obfuscate couldn't handle. By being bold where others were timid and cautious where others were overconfident, she managed to neatly acquire a respectable network of contacts and favors along the West Coast. Each time the call for another clan meeting came, she found herself recognizing more and more of the luminaries in attendance. It was at one of these gatherings that she met Maris Streck, who was quite impressed with the savvy and well-connected youngling. The two got on exceptionally well, and Dawn was glad to broaden Streck's information network out to the Western US.

When Streck made her bid for power and won the seat of Malkavian Justicar, she naturally chose Dawn to be one of the first among her new brood of archons. In the circles that even know of her as archon, Dawn is infamous (and hated) as "Streck's pet." She is the justicar's eyes and ears in the western half of the United States, and, if necessary, could draw considerably more charity from Maris than any other erring archon might.

Nowadays, Dawn travels from city to city much as she used to, although this time it's often on the justicar's business. She has found that she is easily underestimated in these times; few elder vampires are used to seeing Asian-Americans in any great numbers, and most assume that she must have been Embraced fairly recently. Dawn never corrects them — at least, not until she must reveal her true rank and purpose.

While not particularly deadly in a straight-up brawl, the ancilla-*cum*-archon is remarkably lethal when it comes to pulling strings and arranging "accidents." She's not without physical protection, either; although they're never conspicuous, her bodyguards are never far from her. Both are ex-CIA, and have been Dawn's ghouls for 20 years. Needless to say, they are accordingly deadly; the two of them are well-armed and well-trained enough to drop almost any three ancillae who started giving their mistress trouble. In all, Dawn Nakada is exceptional trouble for any city or prince that requires her attention — and woe unto the vampire or mortal who actually gets away with injuring her, for should Maris Streck find out... well, the result would be stickily unpleasant.

Image: Dawn is a small, slender Japanese-American girl, apparently plucked just before coming into full bloom. She fastidiously keeps up with and wears the latest teen fashions, all the better to promote her image of "Embraced just six months ago." Her movements are calculated to project the perfect impression of an overconfident teenager; the only hint to her true nature is at the moment she reveals she has her target over a barrel, when her eyes flash with a glittering, cold wisdom.

Roleplaying Hints: Never let on all that you know. Pepper your speech with teen slang, but speak nervously and politely when in the company of other Kindred, as though you're trying to impress them. Be the very picture of the neonate in over your head until the time comes. And if anyone finds out just who and what you are, use their knowledge of your position and your clan to best advantage. Most Kindred are terrified of the thought of a Malkavian with real power — and well they should be.

Sire: Julius Abrogard

Nature: Conniver

Demeanor: Thrill-Seeker

Generation: 10th

Embrace: 1943

Apparent Age: 14

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Dodge 3, Empathy 2, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 5

Skills: Drive 2, Etiquette 3, Firearms 2, Melee 1, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Academics 2, Investigation 5, Law 3, Linguistics 3 (Japanese, English, Spanish, Cantonese, German), Medicine 1, Occult 1, Politics 4, Science 1

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Dementation 3, Dominate 2, Obfuscate 4

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 4, Generation 3, Mentor 5 (Maris Streck), Resources 3, Retainers 2, Status 4

Virtues: Conscience 4, Self-Control 5, Courage 3

Morality: Humanity 6

Derangements: Disassociative Blood-Spending

Willpower: 7

ALESSIO RINALDI, THE PEACOCK PRINCE

Background: The prince of Ravenna is not what one would expect, were one to come on him while he was unawares. He seems a meek, frail but beautiful creature, so gentle that one might wonder if he weeps when he feeds on blood. His form is well-kept, and he dresses well enough, but he hardly projects the aura of command and strength that

one would associate with a prince.

But the mask... ah, the mask. The mask is a very different creature.

When Alessio dons the porcelain mask that he calls "the Peacock's face," his personality shifts dramatically. His reticent personality gives way to quiet arrogance; his twinges of compassion vanish in a low, pulsating bloodlust. His bearing becomes kingly and aristocratic enough to please even the oldest Old World Ventrue. Where Alessio is timid and unsure, the Peacock is the very picture of the vampiric prince: elegant, decadent, incisive and commanding. The Peacock's parties are the talk of all Italy, as is his management of his domain; few would have expected one so young to excel at the art of pryncedom. He has been prince for only 30 years, ever since the previous prince vanished on a fool's errand hunting rumors of the Inconnu, naming Alessio his successor. Very few knew who this "Alessio" person was; but when the Peacock Prince ascended to the throne, they noticed. He has proven remarkably resistant to outside influence (a fact that most attribute to his clan), his charm is unmistakable, and his allies are quite loyal. A few have subtly tried to overthrow him during his reign, but to date every effort has ended in a very public duel in full view of all the court. The Peacock Prince has won each one.

The most cruel twist of all, however, is that Alessio lives in fear of the night when the Peacock's thirst for blood overcomes him during a revel. For should the Peacock unmask to drink, then Alessio will be left naked and helpless before all the court, victim to whatever sport they devise. The thought is enough to give Alessio terrible nightmares during each day's rest, and he often wakes with bloody tears streaked across his alabaster cheeks. But no matter how terrible his fears get, he nonetheless raises the mask to his face with trembling hands each night.

Image: Alessio is a remarkably beautiful young man, with shoulder-length hair and a complexion to rival the Peacock's porcelain mask (which is painted with a pattern of peacock feathers about one eye and across one cheek). When not holding court he dresses simply and comfortably, usually in well-worn casual clothes. As the Peacock, alas, he cannot display his perfect features; however, he atones for this by wearing only the finest and most stylish clothing, whether painstaking recreations of 17th-century court dress or immaculate, tailored pinstripe suits. The exception is during a duel, when the Peacock gladly strips to the waist — all the better that his opponent's blood might be honored enough to fall on his painstakingly sculpted physique. Blood on the finest marble — how exquisite.

Roleplaying Hints: As Alessio, you are humble and tentative, and surprisingly empathic; you exude a vulnerable charm that is quite winning. As the Peacock, you are arrogant, vain and bloodthirsty, and yet exquisitely refined at the same time. You strive to be the perfect host, always entertaining to your guests and magnanimous to your foes — until they irritate you, of course. You thrill to prove your superior skill against inferior opponents, whether through sword play or political maneuvering; in all likelihood, you would be rather less enthusiastic about a fair fight. Fortunately, you have yet to find one.

[Note: The information given after the slashes represent the Peacock's Traits. Obviously, Alessio's derangement has made his perceived dependence on the mask all too real.]

Sire: Lyra

Nature: Conniver/Autocrat

Demeanor: Conformist/Bon Vivant

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 1788

Apparent Age: early 20s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4/5, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 2/5, Manipulation 4/5, Appearance 5

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3/4, Wits 2/5

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 2/4, Dodge 2/5, Empathy 4/1, Expression 1/3, Intimidation 1/4, Leadership 3/5, Malkavian Time 2, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Drive 1, Etiquette 3/5, Melee 2/5, Performance 1/4, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Academics 4, Finance 2, Law 2, Linguistics 3 (English, Latin, French, Greek), Politics 2/4, Science 2

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Celerity 4, Dementation 1, Obfuscate 2, Presence 2/4

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Contacts 5, Generation 4, Resources 4, Retainers 1, Status 5

Virtues: Conscience 3/1, Self-Control 2/4, Courage 2/5

Morality: Humanity 7/Humanity 4

Derangements: Multiple Personalities, Power-Object Fixation

Willpower: 4/9

DR. DOUGLAS NETCHURCH

Background: Some might find it odd that the fore-most expert in the field of Kindred pathology, hematology and neobiology is in fact a Malkavian. Those regrettably unlearned souls have obviously never met Dr. Netchurch. Although the madness of his clan certainly grips his mind, the good doctor's scientific genius is unmistakable.

Douglas Netchurch was born before the turn of the century, to an affluent New England family with a long history in the medical profession. Although his older brother was something of a disappointment to the family, Douglas turned out to be everything they could have asked for, easily flying through school with top marks. Several universities offered him quite generous scholarships, but ultimately he chose no single one; instead, he chose to spread his higher education out over a number of schools, including study abroad.

When the First World War erupted, Dr. Netchurch chose to leave his Boston practice and return to Europe, assisting the local hospitals in the treatment of fallen soldiers as best he could. He came to know the diseases and infections of the filthy trenches firsthand, as well as the horrors of chemical warfare — and he never so much as flinched.

It was there that he was drawn into the orbit of Trimeggian, a powerful Malkavian and fellow scholar of the medical arts. Trimeggian, who had been drawn to the Great War out of curiosity, was quite impressed by the resolve and insight of the American doctor. It seemed only natural that such a prodigy of modern medicine would prove most useful in applying the cutting edge of medical science to analyze the human and Kindred condition alike. And he was not disappointed — his childe rose to the occasion with all the dedication and rationality one would expect from a Netchurch.

Today Dr. Netchurch operates a covert (but quite professional, mind) facility in the Raleigh-Durham Research Triangle area, where he turns "research grants" of blood, money and volunteers into highly credible findings about vitae, ghoulings, revenants and many other subjects of interest. He is primarily assisted by his childe, Dr. Nancy Reage, a brilliant psychologist whose fixation with her sire and former domitor survived — and was even strengthened — by her Embrace. Netchurch is apparently quite unaware of her amorous obsession; then again, perhaps he knows and has simply classified it as an understandable and nonproblematic behavioral pattern. Whatever the case, her bedside manner is certainly more... generous than his own: yet another asset which makes her invaluable.

Image: Dr. Netchurch is an impeccably groomed man with short-cut ash-blond hair and round glasses (which, given his superior Auspex, are certainly an affectation or obsessive habit). He moves briskly and efficiently, and speaks in a level, measured tone at all times; deliberate attempts to rattle him are met with subtle, icy condescension. Within the confines of his laboratory (where he feels most at home) he dresses like the scientist he is; when forced by circumstance to leave, he wears a suit that's perfectly immaculate, if slightly out of fashion.

Roleplaying Hints: You are consumed with a drive to understand the Kindred condition in all its permutations. Unfortunately, it seems unlikely that you'll achieve this goal any time soon, but you *do* have all the time in the world. You are decidedly contemptuous of the more "occult" beliefs of your fellow Kindred, and patently don't believe in Gehenna; even your connection to the Network is vestigial. However, although you consider Thaumaturgy, Noddism and the like superstitious bunk, you have enough tact not to mention your feelings in front of others. Be reserved, speak only when you have something that needs saying, and keep clear of politics as much as you can; ultimately, only the pursuit of scientific understanding of the preternatural matters, and everything else is a distraction.

Sire: Trimeggian

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Director

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1915

Apparent Age: 30s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 5, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 4 (bloodless stare), Leadership 2, Subterfuge

3

Skills: Drive 1, Etiquette 2, Firearms 1, Security 2, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Academics 4, Computer 1, Investigation 4, Law 2, Linguistics 4 (Latin, Greek, Spanish, French, German, Italian), Medicine 5 (Kindred/ghoul pathology), Science 5 (Vitae hematology)

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Celerity 2, Dementation 1, Dominate 4, Fortitude 1, Obfuscate 3, Potence 1, Presence 1, Protean 1, Vicissitude 1

[Note: Netchurch's studies have exposed him to a great many bloodlines, and he has learned the basics of several "semi-intuitive" Disciplines in the course of his experiments. Storytellers might want to grant him a dot in any other semi-physical Discipline that he is currently studying; however, Netchurch classifies Thaumaturgy and similarly "occult" Disciplines as "mystical" in nature, and has neither inclination nor talent to unravel such.]

Backgrounds: Allies 1 (Dr. Reage), Contacts 3, Generation 6, Herd 3 (orderlies/testsubjects), Mentor 4, Resources 3, Retainers 2, Status 2

Virtues: Compassion 2, Self-Control 5, Courage 4

Morality: Humanity 6

Derangements: Obsessive/Compulsive

Willpower: 9

VASANTASENA

It is probably not a comfortable thought to the pillars of the Camarilla that Vasantasena, one of the key influences in the creation of both Camarilla and Sabbat, still walks the night. First among the Malkavian *antitribu*, prophetess of dark enlightenment, guiding sybil to the innermost circles of the Sabbat — she is a terrible, frightening figure in both myth and reality.

Vasantasena was, as the stories tell, a princess born into a great Indian royal house just before the end of the first millennium AD. Her sire was a vagrant Malkavian, a holy man in life and undeath alike. The two were inseparable, and

they came to Europe during the Inquisition. There they were instrumental in the Camarilla's formation, the beacon that rallied their clan behind the newborn sect.

For that alone, Vasantasena would be infamous. But she quickly grew disenchanted with the Camarilla and its seeming refusal to believe the stories of the Antediluvians, and she and her newfound brood of anarchists moved on to become a cornerstone of the equally fledgling Sabbat. If not for her insider's knowledge of the Camarilla's formation and tactics, the Sabbat would certainly have taken many more hits, and might never have survived to modern nights.

To this night, Vasantasena is a legend among her Sabbat kin. Even those who don't know the history of her contributions have heard of the fiery, evangelical Malkavian who derides the Paths of Enlightenment as cheap, empty substitutes for true understanding. It's said that her powers of Auspex are so great that she sees all that happens within the Sabbat; certainly, not even the oldest archbishop can remember ever surprising her in any way. She is admittedly obsessive on the subject of the Antediluvians, whom she fears greatly, but nonetheless she remains one of the most perceptive and insightful vampires in all the Sabbat. Although the sect would certainly survive her loss, it would lose a great part of its spirit.

ANATOLE

Perhaps it was mere chance; perhaps there was something more at work. There's certainly ample argument for the hand of Providence — for how else could a poor French man-at-arms with some faith and little wisdom rise to become the Prophet of Gehenna?

Anatole's last name was lost somewhere along his long road; all that is known for certain is that he was a Parisian guardsman who was taken by Pierre L'Imbecile in the latter half of the 12th century. His human faith in God and the Church somehow survived the Embrace, but not unchanged; the young vampire began to see signs and portents that, he claimed, were bestowed by the Father as warnings of the coming of Gehenna. (And whether by "the Father" he meant God or Caine, none could say from night to night.)

Over the course of the centuries, Anatole managed to win equal measures of fame and infamy. Although many a prince suspected him of diablerizing elders (as a form of "communion," or so it was rumored), his prophetic warnings gained him a stay of execution. He kept company with similarly "dangerous" allies, among them the dangerous Lasombra *antitribu* Lucita and the far-ranging Noddist scholar Beckett. With their help, Anatole continued to wander Europe and America alike, often emerging on the cusp of strange and portentous events to offer warnings to his fellow Kindred.

Unfortunately, the stories of most prophets end in martyrdom, and Anatole was no exception. During the Week of Nightmares, Anatole began receiving impulses that the time was very near, and that one last "necessary" thing was left to accomplish before Gehenna broke wide open. He followed his vision one last time to a cave in upstate New York, where he found a blasphemous sculpture of flesh and stone, pulsing with a power great enough to belong to an Antediluvian. The Prophet of Gehenna knew all too well what came next — and he offered himself up to the horrific sculpture, blending his flesh with its.

His last nights, spent fused with this strange work — and somehow connected to the power behind it — were nights of delirium more fevered than ever before. Whatever visions he had, whatever he saw in the hours he spent still half-conscious — it drove him to scrawl his final words across the walls of the cave, penning near-volumes of garbled prophecy and Gehenna lore in his own blood. At last, he perished utterly, his task complete.

But although Anatole and his accumulated wisdom were lost to the Cobweb, his final ravings did not go unseen. Some of his writings were gathered up by members of his own clan; other fragments are rumored to be in the hands of the Setites, who no doubt are cross-referencing the convoluted forewarnings with their own clan's Gehenna prophecies. And if synchronicity has had its way, a final portion of his vision might rest with the Salubri, or with the Tremere who succeeded them. But for now, nobody can say for sure.

FABRIZIA CONTRERAZ, SABBAT ARCHBISHOP

She was never meant to be successful; she was appointed out of spite, not respect. Nobody expected the mad neonate to actually be able to hold the reins of power. Nobody thought she'd be able to control Miami, much less orchestrate the conquest of several more Camarilla cities.

But those of Malkav's line are full of surprises.

Fabrizia was a helplessly insane prisoner in a Mexican penitentiary at the time of her Embrace, chosen as cannon fodder for a skirmish in Houston. However, Malkav's blood, while still tainted with madness, gave her an unusual gift of lucidity. She became her sire Licero's lover rather than his pawn, and the two of them were as infamous among the Southwest's Kindred as Bonnie and Clyde. When Licero was lost in the Miami siege, his regent, Galbraith, blamed Fabrizia for being a distraction. Rather than openly work revenge on the youngling (which would certainly be seen as ludicrously petty), Galbraith instead appointed the distraught Fabrizia archbishop in the hopes that the position's demands would destroy her. The regent was sorely disappointed — Fabrizia proved remarkably alert, exceptionally organized and meticulously patient. Ironically, Galbraith could not have asked for a better, more committed, more effective archbishop.

And Fabrizia has been a vampire for only 15 years.

Tonight, Fabrizia is more than a thorn in the side of the East Coast Camarilla — she is a barbed spearhead. She monomaniacally plots to capture more and more cities from the Camarilla, and has placed agents in several key cities in

anticipation of further movements. Atlanta's recent fall to the Sabbat has caused quite a stir in Camarilla and Sabbat circles alike, as the various Kindred try to figure out just how much of that conquest was due to Fabrizia's planning.

It's tragic, really. All she ever wanted was to spend the rest of her nights with her beloved Licero. Now the East Coast will bleed for her loss.

THE ANKOU

Camarilla or Sabbat, every clan has its tales of ancient terrors stalking the night, creatures that kill their grandchilder without remorse or pity. One such legend, at least among the Malkavians, is that of the Ankou.

The Ankou is the Reaper itself — a thing of grave earth and rust, of rot and wormwood. Where its legend has filtered into human lore, it is depicted as a remorseless, lifeless monster that silently treads lightless country roads with ox-cart and scythe, coming upon its victims as suddenly as a sickness, cutting their lives from them, and heaving them into its cart. And it is in this form that it will sometimes appear in a Malkavian's dreams or visions, if always fleetingly.

Those Malkavians who know of the Ankou treat its legends with equal parts reverence and loathing. A few have said that it is the first of the serial killers, or possibly their patron saint. The most reliable visions hint that is a Methuselah — not one of Malkav's direct childer, but a grandchilde and faithful servant to its 4th-generation parent (who, perhaps thankfully, remains nameless). If rumors can be trusted, it was birthed in the days when agriculture was a budding art, and was perhaps even slain and Embraced as a sacrifice to some earth-goddess. However, its duty to the earth did not end with death.

Its powers are seemingly so great that it can roam the back roads of Lupine territory unmolested, or even vanish from one place to appear miles away. It can also, if tales can be trusted, travel with its spectral cart invisibly and intangibly through even the most bustling neon downtown — visible only to its victims, and even then only as a faint smell of corruption and a heavy blow from behind. Vampires, particularly Malkavians, are known to vanish from their hunting grounds without a trace all the time — but sometimes after a disappearance, the word drifting along the Network, repeated in neural whispers, is "Ankou."