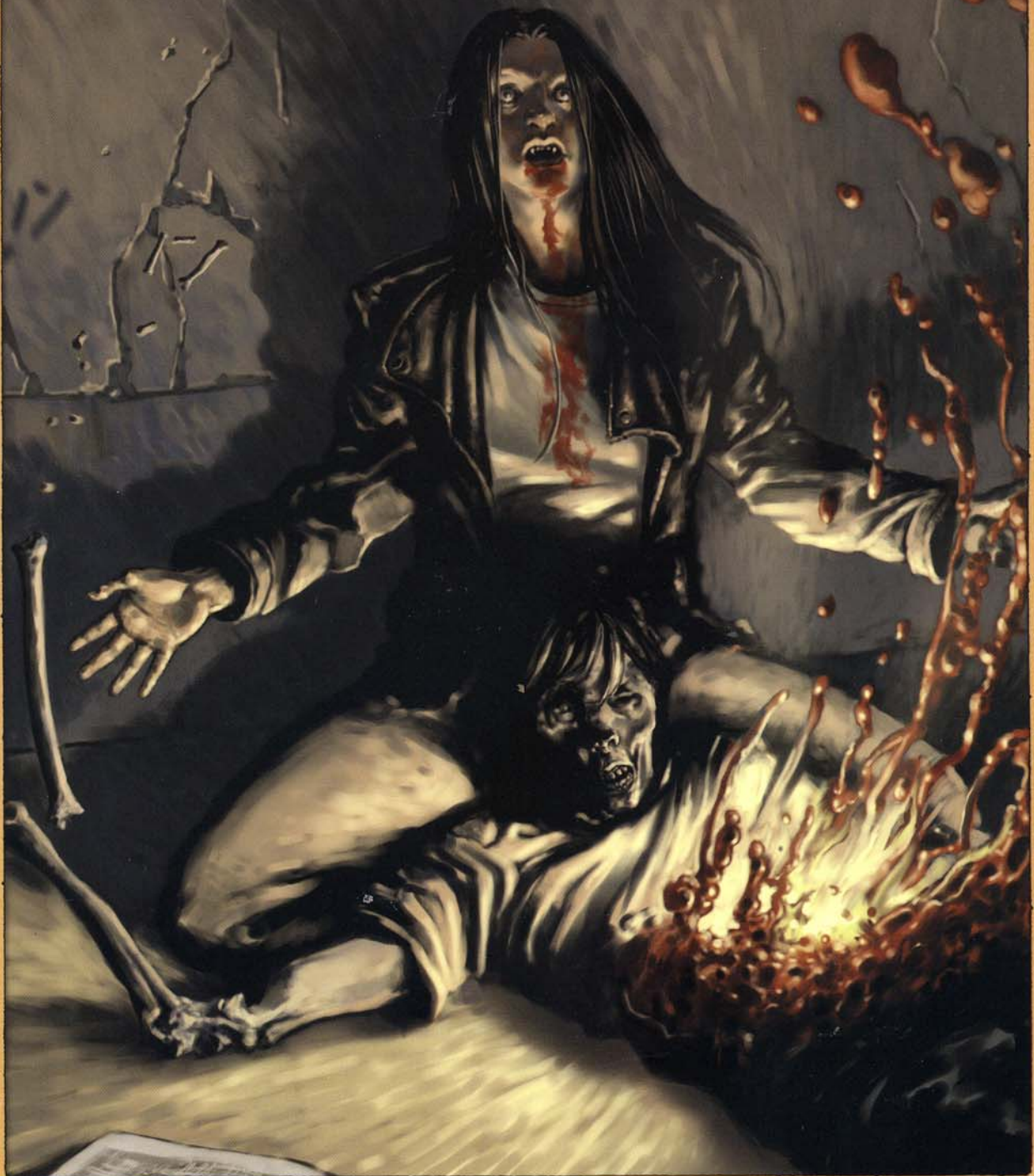


# CHAINING THE BEAST



A character supplement for vampire: the masquerade®



# CHAINING BEAST



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# CHAINING BEAST



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# PROLOGUE: THE END OF INNOCENCE

Something is eating babies in El Barrio.

Yes, you heard me right. Eating. As in, “Cracking the skulls open, slurping out the brains, sucking down the eyeballs like grapes, and leaving a mess of gnawed bones and skin.”

One of ours? Why, yes. Well, vampires don’t *usually* eat people. But a few do. The crazy fetishists choke it down and then vomit it up later. It doesn’t do them any good. It’s the act itself — the ritual — that sates whatever need they have.

Yeah, it is pretty “fucked up.” Damn, I can tell you’re just out of the ground, using talk like that. Once you haven’t used your dick for a decade, that kind of shit will fade.

So what’s next?

No, I’m asking you... what’s next?

*Noches mios*, I get the fucking pick of the litter every fucking time. Yeah, I said “fuck” so I can sound as fucking stupid as you, motherfucker.

Okay, try this. Someone is killing and eating kine babies in Sabbat stomping grounds... and it isn’t one of ours. And the bishop, she comes to me, and do you know what she says?

I didn’t think so. So I’m through asking questions. Get your Red Flower, man-cub. We’re going hunting.

On the way, I want you to use your eyes and ears and brain. Not like before I changed you. Consider this night a metaphor. A night of the soul, like when I was teaching you. We’re going to look into the abyss, we’re going to take a big swig, and then we’re going to spit it up onto this little bitch who hunts where and how he shouldn’t.

Take the machete. Strap it to your back. Hide it. No, no guns. Nouse, anyway. We don’t have enough money. And no, we’re not driving. We’re walking.

Damn, even dead, it feels like my clothes are sticking to me. Hot as a bitch. They say this summer’s not as warm as the last two. Not so’s you’d notice.

That’s okay. It’s like a little crucible of Hell. Suck it up, internalize it, and be ready to give it back to that *puta*.

See, his killing, it’s bad enough. Some of our kind don’t give a rat’s ass about yanking a bum out of a subway station and sucking him dry. It’s a waste of resources, but we have to be tolerant. We can forgive a stumble, just not a fall. Even our kind makes mistakes. It’s ones like this thing, though... still going through the old motions as he tries to cling to anything to stop the fall. The fall into the Beast’s mouth.

He probably thinks he’s helping people, the moron. Take a right on 110th, here.

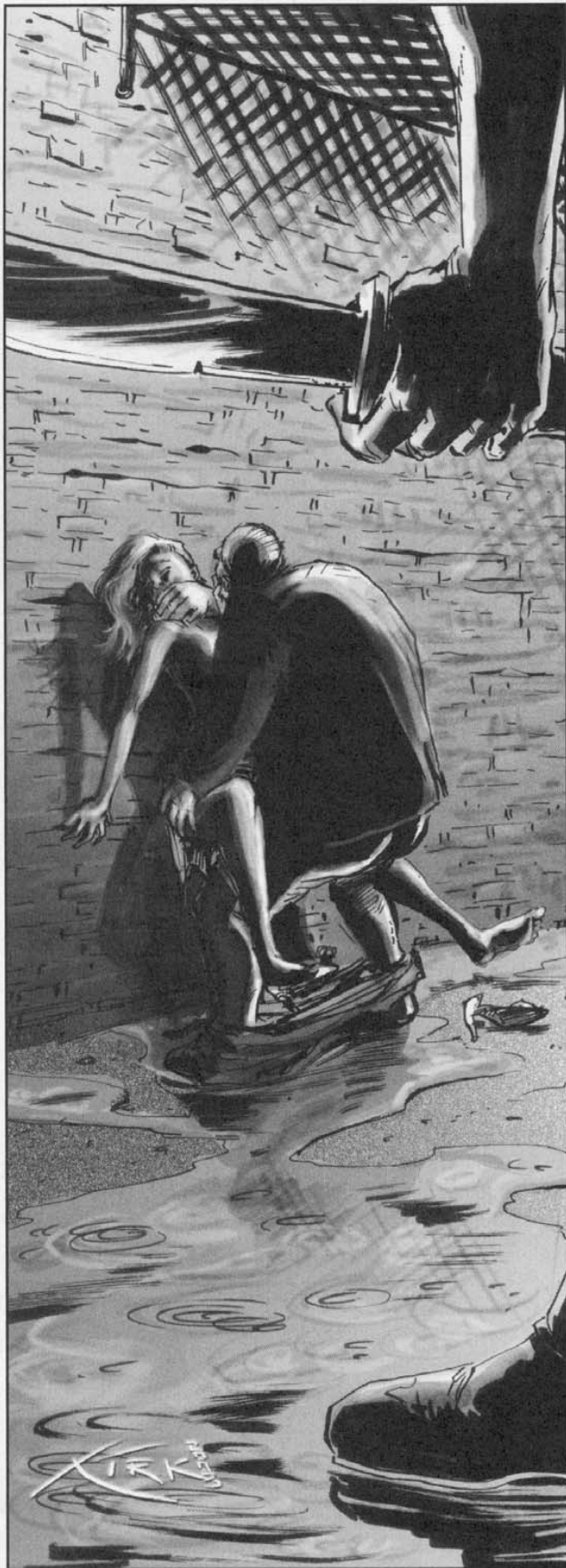
How do I know he’s a “he”? Well, Agent, in my years as Chief of... ahh, I’ll give you this one. You’re young. It’s a “he” because they’re all “he’s.” He’s trying to hide what he’s become in who he was before, and destroying himself and everything around him in the process. I’ve seen it before.

Over to the side, into the shadows. Good. Let your skin kind of... go. Exactly. You’ve got a way with that. Even I can barely see you.

You see them all around. Adam’s blind, idiot children. We walk unseen in the spaces between. We don’t need some artificial Masquerade. It’s not necessary. We are *malanoches* — nightmares. We come as stealthy and silent as a dream, and we teach terrible lessons in our wake. But there’s nothing to be taught in what this one is doing. Turn up this alley.

Speak of the Devil. Here’s our purpose right here. It’s a bit of a distraction, but worth making a point.

The old gentlemen in the suit is Big Business. The ones you see in the news. He gets an eight-figure incentive bonus for laying



off 25% of his workforce. Then there's all his fraudulent accounting, but he's already set up a VP in front of the SEC train. He comes up here a couple times a week. It's the only time you'll see a Lexus here unless it's being stripped for parts.

The girl he's got pinned up against the wall — who knows? He calls them "filthy spic cunts." That's his thing. One of his "little" sins. Not so awful, I suppose. It's just that the \$5 bill he's shoved in her mouth came out of his employees' pockets.

Now wait. Wait until... there we go. Take down those \$5,000 pants, grease up that withered thing with spit, pry on the rubber and... that's it, shove it in hard, just like you do to your employees. You like the pain in her eyes, don't you?

You haven't seen anything yet. Watch and learn.

First, I call up a bit of blood into my palm. Now... you see that shadow stretching out, nuzzling forward like an eager dog? Here it comes, lapping at my hand. Now I tell the shadow to slither out, take that girl's blood the way it took mine.

Regrettable that she gets to escape this world unknowing, but even the mortals' God decreed death for whores.

You see what we're teaching him? You see him lose it as his \$5 fuck screams, withers and turns to a bloodless sack of skin with him still inside her? He fucks the rest of the world and drinks it dry. It's time he knew exactly what it feels like.

That's the fastest I've ever seen someone run with his pants around his ankles. He won't get it up again this side of five-figure therapy.

This is what we do. This is what we are. We are *angelos negros* — black angels. We're harbingers and icons of sin. We sit on the left side of depravity. The girl? A necessary evil.

\*\*\*

Here we go. El Barrio. Spanish Harlem. East Side, *vato*. Just 'cause you're pale doesn't mean you have to be so damn white, *ese*. Oh, lighten up.

Okay, watch out. Here it comes, right on time. Step back and watch the bus. The old 10:12. Look at the dregs it vomits out. Each one bloated with anger, despair, sin, hopelessness.

That one... the one with the slumped shoulders and the dead eyes in the young face, almost like one of us. He's Anibal Gutierrez. He works at a convenience store 70 hours a week to support the girl he impregnated three years ago, and the brood she's popped out since. He's lucky tonight. Someone else got double shifts and he can come home early. Good, responsible husband. So young to be so responsible.

Such a dull, plodding life. Let's make it more interesting, hmm?

Watch this. This is a trick I learned from our brethren below. You must learn it someday, though it's not easy. In an instant, I change my looks, coarsen them, become stocky, grow a mustache. And now I step out, and brush past Anibal like so.

Did you see him flinch? Turn? But I was already gone. I moved faster than his conscious mind — what little he has — could register. But his inner eye saw his shift manager, who he despises, whose form I took.

A little nudge, that's all it takes. A little stick in the anthill of rage. No Cainite mind magic. A test, like the thousand mundane ones we face every day. He's free to shrug off the tension. Or more

likely he's free to go home and try to fill up his dead soul with *cerveza* and beat the shit out of his wife and children.

I know which one my money's on. Good *Catolico* that he is, perhaps he has a guardian angel to undo my work. That's okay. We don't tamper with the work of the Creator. We carry it out.

Unlike this fool we go to find.

In the old nights, this never would have happened. Not to this extent. But those times are gone. New York is crazy now. Ever since the Camarilla came and killed so many of us. Then there was that kine mayor. He thought he'd clean up the city. Sent the police turning over rocks they shouldn't have, got everything underneath squirming. Perfect for those of us who were left. Decades-old domains disrupted, food chains knotted up, tensions at crazy angles. We didn't care. We don't need domains. We eat where we want. Fewer street crimes, more police atrocities. It's all the same to us, as long as we've got a place to put the bodies.

That mayor, they call him the Rock now. But there are still some rocks he didn't turn over, some things still squirming in the deep dark. So occasionally, we have to be the exterminators.

You look confused. What's the problem?

Well, yeah, we're supposed to feed on mortals. But we're harvesters of their bodies and souls. That's the role you've been chosen to play.

Here we are. Finding this fool's haven was a piece of cake. I could have guessed even without asking the dwellers below. He leaves the lights on, on a weeknight, well after hours. Even the police should be able to solve this case.

Don't be so nervous. Yeah, it's a church. You think you're in the movies? Nothing's gonna happen. God isn't going to smite you with a lightning bolt. He's got a more important plan for you.

The door is locked, but that shouldn't stop you, right? You were jacking cars and up for B&E well before I found you.

Thank you. Now, be quiet when you open the door, and stick to the shadows.

It's been a while since I was in one of these places. Candelabra, apse, nave, pulpit... Where's that kid screaming?

Hah! Yeah, that's him, and with the kid! Another collar with penitence issues. They make 'em from priests sometimes—always a mistake. There's that whole guilt thing, and the whole transubstantiation issue takes on... well, you see what the poor, deluded bastard's trying to do.

He's still hung up on his God. He knows he gets power from the blood, but rather than just accept it, he has to filter it through his old life, through his own ego.

So he figures if he can just transubstantiate it all, then it's like he's reenacting the Last Temptation or Supper or Eucharist or whatever. That he's really not killing them. He thinks he's saving them.

I won't even get into what goes through his head when he pukes up the chewed mess. What was that movie a while back? Yeah, *The Exorcist*.

Strange? Nah, pretty typical, actually. Guilt can be a bigger burden than the Curse. But not for us, of course.

What you're seeing, understand, is the Beast. It's the fate of every weakling in the Camarilla, with their Masquerades and their

talk of humanity. They're so stupid. It's like trying to catch a tiger in a paper bag.

This is what I've been trying to show you, so you don't end up the same. To master the Beast, you can't cage it, or nail it to some cross or pretend you're in control. It's like Strength in the Tarot. You can ride it, but you can never break it.

We know the Beast always wins, unless you understand and revere its master. So we pledge ourselves, body and soul, to the darkness. We don't stare into the abyss, we *are* the abyss. And if we accept it, swallow it deep enough, even the Beast gets lost till we decide to let it out.

Anyway, his little midnight Mass is almost over, and the child is about to be the wafer and wine.

Let's move.

Pretend to inhale, three shallow, three deep, like I showed you. Yeah. Yeah. Doesn't feel good, does it? That pins-and-needles feeling all over your body is the blood awakening your cold, dead skin.

Watch this. If you move your hands between the not-breaths, just so, the shadows come coiling round. They're expectant. Hungry. They know they're drinking pure 150-proof sin.

Don't underestimate him. He's one of them, but he's got Caine's bloodsame as you. They look like pussies, but they're tough as \$3 steaks.

Now here's what we're gonna do. Stay in the shadows and move to the vestibule. I'll step out and wrap the night around me, all dramatic-like. I'm gonna give him some song and dance about how I'm Satan come from the pit of Hell to claim the soul of the innocent. And while he's filled with doubt and the Beast starts clawing up, you move. Don't worry, he won't be looking at you. Call up the blood like I showed you and use the machete. You won't get much more than one or two chances.

Got it? Then go!

\*\*\*

Not bad, but damn, he was strong!

Drink up before it all goes dry.

Better?

Okay, get the kid.

The kid. Get the kid.

What? We're taking it back to its mother.

No, we're not going to feed on it. Think. What have I been teaching you? What happens to the kid if you kill it now? Of course it dies, but I mean the essence, the soul?

It's a baby. It doesn't have the knowledge to cover its dick, the knowledge to wipe its own ass. Hello, Original Sin, anyone? It's an innocent. If it dies, it's saved. It gets its little wings and flies off to Heaven. Our master, the Watcher in the Black, goes *hungry*.

Support his head, like this.

If we let him live, he grows up, and every day his soul gets a little more stained. The world is a shithole, a spiritual toilet. By the time he's 12, he and his *vatos locos* are gonna have a record a mile long. Let him live. Let him bloat like a ripe fruit. Let him get so swollen with sin you could practically pop him. *Then* we come back for him. *Then* we harvest him for the Pit.





trahold



# INTRODUCTION

## THE DEATH OF MORALITY

Humanity. A guide to behavior for the undead. A fading memory of what it once meant to be alive. A fleeting concept to which vampires cling for fear of becoming mindless, ravening predators. There's something not quite right about the notion of humanity. There are plenty of mortals out there who can't abide by the strictures of being humane. Look at the evening news. People inflict crimes, indignities and the cruelest punishments upon each other all the time. What's good or decent or moral about them? Take an average mortal, give him eternal hunger, a mindless Beast and immortality, and never let him see the sun again. Then see how long he holds onto the ethical constraints of his daytime existence. Can he claim to be humane any longer?

For the rigors of eternal unlife, the shackles of Humanity as a moral code aren't quite right. How can human ethics persist for a being that no longer abides by the rules of the living? As long as the childer of Caine have fought to keep the Beast at bay, some have fallen from the way of Humanity to alternate moral paths. After all, why should beings that are no longer alive and human still pretend to be? There are countless Paths of Enlightenment — means by which the undead can struggle to retain their identities, if not their old morality, and stave off the Beast. **Chaining the**

**Beast** looks closely at more than 20 of these vampire callings.

As much as **Vampire: The Masquerade** is a game for mature audiences, Paths of Enlightenment are not for the faint of heart. Paths challenge players and Storytellers to accurately portray characters who are *inhuman monsters*. Depicting these kinds of characters isn't easy or trivial, but the insights a troupe can gain from roleplaying paths can be invaluable. You get to truly explore the foreign existence of vampires; how they literally fail to remain human and become something *else*.

Players and Storytellers of **Mind's Eye Theatre** should get plenty out of **Chaining the Beast**, too. While this book isn't explicitly aimed at the live-action audience, it doesn't focus specifically on game-system material. It explores the depths of vampire consciousness, morality and identity — just what roleplaying the undead is all about, whether you're in a roleplaying or live-action game.

## ENLIGHTENMENT AND MYSTERY

**Chaining the Beast** is intended as a sourcebook for both players and Storytellers. Players get a primer on running path-driven characters, and a good look at the rewards and challenges of doing so. They also receive guidelines to help portray the moral courses their characters take.

Storytellers get a tool set for depicting characters from the more esoteric Paths of Enlightenment, as well as guidelines on handling players with characters who answer

various callings. Some paths are suitable for player use, while others best serve Storyteller characters or the characters of experienced and mature players.

**Chapter One: The Right Road Lost** is an overview of Paths of Enlightenment in *Vampire*, including a look at where they generally came from, and which Kindred can use them.

**Chapter Two: Rigors of the Way** walks a Cainite (and player) through the disillusionment and degeneration that accompanies a plunge from Humanity onto a path, allowing a character to rise through the ranks of self-awareness.

**Chapter Three: Paths of Enlightenment** describes each of more than 20 paths in detail, including history, current events, ethics and morality.

**Chapter Four: Knowing the Way** has advice for Storytellers on subjects ranging from mentors to advancement along a path to ways of challenging followers to keeping players from abusing their characters' newfound dedication.

**Appendix: Fellow Travelers** contains descriptions and basic game information on different vampires who have resorted to morals beyond Humanity. As Storyteller, you can drop any of these characters into a chronicle and spin subplots around them. Some could also function as mentors to Cainites who are new to Paths of Enlightenment. Others might serve as fellow students or rivals on the same course.

## THEMES

There are unspoken common threads throughout many of the Paths of Enlightenment. To some degree, they represent the vast unanswered questions of *Vampire* cosmology. As player or Storyteller, you may wish to take advantage of some of these themes and truisms to help define a character's philosophy.

**Adam and Eve:** The First Mortals play a remarkably minor role in most paths, which is strange. They are the parents of the Sire of all Vampires. They're the zero-th generation, as it were. If the biblical creation myth is to be believed, Adam and Eve are the direct, hands-on children of the Lord God Almighty. They're the bridge between vampires and God. So, what does their absence from a path mean? What does it say about vampire self-perception and origins?

**Death:** Not even vampires are sure where ordinary mortal souls go after death. Some might stick around as ghosts, and others could go to Hell. But the rest? Do they return to any "great cycle"? Do they just go into nothingness? As the undead, do vampires even have souls any longer? Are they lost, recycled, or sent to Heaven or Hell to allow the undead remains to persist on Earth? What does the relativity of death mean for beings seeking direction afterward?

**Diablerie:** For some paths, diablerie is the ultimate sin (just as murder is among mortals). Other paths accept killing one's own as a warrior's just reward or the ultimate

## DISCLAIMER FOR THE MORALLY CONFUSED

You are not a vampire. You don't live by an inhuman moral code. The Paths of Enlightenment in this book are descriptions of the activities of wholly fictional creatures and characters. Even when you're roleplaying a character devoted to one of these practices, keep the real world and real morality in mind. These paths are not intended as any kind of behavioral suggestions for you. If living any of these tents seems like a good idea, make an appointment with a mental-health professional.

honor paid to another Cainite. Scholars disagree as to what happens to the soul of a vampire taken by diablerie, or if that soul might even overpower its new body. What does a path's prohibition against or encouragement of feeding on other undead say about the morality of those who adhere to the course?

**God:** Who? We last heard from God either 2,000 or 10,000 years ago, as far as anybody can tell. If He really did curse the First Vampire, where's He been since? Can the Kindred get His attention? Is He doing all this to them on purpose? Or does God even factor into a Cainite's existence? He supposedly created man in His own image, after all. If the undead are no longer "man," does biblical justice even apply to them?

**Golconda:** Some paths suggest that there is a metaphysical point of moral perfection, a stage of enlightenment at which human, vampire and Beast all stand on equal footing. Other paths consider the concept to be a blasphemy concocted to fool the weak. It isn't as though there's any proof either way; the existence of Golconda is a matter of faith. The question of whether particular paths are best suited to reach Golconda or find another way is a matter of debate, to say the least. The question is, what does a vampire seek at the end of his path? Is there a metaphysical destination or is walking the road its own reward?

**Heaven:** In ways that are perhaps more foreign to vampires than the existence of God, the existence of Heaven is (pardon the pun) up in the air. Some Cainite scholars posit that the world is decayed because, while there is a Hell, there is no Heaven. Few paths address the existence of Heaven, except insofar as it corresponds to (or is a metaphor for) Golconda. But what if Heaven does exist? Is salvation even possible for vampires, despite the legends of Golconda? Do creatures who turn to paths turn their back on forgiveness? Is accepting the Curse of Caine worse than having been afflicted with it?

**Hell:** It's depressing yet somehow unsurprising that while many Cainites are unsure of the existence and nature of God and Heaven, some are certain about Hell and its inhabitants. The Path of Revelations glories in contact with Hell, while most other followings eschew demonic realms. In most cases, Cainites avoid Hell not because they're afraid of its evil or distance from God, but because they fear being enslaved or losing what little soul they have left. But can even demons find redemption if they only seek it?

## USING PATHS

Paths of Enlightenment are not for every player, nor are they for every troupe. Players who find a certain poignancy to the struggle for Humanity may find that paths go too far. A vampire on a Path of Enlightenment has decided that Humanity just doesn't work for him. As a result, the character is likely to engage in activities that certain groups may find distasteful. A level of discomfort is to be expected whenever these concepts show up in a game. After all, we are humans, and most of us believe that we follow fairly conventional moral schemes.

Paths of Enlightenment aren't for troupes with immature players. Some troupes may have a hard time getting past problems with characters on the Path of Doing Whatever I Damn Well Please. This problem is addressed in Chapter Four, but if you as Storyteller aren't confident that a player can handle a path, you're encouraged to veto it.

Indeed, your entire troupe should probably sit down and discuss Paths of Enlightenment as soon as they become a possible issue in your game. Players may have points of discomfort — perhaps they don't mind violent murderers such as characters on the Path of Blood, but they may find Cathari (who take pleasure in flesh, drugs and other sorts of debauchery) wholly unpalatable. Pick a level of play that makes everyone comfortable with the chronicle.

As part of that discussion, be sure to talk about the appropriate level of roleplaying that the troupe wants to explore. One group may prefer to portray every event explicitly, including torture, sex and abuse, while another troupe might agree that the Storyteller can gloss over such events. ("You torture one another for hours, and you learn that she has a higher pain threshold than you do.").

Lastly, as silly as it might sound, be aware of any listeners when you play. Are you gaming in someone's dining room? Keep the gore and vileness to a minimum. Are there small children around? They may not be able to distinguish descriptions of depravity in a game from conversations about real life. Use your brain. Try not to offend those nearby who don't take part in your game, or who have little to no idea what you're up to.

## SOURCE MATERIALS

There's really no limit to the fiction available that describes characters who have been forced by environment or circumstance to adopt a code of morality unlike our own. Some examples include:

*Ronin*. A film about what happens to old spies who have nothing left after the conflict that had been the core of their lives collapses from under them. Surely you can imagine some vampiric parallels.

*The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant*, by Steven R. Donaldson. Like a follower of the Path of Paradox, Thomas Covenant does not quite accept the reality of the world in which he finds himself, and commits crimes against its inhabitants as a result.

*Schindler's List*. Oskar Schindler simply cannot adhere to the apparently common and everyday morality of Nazi Germany. He must transcend the behavior of those around him in order to adhere to a higher morality and to retain his sanity.

*Blade Runner*. There's a group of people out there who aren't human, but who believe themselves to be. Then there's the protagonist who believes himself to be essentially human, and his job is to kill the first group. But his job grinds away his humanity. Or maybe he isn't human, after all.

The *Elric* series, by Michael Moorcock. Elric of Melniboné is the prince of an ancient and decadent society. He's willing to make bargains with demons, kill casually and wield a soul-drinking sword, all in order to acquire power and to ostensibly help his people.

The *Amber* series, by Roger Zelazny. There's this family, see, full of insanely powerful immortals. And to them, our world is just a shadow of their true world, and we only barely exist as independent beings. Begin.

*Apocalypse Now*. Captain Willard is sent into the jungle with orders to kill the apparently insane Colonel Kurtz, who has set himself up as a god in Cambodia. Madness surrounds Willard and slowly changes his perceptions and environment until he begins to abandon his sanity and become more like Colonel Kurtz.

*The Godfather*. Having left his family's criminal life behind to attempt to join the world of ordinary folks, Michael Corleone is drawn back in against his will. By the movie's conclusion, he has abandoned the life he craves and accepted the Mafia's code of ethics.

*Time Enough for Love*, et al, Robert Heinlein. This quasi-series of science-fiction novels takes place in a future distant enough that mores regarding sex and incest are quite different from our own. The series smacks a little too much of Heinlein-as-dirty-old-man, but it's a quick read.



trabald



# CHAPTER ONE: THE RIGHT ROAD LOST

Go into any bookstore and you'll see it, probably near the middle of the shop: the marketable, lucrative category entitled "Self-Help."

Tony Robbins sells his *Seven Lies of Success*. Falwell and Falani, Page and Covey—all of them are happy to sell you answers. All of them agree that to believe *nothing* is to, in the words of Hunter S. Thompson's lawyer, "sink like a goddamn stone."

And these are only humans we're talking about. The consequences of a few people's spirals into pain are, in the span of history, inconsequential. They're the sum of a decade or three or five spent in unhappiness, unfulfillment, poverty, lovelessness — and then the release of the grave.

For Cainites, it's not nearly so easy. Once the Beast takes hold, there's no way back. No halfway house, no government subsidy, no 12-step program. The consequences can last not just for years or decades, but centuries, millennia, maybe until the sun swallows the Earth. For all practical purposes, eternity.

Mortals are advised to believe in something. Cainites are *mandated* to do so.

## PATHS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Here are the facts. Humanity doesn't work. Vampires who attempt to retain their human soul act at direct cross-purposes with the behaviors mandated by their new forms. Vampires, by their very nature, can almost never gain Humanity and are in constant danger of losing it.

But if they do lose all that makes them human, they fall prey to the Beast, the personified urge toward savagery and predation that dwells within every vampire's being. The creature loses all

capacity to control his behavior, becoming little more than a corpse with an animal's brain — a liability to human and undead society alike.

So, since retaining Humanity is intrinsically unnatural, yet losing it is a one-way ticket to damnation, Humanity must be replaced by a stronger structure — one that works. For many vampires, the answer is a Path of Enlightenment. Paths of Enlightenment are codes of philosophy, morality, ethics and behavior specifically designed to address the needs of the Kindred. Developed over centuries, sometimes millennia, paths enable a vampire to reorient himself in relation to his environment in a way that accepts and builds on the intrinsic physiology and psychology of the species. Paths don't tell a Cainite that "sucking human blood is wrong," high-handedly ignoring the fact that the creature must suck blood to sustain unlife. Rather, they acknowledge that a vampire must drink blood, and then present ways of incorporating that concept into a worldview.

## STRUGGLE AND STRIVE

Woo-hoo! I'm on the Path of Metamorphosis! I can run around and, like, pull people's faces off! Yeah, yeah! And then I can stick their faces on, like, a dog's butt, and I can suck, like, a million people's blood and spend all the points to cast a ritual that summons bat-demons from Hell, and then I can drink a demon's blood and have, like, super blood points and now my Strength is 12 and I can kick this elder's ass and take his treasure and that RULES! Paths are cool!

Umm... settle down. Contrary to some gamers' beliefs, practicing a path is not synonymous with "I have no Humanity so

## C'MON, GUYS — IT'S NOT THAT DIFFERENT!

"Humanity" is a pretty broad, encompassing term. Mother Teresa, Nelson Mandela, Bill Clinton, Kenneth Lay and John Wayne Gacy all fall or fell somewhere in the spectrum. Frankly, vampires aren't really all that "alien," are they? They all are — or were — people. Aren't we splitting hairs here, saying that honoring the Golden Calf of Metamorphosis instead of the Ten Commandments or the Eightfold Way is going to save souls? When you think about it, the fact that this book is written and read by humans means that we can conceive the tenets of these "alien" paths. Then what's the real difference between a devout follower of the Path of Power and the Inner Voice and, say, Richard Nixon?

Frankly, at the lowest levels, not that much. A vampire with a rating of 2 in the Path of Caine is, more or less, the same uncaring, self-absorbed, predatory bastard that a vampire with a 2 Humanity is. They both take the easy way out. They both live for the moment. They both offer endless rationalizations and excuses for their fuckups. They both fail and do stupid shit. A lot.

One could surmise, in fact, that humans could train themselves in a Path of Enlightenment as readily as vampires could. Theoretically, a mortal who didn't have to undergo constant societal indoctrination, who had the copious amounts of spare time, the cultural impetus, and the sheer callousness to discard traditional superego training in favor of the tenets of a Sabbat path could do so. Yet it never happens, except among Revenants, who only barely qualify as "mortal."

On some level, too, playing a game requires a certain degree of shorthand as regards the "unspeakable" and "unimaginable." Even H.P. Lovecraft, the master of Incomprehensible Horror, had to present his material in terms that readers could comprehend. He'd constantly talk about how the Great Old Ones were polydimensional entities completely beyond the capacity of mere humanity to comprehend. But when his back was against the wall, he held up Great Cthulhu for inspection, and it was a really mean, jumbo-sized plate of calamari. None of us would want to run into ol' Squidhead in a dark alley, but "unimaginable"? "Beyond the ken of human imagination"? Hardly. But we want to be entertained and scared, so we suspend disbelief. Likewise with Paths of Enlightenment. Like the worst of the *Necronomicon*, the most vile and esoteric secrets of the paths might have to stay "off camera." Your character is privy to mind-twisting and soul-blasting secrets that even you, the player, aren't meant to know!

At any rate, for the purpose of keeping the game on track, we presume that the tenets of Humanity are the default codes followed by all mortals, and that significant — well, *any* — advancement on a Path of Enlightenment is the sole province of Cainites.

I can do whatever the Chaotic Evil fuck I want and not suffer a lick of consequences [make the 'devil sign' and insert badly hummed riff from 'Iron Man' here]." In fact, being on a path is arguably harder than retaining at least a modicum of Humanity.

Humans don't have to try to have Humanity. It's hardwired into us. Different people have different levels of intrinsic or cultivated stability and compassion — some are naturally high,

others low. Most fall in the middle. But we all have it. It isn't an effort for us to simply be.

Even vampires, for whom Humanity is unnatural, still remember what it was to be human. After ages of nocturnal existence, they might go through the motions, but they've gone through them since coming out of a mortal womb, so it isn't necessarily unnatural.

Paths of Enlightenment, by contrast, are artificial through and through, and might be a better fit for the realities of the vampiric condition and society. But neonate vampires aren't born with them. The undead have to adopt these philosophies, usually through a harrowing process of spiritual destruction and rebirth. And at best, a path is a spiritual machine, an unlife-support system. Like any machine, it must be rigorously maintained.

Thus, a path follower has to try a lot harder to stay on her course than a Humanity practitioner does to maintain night-to-night existence. For us humans, it takes as tremendous an effort to completely collapse our Humanity as it does to exalt it. For vampires, collapsing any spiritual construct into the abyss of the Beast is frighteningly easy. A Kindred must gauge every action, word and (at high levels) thought against the dictates of the only system keeping her from spiritual breakdown.

Accordingly, Paths of Enlightenment gatherings often resemble occult fraternities or dogmatic cults rather than libertine orgies. Practitioners — especially new ones — are rigorously tested through debates, puzzles, labors and tasks. Adherents must demonstrate unswerving respect toward vampires higher on the path, even if (as is the case with paths like Typhon and Power and the Inner Voice) these vampires are rivals and potentially to be brought down. Cainites belonging to a path must adopt every tenet, every teaching with every fiber of their undead being. To doubt, to stumble, to err is to potentially dislodge a gear that brings the whole path-machine crashing down. (Storytellers who wish to strongly enforce this particular aspect of paths should take a look at the sidebar "Optional Rule: Harsh Hierarchy," on p. XX)

And once the rubble clears, only the Beast remains.

## PRACTITIONERS

Few vampires in the Camarilla practice Paths of Enlightenment. In fact, one of the core tenets of the Camarilla is its emphasis on retaining one's Humanity. To ascribe to a Path of Enlightenment is, in the sect's judgment, to accept that one is a monster. Most practitioners are either in the Sabbat or in one of the independent clans.

The most infamous and ardent path practitioners are found in the Sabbat. The entire sect is structured to enable vampires to "be themselves" externally the way the paths enable Cainites to discover themselves internally. Thus, the sect complements paths, and vice versa. Numerous philosophies and teachings mingle. Some adherents become rivals, while others find common ground and occasionally even develop hybrid courses. Neonates are presented with a bewildering variety of existence choices. Indeed, most philosophical breakthroughs about the vampiric condition come from Sabbat vampires.

This is not to say that all Sabbat practice Paths of Enlightenment. The majority still follow Humanity, albeit at low levels. It is

## CAMARILLA PATH PRACTITIONERS

Not every vampire in the Camarilla follows the "Path of Humanity." Some Camarilla vampires predate the Camarilla itself, and some of those holdovers retain their old moral codes. Others might be spies or turncoats for the Sabbat.

Those within the Camarilla who retain paths from the days before they joined the sect need to walk carefully. They must still obey the six traditional laws of Caine. In many cities, if they wish to remain on the prince's good side, they must at least pay lip service to the ideals of Humanity. Vampires who must follow a non-Humanity path in a Camarilla-influenced town must avoid situations in which their own moral codes conflict with Humanity. A Camarilla vampire who follows the Path of the Beast should avoid a city's Elysium, for example, lest he be drawn into politics that he can't handle. One on the Path of Blood needs to avoid all other vampires except when absolutely necessary, lest his calling drive him to kill in a fashion that violates Kindred laws.

Camarilla princes deal with this issue individually. Factors weighing in their decisions include their age, their own morality, and the political standing and utility of any offenders. Princes old enough to remember the days before the Camarilla may see path followers as less objectionable than young rulers, who have spent their whole unives with nothing but Humanity. Very conservative, ancient princes, however, could see a path follower as a threat, even if that Kindred is loyal to the sect and the prince himself. The rare leader with a high level of Humanity may see nothing wrong with letting another vampire find his own way, while a prince with a low Humanity might consider a path follower's presence too much of a reminder of his own temptation

to succumb to the Beast. And, given that many successful princes are pragmatists, any of the above guidelines can be discarded for an old friend, an old *enemy*, or a Kindred who's proved himself trustworthy and useful. For these reasons alone, followers of the Path of Honorable Accord can sometimes find shelter among the Camarilla. In all cases, very conservative Camarilla leaders who preside on the border with Sabbat territory may find it simplest to just declare a blood hunt on path followers and let the chips fall where they may.

The majority of Kindred who follows paths in Camarilla society are old Gangrel who honor the Beast (and they must remain on the outskirts of their cities), and cunning political vampires on the Path of Power and the Inner Voice. Some Cainites on the Paths of Honorable Accord or Typhon can blend in with Camarilla society without too much work — the corruptors because their way encourages subtlety in action, and the knights because the Code of Milan does not wildly deviate from the Traditions of Caine. The Ashirra have few problems blending in Muslim Camarilla cities. Few others can manage to function in Camarilla society. For instance, those on the Paths of Blood and Paradox have a difficult time avoiding Camarilla laws against destruction or diablerie, while those on the Path of Metamorphosis cannot help but violate the Camarilla's Masquerade if they wish to answer their calling.

No known Camarilla vampires turn to Paths of Enlightenment and remain wholly and comfortably in the sect. They are surely unable to find a mentor, and the Sabbat trusts naught but its own with such secrets.

the Sabbat, though, that exalts Paths of Enlightenment and their practitioners. Ironically, it is this act that causes many neonate members to lose themselves to the Beast, attempting to adhere to a path before they're ready.

By contrast, paths among the independent clans are uniform and ancient. They're typically clan-specific, passed down when necessary from sire to childe (or, more likely, elder to ancilla). Few new discoveries are made — the Path of Typhon is practiced as it has been for millennia, for example. Moreover, practitioners in independent clans tend to be splinter groups, perhaps even marginalized within their clans. Not every Setite practices the Path of Typhon or every Ravnos follows the Path of Paradox. Nor are such adherents necessarily accorded the most respect or status.

## CHARACTERISTICS

Some of us have been part of an "elite" group in our lives, whether formal or informal: military branches, support groups, fitness or sports programs, honor societies. Others of us have sat on the sidelines of such groups, vaguely envious of the motivation and discipline necessary to belong.

For a path follower, eternity is work. Each night provides goals to be accomplished, truths to master, objectives to meet. Existential, club-hopping angst is the sign of an immature unlife, and ultimately a slow tailspin into oblivion. Let the anarchists revel and

rant and posture. Path followers will be here long after the so-called "free people" have reduced themselves to gibbering, maddened wrecks.

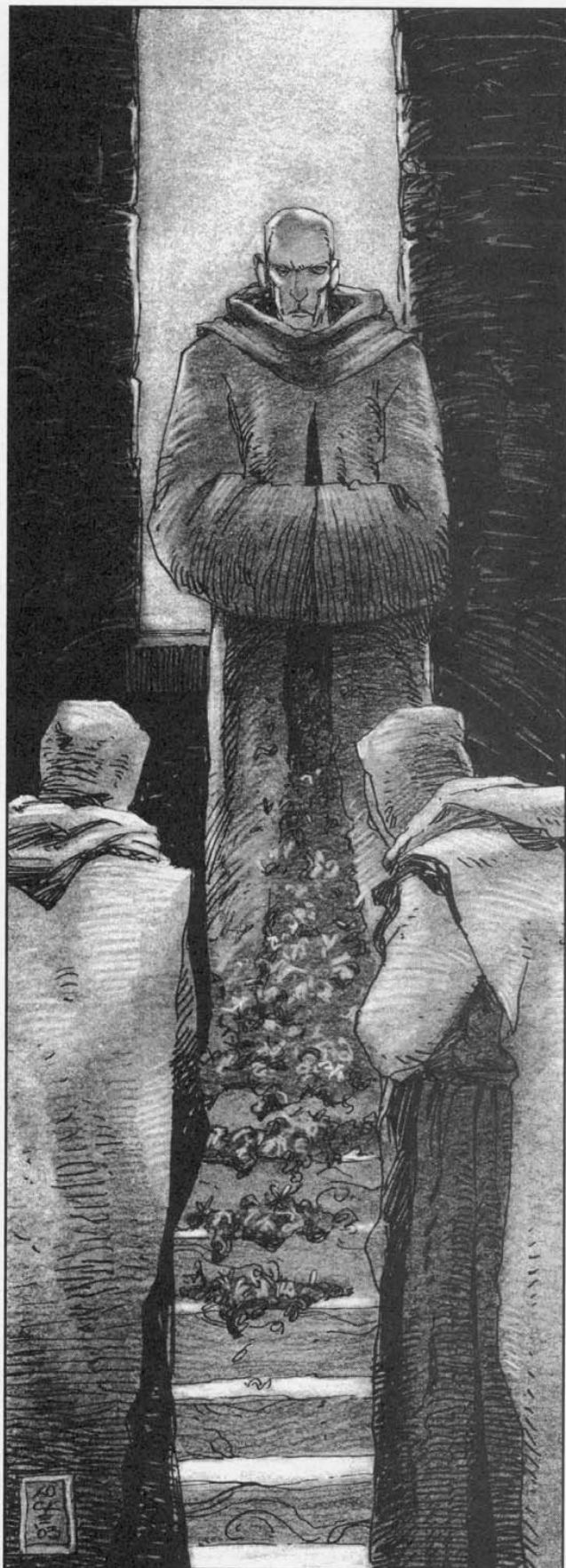
This is not to say that path followers are dour and humorless. Typhon and Cathari adherents can tear it up with the most self-indulgent Camarilla Toreador or Brujah. Even here, though, there are lessons in pleasure and debauchery, if one cares to learn.

Regardless of path, all practitioners believe in a "higher" state, even if (as with Typhon, Revelations and Night) that state is servitude to an evil divinity. Regardless of direction, there's a goal, not just an existential drift into chaos. All paths present a steadily evolving lattice of increasing spiritual development, not merely a meaningless existence of stalling soul decay.

This climb away from the Beast is everything to a path follower. There is a dark nobility of sorts to this goal. Temporal, transient pursuits such as wealth, power and even blood are means to a greater end. It is often necessary to acquire these things as tools or even as lessons, but they should not be valued for their own sake.

Path followers are also known for their strength of will. Merely being on a path denotes success at substantial spiritual trials. As one continues to progress, the tests and tribulations grow more stern, the penalties for failure more harsh. Undisciplined and weak vampires simply can't keep up; they stumble, fall and are lost to the Beast.





## PRACTITIONERS AND THE WORLD

Like many fundamentalist mortals, practitioners tend to view “nonbelievers” with suspicion. Even if a vampire intellectually understands that there are many means to find truth, she is emotionally bound to the one that sets her free from the Beast. Thus, it’s hard for her to truly accept that an alternative means of salvation can work.

This is less true for members of the Sabbat, for whom many paths mingle and ideas are shared. Followers of different visions, having common cause and living space on a nightly basis, learn to bear each other’s views with tolerance if not respect. In fact, there is an increasing demarcation between “disciplined” path followers and the “do as thou wilt” rank and file. Clustered in their elite orders, with their special *ritae*, path followers look down their noses at their ignorant brethren who think that all of unlife is a vast party.

In any event, path adherents tend to view undead still “yoked” to Humanity as untrustworthy, potentially even dangerous. A vampire remembers how fragile the currency of Humanity was for her and what a near thing her own fall was. It’s difficult — and perhaps enraging — to imagine that someone else could maintain what she could not. Certainly, it seems that many devotees treat Humanity-following vampires with veiled or overt contempt.

Such suspicion is even more intense for beings who claim to seek or have achieved Golconda. In fact, many path followers scoff at the very notion of such a state, deeming it a vampiric fairy tale or a machination of the sinister Inconnu. One of the primary tenets of some paths is the impossibility of attaining Golconda — a vampire must be a vampire, not a part-vampire aberration. Path walkers viciously test and try undead who claim to have attained this state. In fact, some make it their duty to bring Final Death to those “blasphemers” who would mingle human and vampire in one being.

Path followers have a greater understanding of the Beast than most other vampires do, but such comprehension doesn’t always translate into sympathy. Paths that stress Instinct advise avoiding Beast-ridden creatures; there are temptations enough to fall. Some courses such as Orion and Blood call for the destruction of bestial vampires. The fewer examples of failure, it is said, the less influenced the undead as a whole will be. Adherents of other ways, remembering their own plight, take pity on the lost and try to help them as best they can. Over the millennia, path followers have tried to aid their Beast-ridden brethren, hoping through example to guide them to the salvation of a calling. The effort usually ends disastrously, though, as bestial beings exploit, eviscerate and feast on their erstwhile saviors.

## PRACTITIONERS AND MORTALS

Path followers know that they are things apart from mortals. Camarilla vampires and the weak (or lucky) Sabbat who pursue the Path of Humanity fool themselves and the mortals around

them into believing that the creatures are just other people. Path followers make no such pretense.

In general, path followers have little to do with mortals beyond gaining sustenance, and that's probably best for the mortals. Having shed their own humanity, the dedicated have no empathy for kine and both parties can quickly grow distracted and uncomfortable after even brief conversations. Moreover, the self-sufficiency often instilled by paths means practitioners are less likely to care about material comforts, entertainment and other "concerns" of the daytime world.

Each path tends to have its own stance toward mortals, but none recommends treating mortals as valued teachers or as creatures to be emulated. The paths typically fall into one of three camps. Many (such as that of the Beast and Death and the Soul) consider humans to be cattle, freely available for slaughter, torture or other abuse. Others (Bones or Blood) suggest that mortals have a necessary place in the world and are not to be murdered or abused indiscriminately. The third group, including devotees of the Path of Caine, holds humans in no particular regard, concerning themselves more with vampiric affairs.

## CEREMONY AND RITUAL

Every Path of Enlightenment is an artificial, ritualized guide to behavior. It is easy to believe that the courses began in ancient times as Cainites crazed with hunger or fear looked for touchstones, shepherds that would help them avoid the worst of the Beast. Superstitions arose around particular behaviors or ideas that helped keep the Beast at bay. Many vampires found that adhering to their mortal morality served them well, but those who tried to transcend that humanity, or who nearly lost their personal battle with the Beast, had to take other roads. Cainites of the most ancient times were able to pull one another out of bestiality and onto a Road of morality.

By the Dark Ages period, many of the Roads (as the paths were then known) assumed a church-like role among the children of Caine, ordaining dark abbots, priests and cardinals, and holding their own services and sacraments. Dark Ages Roads often assumed communities of their own, to hear the ancients speak.

In the years after the Anarch Revolt, the Roads fragmented. The most experienced elders found themselves on the fangs of their students or enemies; many ancient teachings and rituals were lost. Within 50 years of the revolt, Roads that had been communities of faith and discipline descended into wildly varying half-remembered traditions, superstitions and new philosophies. In this fashion, the coherence of the Roads led to the disparate paths.

In light of this fragmenting of ancient ways, players of path followers should come up with a litany of ceremonial behaviors that follow their own logic. Each path has had thousands of practitioners in the centuries since it was developed (and truly ancient ways like that of the Beast go back millennia). It therefore stands to reason that any adherent has acquired a set of ritual behaviors from her mentor and these minor traditions might never be seen outside of that forebear's teachings. Such minor ceremonies or taboos might include pronouncing the Latin names of the major arteries of a victim before feeding, an elaborate bow, enameled paintings on fingernails, never touching a rose, never using the word "human," or whatever else you devise. You're encouraged to come up with your own, with Storyteller cooperation and permission.

Clever Storytellers can use these little rituals as hints of other students' paths. In a way, these trappings represent a ceremonial lineage. All students of the Metamorphosist Zara Slatikov might prepare themselves for daily sleep by adding a new, temporary piercing, for instance, and any student of Slatikov could recognize another by that activity.

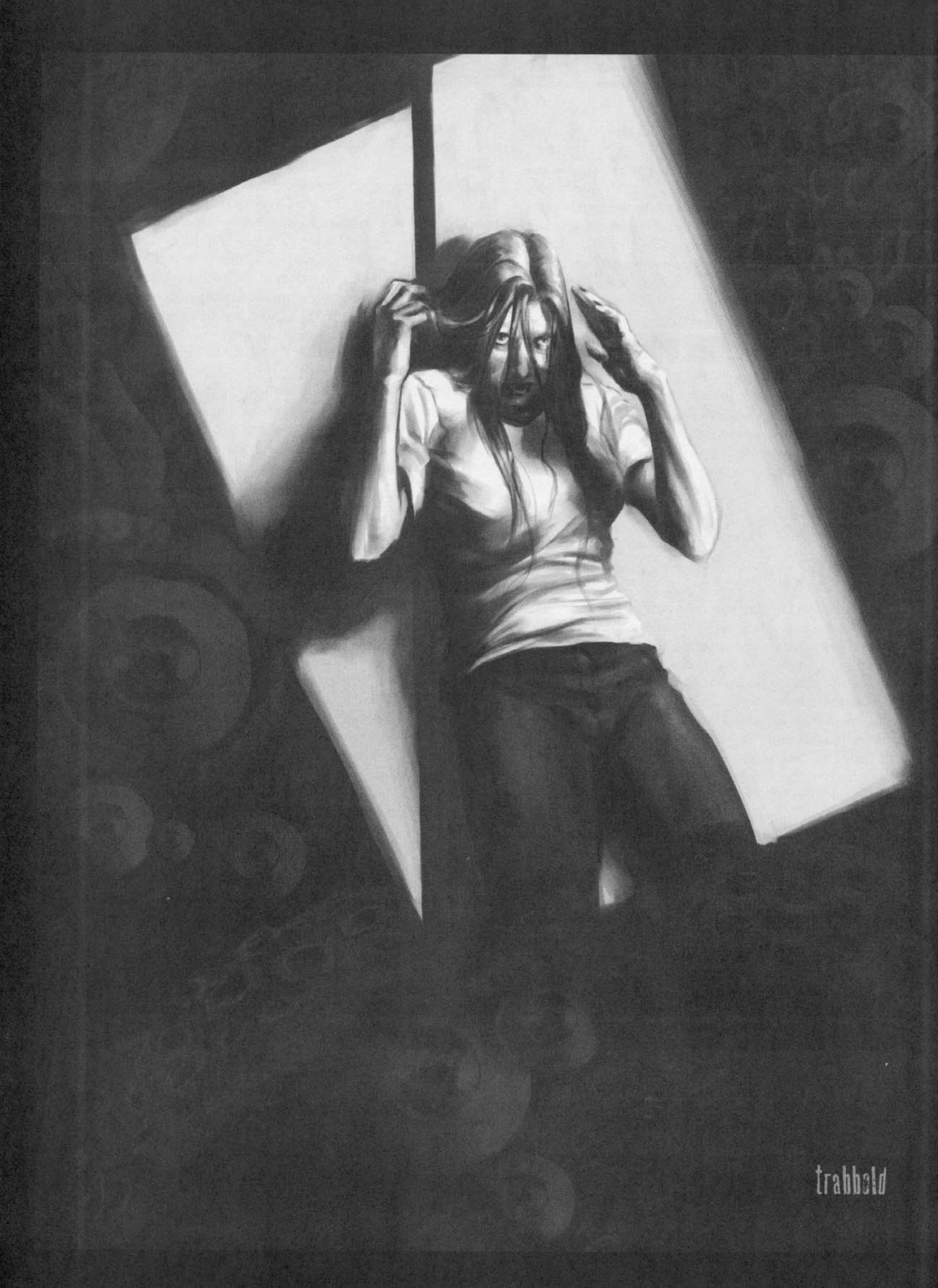
## CREATING A PATH FOLLOWER

With the Storyteller's permission, you may create a beginning character on a Path of Enlightenment. Creating a follower involves slight changes to the **Vampire** rules.

Alternative Virtues (Conviction, Instinct) begin at zero, not 1. Alternative Virtues, being unnatural and "built from scratch," don't get the free starting dots that Conscience, Self-Control and Courage do. These "lost" dots are just that — lost. They're not replaced or moved elsewhere. Thus, a character on the Path of Night (Conviction, Self-Control and Courage) starts with Conviction 0, Self-Control 1 and Courage 1. A character on the Path of Metamorphosis (Conviction, Instinct and Courage) starts with Conviction 0, Instinct 0 and Courage 1. Players get their normal seven starting dots, but must use some of these dots to raise all Virtues to a minimum of 1.

A path follower must also begin the game with a Willpower of 5 or greater. All starting path devotees must have either a Courage rating (and thus a Willpower) of 5, or freebie points must be spent to raise Willpower to 5. If the character wasn't strong-willed, she never would have overcome degeneration and the Beast.

A beginning character may not start the game with a path rating above 5. This is true even if the combination of Conviction + Self-Control/Instinct would indicate a higher score. High levels in a Path of Enlightenment take decades, sometimes centuries, to achieve.



trabhold



# CHAPTER TWO: RIGORS OF THE WAY

So, you've decided to play a follower of a Path of Enlightenment. Cool, and good luck. It's a tall order, though. Even a vampire who retains some of his human nature is by no means an easy subject for one of us humans to represent. A vampire who's not only lost his humanity, but deliberately striven to replace it with something else...? Tough, indeed.

And that's where this chapter comes in. Here we explore what happens to a Cainite along the lonely road into and out of the abyss.

## THE DESCENT

All vampires were human at one point. Even the most alien undead minds in existence built their postmortem perceptions on the foundation — perhaps the ruins — of human thoughts and feelings. It is thus as important to understand the starting point of the journey into darkness as it is to realize the destination.

In *Vampire: The Masquerade*, "Humanity" actually represents a broad 21st-century paradigm of what people in the Western First World consider "healthy" and "good." That said, the tenets espoused in the Humanity code are reasonably universal. Whether one is a Christian, Buddhist, Wiccan, Taoist or atheist, a traditionalist or postmodernist, a conservative or liberal, we tend to agree that "Thou shalt not kill" is a correct code of behavior. Some disagree or at least amend, but for purposes of game play, we can assume Humanity is the default condition for mortals in the World of Darkness, regardless of creed or culture. We can also assume that failure to adhere to this code represents degeneration rather than difference. Serial murderers don't following a unique but equally valuable philosophy, they're just sick.

(It is interesting that in the new millennium, Western society gives an increasingly overt and unapologetic acknowledgment that following the path of "goodness," "decency" and "emotional maturity" does not always lead to material success and security. While this book is not a work of social, political or economic criticism, it could make an interesting story to *contrast* the behavior of a vampire with that of, say, a ruthless CEO who made millions defrauding his shareholders and employees.)

Psychotherapy tends to view the human condition as a continuum, much as the Humanity Trait does. We ascend toward holistic wellness, or we slide toward sickness. We seek to reach a state of "self-love" in which we accept and encompass our negative qualities, but we don't glorify them or seek to augment them.

By contrast, vampires on a path reject some or all of the fundamental tenets of the Humanity code. What is positive for kine is not necessarily so for Kindred, and what is negative for kine might be expected behavior for a vampire. A quality that a mortal or high-Humanity vampire would consider a personality disorder might well be the governing drive of a "healthy" path vampire.

It is important to point out that, while measure of morality and wellness among mortals must always be considered subjective, vampires face the very real and objective threat of the Beast. The Beast is neither imaginary nor subject to postmodern moral relativism. Whether Cainites believe in the story of Caine, the Fall and the Curse from God, they must act as if they do or risk madness and damnation. For all intents, undead must think of the Beast as a demon lurking "around the corner" of the soul, ever ready to pounce. Some psychologists argue that it is possible for the very worst of us humans — the tyrants, serial killers, abusers and other sociopaths — to be reformed given the right treatment. That is impossible for Cainites lost to the Beast.

### AUTHOR'S NOTE

Some of the material in this book uses psychological and therapeutic terminology. We're not psychologists or therapists, and we don't particularly espouse this material as true or even accurate in an out-of-game context. We certainly don't intend for the material in this book — interesting as it is to study — to be taken as gospel. That said, if "pop psychology" can offer a convenient shorthand to develop fictional characters and game situations, it's as valid a tool in the Storytelling tool kit as any other. Just don't consider this manual a textbook to diagnose yourself or your friends (or enemies). Refer to a therapist or a book written by an expert in the field.

## THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL

In game mechanics, most vampires (and by extrapolation, most humans) start existence with Humanity ratings of 5 to 10, with 7 being the norm. This range represents the minimum (and maximum?) necessary to function in "polite society." The kind of person a vampire was before being Embraced has a great impact on her eventual outlook.

Even within the "acceptable" range, there is a broad difference in wellness and outlook. Many people spend their entire lives overcoming the traumas of a low rating, just to move up one or two levels on the spectrum. Put a person with Humanity 6 and a person with Humanity 8 in the same organization, and others will eventually remark on their difference in warmth, happiness and attitude.

Ironically, vampires who fall from the highest Humanity ratings can make the most devout path adherents, as they desperately strive to recover the inner peace they once knew. Conversely, Cainites for whom "it was all a bunch of shit anyway" even as mortals might not expect much from self-improvement. In fact, they might just hover at low Humanity levels until the Beast finally wins.

### HUMANITY RATINGS

The following is a breakdown of what each level of Humanity rating can mean in vampire outlook and behavior, divided into approximate classes of control and decline.

**10:** A person at this level is either exceptionally (perhaps naively) innocent and pure, or has taken considerable pains to advance himself spiritually. If the former, the person might well have levels of True Faith or otherwise have been "chosen by God." If the latter, he's undertaken a systematic program of self-improvement, meditation and/or therapy.

In any event, someone at this level of Humanity is noticeably different from others, and he may have as hard a time fitting into the imperfect world as do those with low Humanity ratings. He probably chooses a career related to his spiritual development, such as becoming a minister, sifu, teacher or healer of some kind (doctor, nurse, therapist). Alternatively, he might "wander the Earth" doing good. It is probably hard for this person to abide wickedness or unpleasantness of any sort.

This level of Humanity is practically impossible for a vampire to maintain. Such a creature may become autarkic, assuming his sire lets him continue to exist. He may seek Golconda relentlessly and tries to harm nothing during feeding. Because he may have been a paragon of human nature, the reality of his unnatural state can be dreadful; he can't see the "good" in immortality. Characters at this level sometimes opt for a sunlit suicide if they don't or can't seek Golconda.

Ironically, vampires who fall from this level and find a path often become the most monstrous members of their chosen courses, because their free-fall into degeneracy is so much more intense than most others'.

**9:** This is the highest level at which a person seems "human." Characters with Humanity 9 stand out in groups, but can still function within them. The subject is not only nice, she's nicer than nice. She never has a bad word for anyone and loses her temper only when provoked beyond any reasonable limit.

Ironically, while the person with Humanity 8 seems like a trusted friend, this person seems like a role model and can thus be less approachable.

A vampire at this level is still horrified by her condition, but is more likely to remain within undead society — the better to "reform" it (or so she tells herself). She retains enough ego to, deep down, relish the thought of eternal life... for the sake of goodness and compassion. At this level, the thought of all the good one can accomplish can justify the means. It's just a thought, a sliver of an idea easily put out of one's head... but also the first chink in the vampire's spiritual armor.

**8:** A character with Humanity 8 is significantly more compassionate, balanced and stable than the norm. This is the person to whom you can confide your problems with perfect confidence that you'll find sympathy and not be taken advantage of — the person who "everyone agrees is nice." In fact, this person seems more approachable than others with higher Humanity levels, because she also has minor, "human" flaws. Even her peccadilloes display a considerable difference in degree. While she might get angry at someone or indulge in gossip, doing so almost never deteriorates into true malice or hatefulness. In any event, people with lower Humanity don't feel as uncomfortable "letting it all hang out" around this person the way they might around those with Humanity ratings of 9 or 10.

A vampire at this level still desires relationships with mortals (and his own kind). He's still a compassionate, empathetic creature, so he tries to befriend his victims, disguising the Embrace through sex, accident or Dominate. The first time he inadvertently kills a victim can be maddening, blasting him down more than one Humanity level at a time.

This is the first step of the "excuse stage." Vampires at higher levels never excuse or try to justify their sins. If they commit them, they take full responsibility. This is the level at which the fatal words, "I wasn't myself," cross the Cainite's lips. In some ways, this is true — but by objectifying and personifying the Beast as something Other, the vampire only strengthens it.

**7:** This rating is the default. A person with 7 Humanity has experienced the vagaries of the "human condition" — the peaks and valleys that you, the reader, know well. He's "normal." He'll give a homeless person some change (if he has it to spare and is in

the right spirit), call 911 if he sees an injury (but might not get much more involved), or give to the office charity (it's expected... and maybe there'll be a karmic payback). A lot of this person's "causes" depend on personal preferences and mood. He might dismiss others' financial woes, but can't stand to see a child suffer, or might take a strong stand against racism, sexism or homophobia while caring little for the plights of "privileged, white, redneck breeders." Humanity 7 types tend to have a concentric moral code, with themselves and their loved ones receiving first priority, friends and acquaintances receiving variable consideration according to their closeness (or usefulness), and strangers being in last place. Like it or not, the adage about "not cutting off one's own pinky to save all the people in China" is true for most of us.

For a vampire at this level, the "excuse stage" comes into full bloom. She does things that intrinsically violate her moral and ethical code, yet lacks the compassion to care as fully as more spiritually developed beings might, so finds it remarkably easy to justify her behavior "just this once" — over and over again.

**6:** A person at this level of Humanity is noticeably "colder" and "harder" than is typical. Such an individual displays a degree of detachment from others. Perhaps she had distant, unappreciative or impossibly demanding parents, or she was severely ostracized or picked on by childhood peers. Maybe she was just "born mean." She's functional, and she forms more or less normal relationships, but there's always some social background noise for her — depression, alienation or frustration. Gossip from a character at this level can be genuinely vicious, intended not only to vent frustration, but to inflict harm.

This level of Humanity can also represent a person of reasonably healthy upbringing who's spent years in a desensitizing environment. An upper-level corporate executive who's had to lay off thousands of workers and play cutthroat politics; a soldier who's watched his friends be maimed or killed; a petty criminal who's been in and out of jail; a lawyer who's seen (or helped) the guilty go free. In any event, this person, while by no means a monster, has developed a layer of emotional callus. She tries to help out those she deems worthy of help, but they've got to help themselves, too — and if they don't, well, not everybody makes it.

At this level, excuses are tossed off casually. A vampire at a higher level of Humanity "wasn't herself." A vampire at this level starts to think that maybe, just maybe, a victim deserved it. While it wasn't right that she fed on that guy, he was kind of creepy — and wasn't he like that guy who always hung around the playground during her mortal days? Maybe he was that guy, some kind of sick pedophile who should have been tried and convicted, anyway. Not that she'll ever kill again, of course....

**5:** A person with this level of Humanity is the product of an upbringing and life that's not only hard, but downright brutal. Childhood traumas might include severe verbal, emotional, physical or sexual abuse from parents, authority figures or peer groups. At this level, the person has difficulty forming and maintaining much more than superficial relationships. She's largely "given up" on her species and can be seen as misanthropic, sometimes hostile. Even casual acquaintances comment about this person's "coldness" or "antisocial" behavior, and workplace relationships can be tense and competitive.

One of the primary differences between Humanity 6 and 5 is the former's attitude toward healthy, positive people. The person

at Humanity 6, by and large, sees higher Humanity as a quality worthy of respect. Those at Humanity 5, by contrast, often respond with contempt and scorn toward "goody two-shoes," or believe that "betters" have ulterior motives. For these people, not only is cynicism a sign of toughness, but compassion is a mark of weakness.

Not even a criminal career is out of the question. Theft (white-collar or straight-up armed robbery) and assault are not beneath a person at this level, although rape and murder are still taboo.

The problem for a Cainite at this level is that, while killing is still forbidden, it's going to happen as the vampire frenzies. Because the vampire has yet to deteriorate to the point at which it's acceptable to kill, but is too callous to muster up a lot of empathy for victims, it's often easiest to just let frenzy take over. These vampires often pick isolated spots and/or convenient targets — "the scum of society," "the enemy" or even "useless yuppie whores." Killing isn't "fun" yet, and the frenzy still terrifies them, but the Beast is stronger. At the halfway point to monstrosity, these Cainites know they have to let the Beast out from time to time.

#### INTO THE ABYSS

The low-end Humanity levels aren't so much fun, are they? We all know — maybe are — people like that. Well, buckle up, because it's about to get a lot worse. The preceding Humanity ratings represent where your character was before the Embrace, and depict any degeneration that occurred afterward. These show what happens when all hope or concern is lost or abandoned. Thus, starting location on the Humanity scale matters, just like it matters whether you fall out of a fourth- or 20th-story window. No matter what, though, it still hurts.

**4:** Humanity 4 marks the point at which someone starts to have serious trouble in daily social life. At this stage, personality and character defects are apparent, even after brief interaction. A person certainly displays one or more disorders. Casual acquaintances describe him as "unstable," "twitchy" or "creepy." If he has high Social Attributes, he might get a superficially favorable reaction, particularly from weak-willed or dependent people. But even here, most people of average or higher Virtues, Humanity and/or Willpower perceive something seriously wrong with the subject.

More importantly, at this level it's hard to make this person see that his behavior needs correction, because he's lost much of his capacity for remorse and guilt. He might spend a lot of time brooding on dark, ugly, painful things. This is the level at which adjectives such as "twisted" are used in all seriousness. Not only is the person indifferent to others' pain, he might even take pleasure in it. In any event, the person's "issues" have developed to the point that his life is governed by them. He can't kill someone casually yet, but his response to the murder of even a closely known person or former friend is likely to be a shrug.

From a gameplay perspective, roleplaying characters at this level and below is not easy. There is a real danger in allowing a character to turn into a brutal and monstrous stereotype. Remember, at Humanity 4, a character doesn't just murder someone randomly. There's still some hope. He is aware that he's losing it, but it's probably not obvious how he can sidestep the chasm at his feet. The character might search for a way out or a means to get some peace. He may devote himself to a solitary activity, or he

might still be devoted to certain friends or loved ones. Take a look at a movie like *Ronin* that revolves around a character who has lost almost everything that matters to him, and who clings to that one last important thing. That saving grace could be a loved one, a sense of honor or a duty to the character's lord, but he may have something left that you can use as a player or Storyteller to keep him from turning into a stereotypical maniac.

3: This is it, the "murder level." At Humanity 3, a person can kill without blinking. Not in self-defense, not "the enemy" in battle, but a random, innocent stranger. The person might not murder for no reason, but can kill on the slightest pretext.

In game mechanic terms, it's quite likely that a character at this level has a zero in either Conscience or Self-Control. Think about that: This character undergoes a serious psychic struggle (Willpower points must be spent) to avoid doing whatever she feels like, whenever she feels like it. If she hates somebody (*and she does*), it's a draining effort not to walk over and beat the shit out of the object of her wrath, regardless of the consequences.

Characters like this are challenging to work into an ongoing chronicle. If a character reaches this point, she's either in search of a path toward recovery or near the end of her useful roleplaying career. At this stage, it's hard for the character *not* to attack friends or other members of a coterie when they irritate her. (Thankfully for the Sabbat, the bonds of the Vaulderie keep packs largely under control.) The player of a character at this level needs to be aware that the rest of the group may have no choice but to destroy the vampire, whether for their own safety or in response to one of her outbursts. A character flailing for a path may be able to hold it together at this point, but one continuing to fall may no longer care.

At this point, a character can move from Humanity to a Path of Enlightenment. Those who drop below a Humanity of 3 but who try to retain their Humanity essentially become unplayable. Their inhuman monstrosity makes them a liability for any coterie or pack that would otherwise have them.

## PERSONALITY DISORDERS

Real-world psychologists have identified 10 primary personality disorders, also referred to as "character disorders." These ailments are not true psychoses on the order of a Malkavian's derangements. As some murderers have discovered to their dismay, personality disabilities are not grounds for the United States' legal definition of insanity. Most people display at least mild levels of one or more of these dysfunctions; to purge one's self fully of all of these qualities is the work of a saint or spiritual guru.

Character disorders are aberrations or facets of personality that detract from one's capacity to cope emotionally, socially or financially. Unlike clinically insane people, those with significant personality disorders can function in society, though often at a much more limited level than people with low levels of these challenges. For example, a person with an avoidant personality disorder might never attain significant success in her professional endeavors, despite having all the cognitive and skill "tools" to do so. She lacks the social skills or confidence to display her capabilities fully. By contrast, a person with antisocial or narcissistic

personality disorder might attain considerable financial and material success — all the while hurting other people, alienating lovers and friends, living life entirely in superficial terms, and wondering why he's so empty and unhappy despite "having it all."

In game terms, as Humanity is lost, one or more of these disorders might become dominant. The person routinely behaves in an unproductive, even destructive fashion. People with these dysfunctions are not necessarily isolated or unsuccessful, however. Indeed, strong personality disorders often goad people to extraordinary success and fame, though probably not happiness or inner peace.

Since personality disabilities often cause or accompany the loss of Humanity, and since all vampires on a Path of Enlightenment attained that state by losing most or all of their Humanity, it stands to reason that most path followers displayed or continue to display some of these characteristics. The difference is that rather than try to clear away the emotional rubble of a personality disorder, many paths use it as a foundation on which to erect a new, alien structure.

Thus, while a schizoid or avoidant character might have difficulty interacting with non-Sabbat or non-clan members, she can function with her sect or clanmates. Of course, the Vaulderie helps here, too; packmates are less like friends and more like a dysfunctional family, trapped in the same hell but needing each other in lunacy.

Even in the human world, "negative" personality qualities can be cultivated and rewarded, such as the emotionally stunted, socially retarded, spiritually empty, abrasive workaholic who's beloved by his bosses because he works 14 hours a day as a substitute for "having a life."

Below we describe the 10 personality disorders, and how they might reflect upon the full-fledged derangements established in the **Vampire** rulebook. We also give examples of how path vampires might use these disorders as instrumental components in rebuilding their personalities.

### ANTISOCIAL

This label might be considered a misnomer, as people with Antisocial personality disorder are not necessarily shy or reclusive, nor do they lack social skills as schizoids or avoidants do. Oftentimes, the opposite is the case — a person is very socially domineering, even aggressive. Antisocial personality disorder refers to a lack of compassion, empathy and superego/conscience. The person simply cannot care about any being other than himself, and almost always places his own wants and needs above those of others. People with this disorder casually lie, steal, cheat and exploit — and a few even rape and kill. Most psychologists and law enforcers consider this the "serial-killer disorder." Ted Bundy, John Wayne Gacy and other notorious monsters are classic examples of offenders who, while legally sane and capable of making moral distinctions, simply don't care.

Most Cainites develop this dysfunction to some degree. Indeed, it can be seen as the flagship disorder of Humanity loss. Sufferers may transition this condition into the Fugue derangement (**Vampire**, p. 224) as the worst of their dismissal of others is blanked out, even routinely.

## “LOSER”

Very few people with extreme personality disorders are truly happy. Given that only the most enlightened path adherents truly transcend all their mortal limitations and “baggage,” this leaves a lot of Sabbat, Setites and similar Cainites as miserable creatures. We’ve all been in school or work environments with frustrated, angry or bitter people who take toxic delight in spewing the venom of their issues onto everyone around them.

Now imagine you’re part of an entire organization of such creatures. Imagine having decades or centuries to brood on the “unfairness of it all.” Imagine that, in many cases, you actually were forcibly wrenched away from friends and loved ones and a life of at least marginal happiness, only to be thrust into a cold world of night, hunger and pain. Imagine centuries of being abused and manipulated by beings more powerful, dominant, intelligent and fitter than you in every way. Beings who can break your body, read your thoughts, flay your soul and restore you only to begin the process over again. Imagine never having the answers, and the only outlet for your aggression is to hunt and hurt weaker creatures who’ve been designated as your food — your former species. Especially the ones who seem fulfilled and happy.

This perspective certainly provides a degree of explanation (though not necessarily excuse) for the so-called “random e-e-e-e-e-e-evil” of the Sabbat, Setites and other “nasty” groups, doesn’t it?

### Character Ideas

A member of the Path of Power and the Inner Voice who attempts to insinuate herself into the same pack with potential rivals, and then guide them into dangerous areas.

A scholar of the Path of Blood who performs her functions not out of duty, but out of pleasure. She loves infiltrating rival sects and clans, causing as much mayhem and murder as possible.

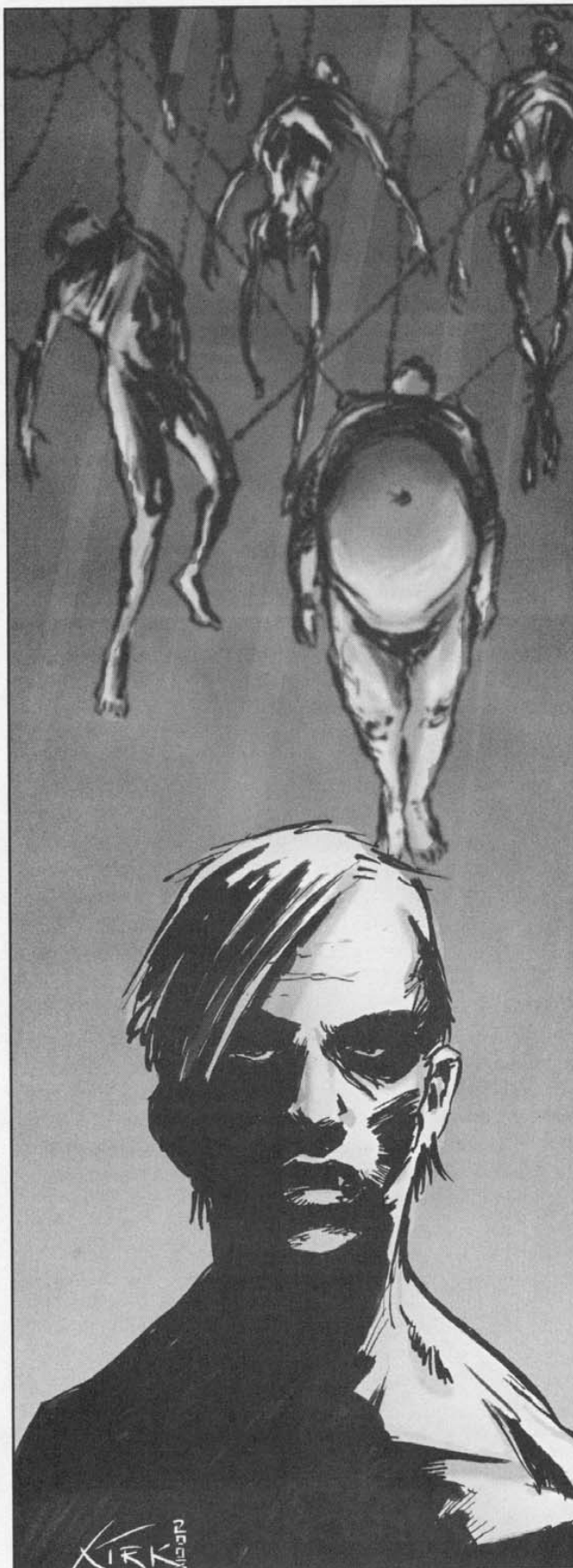
### AVOIDANT

Avoidant personality disorder is characterized by extreme social anxiety. Vampires with this condition often feel inadequate, avoid social situations, and seek isolation in their nightly routines. They fear rejection and social humiliation, often needlessly so. They prefer routine and exaggerate the potential difficulties of new situations to rationalize avoiding them. Some display an imaginative bent, creating fantasy worlds in which they are dominant, loved or triumphant. Unlike schizoid personality disorder, avoidant people yearn for social relations yet feel unable to obtain them. They are frequently depressed and have low self-confidence.

Vampires with this disorder typically have low Social Attributes and low Willpower. Uncontrolled, they can succumb to the Manic-Depression or Paranoia derangements (see *Vampire*, pp. 223-224).

### Character Ideas

A member of the Path of Blood who strives to stay in the field continually and who has as little contact with other undead as possible.





A member of any path who feels too worthless to advance further on it. He strives for solitary self-enlightenment and goes on solo "quests" into enemy territory.

#### **BORDERLINE**

Vampires with borderline personality suffer from mood instability and low self-image. Constant, sudden mood swings and bouts of anger characterize sufferers of this disability, particularly when frustrated. Borderline victims sometimes take out their anger on themselves, masochistically inflicting injury or even trying to kill themselves. They think in very black-and-white terms and often form intense, conflict-ridden relationships.

Borderline Cainites might succumb to the Manic-Depression or Hysteria derangements (*Vampire*, p. 224).

#### **Character Ideas**

A member of the Path of Cathari who prefers to live among mortals. An expert Masquerader, she can dwell among the kine, stirring up drama and starting/ending relationships for years. The Sabbat tolerates this behavior because the sect occasionally finds her knowledge useful.

A member of the Path of Honorable Accord who, while extraordinarily protective of her pack, constantly creates drama and otherwise "stirs up shit" among packmates. (Think "reality TV.")

#### **DEPENDENT**

Beings with dependent personality disorder are needy and helpless. Unlike beings with the Child Nature, they don't necessarily retain a sense of wonder or innocence. In fact, the opposite is often true. People with this condition can't stand being alone or acting on their own. They cling to others and fear losing them, often jumping from relationship to relationship, even abusive ones. They are overly sensitive to disapproval and may break down, even to the point of suicide when faced with rejection. They let others make important decisions for them.

A Dependent Cainite may be particularly vulnerable to the Bulimia derangement (*Vampire*, p. 223).

#### **Character Ideas**

A nomadic templar on the Path of Honorable Accord who becomes obsessed with one bishop after another. She fanatically protects her charge for a time, then suddenly loses interest and moves on, only to repeat the pattern elsewhere.

A member of the Path of Lilith who is held in contempt by his peers for his need to remain in abusive S&M relationships.

#### **HISTRIONIC**

People with histrionic personalities need to be the center of attention all the time, often interrupting others in order to dominate conversations. They use florid language even when describing mundane events, and they seek constant praise. They may dress provocatively or exaggerate injuries in order to gain attention. They also tend to inflate social relationships, believing that everyone loves them; they describe the most casual acquaintances as "dear friends." They need to be adored and use and manipulate others to provoke this result. Nothing infuriates them more than being ignored.

As the name suggests, a histrionic Cainite may develop the Hysteria derangement, or might manifest Megalomania (*Vampire*, pp. 223-224).

#### **Character Ideas**

A vampire on the Path of Lilith who uses Sabbat rituals as personal floor shows. He is at the center of the most dangerous *ritae*, showing off his courage in the face of flames and pain. He develops new, hair-raising *ritae* and then challenges other Sabbat to participate.

A Ravnos on the Path of Paradox who concocts grandiose thefts, then lets everyone know exactly who did it.

#### **NARCISSISTIC**

Narcissistic personality disorder is characterized by self-centeredness. As with histrionic disorder, people with this condition seek attention and praise. They grossly exaggerate and distort their accomplishments, expecting others to acknowledge them as superior. They tend to be choosy about picking friends, since they believe that not just anyone is worthy of them. They tend to make good first impressions, yet have difficulty maintaining long-lasting relationships. They are generally uninterested in the feelings of others and may take advantage of them.

A narcissistic vampire is a prime candidate to end up with the Megalomania derangement (*Vampire*, p. 223).

#### **Character Ideas**

Two Typhonite elders who've been engaged in a centuries-long competition to drive the most vampires (Humanity and path vampires) into the clutches of the Beast. A player's character can be a child of one of these elders, every bit as self-centered and corrupt as his sire. The character seeks to learn from his sire, carrying out plots against the sire's rival while simultaneously avoiding both the sire and rival's attempts to corrupt him. Additionally, the character constantly plots ways to turn the tables on both elders, driving both to the Beast and thereby winning the "game."

A Sabbat templar on the Path of Caine. Acutely aware of all the grand and shadowy figures in Cainite history, she seeks to commit deeds and atrocities on par with the best and worst of all time.

#### **OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE**

This is a lesser but serious form of the obsessive-compulsive derangement (see *Vampire*, p. 223). People with this disorder are overly focused on orderliness and perfection. Their need to do everything "right" and fear of making any mistake often interferes with their capacity to complete projects and make decisions. They set unreasonably high standards for themselves and others, and woe to any who can't meet them. They prefer to act alone or with Vaulderie-bound packmates, believing others to be careless or incompetent. They have difficulty expressing emotion. Vampires with this disorder sometimes display elaborate feeding practices to avoid "contaminated" blood.

#### **Character Ideas**

A vampire on the Path of Caine who comes into the possession of an important set of texts on Cainite history—or at least, all but one lost apocryphal chapter. The vampire devotes his entire unlife to finding the remaining part, spending blood, minions and even packmates heedlessly. The chapter might not

even be that important or valuable, but it's the only thing missing from the texts.

A member of the Path of the Bones who meticulously collects hundreds of corpses in an attempt to have a specimen of every possible type of traumatic death.

### PARANOID

Less than the true derangement (see *Vampire*, p. 223), but destructive nonetheless, paranoid personality disorder causes a character to distrust and ascribe sinister motives to everyone. People with this condition tend to trust no one but themselves (though they trust themselves too much at times). They search for hidden meanings in everything and read hostile intentions into the actions of others. They are quick to challenge the loyalties of friends and loved ones and often appear cold and distant. They usually shift blame to others and tend to carry long grudges.

#### Character Ideas

A member of the Path of Honorable Accord who rabidly adheres to the doctrine of "us" versus "them." Any perceived threat to the Sabbat is met with ferocious resistance.

A member of the Path of Power and the Inner Voice who "realizes" that the factions within the Sabbat pose the greatest threat to her well-being. She follows the tenets of the path in nearly fanatical fashion, trying to accumulate as much personal and political power as possible to protect herself against her "enemies."

### SCHIZOID

Characters with schizoid personality disorder not only have a difficult time with interaction, they prefer it that way. They genuinely choose to be alone and do not secretly wish for popularity. They tend to seek jobs that require little social contact. Their social skills are often weak and they do not show a need for attention or acceptance. They are perceived as humorless and distant and often are termed "loners."

A schizoid Cainite who pulls too far away from reality may develop Fugue, Schizophrenia or Multiple Personality derangements (see *Vampire*, pp. 222-224).

#### Character Ideas

A member of the Path of Typhon who meticulously studies clan foes, and plans the most elaborate schemes of corruption imaginable — yet does not actually participate in carrying them out. He reluctantly gives advice to fellow sectmates, yet truly prefers to contemplate occult esoterica in solitude.

A member of the Path of Blood and a respected member of the Black Hand. Bland and quiet, she's a consummate sneak and assassin. She practices stealth constantly to avoid the unwanted attention of others.

### SCHIZOTYPAL

Schizotypal personality disorder might be a lesser form of schizophrenia (see *Vampire*, p. 222). While not as severe as a derangement, this condition is characterized by odd forms of thinking and perceiving. Individuals often seek isolation from others, have difficulty concentrating for long periods of time, and engage in "conspiracy theory" behavior. Their speech patterns are convoluted, sometimes nearly nonsensical, with a free-association style of thoughts juxtaposed. Schizotypal speech is not as incoherent as schizophrenic "word salad," but jarring nonetheless.



### Character Ideas

A member of the Path of the Bones who is sure that her necrotic trophies convey a message to her. She spends countless nights collecting “just the right” body parts to read “the signs.”

A member of the Path of Power and the Inner Voice who understands that all of the Jihad’s intricate maneuvers are merely the notes of a larger and more sinister melody. He seeks to place himself in the center of the action, cataloging all intrigues, no matter how small, to analyze them later.

## ROCK BOTTOM: THE TRANSITION

Whether through deliberate coaxing, system shock or simple degeneration, a vampire can go on a downward spiral into the abyss. For most Cainites, this is the beginning of the end — the vampire loses her mind and soul to the Beast. Some pull out of the tailspin, however, fashioning new unives and souls.

Every experience is unique, but there are some commonalities to this process. First off, it’s harrowing. A vampire can’t take up a new spiritual direction until she’s nearly derailed from her old track. As one Gangrel *antitribu* put it: “It’s like skydiving. You can’t open the chute too high or you drift all over the place. This wind hits you, then that, and you end up who-knows-where. You have to drop a ways — see the ground closing up underneath you, contemplate what it might be like to impact. Then, when you finally pull that ripcord, you’re damn glad to feel your chute open and control to take over.”

### SWITCHING TO A PATH

Most vampires lose Humanity as they continue to exist. The endless nights, callous struggles and thirst for blood wear away at a creature’s higher sensibilities. Ultimately, the fate of many is to lose their souls to the Beast, becoming more of a monster every night until the last vestiges of morality have all been shed.

Some vampires, like people in the throes of alcoholism or drug addiction, have a revelation, a frightening vision of where they’re headed, and they resolve to change. As with addicts, sometimes there’s an “intervention” on the part of a vampire who stays his own course.

A Kindred seeking to switch to a path must be in a frame of mind to do so: almost consumed, but not yet hopelessly lost. In game terms, your character must have a Humanity rating of 3 or less, but not zero. She must also have Virtue scores of 1 (but not zero) in those Traits that are to be “overwritten” by the path taken. A vampire for whom Conscience will be replaced with Conviction must have a Conscience of 1, for example.

No one shifts out of one mindset and onto another without going through a long night of self-reflection, loathing and hope. As Card XVI of the Tarot, the Tower, instructs, we must undergo a period of loss and ruin before we can rebuild. Accordingly, your character must spend a period of time in her debased state, searching for answers. She is aware of the consequences that await should she stay on the lost road of Humanity. She begins to explore the teachings and practices of an alternative worldview.

### TRIAL BY FIRE

Being a vampire in itself is a test of morality (or a complete dismissal of it). But for Cainites seeking to master a Path of Enlightenment, formal ordeals and measures of dedication are often required to gauge their “purity.” These tests are often ritualized means of improving one or more important Virtues. By undergoing these ordeals, path followers differ from Humanity followers. The latter have no systematic or formal way of “toughening” Virtues, while the former have many. These tests are commonly undertaken as part of a vampire’s initiation into a path, and can be performed later if the creature’s direction is ever in question. Sample tests follow, based on new Virtues gained on paths.

**Conviction:** A common trial among Catharists is for vampires disguised as Inquisitors to kidnap a would-be initiate, take him to a “church chapterhouse,” and “try” him as a demon. The defendant’s answers to the “Inquisitors” denouncements either strengthen or crush him.

**Instinct:** Tales tell of a Nosferatu-built Sabbat “labyrinth” in a hidden location. Several starving initiates are placed in the maze at once. At the center is a single human victim — enough food for one Cainite. Throughout the maze are scattered deadly traps and puzzles. The traps can be avoided and the puzzles solved only through releasing the Beast (i.e., the difficulties are sufficiently high that a vampire might not be able to suffer wound penalties and still overcome them). Of course, nothing stops contestants from feeding on each other... if they can find others in the maze.

**Courage:** This Trait is still valuable to a path vampire, perhaps more so than to Humanity followers. Common trials involve being placed in torpor and then awakened under horrific circumstances (re-interred to undergo the Creation Rites all over again; surrounded by fire or sunlight), or being sent to hunt a victim who turns out to be more than she seems (a Lupine, for example).

In game terms, your character must undertake actions that adhere to the tenets of the new path, and you must apply Willpower to achieve success. Storytellers may deal with this initial stage as they see fit — charging Willpower points, calling for rolls or staging the entire routine purely through roleplaying. The number of any successful Willpower rolls made or points spent varies. At least 10, maybe 20 constitute an average. The vampire puts her money where her mouth is, striving to walk the straight and narrow course. That is, you make Willpower rolls or spend considerable points for your character to avoid incorrect and to practice correct (per the standards of the new path) behavior.

Rolls or points should be called for when the character undertakes any action that is fundamental to the Cainite’s chosen path. The difficulty is based on the appropriateness of that action to the character’s old path, which is to say Humanity. An action that is particularly appropriate to the new path and not unusual for those on the Path of Humanity might have a difficulty of 4. An action that is unheard of for a Humanity follower could have a difficulty of 8 or higher.

At certain points, your vampire might be called on to take an action that utterly violates his old code of Humanity. It might be

murder or rape. In this case, you cannot spend Willpower to “avoid” the deed. Instead, your character should commit the act as though on the Path of Enlightenment, and then you should make Virtue rolls and roleplay to mitigate the consequences.

At some point, after your character undergoes considerable spiritual trial, the Storyteller allows him to attempt to “wake up” to the new path. This indoctrination is akin to that sudden burst of enlightenment known in Zen circles as *satori*. Your character must commit or participate in an act that violates his Humanity code but that is considered “good” by the standards of his intended path. Following the act’s completion, spend a Willpower point and make a Willpower roll. If your character’s current Humanity is 3, the difficulty is 9. If his current Humanity is 2, the difficulty is 8. If his current Humanity is 1, the difficulty is 6. Extra Willpower points may not be spent to modify this roll.

If the roll succeeds, your vampire hears a new calling. He loses all Humanity, his human Virtues are replaced with ratings of 1 in the Virtues appropriate to his path, and he has a rating of 1 in the path itself. If you get three or more successes on your Willpower roll, your character gains a rating of 2 in the path. No matter his path rating, make degeneration, frenzy and Rotschreck checks according to his new Virtues and Path of Enlightenment.

If your Willpower roll fails, your character loses a point of Humanity, fails to understand the rudiments of the intended path, and must undergo the whole process again. If your vampire had a Humanity rating of 1, he loses his last point and is irrevocably lost to the Beast. Failing to comprehend, his mind simply snaps.

Sabbat try to instill their version of *satori* immediately upon the Embrace, via Creation Rites. Deprived of the “normal” Embrace procedure in favor of sudden assault and burial, a victim sometimes experiences an instinctive shift from Humanity to a path while digging herself out of the ground. Indeed, vampires who don’t quickly shed their Humanity following the shock of creation may never emerge from the earth. The trauma drives them into maddened torpor, and they remain interred.

## ALTERNATIVE VIRTUES: CONVICTION AND INSTINCT

Presumably, we humans all have some level of Conscience and Self-Control. We grasp the concepts as part of our own identities and outlooks. Playing a character completely devoid of these qualities is therefore challenging — it ranges outside our personal experience. But now consider playing a character who replaces those qualities, those frames of reference, with something else entirely. This character becomes truly alien. And yet, that’s just what followers of certain paths are.

It might help to think of alternative Virtues not so much as Traits that humans can’t develop, but as Traits that the human experience does not usually include or permit. A human who routinely violates codes of “decency” and “emotional maturity” loses Conscience and Self-Control, but does not necessarily have

a tutor or outlet to replace those characteristics. She simply ends up with extreme personality disorders. It’s in following other faiths or callings, beyond accepted human mores, that Cainites find new purpose, direction and sometimes control.

### CONVICTION

Despite words to the contrary in the **Vampire Appendix**, Conviction is not an entirely foreign Trait to us. Most boot camps instill a certain level of Conviction — the idea that it’s acceptable to harm, kill or otherwise abuse “the enemy.” Vampiric Conviction runs on an entirely different order of magnitude, however. It represents the capacity to overcome or ignore every previous teaching or urge, whether from any remaining human superego or the Beast.

At low levels of Conviction, a vampire still retains a modicum of basic human nature. He might still perceive a human baby as “cute” because, as a (former) *Homo sapien*, he retains a primal biological drive to protect the helpless who perpetuate the species. A vampire with high levels of Conviction doesn’t feel any such empathy, though. The baby is simply a squawling piece of tissue.

### INSTINCT

Unlike Conviction, Instinct is more or less alien to the human psyche, and is harder for us to represent in a game.

Some Eastern philosophies such as Taoism and Hinduism involve similar concepts. Obviously, however, the vast difference between human and vampiric philosophy is that Eastern thought focuses on righteous or at the very least non-harmful behavior, while vampiric philosophy can easily involve killing, maiming and similar predation.

If you have a pet dog or cat, take some time to observe it. Just like a cat reflexively swats at a string toy or passing bug, so a vampire with high Instinct might stalk and hunt an “easy meal,” even if she’s not hungry. She does so simply because the prey is there. (High Instinct is a Virtue, though. A vampire doesn’t put herself in danger merely to “play with her food.”)

In terms of frenzy, high-Instinct vampires learn how to redirect rather than repress. These undead might occasionally burst into Tourette’s Syndrome-like strings of profanity (think of a dog howling at the moon), or vandalize property for seemingly no reason (think of a cat reflexively tearing up furniture). In fact, the vampire diverts and channels his bestial instincts. Like an aikido master, the Cainite senses the Beast rising before it reaches full strength, and “throws” it into less overtly harmful behavior. By letting the Beast “play” in this fashion, the vampire hopes it learns to trust him.

Kindred with high Instinct are known to go on “wild hunts” or “walkabouts.” A vampire, upon rising for the evening, tries to slip into a state of intuitive sensation. Putting his Beast in a kind of cruise control, he operates without a plan of where to go, what to do or whom to see. This is not a full-on frenzy. Metaphorically speaking, the vampire keeps his hand on the cruise-control and can avoid overly violent actions. Still, the idea is to let the Beast “sniff around,” cause controllable mayhem, and guide the character to whatever destination it will. The vampire trusts his Beast so that it can be exercised and exorcised. All too often, walkabouts tend to be tragic for any lesser beings in the vampire’s path. A Cainite

on a wild hunt is on a hair-trigger, and kills and maims on the slightest pretext — or on none at all.

Ironically, some vampires with high Instinct ratings indulge in political machinations and subterfuge. These games are often part and parcel of undead existence, so a high-Instinct vampire can be compelled to practice them. Creatures with high Instinct can make deadly political foes. They wheel, deal and maneuver “by the seat of their pants,” and can thus be unpredictable.

## A NEW CLIMB

Having fallen from the higher faith of his one-time humanity, yet having averted becoming an utter monstrosity, a vampire successfully navigates the spiritual void. Like Dante entering the ninth circle of Hell, or Hercules facing the hound of the underworld, a Kindred confronts the Beast, subdues it (albeit only temporarily), and continues on his journey.

Strangely, this period might be the happiest time a vampire knows throughout his bleak and bloody unlife. The being has accepted his state and looks anew at the world through the eyes of a predator. Though he’s still weak in spirit, it’s the weakness of a battered fighter who’s stayed on his feet through a 10-round pummeling. Many vampires at this point develop newfound confidence in their capacity to persevere through any trial. (In game terms, this occasion is just cause to spend experience on an increase in Willpower rating.)

Existence is still a slippery slope, though, and a vampire is well advised to stay close to fellow path adherents during this time. One error and he may plummet into the jaws of the Beast, permanently. During his first few years on a new path, a Cainite commonly practices “modeling” behavior, observing path gurus and emulating their actions as closely as possible.

Vampires among the independent clans often remain at their sires’ side, receiving spiritual instruction. Such a tie has the benefit of providing a stable role model. Yet some sires barely cling to spiritual stability themselves, and are far from the best teachers. A sire with a low path rating can hinder a childe’s development as much as help it.

Sabbat vampires rarely retain sire-tilde ties, and the paths tend to be practiced formally in this sect, so multiple teachers can instruct a newly turned Cainite. Such relationships can result in a bewildering array of lessons and viewpoints to absorb, but they avoid the risks of a single, poor tutor.

Once a vampire has made a bit of progress on his new road, he’s introduced to others on the same course. This introduction often takes the form of a ceremony, elaborate or simple depending on the calling in question. Higher ranking adherents assign tasks to the novice, some seemingly nonsensical and others of obvious spiritual significance.

Training is more than just spiritual, though. Each path upholds certain Traits — Attributes, Abilities and Disciplines — that all have their place in individual development. If a newly turned vampire on the Path of Power and the Inner Voice has low Social Attributes and Subterfuge/Intimidate ratings, now is the time to correct those deficiencies.

Not all paths bother with training. Some, such as Typhon and Power and the Inner Voice, stress individual achievement. If you

can’t keep up, you’re left to the Beast. For these paths, it is imperative that members closely observe others’ behavior and emulate or correct it successfully. Or, they can convince a specific path member to act as mentor in exchange for whatever arrangements can be bartered.

## PATH RATINGS

Obviously, there’s a tremendous amount of difference between vampires with path scores of 2 and 9. Each level of progression carries its own difficulties, rewards and inspiration for stories.

### SCORE 1 TO 4

Most followers never make it past this range. As discussed previously, there really isn’t much difference between a vampire with a path rating of 2 and a Humanity rating of 2. The same rationale presides in both cases: Why bother to behave any differently? (Why bother to go attain a higher score?) A vampire with 2 in any path (including Humanity), can pretty much do as she pleases, right?

There’s one thing about the Beast, though: It’s perverse. It wants vampires to fall. As a player, it’s not enough to say, “Okay, as long as she doesn’t commit Stupid Senseless Atrocity X, my character won’t fall any lower on her path.” When she’s that low, she *wants* to commit atrocities. She craves the notion of “getting away with it.” And all those other people or Cainites... well, what have they really done for her, anyway? They’re all about “thou shalt not” this and “thou shalt not” that, but the whole thing is really just a house of cards built by a bunch of hypocrites who want to keep all the money and power and status for themselves. Right?

Well, fuck ‘em. Your character is going to do what she wants. And what she wants, and wants very, very badly, is to commit the very deeds “they” say she can’t, mustn’t and shouldn’t do. Simply to show that she’s better than they are.

And when she does, you shave another point off her already low Trait score. Beast 1, Cainite 0. As with a human serial killer, the fact that your character got away with it once makes her want to get away with it again... and again... and again... and each time more elaborately and baroquely than before.

In game terms, when your character is confronted with a temptation toward degeneration, the Storyteller is perfectly within his rights to insist that you spend Willpower for your character to avoid committing the act, particularly if doing it falls in line with her Nature.

Furthermore, especially among the path-centric cliques such as the Sabbat and Setites, vampires with low ratings don’t gain a lot of respect from their elders. More enlightened ones, knowing lesser’s fundamental instability, don’t trust underlings. Vampires don’t have a Geiger counter to measure path rating. But those with 100 or more years of unlife have seen just about every shade in the spectrum of vampiric behavior. They can make pretty good guesses as to how close a Cainite is to the Beast.

At the Storyteller’s discretion, you can make a Perception + Empathy roll (difficulty 9) for your character to interpret another vampire’s path rating. If the subject is on the same course as your character, you could get a bonus die. You should also get a bonus die for a character more than 100 years old, and the Aura Sight Auspex power offers two bonus dice. One success tells you

character whether the target is more or less dedicated than he is (whether the target's rating is higher or lower than your character's). Two successes suggest what the target's rating is, plus or minus one point. Three successes indicate just how the target will behave (his exact rating is apparent). A Manipulation + Subterfuge roll (difficulty 7) can be made in a resisted roll for a vampire who seeks to conceal his path or score. He behaves inappropriately for his calling, but hopefully not in any way that reveals his following.

#### SCORE 5 TO 7

At this range, a vampire begins to understand the advanced tenets of the path. She presents herself as more "socially acceptable" within the framework of her alien mindset. She is given privileges and responsibilities during path gatherings. Indeed, beginning path practitioners may look to her for advice, since she's more approachable than inscrutable elders.

A vampire at this level behaves relatively consistently and in control, is trustworthy, and is therefore a useful pawn or ally. Elders can have some confidence that the Cainite isn't going to break down into a ravaging creature at her first spiritual trial. They employ her as an agent in subtle schemes, "testing the limits" of her resolve. If the character overcomes, she may prove useful in the nights to come. If she fails, there are other minions.

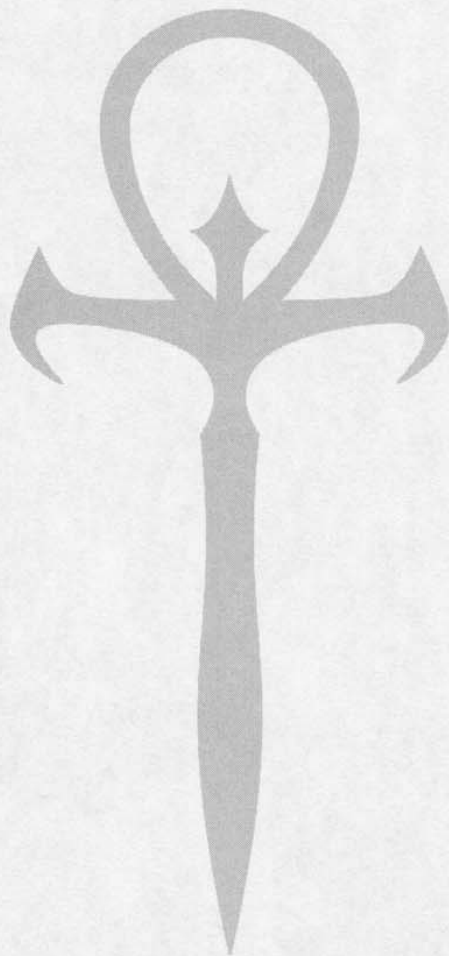
#### SCORE 8 TO 10

Vampires with path ratings in this range have and do apply serious dedication to their spiritual development. Arriving here is an achievement, and is treated as such.

In many ways, a vampire with a rating of 9 is more stable than a vampire with a Humanity of 9. The latter rating is prone to drop through the possessor's normal nightly activities, while the former's rating represents an accomplishment of will and spirit cultivated over decades or centuries. Such a high path rating doesn't usually rise and fall depending on when one has last fed, and how.

Keep in mind that a character at this height has a lengthy history of progression — and has probably suffered occasional bouts of regression. This evolution can provide ideas for countless stories. How many tests did the character pass — and occasionally fail — to progress from 1 to 9 in, say, the Path of Caine? What were the results of those tests? What enemies did he gain and lose throughout that clime? What allies did he bond with or betray?

Also, certain path adherents such as those of Typhon take pleasure in debasing and tearing down vampires on other paths who have high ratings. A character with a rating of 10 is a target for rivals who would see him fall due to political interest, expediency or simple jealousy. Depending on your chronicle, the target might be a victim of demonic corruption or he might be focused on by the Inquisition, which considers him an "Antichrist" among the Damned.





trabald



# CHAPTER THREE: PATHS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

While surely there are individual Paths of Enlightenment that are followed by just a handful of believers, the advocations in this chapter are the big cults, the codes of behavior with *at least* a dozen adherents. Most of them are well represented in the Sabbat, although some are secret factions within that sect, or are upheld solely by the autarkis.

No two paths are organized in quite the same way. Some, like the Path of Caine, have recognized priesthoods, ceremonies and rigorous doctrines to which believers must adhere. Others are highly individualistic — it is a violation of the Path of Metamorphosis to share knowledge or wisdom with another being, for example.

A Storyteller might have already created some of the philosophy or politics surrounding any of the paths described in this chapter. Players of characters already on one of these should confer with the Storyteller to decide how to best reconcile what you've established with what's printed here, assuming you want to adopt any of these concepts. Do not assume that this information supercedes background or events that exist in your game. Take what fits your chronicle best, and revise or dismiss anything that doesn't.

## PATH OF THE BEAST

**Nickname:** Bestials

*"Come with me, childe. Leave those foolish trappings behind. You came here seeking knowledge.... Wisdom, perhaps? Listen. You can hear the wilderness, can't you? This is what the old poet called 'nature red in tooth and claw.' We are vampires, are we not? Vampires are creatures of the city. In the city are the herds. In the city, we have strength in numbers. In*

*the city, we have amusement. In the city, we have safety of a sort. But outside... out in the wild places, we have nothing. Outside, in the wild places, the nights are black and long, lit only by the deceptive light of the moon. Outside, in the wilderness, things wait for the wary Cainite.*

*"Only those such as we would come here. 'Only the Gangrel go out there,' the vampires say. 'Only those bestial... creatures... would dare venture beyond the amber light of the city sky.' 'There is nothing out there, nothing of interest to any vampire,' it is said. 'Nothing at all.'*

*"Perhaps not. The modern world, that foolish prison our fellows squat in, pretending to be something other than what they are, ends where the cities die. Then their world fades to nothing. Certainly the things of mortals have reached beyond. Glimmers of mankind — roads, telephone wires, cars, tractors — but these things are minor, simple, piffling. They are but small scars on the face of the wilderness.*

*"Out here, you know that you are but a transient insignificance. The poor, small, huddled kine of the cities know that beyond their circles of light, monsters wait. The people of the wilds have no names for these dangers. Nor do they have defenses against them. They acquiesce to be hunted. Perhaps out of fear. Perhaps because they know that this is the way things are and should be. It is a simple acceptance. The world belongs to something other than mortals.*

*"Only a wild thing would dwell out here. Only a wild thing would throw away what precious little of himself remains and become a predatory hunter in the night. Such a thing would have to accept its condition as bestial, that the Embrace gives one over to the predatory world and makes one a hunter. You came seeking knowledge, childe? Knowledge, I can give. Wisdom? Wisdom lies at the end of a long road. Follow me."*





The Path of the Beast demands that a creature exist in the moment, to give himself to the hunt, to make himself one with his environment. The vampire is the greatest of all predators, greater than the wolf, shark or hawk. Brutally honest with themselves and with others, these undead, so-called beasts, stand outside petty games of intrigue and politics. They respect only independence and seek only to survive.

## BASIC BELIEFS

Vampires are predators. They kill to eat and draw pleasure. Human morality is a lie best forgotten. Once the night claims you, you are no longer human. To be a vampire is to belong to the Beast. Inside you, a snarling, drooling thing waits; the red fury that other vampires hate and fear. The Beast is not the enemy, seeking to destroy you. The Beast is divinity, the true face of the soul. The Beast must be made strong.

But the Beast must not win. A true master of this path accepts the Beast, but it does not claim him. Rather, he claims the Beast for his own. No longer the other, the Beast teaches survival, violence, strength and balance. Sometimes the Beast even teaches wisdom. Not the wisdom of mortals, but the primal wisdom of the hunt.

The Beast tears away the trappings of the intellect such as lies, foibles and wishful thinking. To follow the Path of the Beast is to strip away falsehood and gaze unblinking at the truth. Masters of the path can rarely be manipulated by promises of what is not immediately before them. The

beasts or "bestials," as some call them, are fearsome, elemental, perceptive creatures. There are few beasts outside the Sabbat, and bishops know better than to try and directly influence these creatures with their schemes.

At its heart, this path exists to sate the hunger within. Once the Beast is fed, there is temporary peace. A vampire is a hunter; he hunts to exist, but he also accepts that he is part of a natural order. If a hunter kills too much, then he eats well this season but starves the next. If a hunter disrupts the food chain of his prey, his prey will starve. The vampire must feed from mortals when he is hungry, but must not feed recklessly or kill randomly. The prey must be hunted, trapped and killed, and the carcass hidden from the herd. To do otherwise would disrupt other cattle and make hunting all the more difficult.

By following these dictates, followers of this path escape the angst and suffering of other vampires. By indulging their hunger when necessary, they can exist without the nagging questions of morality and degeneration. Followers learn the ways of hunger and do not waste time in idle remonstrations with a distant God. Bestials simply exist. The moment is all that matters.

The Path of the Beast, in its oldest form, exalts the vampire as the greatest of all hunters, the pinnacle of the food chain. True predators rely on instinct, honed by experience and guided by feral cunning. It has always been so and it will be so until the Final Night. There have always been Cainites who have thrown off the useless trappings and pretty lies of civilization to embrace the truth.

As the wilderness shrinks and the cities grow ever outward, however, the beasts' rejection of civilization becomes an illusion in its own way. Some ferals attempt to retreat, moving as far as possible from the hostile world of mortals and machines. Others, perhaps wiser creatures, seek to become masters of that habitat. Nature rewards those who adapt and discards those who do not. Why should it be any different for vampires? Some wander between city and wilderness, hunting Lupines and mortal food alike, making the entire world their home. These master stalkers — figures whom students of other paths would call "paragons" — are the alphas of the path, and all ferals seek their wisdom.

By accepting one's place as a hunter in the natural order, a beast accepts that he is subject to what mortal poets call "the law of the jungle" — that the strong survive. A hunter must subdue and slay his prey, but he must also defend his ranges from other predators. Whether those grounds are in the city or the wilderness, a hunter must know how to fight and accept that such violent struggle is part of existence. Other hostile things share the world, too, and they must be driven off to protect one's own claim on the herd.

Three separate varieties of this path exist in the Final Nights. The philosophy described above is the dominant one. Two minor interpretations described below are the Path of Harmony and the Path of the Feral Heart.

#### HIERARCHY OF SINS

Rating	Moral Guideline
10	Hunting without using innate vampiric senses and powers
9	Engaging in political intrigue
8	Risking your unlife except to slay an enemy
7	Indulging in needless cruelty
6	Failing to hunt when the hunger demands
5	Failing to support your pack
4	Killing while feeding
3	Denying your instincts
2	Killing for reasons other than survival
1	Refusing to kill to survive

#### ETHICS OF THE PATH

- The needs of the Beast are paramount.
- Survival is one's first concern. Anything that gets in the way of survival is extraneous.
- Loyalty is an absolute, be it to one's pack or one's self. Oaths are mere words. Deeds are what count.
- Master one's fears. Confront them to become stronger.
- Don't shit where one eats. Keep political messes away from hunting grounds.
- Maintain one's haven and hunting grounds well, and defend them from other predators.
- Each aspect of existence fulfills a role — even civilization has its place. Learn what that role is and abide by it.
- Mercy is for the weak.
- Exist in the moment.

- The world is uncertain. Always be prepared to adapt to new situations.
- Good and evil are mortal notions. Ignore them. They have little practical use.
- Adapt. No environment is constant and one must be able to hunt no matter where he finds himself.

#### DESCRIPTION OF FOLLOWERS

Adherents of this path (or any of its sub-paths) care little for personal appearance, fashion or ornamentation. They choose function over style. Some disdain clothing altogether and wear rags or nothing at all. Alone in the wilderness, with no one to see them save their food, there is little purpose for appearances. Some Gangrel who are adept at Protean spend so much time in other forms that they consider their human shape as but one of several. Being undead means nakedness is irrelevant. Cainites do not suffer from the cold as mortals do, and modesty has no place. Human strictures about dress and appearance are just that — human — and are held in little regard.

Beasts are highly territorial and seek to know of everything that happens on their turf. In the wilderness, beasts tend to make nightly patrols, wandering their claimed hunting grounds.

Few bestials actively seek the company of others of the same path. When their roads cross, they speak and exchange news, but they do not socialize or organize. While certain beasts have acquired sufficient communal responsibility to work as pseudo-priests, they are far from the norm. In the rare instances when beasts do congregate on a "long-term" basis, they struggle for supremacy and operate on a pack basis. Whoever proves dominant leads the pack — until she fails or shows weakness. These packs exist for a specific purpose, and usually for only a short time. A group of followers that ranges across a common area might do so to drive out Lupines, for example. As soon as the need is gone, the pack disbands. The group may not disintegrate completely, though, as individual members may elect to keep in contact, but the pack as a coherent entity is temporary. Beasts do sometimes join established coterie or Sabbat packs, but they deal with the coterie only until a desired purpose has been achieved. And then, with relief, they return to the wilds and their own hunting grounds. But those are optimal situations: Ferals are often forced into long-term social accommodations against their will, particularly in times of war or due to the influence of the ancients.

Bestials following the more rarefied Path of the Feral Heart (see below) are commanded by loyalty to their sect and by war with the Antediluvians. There are a few all-bestial packs in the Sabbat; most serve in groups with Cainites of other paths. Adherents of the Path of the Feral Heart rarely seek leadership roles, but they fight for dominance if faced with a weak leader. Bestials tend to serve as foot soldiers and scouts and rarely partake in pack or sect politics.

Relationships among adherents tend to be limited to sire and childe, or teacher (one advanced on the path) and

pupil (one who is less advanced and who is adopted). Other beasts are ignored or driven off.

When a beast must associate with others, he is honest and gruff. He does not deign to spare the listener's feelings, and seeks to keep such contact to a minimum.

Followers of this path are primarily of the Gangrel and its major Sabbat bloodlines. Some Nosferatu and Brujah also answer the call. There are a precious few Ravnos followers extant these nights. It is almost unheard of for Ventrue, Tzimisce, Lasombra or Toreador to stoop to the level of the beasts. The Camarilla refuses to acknowledge that such a path exists. Those who follow it are considered lost to the Beast, and they best beware in case a Blood Hunt is called on them. The Sabbat sees followers of this path as useful hunters, trackers and cannon fodder. Some young bestials who care little for politics of any kind are labeled anarchs, but the path and the Anarch Movement have little in common.

## HISTORY

The Path of the Beast is merely the latest term for an ancient phenomenon. There has always been a Path of the Beast. Any vampire that struggles with hunger and seeks to satiate its appetites walks this path, at least for a while. In the Dark Ages, vampire elders spoke of the existence of a Via Bestialis, the so-called Road of the Beast.

The Gangrel of old codified that Road — in as much as the philosophy of the Beast could be structured — and have watched over it through its many incarnations. Even now, in the Final Nights, the majority of followers are of the Gangrel clan and its *antitribu* offshoots.

The path has waxed and waned over the years — respected and encouraged at times, ignored and dismissed at others. Since the Gangrel abandoned the Camarilla, some members of the clan have cast about in search of purpose. Gangrel ancients have taught many young ones the Path of the Beast, and some have spoken to Sabbat templars to learn more of their experience with the hunger. It may seem strange for a path that appears to be so anti-intellectual to dwell on origins, but most followers of this path know that while a vampire is a predator, he is also an immortal intelligence.

## CURRENT PRACTICES

There is no organized cult or sect philosophy surrounding the Path of the Beast. Those who walk this path do so alone. Cainites who are further along the precepts of the path choose students as initiates and slowly guide them to a sense of harmony with the Beast. A mentor rarely stays with one initiate for long, moving away and finding others to instruct. Afterward, an initiate must struggle with the philosophies of the path alone or find another teacher. A novice is also expected to help those who have just begun to walk the path.

Followers of the Path of the Beast (or the Path of the Feral Heart) have no real organization. They have little need for ritual, tradition or other ceremonial practices. Ferals are solitary and avoid human contact, except when

hunting. Some Sabbat nomad packs follow this path and it is reported that when such Cainites gather, they follow the ancient Gangrel practices of the *thing*. When these packs come together, they call for all nearby bestials to gather in an isolated part of the countryside, where — after scouring the countryside for Lupines — they feast on unlucky mortals and revel. Once the revel itself has settled, the vampires share stories and hard-earned wisdom until sunup, when most use Protean to submerge into the earth.

The rejection of formal study and emphasis on student-mentor relationships means that disciples of the Path of the Beast have a wide body of instinctual and oral knowledge from which to draw. Much of that lore is contradictory. Each student must choose which aspect of the teachings works best for him.

A few Gangrel nomads act as masters and ritualists of the Beast and attempt to bring some form of continuity to the path. These storytellers, whether by accident or design, have adapted some of the rites and roles of the Ahrimane and Lhiannan bloodlines of times past. Such members are few and rise into their roles not due so much to their knowledge as to their charisma and reliability. Their primary task is to ensure a legacy in a widely scattered and fractious community, not to preach or to research magic.

## FOLLOWING THE PATH

Practitioners of the path must indulge their predatory natures and accept their roles as hunters. What they should not do, however, is allow their purpose to overcome them. Mindless, ravenous things are not predators; they are uncontrolled beings to be destroyed. Like sick, rabid animals, they are avoided if possible and killed if not.

Followers of this path know that they are predators. They look at everyone and everything they encounter in this context. All are potential prey or potential rivals for hunting grounds. Respect is gained through hunting prowess and the capacity to defend one's ranges. A whelp who claims too much territory is destroyed unless he can protect it. If he can, he receives a great deal of respect. There is no place for compassion or for indulging the foolish (and consequently, no place for playing politics). Pain and violence are nature's ways and they are good teachers.

The adherents of this philosophy tend to regard other paths with a degree of contempt. Some callings, such as the Paths of Redemption and Paradox, obsess over ephemeral concepts. These pursuits are wasteful to a feral. More temporal paths are understood, if not respected. In truth, followers do not even see theirs as "one path amongst many." They see theirs as the only sane way to cope with vampirism.

### Virtues

The Path of the Beast in all its forms draws upon Conviction and Instinct.

### Common Abilities

Alertness, Animal Ken, Athletics (Swimming), Brawl, Camouflage, Dodge, Empathy, Hunting, Masquerade, Meditation, Ride and Survival (Tracking). Most harmonists

(see below) also continue to develop Abilities that they possessed as mortals.

#### Preferred Disciplines

Animalism and Auspex are highly respected. Fortitude is valued, but not particularly respected in some quarters. They say it is "cheating." Such grumbling aside, Fortitude is valuable. The Gangrel Discipline of Protean is considered particularly valuable and some young beasts seek an "apprenticeship" in it with elders. Obfuscate and Celerity are useful in hunting prey.

#### PATH OF HARMONY

The Path of Harmony teaches that everything has a purpose, even vampires. If the Beast is an inhuman thing that threatens one's sanity, then it must also have a purpose. The Beast and Humanity must therefore be balanced if a vampire is to survive. Vampires are not human, but their passions, intellect and destiny set them apart from the animal kingdom. Vampires are predators, but they are not *merely* predators. The Beast is strong enough to wipe away all traces of the humane. So, Humanity must be treasured and indulged far more than the Beast if the soul is to survive.

Followers of this path understand that vampires are not and can never be human. Being "humane" as a goal is a false premise, a wasteful philosophy. Mortals are nothing more than food. A vampire is not part of the herd. But as a predator, each vampire must respect its prey.

Harmonists believe that everything has a niche in nature. Vampires are merely at the top of one food chain. Humanity is the height of smaller one. And the fox, for example, is the pinnacle of yet a smaller one. That is merely the way of things. Harmonists respect these structures and respect their own place within them.

Unlike the core Path of the Beast, the Path of Harmony suggests that there is a spiritual element to a vampire's efforts to balance the Beast. All things are connected, harmonists say, and by defying nature one can destroy the fragile, gossamer energies of the world. Over the centuries, the harmonists came to take issue with the Sabbat's treatment of mortals and its uncaring attitude toward its environment — and made the mistake of making their discontent known. Sabbat leaders saw the philosophy as a sign of weakness and those who did not recant their views were destroyed. A few survived to exist alone in the wilderness. Gangrel members found some shelter with their clan members. The rest colored sunrises in Miami, Montreal, Oslo, Mexico City and places further afield.

#### PATH OF THE FERAL HEART

The Path of the Feral Heart is a philosophical interpretation of the tenets of the Path of the Beast, aimed to serve the Sabbat's crusade against the Antediluvians. Like other Sabbat-developed callings, that of the Feral Heart stresses the superiority of the vampiric state — hunter (vampires) over prey (mortals).

The Path of the Feral Heart developed directly out of a schism among followers of the Path of Harmony. The

latter stressed a spiritual dimension to the vampiric state, which was incompatible with Sabbat ways.

Adherents to the Path of the Feral Heart see a violent and vital purity in their separation from the "distractions" of Sabbat politics and the subtleties of the Jihad. By existing only as hunters, the "beasts" of the Feral Heart can be free of superficial loyalties and extraneous behavior and simply be vampires as Caine surely intended.

The Sabbat holds the loyalties of these adherents for the time being, because of the sect's commitment to freedom and because such beasts feel that by banding together they can hope to survive the coming of Gehenna. They do not dwell on such fatalism, but they know enough of the future to fear it and take steps against it.

The Path of the Feral Heart differs from the "mainstream" of the Path of the Beast only by its focus on the pack. The pack means survival. Alone, one cannot stand against the Antediluvians or their plans, but as part of a pack a Beast might survive and prosper. Enemies must be destroyed because they threaten the pack and the individual. Killing in defense of one's self or the pack is not murder. It is mere necessity.

Sabbat leaders greatly appreciate the Path of the Feral Heart. Its followers make excellent cannon fodder. Since the purging of the harmonists, the followers of the Path of the Feral Heart go to extra lengths to prove their determination. This turn of events highly amuses some Lasombra bishops. Once a dog is whipped, they say, he is broken.

## PATH OF BLOOD

**Nickname:** Assassins or Dervishes

The others have all been judged and found wanting. The judgment has been made and it remains for the executioner to deliver the sentence. Through diablerie, murder or blood magic, the Children of Haqim slowly fulfill the dictates of their clan founder. The war is a holy one; the vampires are offenses to God and must be removed from His good earth.

### BASIC BELIEFS

The Path of Blood is the name given by outsiders to the set of dictates and obligations followed by the most loyal of the Children of Haqim. Those who follow the path or those familiar with the ways of the children refer to the faith as "the way" or even "the laws of Haqim."

The path is ancient, dating back to the foundation of Alamut, and its precepts are older still. The course exalts the heirs to Haqim's blood above all others; they are descended from the Holy One and gifted with his teachings. This legacy of both divine grace and immortal wisdom marks the Assamites with a special place in God's plan.

Haqim's teachings claim that the Children of Caine are a curse leveled by God on His failing human worshippers. Haqim's children are just as damned and just as much a part of the curse as any other vampire, but they can transcend their state and rid the world of the pestilence of



other Cainites by virtue of their heritage and blood. Staying the path and obeying the laws of Haqim, the Assamites may stand apart from other vampires and be judged on their own actions.

The Children of Haqim believe that other vampires exist to be consumed, killed and cast aside. By feeding on the heart's blood of other Cainites, a dervish may quench the Beast and move closer to God's grace. This is the will of the Creator, they believe. Caine may have been cursed, but Haqim was favored. God allowed him to be drawn into the night so that he could seek redemption and bring it to others. To move closer to Haqim (through diablerie) is to move closer to salvation.

Not all vampires of Clan Assamite follow this path, not even all among the Loyalist faction do (see **Clanbook: Assamite**). All Children of Haqim know how harsh the path's strictures are and only the most worthy are selected to follow it. Assamites must demonstrate true loyalty to the teachings of their father, and excel at whatever tasks the clan selects for them in order to be chosen.

Other Assamites commit diablerie — be it to satiate the hunger within or to follow what they know of the laws of Haqim — but only those on the Path of Blood commit diablerie for religious reasons. Caine's bastard childer are considered wicked failures, unable to redeem themselves or accept their place in God's plan. Their taint must be wiped away.

The way of Haqim is based on two crucial pillars. The first is that a follower must understand and make others comprehend that vampires are evil, cursed things, and must convert those few worth saving to the service of Haqim. This does not mean adherents attempt to convert other vampires to the path, but ensure that their actions serve followers' interests. A Ventrue's attempt to destroy an Elysium in Johannesburg can be channeled to be "productive." Why just destroy the Elysium with a few vampires inside? Why not convert the Ventrue to the way of Haqim (or a pale shadow of Haqim's way) and use her as a spy? Delay the vampire's grand gesture until followers of the Path of Blood learn everything that they need and then choose the best time to allow the vampire to proceed.

Camarilla neonates, still wallowing in their angst and questioning their fate while bemoaning their status, make easy targets for such manipulation. Some Blood practitioners use packs of young vampires of other clans as blunt instruments — shock troops to test and destroy a target's defenses. There is no shame in doing so; when all these childer go to their Final Deaths, the world is rid of them and God's work has been done. Some path followers fancy that by being destroyed in the service of the path, a vampire of a bastard clan is absolved.

In general, however, Haqim commands that Cainites of other bloodlines be destroyed. They are not to be befriended. They are not to be allied with. There must be a cogent reason why a vampire of another clan is not slain outright by an Assamite on the Path of Blood. The assassin must show fellow followers a valid benefit to the other's existence. For example, a Sabbat Noddist searching for the

resting place of ancient Methuselaha might be spared if his investigation provides clues to Haqim's resting place. A Toreador antiquarian who lovingly maintains a fallen Assamite warrior's weapon may be despised, but can be left alone. A vampire who knowingly aids the Children of Haqim in their holy war is worthy of continued unlife.

But do not assume that these precepts make the dervishes murderous fundamentalists. They understand — as most other vampires do not — that the moral relativism practiced by Cainites is a lie. Vampires consume humans for survival, and use them for diversion, pleasure and as playthings. There is no debate on the issue: Vampires are evil. Evil must be hunted down and destroyed. The hypocrisy of other Cainites is even more insulting than their existence.

Followers of this path know that they cannot wage all-out war on the other clans, though. They tried that before and failed. As deadly as the Assamites are, with their sorcery, Disciplines and martial skills, they are vastly outnumbered. Even adherents of the Path of Blood accept that there must be limits to the true Jyhad. The dervishes operate within the bounds of vampiric society until the time is right, playing at mercenaries and offering gifts of violence and murder to the highest bidders. The price they charge is blood, both in potable donations from elders and in the right to diablerize victims. Some Children of Haqim believe they both honor and save the souls of targets in this manner. Others do not hold to such high-minded superstitions; blood is blood and the children must walk the path.

#### HIERARCHY OF SINS

Rating	Moral Guideline
10	Killing a mortal for blood
9	Breaking your word of honor to a fellow Path of Blood follower
8	Not bringing the truth of Haqim to others
7	Failing to destroy an unrepentant vampire
6	Frenzying
5	Not learning all about the enemy and its secrets
4	Failing to slay and drain the blood of a foe
3	Refusing to answer the summons of another path member
2	Failing to diablerize an enemy
1	Acting against another path follower

#### ETHICS OF THE PATH

- The teachings of Haqim are the gospels of the night. Follow them faithfully.
- The low clans feed on mortal blood. Assassins are not of the low clans. Feed from God's children only when utterly necessary. To feed on humans is wrong. To feed on vampires is the will of the divine.
- The Beast must be sated. The Beast is a tool, a gift, and it can be used for good or ill. The Beast is a challenge. It must be honed to one's will and mastered utterly. To lose

oneself to the Beast is to lose control. Losing control is the province of the weak.

- Watch and listen for anything that can help in the war against the Children of Khayyin.
- Haqim's teachings hold truth for all vampires. Offer those who prove worthy a chance to learn of Haqim's words.
- Those who refuse Haqim's words are heretics and enemies and must be slain.
- Seek out opportunities to draw one's self closer to Haqim (i.e., indulge in diablerie whenever possible)

## HISTORY

The basic philosophies of the Path of Blood can be traced back to Haqim's teachings when he dwelled in the Second City. And yet, the calling itself, like other paths, developed over time. Scholars talk of a process of "honing" as time, work and the pain of ages stripped away and sharpened the philosophy's tenets. At the beginning of the Common Era, the Path of Blood had adapted many of the precepts of Zoroastrianism, but by the 9th century, it had adopted a great deal of Islamic teaching. Vampires were obviously unclean things and a threat to the faithful. The notion of God as a harsh master who had set a great task for his followers appealed to the warriors of Alamut.

In the Dark Ages, the path, then known as the Tariq el-Haqim, was widely respected among Arabic Kindred who followed the tenets of Islam. These Ashirra acknowledged that the Children of Haqim followed an older creed than that of the Prophet and considered followers privy to ancient laws set down by God. For their part, the adherents of Haqim did not strike Ashirra who were true to the laws of God. Haqimite scholars and Ashirra elders discussed their mutual truths until the dawning of many days, and there was balance for a long time. Many young path followers of the time were Embraced as Muslims, or like the Ashirra sought conversion after they were born into the night. Both groups shared a common set of philosophies and goals, and watched over the Empire of Faith as it spread across the known world.

But time is the enemy of all things, even for immortal beings and their beliefs. As the Children of Haqim continued their crusade to bring their lord's justice to even the most distant infidels, the path waned. With adherents stretched between the western isles and the borders of Taugast, there were few teachers sufficiently advanced to ensure that the laws were respected. As the children Embraced infidels, many found it easiest not to instruct their childer in the Path of Blood. Heretical interpretations of the path emerged in this vacuum and it was one such abomination that may have formed the basis of the modern Path of Caine.

Following the Convention of Thorns, the defeated childer of Haqim almost abandoned the Path of Blood. Many newly Embraced "Assamites" — as they were known in the West — clung to the flotsam of their humanity. A strange, mistaken remnant of the Path of Blood lingered on, but it was never very influential. The true path was still taught at Alamut, but until the waking of Haqim's childer Ur-Shulgi in 1999, little effort was made to extend the path's influence.

The following is now taught in its purest form in millennia. Connections to Islam have been downplayed, though are still tolerated. Ur-Shulgi demands that Islamic influence be removed, but his subordinates know that such an exorcism will be extraordinarily difficult and will take decades if not centuries to accomplish. The Path of Blood officially rejects Islam, but there is respect for the Prophet's words in practice. The Loyalist faction sees adherence to the path as adherence to Haqim's laws and by extension, loyalty to Ur-Shulgi. Followers now actively evangelize their way and try to recruit as many of the Children of Haqim as possible (especially those who have not chosen sides in the Loyalist/Schismatic divide) to the holy cause.

### CURRENT PRACTICES

Since the breaking of the Tremere curse and Ur-Shulgi's ascension to the Black Throne, the Path of Blood has come into its own. Practitioners actively pursue their war against all enemies. Followers of the Path of Blood do not hunt their Schismatic fellows. They turn their attention to other foes more worthy of an assassin's blade and a diablerist's fangs. Assamite warriors and sorcerers seek to unravel the Baali curse and prepare the way for the great holy war against the Children of Khayyin. Baali in North America and Europe have fallen to Haqim's children, and others cower in their holes, waiting for the end.

Those on the Path of Blood have always sought to deliver righteous vengeance upon vampires who would sully God's Earth with their evil, but now followers approach fanaticism. They still undertake mercenary work and demand payment in blood, but such "employment" is a means to an end. Adherents, especially those of a scholarly bent, focus on converting others who may be redeemed or used (especially neonates), and seek to secure and translate occult books and libraries for the use of their cause.

All, however, spend considerable time in contemplation, prayer and meditation, seeking to understand Haqim's teachings and the whispered legacy of the Holy One. Others seek to know God's purpose (by whatever name He may be known), and in so doing hope to find clues to both Haqim's location and when he will awaken.

### BREAKING THE CURSE

The Path of Blood struggles on two fronts. Its warriors take the battle to the Children of Khayyin, and its scholars and magicians work nightly in their laboratories and sanctums to break the curse laid on the clan by the Baali.

Ur-Shulgi removed the Tremere curse set upon the Children of Haqim, but the Baali's is beyond even his power. Lifting this last hex is a priority for the Path of Blood, and provides one of the few rationales for making deals with the Children of Khayyin. In the summer of 2003, a representative from Alamut traveled to Mexico City to meet with three Harbingers of Skulls to see if necromancy would serve to weaken the curse. Loyalist Assamites have even taken to Embracing mortal occultists in Europe to see if they can bring new insight into the struggle. Others believe that the curse will last only as long as the Baali bloodline and have doubled their efforts to hunt down and slay the last of that lineage.

The most promising development thus far involves creating amulets that ward off the curse. These items can sate the hunger for one lunar month and require the expenditure of a blood point each week. Making an amulet is neither easy nor cheap, so the devices are impractical to issue to every clan member. An amulet's effect proves that the curse is somehow external to the Assamite blood. Sorcerers now want Baali vampires captured. Some Baali somewhere holds the key to lifting the curse. It's only a matter of time until the Children of Haqim are liberated.

### DESCRIPTION OF FOLLOWERS

Followers of this path may appear to be fanatical assassins or obsessive scholars, desperately searching for clues to the End Times, but this view is false. There is an edge of desperation to their actions, but adherents to the way of Blood must prepare, must plan and must be equipped for war. Similarly, practitioners may seem to confirm the stereotype of "foreign" assassin, terrorist or spy (and likely Islamic), but followers of Haqim are not "Islamic." The way of Haqim is older than the law of the Prophet and although the faithful maintain a particular respect for Islam, few would call themselves "Muslim." Only a few path members are Arabs.

Followers of this path still operate as mercenaries for blood, but now much of that vitae is sent to Alamut to prepare for the awakening of Haqim. Scholars know that when a being as old as Haqim awakes, he will be hungry. They wish to sate their lord's thirst so that he may lead the clan to victory, rather than be his food. When Haqim is satisfied, the final battle will commence and the Children of Haqim will march alongside God's holy angels.

### FOLLOWING THE PATH

To walk this path, adherents must rid themselves of any moral objections to diablerie. Feeding upon other Cainites is not the worst sin of the blood. Indeed, it is one of the least. There's no shame in delivering God's judgment. Nor is it a

crime to steal from a thief. Diablerie rids the world of a cursed being and diminishes potential enemies.

Dervishes know that they are the only hope for salvation for the world. Seeking oneness with Haqim is not just a rationale for diablerie, it means seeking to balance one's soul and putting the hunger at bay. This oneness is perhaps a form of Golconda, or perhaps something more. The path's focus may go beyond a mere balance of Beast and intellect, and may set an adherent in a new direction, one that will bring him to transcendent unity with the divine.

Followers of Blood are not Islamic, but they respect the teachings of the Prophet. Some reject the schism and say that Haqim was one of the prophets who came before the Last Prophet — Islam has named Christ and Buddha and sometimes Zarathustra as prophets who came before. Those are prophets of the day, of mortals. Why should the night not also have prophets?

Devotees respect humanity and seek to protect mortals from the hungers of the Children of Khayyin. Followers must deal fairly and honestly with mortals, and see to it that they are not harmed unnecessarily. Some even refuse to commit an act of violence against a Cainite if there is any chance that a mortal may be harmed.

Though other vampires are considered cursed, many Assassins make exceptions in their holy mission, depending on the circumstances. Given a choice between slaying a Camarilla archon and helping her destroy a nest of Baali, the follower of the Path of Blood lends his talents to the Camarilla mission.

Targeting Baali and infernalists is always work performed gratis. Assassins do not charge seek payment for performing a righteous duty. Followers of this path refuse to diablerize such vampires, though. Some refuse to even allow these enemies' blood to touch the earth. A favored tactic is to stake such infernalists and transport their prone forms to Alamut where Assamite sorcerers can torture the infidels and ensure that they're disposed of in a consecrated manner.

Like Sabbat Noddists, Path of Blood adherents perform intensive research to learn where powerful elders may sleep — so that they may be slain and diablerized.

#### ADVANCING ON THE PATH

Path of Blood tutors lead a postulant through the early stages of conversion from Humanity to truth. Most of this education takes place at Alamut. An assigned tutor leads a child through a series of initiations and tests until she is deemed fit to progress onto the path itself. Initiation is personal. A tutor sets aside a cell for the student, where the subject must stay for one lunar month. In that time, she must, in a strange echo of Sufi ritual, meditate through dancing while cutting herself with a chosen weapon. At each dawn, the postulant is allowed to feed from animals provided, and sleep. As the student focuses, dancing in a violent, swirling motion, she concentrates on the teachings of Haqim and contemplates the nature of God. (Thus, followers of this path are sometimes nicknamed "dervishes," although the Path of Blood has little to do with Sufism.)

When an initiate is deemed ready, she is branded by a magical device at the base of the spine, leaving a strange blue

sigil. The sign is the ancient Enochian glyph for death. Such marking is an ancient practice that fell out of use in the long nights since Haqim's departure. Only a few truly elder followers who are still active bear the original sign. Since Ur-Shulgi's awakening, the practice has resumed. Not all adherents have these brands — only those who make frequent visits to Alamut. Still, young followers have adopted the practice enthusiastically. Those few Blood practitioners who are numbered amongst the "Schismatics" refuse such markings.

As a novice progresses on the path, her markings become more complex. She is allowed progress when she performs particular holy missions, set as challenges. At first, a mission may involve learning crucial intelligence. Later, a candidate may be set to hunt down a Baali coterie or slay a Camarilla prince. The viziers of the Path of Blood trace long flame tattoos on an assassin's back. The marks are made with a tool carved from the fangs or claws of fallen enemies. As an adherent advances, the tattoos can cover the vampire's back.

Intermingled with the flames, viziers etch the names of victims. These names are written in either Arabic or Enochian, are very small and are hard to discern from obvious designs. Viziers say that they do not glorify such murder or pay homage to a mere killer, but revel in the prowess of a warrior devoted to the word of God.

Non-combatant path followers sometimes bear lists of the great services they have performed for the Children of Haqim. A scholar may wear the names of texts she has translated. A sorcerer may be adorned by titles of the rituals she has unearthed.

#### Virtues

Those who follow Haqim's way must demonstrate great Conviction and Self-Control.

#### Common Abilities

As may be expected, combat proficiency — Brawl, Melee, Dodge, Intimidation and perhaps Firearms — is incredibly useful for a path follower. Scholarly adherents practice Academics, Expression and Occult.

#### Preferred Disciplines

Adherents of Blood seek to refine their control over Quietus, Obfuscate and Celerity — the Assamite clan Disciplines. These are Haqim's gifts and effective weapons in the war against the Children of Khayyin. Assamite sorcerers who follow this path research their own brand of Thaumaturgy (see **Blood Magic** and **Blood Sacrifice**).

## PATH OF THE BONES

#### Nickname: Gravediggers

The one commonality among all vampires — Camarilla or Sabbat, elder or neonate — is the Embrace. And to be Embraced, to rise as the undead, a being must shed his mortal coil. To put it bluntly, he must die. All vampires have therefore experienced and transcended the greatest of mortal mysteries.

Or have they? To followers on the Path of the Bones, the study of death — of that fleeting moment between living and unliving existence — is the key to the spiritual



understanding of undeath. The relationship between death and the rest of existence — life, undeath and even stranger and more abstract states — is the central mystery that followers of this path seek to solve.

This calling has ancient roots. The vampires who developed the first teachings were ancient nearly beyond recollection. Currently, however, the path is the domain of the terrifying Clan Giovanni. These usurpers are infamous for their practice of necromancy, and the study of this path certainly facilitates and is facilitated by the necromantic arts. But gravediggers, as path devotees are sometimes called, seek more than mere lore. They seek understanding and comprehension of the forces of death itself, not simply control over them.

This path is contemplative, although the subjects that members study can shatter a weak or unready mind. Gravediggers spend their nights in research and introspection, and murder and ill fortune can follow these vampires like a flock of ravens. Even among some Giovanni, devotees of the Path of the Bones are regarded with superstitious dread. Some Kindred fear that gravedigger studies give them significant insights into the Final Death of all vampires.

To some extent, this reputation is justified. Adherents do their best work in times and places where death is prevalent. The presence of gravediggers often means “something wicked” is about to happen — death on as large and grotesque a scale as possible. To the extent that this predilection works in synch with the goals of the Giovanni,

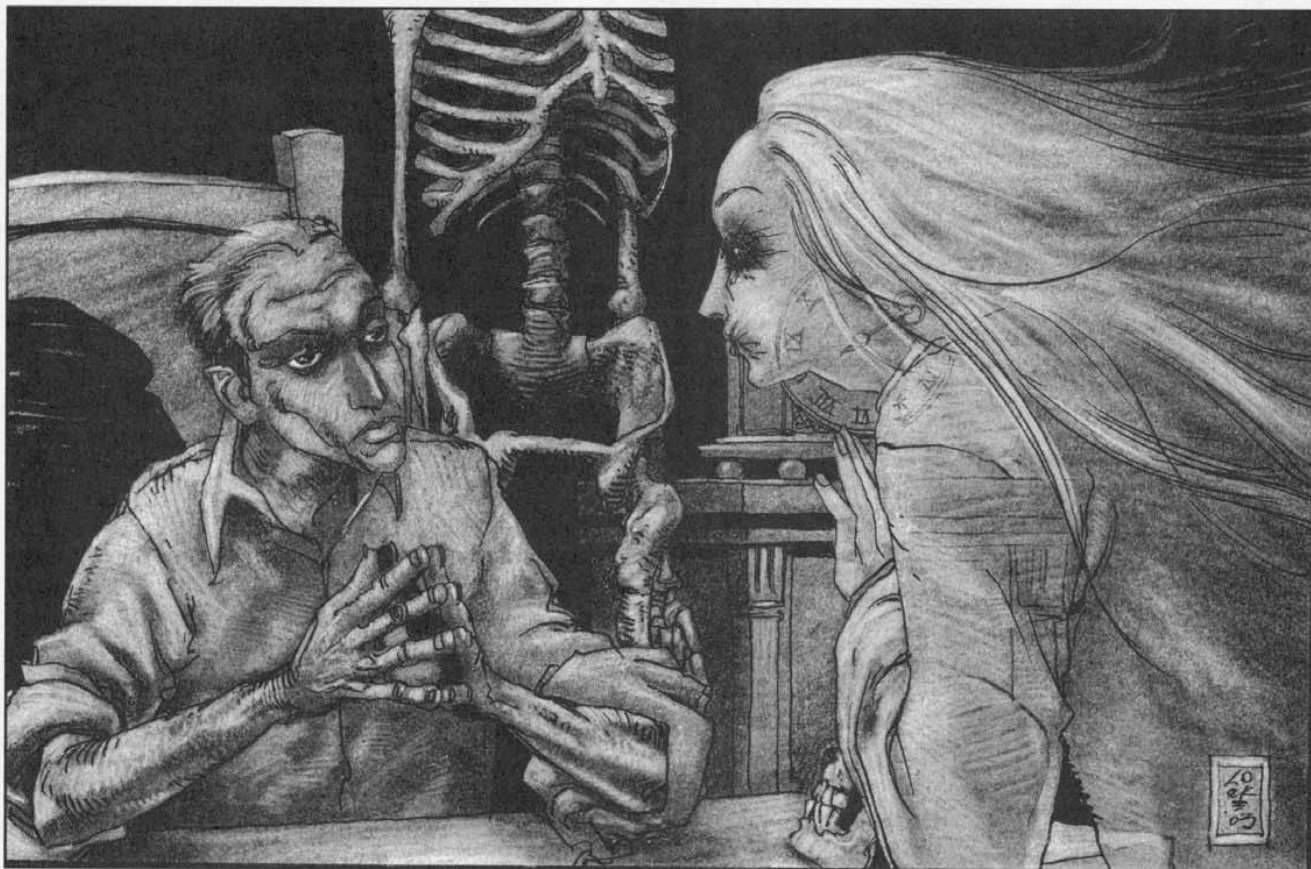
the clan permits practitioners to pursue their studies. The relationship between gravedigger and fellow Giovanni is not so cordial as outsiders might assume, though.

## BASIC BELIEFS

Unlike some paths that uphold understanding vampirism as essential to spiritual development, followers of the Path of the Bones view unlife as tertiary, perhaps even incidental. Undeath is clearly a part of the whole; it is merely convenient to have centuries over which to perform one's work. Without understanding of the states of being beyond death's veil, nothing will matter when Final Death comes. Even Antediluvians can fall. The Giovanni know this all too well.

Still, the Beast can ruin the work of centuries in but a moment. Meditation is considered essential not only to comprehension, but also to control the monster within. Many gravediggers actually consider the Beast to be the *human* side of the soul — the frustrated life principle, the urge to fight and eat and mate that dissipates in the tranquility of the other side.

Gravediggers play little part in the Jyhad, save as it serves to advance their own aims. If the Antediluvians exist at all, they are still infinitesimal next to the cosmic blackness that snuffs out the very stars. Thus, the path holds little opinion on the coming of Gehenna, save that it could prove to be an impediment to study or a great crucible for personal development.



## HIERARCHY OF SINS

Rating	Moral Guideline
10	Showing fear of death
9	Failing to study an occurrence of death
8	Accidental killing
7	Postponing feeding when hungry
6	Succumbing to frenzy
5	Refusing to kill when the opportunity presents itself
4	Making a decision based on emotion rather than logic
3	Inconveniencing yourself for another's benefit
2	Needlessly preventing a death
1	Actively preventing a death

## ETHICS OF THE PATH

- Study death in all its permutations. This is the central tenet of the path. If 10,000 years of civilization and a plethora of tools from astrolabes to the Internet are insufficient to define even a fraction of what is known as "life," surely death (which is potentially more vast) will take all the more time and effort to comprehend.
- Determine when death occurs; define it. For vampires, death does not come when the heart stops, when brain activity ceases. These physiological events occurred some time ago. Thus, all the medical lore of the First World is useless in answering the age-old question. The precise whens, whys and wherefores of the moment between awareness and nonexistence, vital and inanimate, must be determined.
- Search for a purpose for death and the life that precedes it. In this goal, the path is not so different from other philosophies and religions, not even those of mortals. Existentialist and spiritualist thought certainly has a place in the world of the Cainites, just as it does among all sentient beings. You simply ask different questions.
- Quantify the differences of death among various causes. From studies of ghosts, it is clear that means of death have a measurable effect on what lies beyond. Evidence exists that, just as different dyes stain clothing with different hues, so do different ways of passing cause significant and possibly eternal markings on the fabric of the spirit. Precisely what this means to those on "this side," or to eternity as a whole, is a subject for debate. Nonetheless, the varieties of death and their meaning must be studied as must any significant phenomenon.
- Achieve a comfort with death and life — distinguish between salvation and damnation. The very terms "salvation" and "damnation" are permuted and perverted by kine and Kindred's primal fear of the beyond. Vampires refer to themselves as "the Damned" and seek a false salvation in the bizarre hybrid-state of Golconda. When one has confronted the ultimate mystery, all lesser considerations are trivial.
- Hasten death's arrival should it seem to be unnecessarily delayed. When God cast Adam from the Garden of Eden,

God decreed that death was the ultimate end of mortality. Since that day, man (and vampires) have devoted countless hours and labor toward cheating death, flouting God's decree. Thus, it seems fitting that, as beings seeking to understand the universe's plan, gravediggers repay a little of what has been stolen from death.

## DESCRIPTION OF FOLLOWERS

Obviously, the vast majority of gravediggers belong to Clan Giovanni. Many outsiders perceive the path and clan as synonymous. That is not the case. In fact, few Giovanni follow the path, seeing it as a questionable and dubious relic of a dead past. That said, the clan tolerates and humors path followers, because they provide most of its advances in knowledge and Necromancy. Materialistic members of the clan lack the patience and personality to develop the rituals and techniques that gravediggers eagerly invent and (not so eagerly) disseminate.

Giovanni adherents serve primarily as "scientists" and repositories of ancient lore. Among the path's libraries is much of historical and pragmatic value for clan members as a whole. Gravediggers know this well and like all good Necromancers are shrewd and hard bargainers when it comes to exchanging favors with their less erudite kin.

Not all knowledge lies at the clan's fingertips, though. Many ancient precursor sites are hidden and abandoned, guarded by fell traps and perhaps worse. Some gravediggers specialize in "tomb robbing" these ancient sites, and those with an aptitude for this vocation are often retained by the Giovanni as a whole for other missions. Say, infiltrating a Tremere chantry or a primogen haven.

Some followers not only specialize in learning ancient lore, they talk to it. Gravediggers are the clan's primary liaisons with ghosts. The path itself has much to learn from spirits, but the networks that have been developed over time prove useful for more than knowledge of the "other side." Gravedigger "diplomats" with the dead often find themselves thrust into the Jyhad to recruit "allies."

But devotees have ambitions and aims outside Clan Giovanni, and other Kindred of suitable mindset are occasionally inducted onto the path. Tremere and their *antitribu* are the most likely candidates, given their scholarly bent and aptitude for magic. Nor is it a great leap between the philosophies of Bones and Death and the Soul, so some Sabbat neonates "defect." In fact, path followers keep an eye out (when possible) for promising Death and the Soul recruits, and attempt to lure them from their sect before their initiation is complete. Malkavians of all stripes occasionally have insight to offer about the world beyond, as well.

## HISTORY

Perhaps the most "religious" of the paths, Bones came from ancient spiritual practices of vampires who predated the Giovanni. Rumor has it that these creatures, rather than playing games of power or Jyhad, sought to reconcile themselves with the god of life and death who had cast them into the wilderness of undeath.

The mysteries posed by this path and its followers might well be as old as Neolithic burial practices. Indeed, they could predate Caine if the First Vampire came from an established agrarian community rather than from Adam himself. It is speculated, though, that the philosophical bent of this following coalesced during the last millennium B.C., when Judaism and Zoroastrianism arose while “pagan” writers such as Aeschylus asked deep, dark questions of the great void.

It is known that by this time, the precursors of the Giovanni had distanced themselves from the struggles of the other Antediluvians and Methuselahs, seeking solitude and communion with a higher power. Much of the ancient lore that was transcribed into the Path of the Bones supposedly sprang from the litanies and complaints of that line’s Antediluvian, whose name is given as Cappadocius, Lazarus and Thanatos.

By the Middle Ages, the “Road of Bones” was known among the Cainites of Europe and the Near East. Travelers of the Road sought to “complete the journey” between life and death in order to take their place as the children of God. They saw their unliving bodies, filled with blood, as vessels by which the will of God could be made manifest on Earth. Unlike some other vampires, followers of the Road of Bones did not seek to actively enact the will of God, merely to comprehend it.

The Road took a turn, however, when the ancient bloodline was murdered and usurped by the Venetian servitor family, the Giovanni. Under new masters, the lore of the Road largely disappeared. Still, some Giovanni had pursued the Road and over the next two centuries, they sought both to make peace with the calling’s few surviving lorebearers, and to distill the following into something with a more pragmatic bent.

They succeeded only partly. Over the next centuries, lore was consolidated and redistributed into a new form suitable for the nascent clan. As the Age of Enlightenment dawned, the overtly religious trappings of the path were altered into a more secular study of death. Rather than a path to the divine, death became a divinity or divine state in and of itself.

The large-scale conflicts of nation states in the 17th through 20th centuries spurred the path’s development. Gravediggers haunted the battlefields of the Hundred Years’, Napoleonic, Crimean, American Civil, Franco-Prussian and War to End All Wars, avidly gleaning knowledge from increasingly innovative carnage.

Since the development of the atomic bomb and other “weapons of mass destruction,” Kindred on other paths worry about gravediggers’ ultimate aims. Certainly, the potential means now exist for the greatest imaginable experiments in life and death ever conducted. Genocide, too, is now a more commonplace idea than it was in history. When pressed on these points, most gravediggers tend to stare calmly, neither confirming nor denying accusations.

## CURRENT PRACTICES

Gravediggers value discretion and secrecy. They obscure their doings from the eyes of even their own clan mates, to say nothing of outsiders. Rituals, gatherings and experiments are conducted in out-of-the-way places, with no (living) witnesses.

The creation of zombies is essential to the practices of the path, simply because no living servitors can be trusted to perform tasks correctly and keep their mouths shut. Zombie creation is also a means of maintaining the “basics” and keeping one’s necromantic skills sharp.

Adherents are contemplative; study and meditation are central to advancement. Teachers, however, are more difficult to come by than one might expect. The greatest mentors often isolate themselves from the demands of clan and Jyhad, so they must be sought out by prospective students. Finding them can be demanding; merely unearthing the locations of teachers can be a taxing research project.

With study comes experimentation, the overseeing of different means and processes of death. Gravediggers sometimes set up havens with access to penitentiaries, war-torn locales, hospitals, morgues and other places where the dead and dying gather. Some experiments still require the procurement of active subjects, though. Practitioners don’t go out of their way to slay the healthy and vital, but they are not averse to helping the natural process along — even rudely and violently if necessary.

Some gravediggers act as *agents provocateur*, entering volatile situations such as border conflicts, sect wars or turf battles, and “stir the shit” to incite violence. These efforts sometimes coincide with the needs of Clan Giovanni, so such experiments can occur in parallel with other clan business.

Conversely, some Gravediggers enter sect war zones as *stabilizing* agents. To make for valuable study, death must not only be present, it must be well orchestrated. Such meticulous procedure is sometimes not possible in Kindred (or kine) struggles. Like a conductor, a gravedigger directs and focuses the carnage, ensuring that it serves his purpose in uncovering truths behind death as a whole.

In a more direct vein, a few devotees seek to improve their understanding of death directly, serving as clan warriors, mercenaries or assassins. Such creatures are prized by whatever master is fortunate enough to retain their services. With their knowledge of Necromancy, gravediggers prove to be effective killers (and even better resurrectionists). In this task, they occasionally come into conflict with members of Clan Assamite. Battles between such undead can be as spectacular as they are brutal.

Not a few gravediggers deal with the spirit world directly, acting as liaisons (or slave masters) for ghosts and spirits. Different path followers make pacts with the various castes of the Underworld, offering favors (perhaps to the living relatives of ghosts) in exchange for teaching and services. It’s rumored that a few powerful practitioners have even managed to enter the ghosts’ realm, to walk the fabled Iron City — or perhaps to be enslaved there, never to return to living lands.

A few gravediggers have taken it upon themselves to understand the relationship between the Underworld and the fabled "spirit world" of their Lupine foes. Thus far, efforts to contact or control such spirits have proven of little gain. Indeed, vampires can barely perceive such spirits, while some Lupines claim to interact with them regularly. Nonetheless, efforts to grasp any such aspect of posthumous existence persist, for there could be a wealth of power there, power of an unknown but potentially enlightening variety.

One duty that's recently been assumed by path members is the protection of certain mortal family trees, most often those connected to the Giovanni. A gravedigger "watches over" a family, either disguising himself as a member or simply observing nearby. In this fashion, he can oversee the mortals' progress from birth to old age to the grave, while the family (theoretically) gains a protector and "guardian angel." In practice, observers almost never lift a finger to stave off death from any source, though they thwart the efforts of rival Kindred to control such families.

Obviously, development of Necromancy powers and rituals is both a means and an end. Proficiency in Necromancy is a sign of aptitude and devotion. Gravediggers go to great lengths to discover (or rediscover) new, forgotten or lost techniques in the black arts.

## FOLLOWING THE PATH

Taking up the Path of the Bones entails gaining an intimate understanding of death in all its forms. The first stages of the path are fairly strictly regulated. A prospective student is approached and taken through the initiation process by a group and is then apprenticed to a particular master. The student performs tasks and errands for her mentor, learning about death and the afterlife in the process. A task might involve ridding a mausoleum of the ghosts haunting it (perhaps by negotiating with them), or directing the deeds of a serial murderer.

As the vampire grows in age and maturity (and kills more and more of her own victims), she is permitted to engage in self-directed research. At this time, she often leaves her teacher to set up a haven in a different city. Young members of the path often enter either Giovanni or Camarilla territory and offer their services in exchange for welcome and protection.

Once established, research is largely at the discretion of the individual vampire. Like any other scholarly group, gravediggers maintain contact through libraries and the Internet (the latter under several encrypted newsgroups and websites). Truly grotesque experiments often require the establishment of a labyrinthine retreat, where failed — or successful — creations are least likely to attract attention.

At some point in their studies, most followers establish spiritual communion with ghosts. They seek to establish havens in areas with access to spirits — often in graveyards or at murder sites. Through careful bargaining with wraiths, a journeyman refines his knowledge into a sophisticated body of lore.

The central meeting place of the path is, not surprisingly, in Venice. It is not at the Giovanni clan loggia, however, but at a small, out-of-the-way villa in the suburbs. Here, path members from around the world share knowledge, viewpoints and insights. Even the dullest locals know the place is "haunted," a side effect of the numerous ghosts and spirits contacted in the abode.

The library of lore at this place is fantastic, even by Kindred standards. The warlocks of Clan Tremere have tried for centuries to get their hands on it. Every attempt has been denied, and path members are suspicious of Tremere initiates to this night (though, ironically, they induct more members of this clan than any other non-Giovanni clan).

### Virtues

Followers of the Path of the Bones practice Conviction and Self-Control.

### Common Abilities

Initiates are often called upon for menial labor, leading them to improve their Athletics Ability. They might also be put on scout or guard duty, requiring competent combat Abilities. As they advance, gravediggers need high scores in Occult, Science and Medicine.

### Preferred Disciplines

The Path of the Bones exalts the complex Discipline of Necromancy above all others. *Auspex* is too useful a tool to ignore, and of all things *Potence* proves useful in hands-on graveyard toil. A few gravediggers know some *Thaumaturgy* and they guard their knowledge carefully.

## PATH OF CAINE

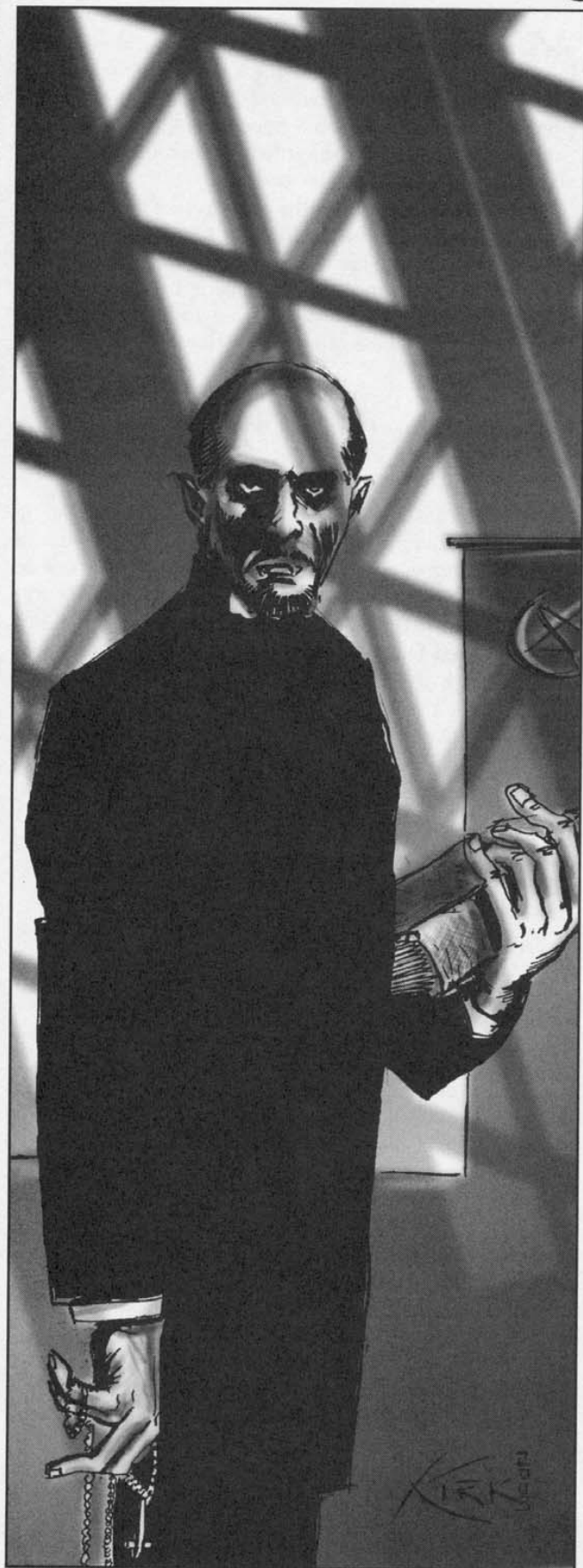
Nickname: Noddists

### BASIC BELIEFS

The key to redemption lies within. Only by learning of Caine's ways and following his divine teachings can a vampire learn to be at peace. A Cainite must examine himself, his desires, his weaknesses and his failings. The vampiric condition can be understood only through thorough self-examination. Pain and uncertainty must be confronted and transcended. The agonies of undead existence are mere penance.

The key to undeath, Noddists say, is that by knowing the past, one can understand the present. Followers of the Path of Caine go well beyond that simple aphorism, though. Understanding Caine and the beginnings of things is an obsession beyond all else. Caine is the paragon of all vampires, the Dark Father to whom all vampires should aspire. To seek such greatness, a vampire must explore all the advantages and limitations of his nature and learn about how these phenomena came to be. To fully comprehend Caine's blessing, Caine himself must be comprehended and the student must understand why the dark gift was given.

Adherents of this path are the historians of the Sabbat. Noddists obsessively search through mortal histories and the shadow histories of vampires. They are



expected to be scholars, both to record the epic glories of the Sabbat's struggle against the Antediluvians, and to ferret out information that might be useful to the sect's crusades. The Sabbat expects useful information, but it also allows Noddists to continue their obscure pursuits unmolested. Followers' grails are primary sources — the fragmentary and seemingly contradictory records of Caine, the First City and the Flood. This obsession goes far beyond mere historical interest. It borders on the religious and mystical. Noddists are the theologians of the terrifying faith of Caine.

The true heart of this path is the acceptance of the curse. But acceptance is merely the start. Vampirism is considered a gift. By becoming a vampire, a mortal can come close to the truth of all things and touch divinity. The undead form and its weaknesses must be fully understood, even as one studies Caine's laws. One cannot comprehend vampirism without knowing the law. Caine's gift must also be honed, sharpened and tested, by developing Disciplines, learning new skills and by challenging oneself.

Diablerie is sanctioned and practiced by adherents of this faith — to become closer to Caine. Noddists seek to approach the Father, not the Antediluvians. Advocates seek to end the Antediluvians above all other goals. After all, these elders defied Caine and were punished.

Diablerie is not anything as base as merely stealing power. It is not merely a cheap way of learning Disciplines. By drinking the heart's blood of another vampire, one can savor another's unlife, another's experience, and grow in the light of Caine's wisdom. Other vampires all have insights into the nature of the vampiric condition. By drinking their souls, Noddists receive blessings from unlife itself.

This path is not concerned with salvation or with somehow seeking redemption from God. Vampires are the result of God's curse, and so the undead should have no need or desire to seek His grace or to supplicate themselves to His power. Vampires are not "evil" — they are part of the natural order. To be a vampire and not exult in one's nature is evil. To be undead and not use the tools that the Curse provides is evil. Sanctity, if it applies to the vampires at all, can only come through learning Caine's way. Transcendence, if it is possible, will only come when Caine awakens and gathers his childer to him. On that Final Night, he will judge all and bring those who have been faithful into his mercy and grace.

The Path of Caine is demanding, rigorous and specialized. It emphasizes scholarship, eschatology, insight and harsh personal control. Followers are expected to spend most of their time learning all they can about Gehenna, searching for fragments of the *Book of Nod* and other texts, and defending their theology against doubters and blasphemers. Other things, adherents are told, can wait. After all, vampires are undying.

### HIERARCHY OF SINS

Rating	Moral Guideline
10	Failing to research and study at every opportunity
9	Failing to instruct other vampires on the Path of Caine
8	Treating mortals as equals
7	Disrespecting other students of Caine
6	Failing to “ride the wave” of a frenzy
5	Succumbing to Rotschreck
4	Failing to slay and diablerize an enemy
3	Not testing the limits of the vampiric form
2	Failing to pursue knowledge about Caine and vampirism
1	Denying the hunger or the needs of the Cainite form

### ETHICS OF THE PATH

- The way of wisdom is the way of restraint. Never go to extremes in anything. Indulgence, passion and mercy — all these things cloud the mind.
- Develop the will. One’s will is his greatest tool. Learn the meaning of inner strength.
- Learn as much as possible about vampiric history, especially that which concerns Caine. Search for every clue, fragment and hint about the Dark Father. Learn well from them.
- The vitae of the unworthy should be taken. Always seek to drink the heart’s blood of older generations and thereby grow closer to Caine. Take the vitae of the weak and savor their experiences and insights. Caine whispers in their blood, too.
- Adapt to the undead state. Exist as a vampire. Do not lie to one’s self and be subservient to mortal laws or moral strictures.
- Meditate and spend time alone to better understand one’s self.
- Do not take the curse for granted. Exult in its power and beware its weaknesses.
- Respect those on this path who have come closer to the truth than one’s self.
- Recognize that vampires are of the race of Caine and humans are of the race of Abel. It is a vampire’s right to take human lives at will. It is the curse placed upon Caine and all his children.
- Fight the Beast. Master it. Be stronger. Will can overcome weakness. Never succumb to frenzy; always “ride the wave.” The Beast led Caine to murder Abel. The Beast can force lesser beings to perform unplanned, foolish and depraved acts.
- Live in peace among mortals whenever possible. Do not reveal vampiric existence to them. But never forget that the undead are their betters and mortals are food.

### DESCRIPTION OF FOLLOWERS

Noddists take their role as Caine’s priests seriously. Followers of this path are expected to be reserved, dignified and educated. They tend to dress in somber black, and many adopt traditional Catholic trappings in mockery of that religion. Some were religious in life — usually those whose intellect or perversion attracted the attention of sires in the first place. Such origins give the priests a rather dubious reputation outside the Sabbat, as many suspect that followers are primarily disturbed and deranged mortals given the dark gift so they may practice their sins for eternity. These accusations are not necessarily untrue, but it is usually intellect, not perversion, that a Noddist sire seeks. Those Embraced can seek Caine’s truths as a way of finding redemption.

Noddists are often soft-spoken, diplomatic and scholarly, but defend their ideals with passion and sometimes violence. While many have a reputation for non-competition with others of the path, serious disagreements have arisen — rifts that have led to monomancy and murder.

Priests do not seek to play games with the universe. Caine’s knowledge has been recorded; Noddists’ goal is merely to find it. They are not philosophers in the truest sense of the word. Rather, they are theologians. They debate and study Caine’s words and the records of ancient times to synthesize a theological framework for the Sabbat in the Final Nights.

The faithful tend to be controlled, calm and intellectual. Many see them as aloof, even arrogant. Noddists deliberately make themselves unapproachable so they are not distracted by petty concerns. When they deign to communicate, they dominate conversations and seek to test other vampires’ knowledge of Caine, and to find out how others view the same concepts. Adherents are interested in vampirism as a subject and fascinated by others’ experiences of unlife.

Assamite *antitribu* are and always have been the greatest devotees of this path. Ventrue *antitribu*, Toreador *antitribu* and Serpents of the Light are also common followers. There are a few Tzimisce and Lasombra Noddists, but vampires of those clans tend to be more interested with the temporal aspects of power or the occult aspects of the unknown than with mere preaching and “religious” knowledge. Many of those Tzimisce and Lasombra are interested in Noddist lore, but not with the path. Practitioners treat their knowledge as sacred. Gospel and ceremonies are for public consumption, while the intricacies of Noddist theology and raw research are beyond the reach of the uninitiated. For an outsider to even glimpse any truly important texts is a mark of respect and trust. For example, one of the world’s foremost scholars of Noddist lore is Sascha Vykos, who is a necronomist. While the Noddists respect the necronomists for their dedication, few are granted such immense trust and respect. That Vykos has been given so much access to Noddist libraries says much about the creature’s importance to the Church of Caine.

## HISTORY

The Path of Caine arose among the Assamites as a heretical cult among the Children of Haqim, following the discovery of what they thought to be the original *Book of Nod*. Never a powerful or popular cult, the original Noddists remained an obscure faction amongst the viziers until the early nights of the Anarch Revolt. When the Assamites swept into Europe on their own Jyhad of murder and revenge against “Khayyin’s” false childer, that obscure cult served the cause well. Anarchs, fractious, poorly organized and motivated by fear and uncertainty, were eager listeners. To worship Caine and his ways, to cast down his weak and oppressive childer and to grow close to him — those were strong words.

The Sabbat claim that the Assamites “flocked” to Gratiano’s banner. The Children of Haqim know better. Their Noddists united the anarchists and made them a weapon against Europe’s elders. When the Convention of Thorns humiliated the Assamites, these few Noddists formed the core of the rebel *antitribu*.

The actual path, as it is now understood, came about as a reaction to Renaissance concepts of humanism. Humanism was a set of 16th-century social mores, influenced by the rediscovery of “pagan” texts such as the philosophies of the ancient Greeks. Humanism promoted secularism and represented a departure from the Catholic notion of life as a “veil of tears.” Renaissance humanism was empowering to the kine, but horribly limiting for vampires. As undead moralists and philosophers debated this new concept, certain creatures reacted. Vampires are not mortals and need no theology, philosophy or dogma of the kine. The Assamite *antitribu* put forward their Caine philosophy as a suitable alternative. The path did not take root immediately, but formed the basis of a number of Sabbat philosophies. By the time the path was formalized in the early 16th century it was but one of a number of Sabbat doctrines. The burgeoning path was regarded highly due to its ancient pedigree and its utility in the Anarch Revolt, but it was never widely adopted.

In time, the path began to dwindle. It was too rigorous for most vampires to follow. The core Children of Haqim rebels who introduced the faith were at their peak in the 17th century, but as time passed the Curse and constant warfare took their toll. As the Assamite *antitribu* focused more on strengthening the Black Hand and struggling with the Camarilla, they had less time and interest in promoting their small sect. Those other vampires who came to the philosophy came to it by their own means.

The Enlightenment, like the Renaissance, led to a change in the way Cainites viewed followings, and the Path of Caine fell out of favor with young vampires. The calling became an obscure philosophy, practiced only by the priests and scholars of the Sabbat, and was considered irrelevant. The few remaining truth seekers were respected, but few others were encouraged to join their ranks.

Since the 1700s, however, the Noddists have established themselves firmly as the theological and intellectual heart of the Sabbat. Like the mortal Roman Catholic Church, they see themselves as beyond concepts of “rel-

evance.” They are not out of touch, they deal with eternal truths. They have not lost contact with the world, the world has lost contact with them.

Covens such as the Librarians in Montreal and Las Hermanitas de Zila in Mexico City were respected for their dedication to vampiric history and Noddist scholarship. Recent years have seen more neonates join the path as the Sabbat selects fledglings rather than Embracing randomly in times of war. New Sabbat with scholarly inclinations have much to learn, and Noddist status has increased as a result.

The recent implosion of the Librarians in Montreal (see **Nights of Prophecy**) has caused an uproar in Noddist circles. Other scholars, normally said to be staid, quiet and academic, position themselves to claim the Librarians’ status.

## THE CAINITE HERESY

The Path of Caine has also been linked to the survivors of the medieval Cainite Heresy. The heresy, which claimed that Christ was the Second Coming of Caine, was the spark that set off the Inquisition (if vampire historians are to be believed). It was, in its own way, responsible for the Anarch Revolt. There is some support for this argument. Followers of Caine believe that the vampiric form is divine and that the Father’s words and teachings hold truths beyond those revealed to mortals.

The heresy, however, was a product of its time and place and has little relevance to Cainites in the Final Nights. It does, however, make for a lively, interesting and diverting discussion among Noddists in need of a distraction from more pressing issues.

The Cainite Heresy was an eschatological sect that foresaw the great winnowing of the Inquisition, the Black Plague and the Anarch Revolt. The prophets of the heresy expected these events to lead to the end of the world. There is little more useless than a prophet whose Apocalyptic declarations pass into history. Yet the Cainite Heresy is said to have left a body of knowledge, prophecy and theology scattered throughout the libraries of Europe, disguised as so-called “Cursed” or “Black Bibles” — books whose obvious typographical errors made them anathema as scripture. Many of these books were kept as collectors’ items and curios. The Noddists of the Final Nights would dearly like to find such lore. It is rumored that some if not all of this scripture is not merely blasphemy against the Christian Church, but heretical against the teachings of the Path of Caine. If that’s true, then faithful Noddists may seek to destroy these books.

## CURRENT PRACTICES

Path members have a primary role in the Sabbat: They are the priests of Caine. All those who would follow them are expected to know the *Book of Nod* by rote and be able to give spontaneous sermons on Caine’s teachings.

Followers of this path tend to be quiet and reserved, and seek to spend much of their existence alone. They do gather with fellow adherents, though, to debate and socialize. A Noddist’s primary loyalty is to her pack. The way of Caine is the closest thing to an official religion within the

## THE MNEMOSYNE AND THE JOCASTASIANS

Most Noddists belong to the Sabbat, but there are two other cults worth mentioning. The best known is the Mnemosyne, a coven of Malkavian scholars who are compelled to record the hidden histories of vampires. Although the Mnemosyne aren't strongly associated with the Camarilla, the Jocastatians are a specifically Sabbat offshoot. Both groups use ritual diablerie to pass on the learning from elder to childe, when an elder feels her time has come. The original source of the conflict between the cults' founders has been lost to antiquity.

The predilections of both of these bloodlines tend to bring them into conflict with Cainites of all sects. Vampires thrive on secrets, and the Mnemosyne and Jocastians exist to find and record them. Neither cult feels a *compulsion* to share what it learns, but most Mnemosyne are willing to make the information they uncover available to undead society, when pressured or threatened. They typically do so in such a way that glorifies their intelligence-gathering capabilities. The Jocastians are more careful about sharing their lore — all the better to save their hides — but they tend to consider discoveries to be the property of the universe rather than themselves.

Sabbat, so Noddists are frequently called upon to speak at sect gatherings or to lead Cainites in prayer before crusades. What sets adherents of the path apart from other Sabbat is their willingness to commit their unives to the lore of Caine.

Noddists do not Embrace randomly. They study candidates well and act only when a subject demonstrates the intelligence, commitment and single-mindedness that the priests require. Students are educated in cloisters, learning the catechism of Caine's church and debating points of philosophical contention with their mentors.

While most Noddists are austere and scholarly, many young followers accompany war parties on their crusades and hunts, so they may prove themselves worthy of Caine's grace and garner respect within the Sabbat. Advanced Noddists frequently indulge in sect violence to ensure that their gifts are suitably honed. Besides, after months of quiet study, random violence makes a satisfying outlet for the Beast.

Noddists can also be found traveling with Sabbat nomadic packs, acting as diplomats (all the better to approach potentially hostile Sabbat territory with one who knows sect ritual), and as priests. Many see this practice as a good way to bring muscle along while searching for Cainite artifacts. A Noddist simply has to be subtle in directing a nomadic pack's meandering.

When threatened, Noddists act quickly and violently. Killing is part of the curse of Caine. Those who do not participate in such aggression are considered weak. Even scholars must use the gifts of the Curse when called upon.

Noddists are diablerists. They believe they should take every opportunity to drink an elder's blood. War parties, crusades and

hunts are all good opportunities to indulge in the practice. Elder vitae is precious, but even neonate blood is worth drinking.

All priests make a point to study history, whether the records of vampires or the legends of mortals. Those with knowledge of ancient languages are particularly respected for the information they can spread and share. Noddists should always take risks to garner new information and to gather insights, but only the lore of Caine is worth risking one's very unlife for.

## FOLLOWING THE PATH

Caine is to these priests what Christ is to mortal Catholics. Caine is the heart of a vampire's existence, which must be dedicated to praising him. Noddists should always seek out information on the vampiric condition and explore every facet of the Curse. Caine's gift must be explored fully for the Father to be pleased. One must study and practice with Disciplines and always seek to improve skills and awareness.

Diablerie is encouraged. A vampire who falls to a diablerist and who is robbed of her heart's blood is obviously weak and unworthy of Caine's favor. Even some of the worthy grow tired, and taking their blood is merciful. Noddists who grow tired or appear weak can ask to be diablerized. That is an honorable end.

Noddists do not usually participate in the wider world of temporal Sabbat politics. They tend to limit their ambitions to positions such as pack priest or perhaps ductus, and do so to better preach to Cainites and to always have enforcers and protection on hand. Packs also serve as useful eyes and ears and can be sent to search for knowledge and new materials while a Noddist must study. Perhaps because of their relative isolation, Noddists can be called on to mediate sect disputes or to bring "religious" insights into a problem. Many bishops and archbishops sponsor small covens of Noddists to ensure that such wisdom as always on hand.

Priests tend to regard other path followers coolly. They respect some followers' dedication to learning, but see any deviation from the most vital of studies — the lore of Caine and the secrets of vampiric history — as trivial and distracting. Devotees of this path have found themselves in constant friction with those of the Sabbat Path of Redemption, who in turn see themselves as the moral and religious heart of the sect. Noddists are often curious about other Paths of Enlightenment, but rarely admit to such interest. They would dearly love to know more about the Path of Blood — from whence the Path of Caine perhaps developed — but the Children of Haqim refuse to reveal their secrets.

Noddists outside the Sabbat are few and those that exist in the Camarilla keep to themselves, rarely drawing attention to their faith or their practices. Many have been destroyed by Camarilla archons for "dealing with the enemy."

### Virtues

Vampires on the Path of Caine uphold Conviction and Instinct.

### Common Abilities

All Noddists are knowledgeable in at least some of the following areas: Academics (particularly the specialties Ar-



cheology and Theology), History, Investigation, Linguistics (ancient languages in particular), Cainite Lore and Occult. Noddists are not mere scholars, though. They are expected to be able to defend themselves. Many also believe physical perfection represents mental perfection. Athletics, Melee and Survival are encouraged. While Noddists are typically divorced from Sabbat politics, more than a few are adept at Leadership, Politics and Subterfuge. Those who take their roles as priests seriously tend to excel at Expression.

#### Preferred Disciplines

Noddists divide Disciplines into "natural" and "unnatural." "Natural" ones are accepted. Blood Magic and Serpentis are not viewed as "natural" — Caine never spoke of such things or encouraged their like, it is said. In fact, many Noddists regard these Disciplines as somehow blasphemous and they actively work against those who uphold these practices. Certain "unique" clan Disciplines such as Obtenebration and Vicissitude, while never mentioned by Caine, are considered acceptable. But this tolerance has more to do with a realistic understanding of Sabbat politics than anything else. Among the other Disciplines, Celerity, Fortitude and Potence are particularly respected.

## PATH OF CATHARI

**Nickname:** Albigensians or "Sinners"

The Path of Cathari is ironically named. It draws its technical and spiritual terminology from the so-called Albigensian Heresy of the Middle Ages. The path claims to accept one of the core concepts of the mortal Albigensians and then, heretically, twists it to its own ends.

### THE CATHARIST OR ALBIGENSIAN HERESY

The Catharist Heresy was a Medieval flowering of a much older set of spiritual and religious beliefs. Mortal scholars trace the heresy's development from Persian Manicheism to Bulgarian Bogomilism to the more familiar Catharist Heresy of Languedoc. Manicheism was a revival of much older Zoroastrian beliefs. The Manicheans believed that the Holy Spirit appeared in the shape of an angel to a Persian prince named Mani. The spirit said that he was the last in a long line of prophets (including Zoroaster and Jesus). Oddly enough, this is similar to what the angel Gabriel would tell the Prophet Muhammad a scant few centuries later.

The Manicheans married Gnostic tradition with Zoroastrian myth. God (as both the Tetragrammaton IHVH or "Jaweh" and the Lord of Light "Ahura Mazda") stood against Sakhlas (the Lord of Darkness, Satan, the Ahriman). The Lord of Darkness created the physical world and God stood outside it, in the spiritual world. God was being tortured by the darkness. Thus, the Manicheanists said, those who followed God must suffer, too. They rejected the flesh — total celibacy, poverty and vegetarianism. Those who were holy transcended to the spiritual world to be with God, and the weak were doomed to suffer and reincarnate until they too achieved holiness.

This heresy survived in various forms until it blossomed in A.D. 950, in what is now Bulgaria and Serbia. It presented itself as a unifying alternative to the fractious Orthodox and Roman churches, but preached a form of Manicheanist belief. The term "Bogomilism" meant "dear to God" but most of its followers merely described themselves as Christians. By the turn of the first millennium, Bogomil missionaries arrived in southern France — at Languedoc. Their teachings found ready converts. There had already been a long tradition of Manicheanist belief there. By 1200, this new flavor of Manicheanist doctrine was powerful enough to challenge the established church.

Centered on the French cities of Toulouse and Albi, the Catharists (meaning "those who are pure") spread their beliefs throughout western Europe. By 1149, bishops held Catharist Mass in defiance of Rome. The Cathars taught that the Devil, whom they named as the chief Archon Jaldabaoth was the Demiurgic spirit that created the Earth to entrap and enslave humanity. This Demiurge masqueraded as God and led humanity away from the beliefs and spirituality that could free them from the worldly prison.

The Church of Rome called a crusade that saw the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people in an effort to stamp out the heresy. Indeed, the crusade resulted in the official formation of the Inquisition.

### BASIC BELIEFS

The Path of Cathari is heavily influenced by the religious dualism of the Cathari creed. The faith holds that there are two creators, a good one (God) and a bad (the Demiurge). The good creator was responsible for the spiritual world. The bad creator was the son or the creation of the "good" God, and the Evil One created (or is) the material world. The Cathari believe the body to be evil, but the soul to be good. They accept the physical world, but consider all within to be evil.

The path teaches that vampires are Lesser Aeons, Archonic sprits of the Demiurge. The undead are God's jailers and torturers, placed on Earth to ensure that humanity remains trapped away from the Sophic light of divinity. As instruments of spiritual imprisonment, vampires are set above humanity. Mortals are lesser, there to be used.

Vampires are the creation of the "evil" God, or Demiurge, to try the souls of mankind and force them to lose hope and succumb to the corruption of the material world. The God who cast Caine out of the Garden (obviously a metaphor for the spirit world) was the evil God, who damned Caine to physicality and mortality. The Sabbat on this path practice the same philosophies as their mortal forbears, the medieval Cathari, but they believe vampirism must be predestined. To have been chosen for the Embrace means one was fated to be. If you are so fated, one was weak or evil in a past life. Now, as punishment in this life, vampires are tied to the material world. The evil nature of vampirism only adds credence to the belief in the innate evil of the material world.

As jailors, vampires should explore and enjoy the “false” world and the decadent pleasures of flesh and sin. By experiencing the delights of this world, the Aeons work to strengthen the bonds that trap mortals. By seducing humans and awakening their innermost desires, the Cathari ensure that mankind will never transcend this plane.

Followers of this path wholeheartedly accept evil as innate to their immortal existence, since they are denied the spiritual plane after death. To the Cathari, Earth is Hell and they want to make the best of it. They have developed a religious morality based on original Cathari beliefs on how to avoid the evil of the world. The Cathari seek out the evil against which their predecessors acted, and accept it.

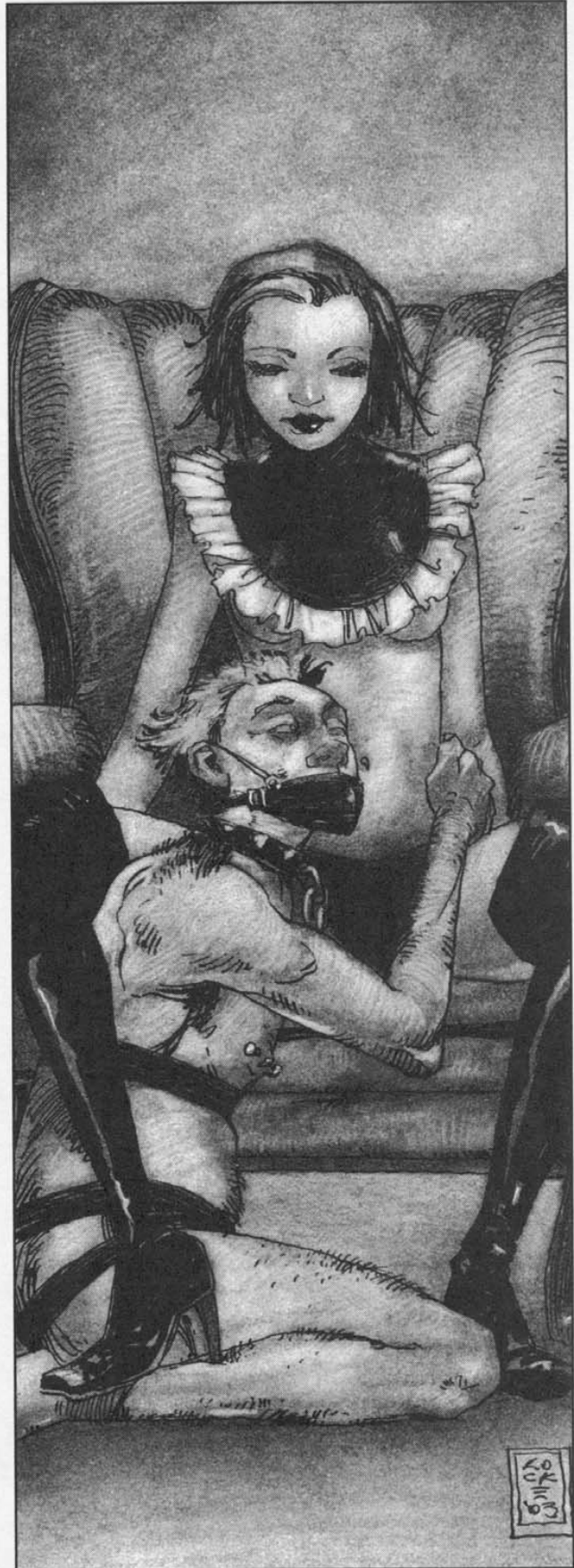
Vampires are creatures of hunger and physicality. Their passion is dark, exploring extremes of eroticism and obsession that mere mortals are incapable of. Perversion is inherent to undead existence — a reductionism, a state of voyeurism that demeans the human participant and dismisses humanity itself to a mere caricature. The Cathari revel in this dominance and depravity. It means they are doing their job.

Mortal victims feel pleasure when fed upon. Are they therefore victims of a violation, or are they willing submissives? Is humanity nothing but food for the gods and devils of the night? How far does human submission go? Human sexuality is merely an evolutionary trick to force procreation. It is the seduction, the trap that vampires use when they steal blood, soul and life. How could vampires be anything but creatures of physicality, sin and imprisonment?

The Cathari way is not a specific set of behavioral laws. It merely draws whatever urges a vampire may have to the surface. These compulsions are diverse and plentiful. Some sinners indulge the senses, even to the extreme of temporarily removing other senses to experience one to the fullest. They seek out artists and inventors to create new and more vital expressions of these sensual experiences. Indeed, European followers of this path bewitch artists and designers from great fashion houses to create exquisite things to indulge the senses.

Such pursuits are ultimately tedious, however. True followers seek to recruit mortals into their games and have new experiences vicariously through their pawns. Some have perfected Thaumaturgical rituals that allow a vampire to “ride” a mortal as she goes about her daily pursuits and then, slowly, use the insights and secrets gained to lure the mortal into a vicious, deadly game. Others study the Dominate Discipline to attain the power known as “Possession” (Dominate 5) for the same purpose. These seductions — be they magical or purely physical — are intended to play mortals like violins. Some sinners even collect “prizes” of beautiful kine who have been completely broken to the vampires’ will. These victims have been stripped of all dignity and identity and now serve merely to populate a “harem” of slaves.

Other Cathari are more direct. They kidnap mortals for sport, using them as “blood” for the “hounds” — other, young adherents of the path who seek to prove themselves.



Some merely involve mortals in torture rituals, seeking to explore human limits.

Nothing is forbidden, everything is permitted, devotees of this path cry as a mantra. The only things that are frowned upon are failing to indulge and losing one's self to the Beast. By struggling against one's vices, the Beast grows hungry. When the Beast is loosed, the self is lost for a time. Followers of this path treasure the self above all else.

Cathari seek to spread corruption, torment and evil out of respect for their beliefs, and because indulgence is a relief from the stresses of and conflicts with the hunger.

#### HIERARCHY OF SINS

Rating	Moral Guideline
10	Showing moral restraint
9	Showing trust
8	Failing to Embrace remarkable mortals
7	Failing to "ride the wave" of frenzy
6	Acting against another on the path
5	Impassioned murder
4	Being selfless
3	Denial of pleasure
2	Refusing to feed when hungry
1	Encouraging restraint or virtue

#### ETHICS OF THE PATH

- Indulge in vice and all that is forbidden. Wealth, excess, sensuality, material power and sadism are the watchwords of the Demiurge's world.
- "Nothing is forbidden, everything is permitted." The night belongs to vampires. One is already damned, already lost to the darkness. Enjoy it.
- Lead others into games of sensuality and dominance. As innocents are corrupted, the Demiurge's world grows stronger.
- Choose those with great passion and great potential for future depravity. Do not fear to Embrace new childer — they will ensure that the curse lives on and the world's shackles are never loosened.
- Be part of the world. If it is corrupt, be corrupt along with it. If the world is indulgent, indulge. Expect no less of anyone else.
- Trust no one. Do not love. A vampire is evil and has no concept of such things.
- The undead are creatures of evil, Archonic creations of a dark god. Accept that destiny and one's role in the scheme of things.
- The Beast belongs to the individual; he is not bound by it. Let the Beast prey, but do not let it rule.
- Do not hesitate. Act. The Devil take the hindmost.
- Death leads to reincarnation. Do not fret over killing mortals. They will come back. Similarly, slaying weak vampires serves the Demiurge by making their souls part of the prison of the world. But avoid death one's self. Do not be reincarnated as a mortal.
- The undead body is a temple, a potential for utter pleasure and utter experience. Enjoy it.

## HISTORY

The Path of Cathari may hearken back to the Albigensian Heresy of medieval France, but the notion that vampires exist merely to indulge is far older. The undead have followed this "Path of Sin" for millennia, as long as vampires have acknowledged that there is little reward in fighting the lusts, hungers and temptations of the Beast. Since vampires are Damned, why bother fighting? If Heaven is always denied, why waste time and shed tears to appeal to a reward that's unattainable? No, adherents of this path have claimed, it is much better to exult in one's power and satisfy one's every impulse.

As Inquisitors tore through the lands of Languedoc, putting thousands to death in their quest for religious and political hegemony, the followers of the Path of Sin (or the Via Peccati as it was known) found it amusing to identify themselves with the puritanical mortals who rejected all sensual pleasure. When the Sabbat defined the Paths of Enlightenment at the Black Monastery, the Road of Sin was re-developed as the Path of Cathari.

As previously discussed, the path takes much of its philosophical and spiritual basis from the Albigensian Heresy. During the initial conflicts that became the Albigensian Crusade, vampires on the Road of Sin took it upon themselves to fulfill their destiny as purveyors of the physical world's corruption. Their efforts to involve clergy and nobles — on both sides — in their games may have contributed to the ferocity of the Inquisitions that followed.

At one point, the path did stray close to infernalism. In the 18th century, several followers in Germany and the New World took their worship of the Demiurge too seriously and attracted the attention of dark powers. This extremity was stamped out by the Sabbat, and the Sabbat Inquisition has kept a "weather eye" on the path ever since.

The following has, like other Paths of Enlightenment, waxed and waned over the years, depending on Sabbat politics and other factors. In the decadent Final Nights, it is stronger than ever. So strong, in fact, that the course has undergone a schism of sorts: one heretical offshoot led by the Widows of Montreal, and a "canonical" path as practiced by several European bishops. Members of the "canonical" path are considered "lost" to the material world by their opponents, while the Widows and their followers believe there is a reason they call themselves Cathars. The European elders counter that they are the true heirs of the Via Peccati, declaring themselves "sinners," and naming their calling the "Path of Sin" again.

The split, between the influential elders on one side and the Widows of Montreal and their followers on the other, could threaten the Sabbat itself.

#### CURRENT PRACTICES

All adherents of this path seek to lead others into temptation, to ensnare them into cruel and sadistic games of emotional need. Once a victim is trapped, a practitioner uses him for her own purposes.

The faith has a divergent and heretical offshoot, overseen by the Widows. This “deviant” path teaches that as jailors, vampires are God’s angels. The undead can unlock the sleeping divinity inside vampires and mortals by understanding and embracing evil and cruelty. Vampirism is not an excuse to “merely” revel in pleasure and depravity. By unlocking that divinity within themselves and others, the Catharists believe they can throw off their lesser forms and take their place at God’s side, as His new angels. This version of the path plays down the concept of God as the demonic Jaldabaoth, instead placing God as a harsh but loving father, a sculptor who seeks to chip and burn and cut away the dross of His creation. Good and evil are meaningless concepts. Sin is an arbitrary, mortal notion, based on arbitrary, mortal laws.

Those who still call themselves “Cathari” use their victims as vehicles toward an ultimate enlightenment. Those who see themselves as heirs to the old Road of Sin use their trapped lovers as toys to be played with until broken.

Two particular victims are favored: those who are powerful and already corrupt, and those who are innocent and pure. The former are perfect entertainment because they are so inured to the world, insulated from everything with wealth and influence. The latter make good toys since tearing away their illusions and kissing away their tears is always a pleasant, decadent experience.

The most important ritual performed by the Cathari is the *consolamentum*. This rite is conducted by two *perfecti* who absolve a vampire of all the sins she has committed, thus allowing her to suffer Final Death without fear. The *consolamentum* is usually performed on a follower on this path once every few years.

The so-called “sinners” of Europe perform the *consolamentum* as a blasphemous joke. The Montreal “Widows,” as leaders of the more spiritual form of the path, perform their own form of the rite and welcome pilgrims to their temple and encourage other followers throughout the world to use the ritual as part of pack *Vaulderie*. Unlike most *Vaulderie*, though, this rite has been augmented with Disciplines such as Dominate and Dementation, and with blood magic. Participants are forced to relive their most shameful and painful memories. The *perfecti* are bound into this emotional trauma and are usually driven into frenzy. They turn on the *credentes* — followers — in a violent expression of lust and pathos. Weak *credentes* rarely survive this physical and emotional ravishing. Those who do are absolved of their sins and allowed to progress further on the path.

As the Widows’ variant of the path grows more popular, *credentes* from all across North America and Europe travel to Montreal to participate in the *consolamentum*. Few survive, but more always seek to be absolved and still others search for further purpose in their unives. The weak are rooted out and the strongest advance.

In their own way, both factions believe the world is doomed to collapse into its own corruption, and they take pleasure in a job well done.

## DESCRIPTION OF FOLLOWERS

Those who have progressed sufficiently down the path to become truly influential are called *perfecti*, again in mockery of the most pious of the medieval Cathars. (*Perfecti* have path ratings of 8 or higher.) Those lower in the hierarchy are called “*credentes*” or sometimes simply the “holy.” (*Credentes* have path ratings of 7 or lower.) Followers of the Path of Cathari are typically highly materialistic. They usually care little about spiritual matters — but there are many exceptions to the rule. The Sabbath is an important outlet to adherents because it allows them to indulge in an extreme and hedonistic manner without fear of retribution or judgment. The Sabbath, practitioners say, know they are damned and revel in it. The Cathari merely take this acceptance a little further.

Lesser members strive to achieve the influence and power of the *perfecti* and work hard to gain notice. No follower of this path is lazy. Sloth is the one indulgence upon which the Cathari frown. Laziness achieves nothing, corrupts nothing and holds no interest for one’s peers. Besides, it’s boring. All are hedonistic and indulgent. Several are noted Thaumaturges — they have worked hard to re-awaken dead vampiric sexual organs and taste glands.

It is a duty to embody the vices of the material world, and it is a glorious destiny to use these vices to entrap and enrapture innocents. Other vampires must force themselves to appreciate the depths of Cathari games. If they do not, they will only become victims.

Followers of this path make no distinction between elder and neonate. What matters is success in the calling. An adherent of 13th generation with 20 years in darkness can be more influential than a centuries-old, 7th-generation being — if the game is played well.

Toreador *antitribu* and the Tzimisce, in particular, can follow this path. The philosophy allows Tzimisce to indulge in their most perverse desires, all the while crafting themselves, spiritually and physically, into potent servitors of the Demiurge. Some Tzimisce view this path as an opportunity to hone their *xulo* form. With its emphasis on physicality and dominance, the form is recognized as an extension of the path.

For many Sabbath, the Cathari offer all the best elements of the other paths, without the hypocritical spiritual baggage.

Followers do anything in the pursuit of pleasure. Cathari have no qualms about killing since they believe in reincarnation, and Final Death releases the soul from its entrapment in the evil body. Supporters usually have no wish to die, however, since existence as vampires is much better than that of mortals.

One of the more notable path followers is Fabrizia Conteraz, who has written extensively on the subject of Cathari morality, but whose adherence to the path is known to be weak, to say the least. At different points in the last decade, she has followed Humanity (albeit at an exceptionally low level) and the Path of Cathari. Both the Montreal Cathari and the European “sinners” respect her writings, but she herself is regarded as something of a loose cannon. Cathari have come to refer to her in correspondence as “Augustine” after St. Augustine (as in “the spirit

is willing, but the flesh is weak"). Conteraz knows of these gentle insults, but remains the Archbishop of Miami and has better things with which to be concerned.

## FOLLOWING THE PATH

The Cathari — be they adherents of the Widows' heresy or the European "canon" — are all incredibly passionate. This vigor emerges in many forms; they are sensual, lustful, hedonistic and adventurous. Their emotions ride close to the surface. They have no time for angst or sadness. When a sinner or Cathar is upset, she is not sad, she is viciously, violently angry. When an adherent is pleased, she is not merely happy or content, she is delirious, abandoned or on a high.

Adherents of this path see the world as a vast playground, and humanity (and lesser vampires) as playthings. The world is there is satiate one's urges, to feed the Beast.

Members respect other paths but view them as over-serious and obsessive about the wrong sorts of things. They regard the Path of the Beast as an interesting diversion from their own philosophies. The Beast is, after all, something to be accepted and indulged. Practitioners are among the most violent opponents of the Path of Revelations and enthusiastically co-operate with the Sabbat Inquisition to hunt down infernalists. The Cathari believe in sin, not in submission to ancient powers. The Cathari are strong proponents of the Sabbat philosophy of freedom. In freedom, followers say, the worst excesses are permitted and encouraged. Some accuse the Cathari of using the Sabbat as a tool for advancing their own agendas.

However extreme adherents' behavior might be, they are all highly social and know how to insinuate themselves into others' lives, by force or seduction. They know not to scare potential victims away. Terror can come later, when a victim has nowhere to run.

### Virtues

Cathari characters should be strong in Conviction and Instinct.

### Common Abilities

A hedonist may be called upon to feast, revel and debauch nearly anywhere, and in so doing is expected to be an entertaining participant and a knowledgeable conversationalist. Area Knowledge, Expression, City Secrets, Finance, Masquerade, Grace, Hagglng and Seduction may all be called for.

### Preferred Disciplines

Heretics can take advantage of nearly any Discipline and do not dogmatically favor any one. Animalism, Domination and Presence are most commonly seen among their ranks.

## PATH OF DEATH AND THE SOUL

**Nickname:** Necronomists

The dead do not walk. The dead rot. Sometimes their souls linger in a tormented in-between state. But eventually even they pass, to Heaven or Hell or to whatever fate

lies beyond earthly experience. And yet, vampires walk and vampires are dead. Their organs are rotted, vestigial things. The Embrace purges out every bodily fluid but one. Vampires are dead, but they walk. How can this be?

The simple, glib answer is that vampires are cursed by Caine's legacy. But a mere curse cannot defy the order of things.

Vampires are therefore something else, something not perfectly understood. Various undead have tried to solve this mystery. A few have made it an obsession. The necronomists are among them. Death, the afterlife, the strange anatomy of vampirism, the science of the soul — these are believed to be the Enochian keys to opening the secrets of the universe.

If only they could be understood.

## BASIC BELIEFS

Vampires are dead things. They are cursed, animated corpses, but they are dead, cold and unliving. A vampire's soul is trapped, cut off from the mortal world of life, but unable to move on. This morbid state has been the subject of discussion by Cainite philosophers since the nights of the First City. Fascination with the issue has never wavered and Kindred of these Final Nights still pursue the secrets of their existence and the knowledge of death.

Vampire existence is a key to all knowledge. Straddling two worlds — the land of the living and the land of the dead — a vampire must claw the secrets of Creation from the night. To attempt to unravel such mysteries, a necronomist must first understand her own state and know what it means to be undead. Necronomists do not speak of a "living world" and a "dead world." They speak of the rational universe and the irrational realm of secrets, spirits and pain. Students of this path must develop a deep comprehension of the soul, that spark of irrational divinity that exists in the rational universe. A necronomist must discover how the soul interacts with the body, and how the soul migrates from its clay shell to what lies beyond.

Necronomists may project a demeanor of cold rationality, but they believe that powerful emotions — hate, love, despair — are expressions of the spirit bubbling up from within. These powerful eruptions are to be treasured and explored. Followers believe the heart is the seat of the soul; both the metaphorical heart of the human romantic, and the physical, dead heart of the vampire. When a wooden stake is driven through an undead heart, a vampire is paralyzed. Thus, when the soul is violated, a vampire cannot move. The soul drives a vampire's corpse. Like the ghosts that necronomists study, vampires are driven by emotion, by the heart. Blood flowing from the vampire's heart gives power to his dead limbs. Blood transubstantiated from base liquid and iron becomes magical and fuels a vampire's powers. The blood literally is the life, and the fountain of all magic and might.

Like several other faiths, the Path of Death and the Soul seeks to repress the Beast by denying it, and by pursuing knowledge and understanding against all else. But the knowl-

edge these vampires seek is a *scientific* comprehension of the vampiric state and the Beast that sleeps within. Necromonists repress the Beast and study death so they may at last confront and destroy their inner creature. The Beast is believed a visceral, animalistic thing and is diametrically opposed to the soul.

So, the soul is the key to a vampire's existence. If the soul can be understood, a scientist has a key to understanding the irrational universe. It is then his duty to pass that information along, into the rational world. Necromonists are therefore a group of academics. Though they are obsessed with death and the world beyond mortal perception, their interests are not the scrablblings of the occultist or the ritualism of the necromancer. They seek to categorize, dissect and experiment.

### AVENUES OF RESEARCH

Two very promising lines of investigation into the soul have proved to involve the Asian ("Cathayan") vampires and the thin-blooded. Stories claim that the souls of both of these vampire "species" spend a little time in the Underworld before returning to life. Some followers of this path work on a "unified theory of vampirism" and seek knowledge from Noddists and others to establish the exact nature of the relationship between Cathayans and Cainites. Some necromonists suggest that Cathayans are actually childe of one of the so-called Second Generation whose curse has changed over the ages and miles. Instead of the "blood" being passed down from sire to childe, the Curse has become an expression of some predetermined destiny. Before the Week of Nightmares, when such things were easier, necromonists recorded ghosts speak of things known as "death signs." Perhaps these marks designate all Cainites. Perhaps no vampire is ever Embraced randomly, but some other force of death or predestination leads sire to childe. Many vampires dismiss such possibilities, but to necromonists they remain tantalizing possibilities. Perhaps a fated Embrace is all part of an Antediluvian plan.

Another issue that the path faces but cannot seem to resolve is that few ghosts persist as long as ancient vampires. Spirits ultimately "move on" to some other plane or state, apparently transcending the in-between realm of the land of the dead. Do they merely cease to be, subject to some special case of thermodynamics or do they move beyond science? Is there a Heaven or Hell? Is there a God? Other path philosophies declare and define such things, but the necromonists know what they *don't know*. Some path followers claim that the in-between state is a borderland between life and Hell, and that Hell is close, but Heaven is eternally distant. Some adherents fear that their rational investigations and their perfectly categorized understanding is terribly incomplete and perhaps utterly flawed. Necromonists, despite their incredible array of sources and in-depth records, usually work from partial records and second- or third-hand sources. The power of Necromancy is greatly reduced from ancient times, if the tales are to be believed. And now there seems



to be a terrible upheaval in the Underworld. Necronomists would love an opportunity to study that turmoil directly. Even now, devotees work to perfect methods of viewing across the worlds so their interrupted studies may continue.

Scientists also apply their philosophy and research to the souls of diablerized vampires. The necronomists have spent decades debating and studying the fate of these spirits. They have followed Caitiff diablerists and roamed with Sabbat war parties. The Sabbat tolerates — encourages — diablerie, but researchers, who are unwilling to taint their objectivity by committing diablerie on their own, wait until a subject runs afoul of Sabbat justice. Sect leaders have found that condemning traitors to necronomist laboratories is a useful way of maintaining discipline. The offender is experimented on, and investigators have developed ways of tormenting souls to see which is capable of the most response. No results have been released yet, but rumors and leaks abound. It is said that a powerful diablerie victim might overwhelm its murderer and make the attacker's body and mind its own. If this proves true, then the sect itself could be in danger. How many Sabbat leaders — the great heroes of the Anarch Revolt and the wars with the Camarilla — have powerful spirits inside them, consuming them from within?

By seeking the mysteries of the soul and the afterlife, students of death explore an array of secrets. There is far more to the mysteries of the irrational universe than any one vampire can understand. By obsessively seeking these mysteries, followers of this path distract the Beast, but few ever discover enough to conquer it. Some speculate that the Beast can never be overcome completely. As a result, some investigators perceive destruction as an escape, the only salvation from the ravages of the Beast. But until they can lay down that burden, they seek to understand as much of the road ahead as possible. Forewarned and forearmed, they can move on.

#### NECROMANCY AND THE GIOVANNI

The Giovanni despise the necronomists. The study of vampiric Necromancy may be older than the Giovanni, but that clan claims proprietary rights to it. The Giovanni do not tolerate family members either contacting followers of or studying the Path of Death and the Soul. The necronomists, for their part, would dearly love to gain access to Giovanni libraries. The scientists are at the forefront of the search for any lore left by the slain Cappodocians. Their intricate theories on the nature of the afterlife derive from what few Cappodocian texts remain.

Though family policy prohibits contact with necronomists, the Giovanni would be very interested in gaining access to the investigators' discoveries, too. Some clan members have attempted to infiltrate the Sabbat and the Path of Death and the Soul, but it is unlikely that any have survived.

#### HIERARCHY OF SINS

Rating	Moral Guideline
10	Attachment to the living world
9	Fearing Final Death
8	Being guided by emotion
7	Frenzying
6	Not killing when useful or necessary
5	Not pursuing enlightenment
4	Showing an aversion to death
3	Showing compassion
2	Killing without studying death
1	Preventing a death

#### ETHICS OF THE PATH

- Beyond death lies the hidden world. The transition between this life and the next holds clues to the nature of things. Study that transition.
- As is above is not so below. The physical world is a pale reflection of that which lies beyond. By understanding the "irrational" or "astral" world, one can truly understand the hidden physics of this world.
- The soul, even a vampire's soul, is immortal. The vampire's undead state is not true immortality. Do not fear death, because true immortality lies beyond.
- The mind is the physical twin to the astral soul. By understanding the mind, one can glimpse the nature of the soul.
- God's plan can be revealed in all things. Attempt to understand everything. One has nothing if not time, and the rewards of such studies are bountiful. Everything contains a piece of the puzzle that is Creation. By learning, one can assemble the pieces. Learn to isolate the key truths and ignore the rest.
- The vestiges of a vampire's once-mortal self contain certain clues — in the form of conscience and emotion — that can allow one to examine the current context of existence. Explore these emotions as a scientist, but do not indulge them.
- Accept that all belong to a greater phenomenon, be it a consciousness, a plan or some pattern beyond mortal understanding.

#### HISTORY

The Path of Death and the Soul was the first faith codified by the Sabbat at the Black Monastery. It is an offshoot of older moralities — one followed by the Cappodocians and another (or possibly several "gnostic" or vampiric "mystery cult" philosophies all concerned with the nature of the vampiric condition) now lost to history. The Tzimisce believe that this path has always been theirs and that Tzimisce and his childer from the earliest nights were obsessed with these philosophies. There have always been Fiends who study death and the limits of pain.

During the Age of Enlightenment, the path adopted many mortal scientific methods — experimentation, documentation and empirical discussion — and used them as a

bulwark against the sheer insanity of their investigation. The irrational universe is not easily understood in rational terms, they know, but there has to be a series of rules that can be mapped and understood. By recording their studies, by obsessively calibrating and re-checking each experiment, and constantly refining their knowledge, the necronomists seek to distill the formulae and theorems needed to codify that other world.

### CURRENT PRACTICES

This path has many elaborate rituals. Human and vampire sacrifices are common. Most necronomist experimentation has a ritualistic quality. Such ceremony and research seeks to bring the soul closer to the fore, where it can be examined, understood and dissected.

By testing willing volunteers and human and vampiric victims, scientists can better understand the spirit as it suffers. Such “tests” allow one first-hand experience with the nature of human mortality and suffering. Is there, as some claim, a state of clarity beyond pain? Does every soul have access to that rarified state? Is there a final limit to pain or can a mortal shell be made to suffer endlessly in an infinite crescendo of exposure? These are crucial questions. While mortals make interesting subjects for further studies, vampires are infinitely more malleable and repairable. Vampires, with their heightened senses and brittle emotions, are perfect test subjects.

Necronomists are not just sadistic scientists — they also subject themselves to the same rigorous intellectual and experimental scrutiny. Researchers frequently volunteer for experimentation by other interested parties. Indeed, a teacher may fulfill his role by submitting to the inquiries of those below him on the path.

Beyond these explorations of the physical world, necronomists study the afterlife. Of particular interest are the circumstances by which ghosts are formed. These wraithly presences seem to be remnants of strong individuals, or the last of people who perished with so much passion or frustration that something remained. Some scientists play games with chosen subjects before death, by interfering in the mortals’ lives, taking away things that were loved, hurting them and then arranging one final accident. Others kidnap mortal test subjects and use them for experiments and then, when the time is right, torture them to death to enhance subjects’ suffering. These efforts have proven effective in creating ghosts, but many seem possessed of a terrible inner darkness — perhaps otherworldly expressions of the Beast — and need to be destroyed. Necronomists also study ways to destroy ghosts and some explore Necromancy for this purpose.

Academics classify their ritual practices into three distinct groups. The first involves public rituals, which are performed as much for the entertainment and enlightenment of other Sabbat as for inquiry. These rituals are not totally without merit, but necronomists do not ascribe much value to them. The second class is the experimental test. These practices are somewhat ritualistic, but happen in private and form part of an extensive body of experimental work. Outsiders are

not invited to watch, although they may participate in some cases. Finally, those who study the Necromancy Discipline perform rituals to contact the next world. These are private rites and are not publicly acknowledged.

Necronomists are loyal to the Sabbat, but like some mortal scientists, they know that knowledge supercedes politics. They frequently correspond with like-minded researchers — mortal occultists, magi, mediums and other undead.

The scholars have moved much of their lore and activity to Toronto in recent years. That city has always been one of the Sabbat’s prizes, with a reputation for experimentation and science amongst the undead. Necronomists there correspond with Malkavian scholar Dr. Douglas Netchurch. The Bleeding Hearts pack of necronomists is one of the most accomplished groups of Sabbat scientists and researchers in the world. Their interaction with Netchurch has been fruitful. The Malkavian has provided the Hearts with several of his papers on the vampiric state, as well as a copy of the *Encyclopedia Vampirica* and a copy of Trimeggian’s *Encyclopedia Haemovoria*. In return, the Bleeding Hearts have furnished Netchurch with the results of much of their experimental work, and extended an invitation to the Malkavian to speak at a convention of scientists. The pack has also, through Netchurch, established contacts with other like-minded vampires in North America and Europe. The Bishop of Toronto has been asked to extend guest status to these august investigators, as well.

### DESCRIPTION OF FOLLOWERS

Most necronomists are curious, objective and somewhat callous. Yet they study human emotions and conscience, even treating their own fading humanity as the subject of scientific inquiry. They appear unemotional, but are actually very controlled. They are not bereft of emotions; emotion is one of the keys to the soul and must be studied. A necronomist whose emotions run rampant takes the risk of confounding his work.

Path adherents’ detachment is notorious and many allies feel that in dealing with necronomists, they too are being studied. They are. Followers respect those with knowledge, but they do not form friendships. They are loyal to the Sabbat, but only because the sect allows them free reign to study. If the Sabbat were to banish the path, the scholars would leave without regret.

Many researchers were possessed of morbid faith or obsession in life, and were chosen specifically to pursue their inclinations in undeath. Necronomists tend to be spiritual, but lack any apparent passion for their beliefs. They study death and the occult as object realities. Indeed, those with *Auspex* can even attempt to quantify the characteristics of the soul. Necronomists eschew religious faith and any belief not based on empirical results. Even vampires of the Sabbat feel uncomfortable around them.

Toreador *antitribu* comprise the largest portion of this path’s following, after the Tzimisce, but several Sabbat Malkavians and Harbinger of Skulls are also members.



Some Camarilla Malkavians and Tremere are said to be interested in the path's studies, but few of them could abstain sufficiently from Humanity to participate fully. Some Giovanni study this path, but Harbinger of Skulls followers have proved remarkably efficient in rooting these intruders out. Adherents of the path do not dispatch such interlopers immediately, but take them to a laboratory for testing and experimentation.

There are a few necronomists among Sabbat leaders. They typically serve to protect the path and allow its studies to continue, rather than use it to form Sabbat policy. Theirs is nothing like the influence of paths such as Caine, Cathari or Power and the Inner Voice. There are a few exceptions, though. The Bishop of Dublin is respected both as a temporal leader and a scholar. The Tijuana based philosopher Anisa Marianna Lopez has written extensively on science, spirituality and Sabbat policy.

Other Sabbat accord quiet respect to followers of this path. Proponents of Death and the Soul regard codes such as the Path of Lilith and the Path of Cathari as contemptible, unscientific and weak. That of Caine is respected for its dedication to scholarship. Orders outside the Sabbat are ignored, with the exception of the Giovanni Path of the Bones. Necronomists and gravediggers are rivals, and do not break into open conflict because few of either group can operate openly in the cities of enemy sects. Observers believe that if the Sabbat attempts to conquer Venice, the scholars of Death and the Soul will get out their long knives and go hunting.

While necronomists recognize that theirs is just one of many ways, they do not consider their studies to form a Path of Enlightenment per se. They believe that suppressing the Beast is secondary to the acquisition of knowledge about the vampiric condition. Necronomists do not really consider Death and the Soul to be a moral code; they are simply too busy with the mysteries of the universe to worry about good and evil. The path requires followers to maintain their composure through obsessive study, but it's study that is important. A vampire following the tenets of Humanity who seeks to learn the truths of the universe is respected, despite his moral compass.

## FOLLOWING THE PATH

The heart of the Path of Death and the Soul is intense intellectualism. Dogma, wishful thinking and the reflexive acceptance of the obvious are all anathema. A follower should never assume, she must discover. An adherent should not rely on conclusions drawn from observation alone. She should experiment, study and categorize everything. Path teachers urge students to remember that insight can be found in the most mundane sources.

### Virtues

Followers of Death and the Soul espouse Conviction and Self-Control.

### Common Abilities

As scientists and researchers of the mechanisms of death, necronomists need Science (Alchemy), various

kinds of Lore, Medicine, Occult, Research and Science (Toxicology). As torturers and interrogators of ghosts, they find Interrogation, Science (Psychoanalysis), Psychology and Academics (Theology) to be useful.

### Preferred Disciplines

The most important Disciplines for understanding existence through this path are Auspex, Necromancy and Thaumaturgy. Necronomists have concluded that vampiric Thaumaturgy is not magic, as it is commonly understood, but is rather a corrupted power. By understanding the nature of that "wrongness," followers of this path hope to further understand the nature of the Curse.

## PATH OF HONORABLE ACCORD

Nickname: Knights

### BASIC BELIEFS

From a sermon given by Azrael, Salubri *antitribu* paladin

*Cultures have two ways to control their miscreant members: guilt and shame. Guilt is based on adherence to a moral code — ideas of salvation and sin, good and evil. Shame is fostered by a breach of ethics — deviation from accepted doctrine, creed or code of behavior. As predators, we have no room for morality — it is a mortal invention. Guilt falls to the Beast like a paper screen to a raging tiger.*

*Ethics are also an invention, but they are far more efficient in their function. One has only to look at the kine world to see the impossibility of enforcing morality. The spiral of hypocrisy and rationalization, the chaos and madness that reign when morals fail. Ethics fail, too, much of the time, but they sometimes succeed and are clearer and less subject to justification and prevarication than is morality.*

*When one looks at the supreme ethical codes among mortals — the samurai of Japan, the knights of Europe, the tablets of Hammurabi and the iron codes of Draco — one sees a discipline, a purity, that is not subject to argument or erosion. Most fail to live up to these codes, but the failure is of the individual, not the code itself.*

*No mortal code is strong enough to govern us. We have the will of immortals and the passions of the Damned. Only we can forge a cage strong enough to bind us.*

*You have chosen such a cage, but for you it shall be an armor of sturdiest steel. You have gazed into your abyss. You know what lies there. We have dipped our pens into that abyss and written a code as encompassing as the night sky and as strong as black iron.*

*Is our path a lie? No. Will it last until the stars wink out and the moon spins into the void? Perhaps not. Will we hold this code as our truth, as the spine and axis and axon of our existence, for howsoever long as our undeath sustains us? Yes.*

The Path of Honorable Accord strives not only to be different from the way of Humanity, it strives to be better. Its members would argue that there is no alternative.

The entirety of the path — and the path follower — lies in a code of duties and prescriptions known as the Code of Milan. Though neither overly lengthy nor overly complex, the code dictates its followers' entire existence. The Beast claims the souls of the Damned by insidious rationalization. So, their code of behavior must be so clear that such rationalization is impossible. The Beast claims the souls of the Damned through blind emotion. So, any such emotion must be replaced by the cold logic of the code. Whether their sworn duty involves protecting an ally — or enemy — or torturing a child to death, knights carry it out to the letter. If they give their word that a task will be accomplished, it will be or they will reach Final Death trying.

The code upholds truth, courage and duty. In some ways, this path is the ultimate example of “negative reinforcement.” Its precepts and followers are cold and harsh — but those who follow the Path of Honorable Accord are a thousand times as harsh on themselves as they are on the world. They take first blame for failure and if it is their duty to defend someone, they will be destroyed before allowing her to be harmed. Truth, no matter how terrible, is cultivated, for lies are the soil in which the Beast tunnels like a worm. The soil of the vampire's soul must therefore be stone.

Make no mistake: While many of this calling's tenets are “virtuous,” they are by no means “good.” Love is a lie. All the Damned know that. Honorable Accord rejects compassion of any sort. Error leads to flaw, flaw leads to weakness and weakness lead to ruin. Adherents of this code must be without error. Nor may they tolerate it in others. Different paths seek to guide the Beast or to let it run along prescribed channels. This one would cage it, then freeze it into immobility. To do that, a vampire's heart must be as hard and cold as steel.

#### HIERARCHY OF SINS

Rating	Moral Guideline
10	Failing to uphold the precepts of your group
9	Failing to show hospitality to allies
8	Associating with the dishonorable
7	Failing to participate in group rites
6	Disobeying a leader
5	Failing to protect allies
4	Placing personal concerns over duty
3	Showing cowardice
2	Killing without reason
1	Breaking your word or oath; failing to honor an agreement

#### ETHICS OF THE PATH

- One always keeps his word and honors his agreements. One's word is one's personal Code of Milan. The first inroads of the Beast are through lies, both to one's self and to others. The next are through excusing either one's own or other Cainites' lapses. If one neither lies nor lapses, the Beast cannot gain a foothold.
- Never show cowardice; overcome fears. Ultimately, best intentions are useless if they cannot be acted upon. In

some ways, fear is a knight's worst foe, for it is both a rationalization not to accomplish something and a blinding emotion. Fear is the currency of the Beast. It must be rejected at all costs.

- Duty comes before personal matters. Duty is inflexible, immutable; personal matters are subject to whim, to rationalization and thus to the Beast.
- Treat fairly and equitably with those of station. Conversely, the dishonorable are beneath contempt. As one does not lie to himself or fellow knights, so he does not lie to or exploit other noble Cainites. Those who have taken pains to quell their own Beasts and to set examples for the Damned are to be respected and honored, even if they don't (yet) follow the code. Conversely, those who are clearly doomed, who wallow in their own shame and weakness, are to be avoided, placed out of sight, mind and soul. Such creatures can corrupt all around them like a pestilence.
- Always repay debts. This tenet is central to the code. So long as debt or gratitude weighs on one's soul, there is an opening for the Beast to exploit. The ideal knight's mind and heart are on the code and only the code, not on matters owed to another Cainite. Debts must always be repaid promptly and in full.
- Support comrades-in-arms in all things, except when they counsel treachery. Only by being an example to all can one save others from their own weaknesses. Be a paragon to packmates, acting as a righteous exemplar and, if necessary, a punishing scourge.

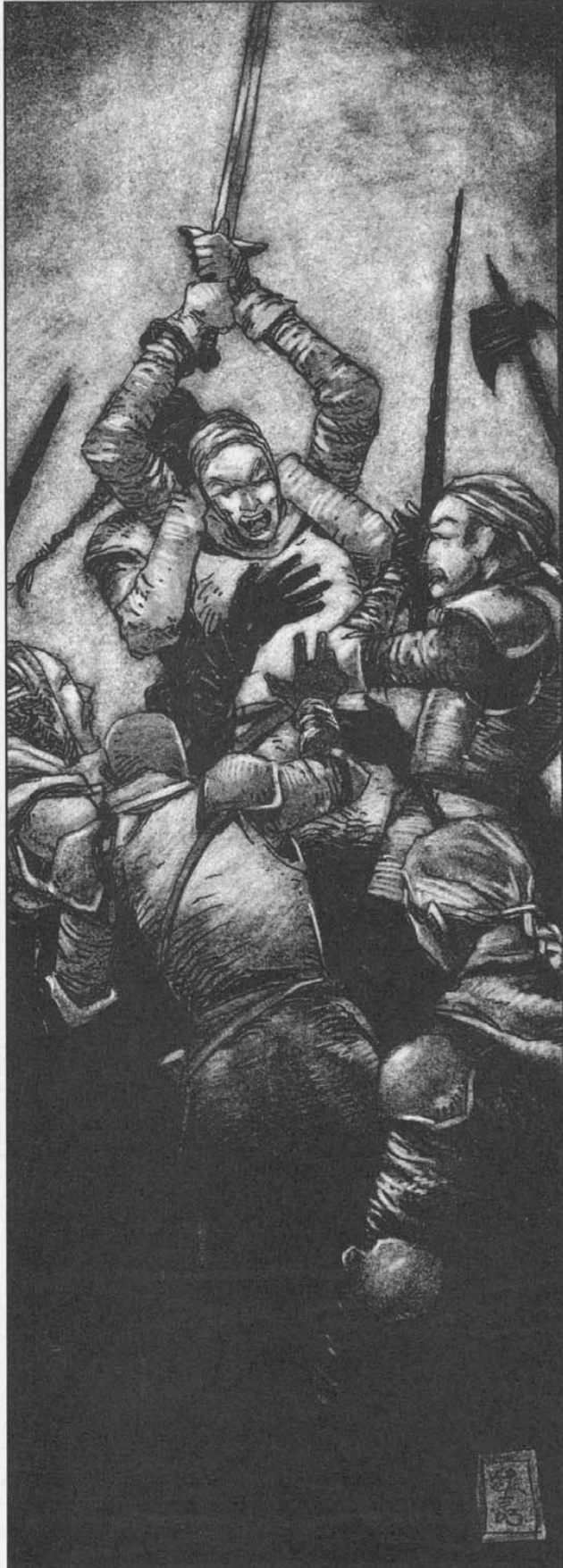
#### HISTORY

Practitioners of the path are called “knights”; the origin of this path can certainly be traced to the chivalric ideals of the High Middle Ages. While individual Cainites had acted in accordance with this path prior to this time, it was not institutionalized until about A.D. 1150.

By the time of the late Crusades and the religious orders of knighthood, the rudiments of this path had been laid. Church records point to folk tales of “darke knytes” with supernatural powers seemingly granted by the Devil himself, yet who would keep their word when overcome by faithful mortals.

Most Cainites give little credence to the idea that Jacques de Molay was Embraced at all, let alone became a founder of this path. Still, the word “templar” was introduced into the Sabbat *patois* by members of this path, and Honorable Accord practitioners have had dealings, albeit transient and superficial, with Knights Templar, Teutonic Knights, Knights of Malta, Freemasons and similar esoteric orders and fraternities.

Although the chivalric tradition was dying out among mortals by the time of the Anarch Revolt, many of the vampires Embraced during its heyday were just coming into their own. Many of the newly Embraced (and destroyed and Embraced) childer that rose during the sects' formation were sired by ex-knights and similar upholders of chivalric ideals. Several members of the nascent Sabbat tempered



their cruelty and wantonness with a dose of their sires' teachings. These vampires codified their beliefs into a work known as the Code of Milan, after the city in which it was penned. The code clarified the different chivalric ideals of duty, honor and courage, while rejecting parts of the old ways unsuitable for Cainites (courtly love, for example).

Followers of the code were not particularly numerous among the early Sabbat. Most vampires preferred to raven and rape. But code followers were among the most effective of the sect's agents. The up-and-coming leaders of the sect didn't fail to notice that, while these strange vampire-knights weren't necessarily the most fun to be around or the most amenable to the sect's "run wild and free" philosophy, they got things done. And they kept other vampires in line during incursions and raids. The honorable vampires established collective traditions, the *ritae*, to instill a sense of camaraderie and unity in the otherwise disparate sect.

Thus, the followers of the code gained an influence perhaps out of proportion to their actual numbers. This mitigating force proved good for the sect. Without the unifying influence of the knights (as the followers of the path came to be known), the Sabbat would likely have disintegrated or been assimilated into the Anarch Movement. Other Sabbat, not necessarily liking the knights, respected them enough to participate in their *ritae* and form themselves into crude military-style units — packs.

During the Renaissance, the knights gradually found themselves brushed aside. Overt warfare between the sects was increasingly replaced by subterfuge and trickery, acts not to the knights' liking. While they acknowledged the necessity of such duplicity, they preferred not to participate in it. They thus gave up or were overlooked when positions of leadership became available. The knights found their niche as solitary warriors carrying out the dictates of particular archbishops or the sect as a whole. This office, known as "templar" or "paladin," survives to this day. Not all templars are on the Path of Honorable Accord, but the majority are.

The influence of the mysterious Cathayans means that relatively few Far Eastern mortals were Embraced until recent nights. Nonetheless, when Commodore Perry opened Japan to the West in 1867, path practitioners found themselves intrigued by the samurai code of Bushido. In the late 1800s, new amendments reflecting the principles of this philosophy were introduced to the Code of Milan, and the path adopted elements of Zen-like philosophy and spirituality into its heretofore pragmatic precepts.

In the 20th century, the knights dutifully carried out sect duties even as they grew appalled by the lack of any kind of ethics among neonates... both Sabbat and Camarilla. Vampire and kine society alike took on the *fin de siècle* characteristics of shallow hedonism, individualism and mob rule.

Some young members of the path, those Embraced in North America, took an especially dim view of the events following 9-11, 2001. For a while it seemed as if the society of American mortals might truly come together, putting aside crass capitalism and uniting as a people. The fact that this didn't happen — that 9-11 became an excuse for shallow "buy the flag" marketing, politicking and eventual

## KLAUS KONRECHT

The Alsatian knight Klaus Konrecht is revered by the Path of Honorable Accord as one of the first, sterling examples of its teachings. Embraced in the 11th century, Konrecht wandered central Europe for decades as a roving purveyor of justice among the undead courts. Stern, merciless and unyielding, he worked tirelessly to instill principled behavior and trustworthiness among fractured Ventrue, Brujah and Lasombra fiefdoms. Though he could foster little unity among the German Cainites, he quelled the most treacherous and divisive leaders. He also stood firm against the incursions of the treacherous Tzimisce to the east.

When the Teutonic Knights were organized, Konrecht saw an opportunity to establish his principles among both a political and religious power group. He joined the order and gained renown among both kine and Cainites for his aggressive campaigns against the Slavs (and the Tzimisce). Yet, try as he might, he could not stem the corruption and greed that consumed the order's mortals.

Nonetheless, Konrecht marched with the Teutonic Knights against the Slavs of Russia and their Tzimisce parasites. At first the advancing German hordes met with great success, but a combination of the Russian climate and the strategies of Aleksandr Nevsky defeated the Teutonic incursion. Konrecht never returned from this campaign. Whether he fell in one of the great battles, was sacrificed to the Tzimisce rebels in exchange for their cooperation, or met with some old and terrible power in the Russian wastes, the tales do not say.

apathy — struck a chord even among these undead. A nation of 260 million rejecting CNN in favor of *The Anna Nicole Show*... surely this was the mark of a greater Beast, a Beast of indifferent consumption. Perhaps, these knights reasoned, the only way to motivate the kine was through constant terror and negative reinforcement. If righteousness could be achieved only through dread, so be it.

Packs of these knights now take it upon themselves to terrorize mortals in their vicinity, hoping that such actions will provoke order and community among the kine. Some have even considered perpetuating further horrors on mankind as a whole, to shock them into realizing the seriousness of the Final Nights.

## THE CODE OF MILAN

Like most things associated with Honorable Accord, the Code of Milan is simple. It's a three-part folio; when translated into English, it rarely exceeds 72 pages. The three chapters are the Tower of Duty, the Tower of Honor and the Tower of Courage. Symbolic links to the Tower card of the Tarot are obvious and intentional. The Tarot Tower represents the great fall that one must undergo before rebuilding one's spirituality in a higher form. The links between this and a Path of Enlightenment are obvious.

The Tower of Duty is the most straightforward chapter. It is a simple listing of various examples, creeds and rules of conduct governing such things as hunting kine, dealing with other Cainites and controlling frenzy. It is the most practical chapter, an "etiquette guide" rather than a spiritual tract. Still, Sabbat templars and paladins learn its maxims by heart, quoting them as reflexive mantras in times of physical or spiritual crisis.

The Tower of Honor is the central, spiritual part of the text. Written as a dialogue between student and teacher, this section imparts lessons through parable rather than through straightforward lecture. Six different stories — the Tale of Blood, the Tale of the Lone Wanderer, the Tale of the Midnight Court, the Tale of the Kine, the Tale of the Wolf and the Tale of Dawn — compose the chapter. Each story imparts a lesson by both logical and intuitive example.

The Tower of Courage is the story of a knight who wanders through a dim valley, comes to a shadowy tower, and enters and confronts a monster within. Depending on the translation, the monster can be a dragon, a beast, a great wolf or some other horror. The story is convoluted — deliberately so — and allegorical. There are hidden and coded messages within the text and certain letters, phrases and sentences can be recombined into other meanings altogether. Some of the suggestions uncovered in so doing are downright dreadful, and reading and comprehension of the story is designed to be a harrowing experience.

Knights are expected to keep a copy of the code with them at all times. Recently Embraced vampires with political inclinations occasionally jest about path followers' "little red books," but the knights take this precept exceedingly seriously.

## CURRENT PRACTICES

Practitioners of Honorable Accord are the primary creators and maintainers of the sect's "pomp and circumstance." The Path of Caine records the sect's history, but it is the knights who keep the traditions and *ritae* of the current nights. Some (especially the knights themselves) speculate that without this path to provide cohesion, the Sabbat would have splintered long ago.

As expected, followers are at the forefront of sieges, war parties and other military operations. They revel in vampiric struggle, seeing it as an opportunity to display their courage. In particular, knights seek out "champions" from the other side (Camarilla, Setites, Assamites) and attempt to engage them in personal combat. Defeating a foe of similar power is a mark of prestige, particularly if the enemy was a noted proponent of another path (high score in Humanity, Path of Blood, Path of Typhon). Honorable Accord vampires tolerate other paths, and perhaps respect them to a degree, but seek to demonstrate their way's superiority when possible. Path leaders expect that the Sabbat's most glorious challenges be undertaken primarily by adherents. In this role, knights often conflict with the followers of the Path of Power and the Inner Voice. Where the paths differ is that initiatives taken by knights should be primarily for the good of the sect, perhaps even at a knight's

own expense, while unifiers seek to advance themselves and their status above all else.

Although followers of this path, like all Sabbat, are pleased with the success of recent campaigns against Camarilla rivals, they are disheartened by what they perceive to be the breakdown of all virtues and codes in recent nights. Though they hold themselves above the kine, knights had hoped for some degree of their ethical sensibility to carry over into mortal society as a whole. Instead, the 21st century seems to be a world of overt individual self-interest, “welcoming change” (i.e., discarding people and institutions at the slightest pretext), and disinterested third parties.

The society of the night has fared little better in their eyes. Clan Gangrel, an enemy but by and large a noble one, has broken its ties to the Camarilla. Clan Ravnos, an ancient line worthy of respect if not trust, has imploded. Knights’ own sect is riddled with demonic corruption, and even the ties of blood grow thinner by the night. When the Antediluvians come, will they find a resisting army or simply shiftless, apathetic fodder?

Some practitioners now meet in secret, across pack lines, to discuss potential courses of action. Most suggest that individual knights must set examples where they can, performing deeds of such glory or importance that the Sabbat cannot help but take notice. Other, wilder ideas include a crusade against the shapeshifters as a whole, an alliance with the mortal Christian Church, or a coup to take control of the Sabbat “for its own good.” To date, none of these ideas has been taken seriously.

Upholders of Honorable Accord who use weapons, particularly melee weapons, grant them a degree of reverence and respect otherwise unknown in Cainite culture. If a practitioner has a haven, she often mounts her weapons in display cases or stands, and keeps her firearms oiled and in pristine condition behind glass panels or otherwise in positions of value.

## DESCRIPTION OF FOLLOWERS

Some neonates, proud, honorable and unyielding in life, seek to find a dark and tragic nobility in their state of undeath. Most of these vampires strive to cling to Humanity and of these, most fail. A few bend — once — to accept this path’s teachings, and having saved themselves resolve to never bend again. They must not. Neither the Beast nor their own egos would allow it. But as the realities of unlife become all too clear, a new code of behavior becomes all the more appealing.

Followers of other paths see knights as cold, aloof and rigid. This is true to an extent. The coldness comes from intense focus rather than disdain — a knight does everything possible to keep his Beast in check through sheer will. Such an introspective activity leaves little levity or energy for more sociable activities. Still, knights are known to be good “foxhole buddies,” and their senses of humor can be sharp, if grim.

Of all the paths, that of Honorable Accord is most likely to receive crossovers from rival sects. Its tenets, while anti-

thetical to human ideals of compassion and empathy, are close enough to qualities that humans think of as “good” that a formerly Humanist vampire can accept the teachings. Thus, a fair number of ex-Camarilla, Setite, Assamite, Giovanni and even Ravnos Cainites fill out this path’s ranks.

## FOLLOWING THE PATH

This is not a calling to study or contemplation. Without the capacity to act, to stem the tides of chaos and duplicity that engulf the sect and world, a member is nothing. Knights must take active roles in all things Sabbat — packs, war parties, *ritae*, sieges. If they do not, who will set an example?

The pack-based nature of the Sabbat simultaneously uplifts and frustrates many practitioners. On one hand, a pack provides a ready-made warrior band, greater than any one Cainite but small enough to live up to a single ideal. On the other hand, duty to pack can conflict with duty to the code if a knight’s allies adhere to different principles. Eventually, many path followers end up in packs together since no other Cainites meet their standards. Such “camaraderie” intensifies their reputation as aloof and obstinate.

The goals of this path and the Sabbat Inquisition often coincide. Arguably, more Inquisitors are on this course than any other. In their ruthless purging of disruptive elements and demonic threats, these followers work to purify the sect as a whole. Sometimes the Inquisition’s reliance on deviousness and double-dealing can sufficiently repulse a path follower to the point where she leaves entirely.

Similarly, path followers prefer the solitary pursuits of templar and paladin to the ranks of the Black Hand. The Hand is known for deception and ruthlessness, and few knights trust it not to have ulterior motives or hidden agendas. When they can, some warriors maneuver the sect against the Hand as best they can.

Contemplation of path precepts is more likely to involve quiet meditation than active teaching. Paragons of the path lead by example, not by sermons.

The gravest threat to members of this path, as with any honorable soldier, is conflicting duties. When, for example, duty to one’s packmates conflicts with duty to one’s superiors, or when duty to one’s superiors conflicts with duty to the tenets of the code. In these cases, a knight must either make a choice (suffering possible degeneration for doing so) or abstain from a choice (which might lead to unwanted consequences and similar ethical suffering).

### Virtues

Unique among the Paths of Enlightenment, the Path of Honorable Accord espouses Conscience in addition to Self-Control.

### Common Abilities

Followers of the Path of Honorable Accord concentrate on learned skills, the sort of physical capabilities that can be mastered. Given their typical roles in a pack or city, knights become experts in Melee and Firearms. Many work to hone their innate talents for Athletics, Brawl and Dodge.

Knights are trustworthy and straightforward, but they are not fools. Many work hard on their Empathy talents so that they can more easily tell when another Cainite tries to deceive them. They often cultivate high Intimidation and Leadership Traits, as well.

#### Preferred Disciplines

Many knights learn Presence to heighten their aura of command and fear on the battlefield. Most put some effort into the physical Disciplines of Potence, Celerity and Fortitude. Those in leadership positions may learn Auspex both for its usefulness in the field and to help pierce deceptions.

## PATH OF LILITH

**Nickname:** Bahari (sometimes Lilin — both singular and plural)

The first woman was not Eve. Eve was a submissive, pure, behaved creation, designed to satisfy Adam's arrogance and to indulge his foolishness. The first woman was Lilith. She demanded knowledge and equality and was cast from the Garden of Eden for that sin.

It was in her long years of wandering that she found Samael, the Lightbringer Angel. He too was fallen. Lilith gave him her flesh and her love and he gave her knowledge. At least, that's how some tell it. Others say he raped her and she stole magic from him in revenge. The details do not matter, only the result: Lilith was pregnant and she had learned of the power of angels.

God sent the angels Senoy, Sansenoy and Semaneloff (Snyi, Snsyi and Smnglv) to subdue Lilith and drag her back to servitude in the Garden. Her first children claimed that the three angels raped and abused her and put a curse upon her. If anyone carved the names of those three angels on an amulet and held it to her or her children and shouted, "Out Lilith," she (and her children) would be powerless and would have to flee. Lilith, betrayed again, bleeding and wounded, gave birth to the angels' children.

In later years, she met Caine, the son of Adam, wandering in the Land of Nod. She took him in, clothed him and taught him the secrets she had gathered from Samael, from the angels, from the demons that she had taken as her lovers, and from the wild ones who had sheltered her when she gave birth. Perhaps she loved Caine. He too bore a curse, an exile from God akin to her own. Caine, too, betrayed her.

In time, Lilith became the mother of many strange and demonic creatures, but those that were most like her, those that honored her were the Lilin: those named the succubae and the incubi. They in turn had children and those spread throughout the world, born of pain and fire, rape and betrayal, with the secret knowledge stolen by their mother rushing through their veins. In time, they came to rule expanses of the Earth. They preyed on the sons of Seth as the human race struggled in the time after the fall of man. They warred with Caine's children.

Eventually, elder succubae and incubi offered their allegiance to Hell, or traveled away from the Earth. Lilith



went into hiding, disappeared or died. Others say she walked the Earth, stalking the tribes of man as they spread. "The Dark Mother," they called her, giving her names such as Kali, Morrigan, Hel and Tiamat. But where she went, her children followed. Their blood mingled with all the races of man so that in each tribe there lay the potential for the dark, beautiful, demonic and immortal Lilin to be born.

Before the Flood, the Lilin ruled huge kingdoms in defiance of Heaven and the sons of Caine. Then three of them, grandchildren of Lilith herself, entered Enoch to offer themselves to the dark gods who ruled there. In the sons of Caine's lust for the children's blood, beauty and knowledge, the vampires gave the Lilin the Dark Gift. And in time, the Children of Lilith bade their siblings rise up and slay the sons of Caine.

The Bahari say they were the first to walk the Path of Lilith, and the first vampires to know Lilith's truths.

## BASIC BELIEFS

The Bahari (or the Lilin as they sometimes refer to themselves) are a large, diverse group of worshippers of the Dark Mother. Many Cainites worship Lilith, but only a few of those use such worship as the focus for a Path of Enlightenment.

Lilith worshippers do not follow any one canonical theology. Rather, they each follow one of a number of apocryphal and contradictory beliefs, oral traditions and fragments of ancient texts. All agree, however, that Lilith is the Dark Mother, Caine's lover and the explorer of hidden things. To find her truths, one must suffer her thorns.

A common concept discussed by the Bahari is the notion of "the Torture Garden" or "Lilith's Garden" — a perfumed oasis of pain, suffering, dark sensuality and enlightenment. The garden is both a mythological place — spoken of in several stories about her — and a metaphorical thing. To be a true Lilin, one must dwell in the lair amongst the sharp, barbed flowers and the sweet moans of the seekers as they enjoy the Dark Mother's torments. For a vampire, one of Lilith's thorns is the hunger of the Beast.

To progress on this path, one must move deep into the garden, wherever darker pleasures and sharper agonies await. At the center of the place lies the Tree of Enlightenment, which by legend Lilith grew from the stolen seed of God's tree, and which in metaphorical terms is the final initiation that balances Beast and intellect, pleasure and pain, intellect and sensuality. By opening one's self to true experience, suffering and ecstasy, enlightenment and madness, one can comprehend the truth of reality.

This following has no place for insincere compassion or false conscience. The Mother suffered for her children's joys and died for their sins. Those who choose to follow her ways must suffer and endure as she did. Those who do not follow her ways are fools. Those who try to follow and fail her tests are chaff to be cast aside. Compassion is indulging other's weakness. Con-

science is giving free rein to one's own hypocrisy. Only the strong can follow Lilith's ways. Only those brave enough to defy God and petty civilized "morality" can ever strive to enter her garden.

Vampires who follow Lilith's teachings must lust — no, have a need far beyond lust — for her secrets and experiences. A postulant must prove that need. She must demand agonies — be it the torments of whip and fire, or the rages and depredations of the Beast — before the Bahari accept her. Only then, when the initiate has taken the first tenuous steps into the exquisite agonies of the Dark Mother's love, do the Hierophants — the vampire-priests — come to her and challenge her.

The Hierophants, the torturer priests of Lilith, become the student's lovers, and their ministrations are merciless. From the beginning, an acolyte experiences pain beyond comprehension. If the student's need is sufficient, the pain draws her deeper into that metaphorical garden and the Hierophants show her the Mother's thorns.

In the end, when the postulant has proven herself, when she has demonstrated her pure, ravenous need, the Hierophants put away their knives, hang up their whips, remove the barbs, sheath their instruments, take her as a disciple and whisper the first secrets of Lilith's way.

The Path of Lilith is not an infernalist path. One of its sub-paths strays close to infernalism, but Lilith is no mere demon.

Some Bahari hold that Lilith is the creator of all vampires — that the Caine myth is some form of revisionism — but most feel that Lilith's status as "mother to demons" is only allegorical. Some argue that vampirism is an ancient expression of God's displeasure, that all who are cast from His light are doomed to darkness and eternal bloodlust. If that theory is correct, the hierarchies and genealogies so lovingly compiled by the Children of Caine are false.

The Lilin coven known as the Silent Rose, a group of six female vampires led by the Gangrel Yasamhain and based in Croatia, has studied the so-called "Cathayans." They note that the vampires of the East describe their progenitors as a man and woman, a dark father and a dark mother. The Silent Rose has traveled extensively and seeks to understand Lilith by unearthing as many secrets of the undead as possible. Unlike other Lilin, Yasamhain and her coven also seek Noddist lore. By understanding the lies and half-truths of Caine worshippers, they hope to hone the truth of Lilith.

The Bahari revere the archaic written records of their faith. Texts such as the *Guarded Rubrics*, *Revelations of the Dark Mother* and others are treasured, copied and compared to one another in order to find hidden meaning in their intersections. Many Lilin temples are also home to extensive research libraries.

## HIERARCHY OF SINS

Rating	Moral Guideline
10	Indulging in instant gratification; feeding immediately when hungry
9	Seeking wealth or temporal power
8	Not challenging the "false" scriptures of mortal religions or vampire Noddists
7	Feeling remorse for the suffering you bring on others
6	Not participating in a Bahari ritual
5	Showing fear of death or pain
4	Murdering a mortal or vampire
3	Not learning the teachings of Lilith
2	Not bringing pain and anguish to others
1	Shunning pain

## ETHICS OF THE PATH

- Seek pain. In moments of agony, one's senses are afire and enlightenment is close.
- Be a teacher, lover and bringer of pain and knowledge to those who would follow the Dark Mother's ways.
- As a vampire, the night belongs to the Lilin. Blind mortals are one's victims.
- Confront one's fears. Overcome them. Grow stronger.
- Seek out those who would find awareness and draw them into the truths of the path.
- Nothing is fair in this world. Fairness and sentimentality are for the weak. The Mother rewards the strong.
- Be independent. Be strong. Trust only one's self.
- Share pain and learning with others on this path.
- Wealth, materialism and comfort are mere trappings — foolish things of civilization. Reject them.
- Mortal religion merely encapsulates God's oppression of the Mother. Seek to undo all its rules and teachings.
- God forbids magic and all vampiric Disciplines. They are the dark gifts that cast off the shackles of His petty rules.
- Prepare the way for the Eschaton when Heaven, Hell and Earth cease to be, and Heaven is remade.

## DESTINIES

This path's catechisms hold that Lilith will return on the Night of Gehenna, after Caine has awakened, exacting revenge on him before taking revenge on Lucifer and God and all others who have used and hurt her. Lilith — the true mother of humanity and the true mother of monsters — will then ascend into Heaven and make it her own.

## DESCRIPTION OF FOLLOWERS

The Lilin — no matter which road they walk — are chosen for their intellectual courage, emotional vibrancy and craving to experience the Dark Mother's truths. Converts are typically young, rarely older than ancillae. Unlike adherents of other paths, the Bahari are willing to adopt vampires with high Humanity scores as future path followers. Coven members do not actively pursue recruits, however. A prospective mentor may watch several potential students

from afar. She marks these subjects by using a minor rite to add a tiny, barely noticeable coloration to their auras. Only a master of Auspex would notice it, and only Lilin know the mark's significance. Of those touched, the Bahari approach a mere handful as part of a long seduction. An elder might pass a candidate timely information that has nothing to do with Lilith, or make herself known in a casual manner. After a few years of interaction, the elder might set small challenges for the student to see if the subject is a valid choice. In that time, the Bahari — any in the area — watch over the prospect and evaluate him. The Bahari look for intelligence, strength and a willingness to explore. Only after at least another year does the elder invite the student to take his first steps onto the path. This approach to indoctrination has worked for centuries. There have always been exceptions, though — vampires who are guided to the way by some other force, be it fate, destiny or curiosity. These vampires are never turned away. Members prefer to know such candidates in advance, but they believe that those who come unbidden have been sent by Lilith herself.

Despite their obvious love of pain, the Lilin have no interest in associating with truly depraved monsters. Debased vampires are not enlightened. Creatures that have lost all humanity and sanity — wights — have been snagged by thorns on the road to enlightenment and have been destroyed as a result.

Lilin dress in comfortable clothes, casual yet stylish. When performing rituals, they wear scarlet robes inlaid with black briar patterns. They do not decorate themselves beyond this. Lilin often dress revealingly, however, so that others may see the scars they have received in honoring the Mother's ways.

## FOLLOWING THE PATH

Bahari reject their ties to Caine and claim descent from the Dark Mother alone. Her vampiric powers and curses are taints that must be purified by privation, suffering and study.

The Lilin consider their vampiric form to be a pale shell of what will come after Lilith's destiny has been fulfilled. They will be remade into pure, immortal spirits of sense and experience. When Caine has been cast down and God has been humbled at last, Lilith will gather her children and this dead flesh will be stripped away.

Each of Lilith's followers seeks to flout the "acceptable" and "moral" and create a new order, whether it be the heavens-shattering plans of the Path of Awakening (see below), the hedonism of the Path of the Flesh or the plans of the Lilith cults. Bahari transgressions can be made against the simple rules of polite society or against the oldest moral strictures of Caine's vampires. God exiled Lilith. His laws in particular deserve no respect. Adam spurned Lilith. The laws of his weak children must not be obeyed. Caine tormented Lilith. He is her enemy and his laws must be undone. Children can be kidnapped or tortured to death. Neonate vampires can be diablerized. The most forbidden of secrets can be read, all in Lilith's name. Obedience to others' moral codes represents weakness.



The Sabbat Inquisition considers this path heretical. The Camarilla is largely ignorant of it. Bahari have, on occasion, been forced to defend their practices before Sabbat councils. More than a few have fallen to the Inquisition. Path members must practice in secret and they confide only in other path members.

Lilin Hierophants eschew the Sabbat. They do not forbid other members to join that sect, but they understand that the Sabbat worships Caine and Caine is an enemy of the Dark Mother. Sabbat members chosen as Hierophants often fake their own Final Deaths and abandon the sect. Exitsing Hierophants find a new priest a place and attempt to waylay any investigators. Because the Sabbat has such a high turnover rate, few such investigations occur.

Lilith's followers must prove themselves constantly and challenge others on the path. Her temples are established in torture chambers and morgues, where initiates are forced to confront the limits of their existence. Although Bahari see pain and pleasure as the two constants of unlife, they are not mere "leather sluts" and rarely indulge in mortal sadomasochistic practices. They occasionally draw converts from such communities, but frown on the vanity of such pursuits. Pain without enlightenment is a mere fact of biology. Titillation does not enlighten. Enlightenment must burn. Enlightenment must tear down all illusions and flay away mortality. Enlightenment is nothing if it's easy.

The Path of Lilith is upheld by vampires. There are, however, other churches of Lilith amongst the other races of the night. From what little the Bahari truly know, different creatures have their own catechisms, their own scriptures and their own cults dedicated to the Dark Mother. Adherents of the path have little time for these foreign groups, though. Lilith may deliver truths and revelations upon other races, but those she whispers to the undead are obviously the most important. This arrogance has brought the Bahari into conflict with other followers of Lilith in the past, and may well do so again. The Lilin are particularly interested in finding out if other offspring of the Mother — the people of Arikel's tribe — still survive. The search was never a priority, but as the Final Nights draw close the coven wonders if its has unknown allies. These humans may bear knowledge denied to vampires. If the tribe still exists, the Bahari must know on whose side it stands. If the humans are enemies, the Bahari whisper, they must be killed before the Dark Mother awakens.

#### **Virtues**

The Path of Lilith requires followers to have Conviction and Instinct.

#### **Common Abilities**

The ideals of this path demand creativity and an analytical mind. Bahari also prize acuteness of the five senses: Alertness is favored. Other prized Abilities include Athletics, Empathy, Expression, Crafts, Performance, Academics, Medicine, Occult and Science. Though they may claim otherwise, the Lilin tend to welcome converts who have a high Appearance rating.

Torture is an essential element of the path, so adherents are usually skilled in Intimidation and Melee (with specialties in instruments of pain), as well as in Medicine.

Linguistics is also favored, although followers are more interested in dead languages than extant ones.

#### **Preferred Disciplines**

The vampiric Disciplines are Lilith's gifts to the Children of Caine. These are the powers Caine and his grandchilder in turn used to destroy her garden and exile her. Lilin are expected to hone their powers so that her gifts can be used against Caine and his line.

Powers such as Animalism, Celerity, Fortitude and Obfuscate are prized, as these are said to be the "purest" of the Mother's Disciplines. There are rumors of a cult of Lilith worshippers in Egypt who are skilled at Necromancy.

### **OTHER PATHS OF LILITH**

The Path of Lilith has several sub-paths, many of which are similar to other Paths of Enlightenment. Some echo the Path of Cathari, others the Path of the Beast. The two most important sub-paths are described below.

#### **PATH OF AWAKENING**

Adherents of this heretical path hold that the founder of Clan Malkavian was not human. He was a Lilin, descended from Lilith herself. In the days before the Great Flood, three Lilin, barely out of childhood, came to the city of Enoch as treaty hostages — the twins Arikel and Malkav, and one other. They were given the Embrace, but it did not curse them. Indeed, it blessed them and made them powerful. They defied their elders, defied Caine and led the other vampires of the third generation in rebellion.

The third hostage is named Nahema in certain texts. Some worshippers call her the Anti-Muse or Dark Muse, the Demon Queen of Madness. She is said to be the patron of serial killers and torturers. The Nahemites, the followers of the Path of Awakening, claim that Nahema was the younger sister of Arikel and Malkav. Legends say she descended into Hell, but never lost contact with her siblings. Her spirit is forever bound to her siblings and their childer. Supposedly, it is her spirit that whispers along the cobwebs of the Malkavian "madness network." It is her spirit that burns in the hearts of the Toreador. Other vampires dismiss these stories as fancy. Perhaps they are. But these tales have some credence among the Lilin. Some Bahari have dedicated themselves to that spirit, hoping that by knowing Nahema's way they can come to understand Lilith's teachings.

These cultists seek knowledge by peeling back the skin of accepted reality. Through blood-magic rites and hallucinogen-enriched blood, they turn the violent rituals of the Bahari into attempts to see past the world. What they perceive is terrifying and soul destroying. They recognize the world as the lie it is, and hope to unravel it to set Nahema's spirit free. They hope to present the devastated wreckage, freed of God's interference, as a gift to the Dark Mother when she awakens.

Other Bahari believe the Nahemites to be dangerous extremists.

## PATH OF FLESH

Some Bahari follow a different sub-path, that of Flesh. These cultists do not memorize long and involved mythologies. Rather, they accept Lilith as an expression, metaphorical or otherwise, of the powerful aspect of the feminine principle, as an exploration of the dark side of sensuality. Lilith may or may not have existed, but the truth of the mythological cycles is irrelevant. She is an archetype and aspirational vision.

Adherents study legends of Lilith along with biblical and mythological apocrypha to explore her concept as an archetypal guide, one who has relevance to both vampires and humanity. Lilith, they say, is a representative figure of humanity's worst, chthonic urges. She is everything that society rejects. By rejecting society's rules in turn, a member adopts the urges attributed to the Mother and truly understands what it means to exist. Society brands so many things as sinful. It forbids cannibalism, but people have consumed the flesh of fallen enemies for centuries. Society forbids self-mutilation, but the soul can awaken by exploring that pain. Society attempts to control and channel sensual hungers, but abolishing them makes these experiences all the more tempting. Followers of this path claim that the curse of vampirism has within it the potential for utter experience. Immortal, possessed of heightened senses, almost indestructible... what better vehicle is there for exploring the dizzying heights of pleasure and pain? Denial, these cultists protest, defies vampire potential.

Advocates of the Path of Flesh seek to placate the Beast through their explorations. The Beast is merely the hunger that drives a vampire. By satiating that hunger and experimenting with new experiences, practitioners hope to keep their sanity intact, their senses sharp and their intellects vital.

## PATH OF METAMORPHOSIS

**Nickname:** Metamorphosists or Freaks

Some Paths of Enlightenment are simply specific ways of looking at the world. They're taken to inhuman extremes, but they're founded on a human basis. Not so the Path of Metamorphosis. The brainchild of Clan Tzimisce, this calling concentrates on alienation, cultivation of inhumanity, and ultimately on escaping all humane traits the way a butterfly breaks free from its cocoon.

The basic doctrine of the path is that humanity is but a precursor to the more evolved state of vampirism, and vampirism is a prelude to something else... sometime wondrous and terrible. As partly evolved beings, it is Cainites' sacred duty to continue the process of change and refinement into a state of earthly apotheosis.

Perhaps characteristically, adherence to this path is an individualistic rather than communal endeavor. Devotees are competitive at best, outright rivals or foes at worst. Each vampire must walk the path by herself. While followers often ally to accomplish temporal ends or to discuss general matters of



spirituality, receiving more than mere rudiments of knowledge from other paths is considered weakness and dullness.

Also, unlike many paths, Metamorphosis advocates no specific route to enlightenment. There are certainly rules to obey, techniques to follow and prohibitions to honor, but the following is ultimately a function of intuition and experience. Teachers understand that a student's destiny might be to fail, not succeed. Failures are not only expected but occasionally encouraged as object lessons.

All told, the path sometimes presents an element that the Sabbat finds unharmonious, even divisive. It is only the influence of the Tzimisce and the usefulness of its members that keeps the path from being scourged from the sect altogether.

## BASIC BELIEFS

Like all paths, Metamorphosis seeks to free its members from the Beast's chains. The creature within is not considered evil in and of itself, but as a burden that restricts a vampire to a low state of being. The Beast is a fine lens for exploring the world — thus, metamorphosists tend to have high Instinct ratings — but it can make an unwary vampire fatally short-sighted.

Most changers belong to the Sabbat, but they view the sect as a laboratory and tool rather than a holy institution. In truth, they would not act much differently if they were Camarilla or independent. Every vampire differs, of course, but as a rule, metamorphosists view and carry out their sect duties in dutiful but not inspired fashion.

Though Sabbat, many adherents fear the impending Gehenna. If it happens too soon, they may not be ready. Philosophers estimate that it will take at least another century of experimentation and research before the highest truths of Metamorphosis are revealed — a century they might not have. Thus, certain changers do everything in their power to delay Gehenna. Some seek a sudden, overwhelming assault against the Camarilla. Others hope to use delaying tactics in an attempt to stabilize the Jyhad on both sides of the sect divide (which is treason by Sabbat standards). A few even dare to postulate approaching certain leaders of the Camarilla, declaring a secret truce and purging both sects of sufficient Antediluvian influence to delay if not avoid the impending reckoning.

### HIERARCHY OF SINS

Rating	Moral Guideline
10	Postponing feeding when hungry
9	Indulging in pleasure
8	Deferring to another for knowledge
7	Sharing knowledge with another
6	Refusing to kill when knowledge may be gained from it
5	Failing to ride out a frenzy
4	Considering the needs of others
3	Failure to experiment, even at your own risk
2	Neglecting to alter your own body
1	Exhibiting compassion for others

## ETHICS OF THE PATH

- Learn the characteristics of all stages of life and death. Vampires, as embodiments of both stages' qualities, must evolve along the tree of death as well as life. Death is perhaps only the protozoa-stage of unimaginable states of being, which a truly enlightened Cainite must learn and assimilate.
- One should not overly concern oneself with mortals. They are a step below the Children of Caine, not a step above. In retaining bipedal posture, binocular vision, opposable thumbs and cause/effect cognitive processing, a Cainite has taken all she generally needs from her former existence. Mortals sometimes aid vampires by accomplishing valuable intellectual breakthroughs, but most such reasoning applies to mortal concerns and is thus of marginal utility to vampires. At any rate, a vampire can parasitize his mortal servitors and networks with little effort, much like logging onto the Internet.
- Do not share knowledge with others, as it is too valuable to trust to a flawed creature like one's self. This tenet is perhaps more indicative of Tzimisce paranoia than enlightened development, as it seems of limited utility. Nonetheless, the metamorphosist viewpoint is that all creatures — even other path followers — are ultimately objects of study. To impart knowledge and enlightenment to a lab rat is to corrupt the experiment. The rat will not act "naturally."
- Indulge the Beast, but deny it. True comprehension of unlife requires a broad range of experience. The Beast in and of itself is like any other organ or system. If overtaxed or if the rest of one's self is allowed to atrophy, it is a detriment. If assimilated properly into the whole, exercised and nourished but not besotted or bloated, the Beast takes its place within the framework. Its perceptions, while simple, are often correct.
- One should alter and augment one's body. Changing the flesh might pave the way toward changing the soul. As without, so within. While altering one's flesh in and of itself does not lead to enlightenment, the act of experiencing the physical world through a different body-lens can in turn lead to innovative ways of thinking — or unthinking, as the case may be.
- Do not heed the needs or desires of others. Their lack of introspection may distract even the keenest intellect. To remain ever aware of one's own evolution, one must be continuously self-centered. Because one cannot evolve another being, that being's needs are by definition an impediment to the true way.

## DESCRIPTION OF FOLLOWERS

Metamorphosists are just plain weird. Invariably, they develop high levels of the Vicissitude Discipline, then use it to assume ever-changing but always inhuman or quasi-human forms.

Most practitioners are members of the Tzimisce clan. The philosophy simply doesn't appeal to very many other Cainites, even ones who've developed the Vicissitude

power. Given that metamorphosists withdraw from undead society by necessity, the path doesn't take well among more sociable Cainites.

Still, a few Sabbat and others come forward. Gangrel, with their Protean Discipline, are sometimes accepted, then taught the "true way" of Vicissitude. A few Serpents of the Light answer the call. Generally, metamorphosists prefer Cainites from stock perceived as "strong" and old: Ventruue, Toreador, Lasombra and even Nosferatu. Given their own limitations and animalistic nature, Nosferatu find the path particularly appealing. Tremere and Panders, as "weak-blooded," tend to be discriminated against, though there are exceptions.

Sabbat metamorphosists serve the sect distractedly at best. The path is simply too individualistic to allow for much pack cohesion. (At the Storyteller's option, Vinculum ratings for metamorphosists can be cut in half, courtesy of ongoing rituals developed by elder path followers.)

A schism exists between metamorphosists who serve the Sabbat and those who do not. The latter, while rare, exist in Europe and the Third World, descendants of old Clan Tzimisce or renegades who followed the dictates of path over sect. Independent changers care little for sect ideology and routinely hire themselves out to Kindred of any clan or side if they think they can obtain useful data or favors in return. Persistent rumor states that a small brood of Tzimisce metamorphosists serves the Inner Circle of the Camarilla, despite the surface implausibility of such an alliance.

The fact remains, though, that elder followers of the path are among the most intelligent, perceptive creatures in existence. The Sabbat grudgingly lets these creatures come, go and do as they please. When elder and sect aims correspond, the freaks serve as masterminds, strategists and warlocks beyond compare. When respective needs are not in synch, Sabbat leadership only hopes that the sect can keep out of the way.

## HISTORY

The raw rudiments of this path have developed in the Balkans for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years. The path as it's understood today flowered during the Renaissance and was refined during the Age of Enlightenment and later. It is ironic that those beings who would cast away all kinship with mortals owe some of their tenets to humans' development of the scientific method.

Prior to that time, even vampires largely held to the idea of Platonic forms. While the Tzimisce sprang largely from pagan stock, the notion of a progression from lower to higher form was largely alien to them at first. At some point during the Roman era, a few *koldun* (practitioners of diablerie) conceived the idea of "becoming one with the gods" or "spirits" by consuming divine essence. Since the gods of the land were earthbound, finite beings, this progression did not seem as impossible or blasphemous as the consumption of a celestial being might be.

From this base, the *kolduns'* thought progressed to becoming "one with the land," a mystical amalgamation of life, spirit and blood. Roman soldiers in the Balkans spoke of the "genius loci," the animate life of the Old Country itself. Tzimisce *kolduns* worshipped various genius loci, sought their havens and consumed them to become the new masters of the domain. In the process, legend says they transformed from mere Cainites into vast entities of titanic power.

For a time, following the coming of Christianity into the region, this myth-cycle was lost, passed down only among the oldest bloodlines. The idea of gradual progression into not only more potent blood, but to a higher stage of life itself remained dormant for centuries, until the coming of Darwinian and Lamarckian theories.

Tzimisce elders were attracted to talk of Linnaean taxonomy, to the great "dragon bones" extracted from ancient rock strata. Old whispers passed among the warriors of the Sabbat, and elders who had kept their lips sealed for centuries began imparting tales and knowledge. Like the dinosaur hunters of the day, though, they kept their secrets carefully guarded — and thus the nascent path, like the tree of life itself, branched in dozens, possibly hundreds, of different directions.

On the European continent, the path continued to evolve in a very "ubermenschian" direction, possibly influenced by the work of philosophers such as Nietzsche. Contrary to Sabbat teachings (but useful to the sect nonetheless), metamorphosists actively participated in the worlds of both kine and Jyhad, using both as weapons in their tests and struggles. These conflicts were against each other as often as not, but they also helped the sect clear away some of the last old-clan remnants in eastern Europe.

Philosophically, the path developed extensively in the 20th century, with that era's emphasis on rapid progress, lack of objective truth and large-scale carnage. Human debates on eugenics echoed (or perhaps started) in the cavernous lairs of the metamorphosists. By now, some practitioners had progressed far along the path, and a variety of terrible monsters haunted the early half of the century. While the Nazi regime was a human-spawned atrocity, it is fair to say that the death camps of the Holocaust provided havens and grist for several Sabbat and independent metamorphosists.

The Atomic Age and beyond have likewise been fruitful. Advances in human science provide parallels or precursors for the work of metamorphosists, while Third World regimes and global hotspots allow all manner of experiments to continue unabated. While caring little for human genetics, devotees nonetheless mine the most enlightening and useful methodologies for their own uses. The Internet proves as fruitful for metamorphosist research as it does for human study. And at least one mighty metamorphosist has postulated the idea of a great vampire colony on the dark side of the moon, with kine slaves and tunneled laboratories.

### THE *PHRYGIAN CODEX*

The sole unifying creed among the metamorphosists is a small folio called the *Phrygian Codex*. The book is about 100 pages or so, but different parts were written over centuries, possibly millennia. The first chapters are held to be the writings of the pre-Roman *kolduns*, while later chapters were added during the Dark Ages and afterward.

Several editions exist. Later editions, those with additional chapters and revisions added by powerful metamorphosists, are especially prized. A follower's codex is as much her lab notes and journal as it is her scripture. Individuals can update, alter and revise their books to reflect their experiences. A few ancient metamorphosists have codexes thousands of pages in length, penned with centuries of notes, observations and experiences. Such tomes are prized by greedy inferiors.

### CURRENT PRACTICES

All metamorphosists seek to transcend their innate limitations to become divine — or at least as close to omnipotent and omniscient as they can manage. The precise nature of this state varies from teacher to teacher, but all agree that Metamorphosis must be sought through a mixture of contemplation and action. In some senses, this path is not so much a “spiritual” guide as a recipe for physical and mental development. The soul, while acknowledged to exist, is ultimately a building block in the whole of vampiric being. It should be preserved, certainly not lost, but not cultivated to the exclusion of all else, either.

As with any other path, a teacher guides a new student through the rudiments. These are common to all metamorphosists and they typically involve mastering the Vicissitude Discipline to level 4 while simultaneously purging one's self of human sentiment (raising Conviction to at least 3). Unleashing the *zulo* war-form is the first step in an initiate's understanding of his capabilities and possibilities. Once the *zulo* is attained, a teacher generally cuts the student loose to seek his own way.

A few teachers and their childer-students form coterie, working collectively to research and study. This arrangement was formerly not permitted until an erudite metamorphosist scholar pointed out that beings of the same bloodline might in fact be a communal, “colony” organism or could become one. Given that none could conclusively prove otherwise, bloodline-related coterie have since been permitted to exist under this stricture. In such units, the eldest and strongest is considered the “brain” and leader, although usurpation has been known to occur.

Metamorphosists cannot proselytize, but they look with little favor on Tzimisce who develop skill at Vicissitude without adopting the path. In some cases, changers might challenge such non-path clan members, posing trials and favors as tests of their resolve. If the other Tzimisce can be persuaded to join the path, it is for the good. If not,

perhaps overcoming such a creature is a suitable test for a true metamorphosist.

The obvious way to transcend is through study. This is more challenging than it might seem. Because there is little “standard” doctrine outside of the *Phrygian Codex*, and numerous editions of even that exist, metamorphosists must glean their texts and knowledge through active research. This means traveling to hidden libraries, questing for lost tomes and stealing needed materials from rival followers. Adherents encourage this competition. After all, a scholar who can't defend her gains from her fellows is not worthy of apotheosis.

No studies can be complete without experimentation. Metamorphosists commonly set up bizarre abattoir-labs, complete with mazes, dissection tables, cages and other experiment-facilitating devices. Here they study animals and kine — if they must. Better subjects are the various Awakened beings of the world. Thus, metamorphosists occasionally barter or cooperate with other Cainites (never other metamorphosists) to hunt and capture Cainites, Lupines and other creatures.

Ironically, a metamorphosist perceived to be high on the path can be a viable target for another, lower one. More than one “enlightened” metamorphosist elder has given up not only his blood but his flesh, bones, organs and soul to knowledge-hungry inferiors.

Metamorphosists believe in the standard doctrine of evolution. “Survival of the fittest” is even more apropos for them than for other Cainites. Some practitioners eagerly test their war-forms in combat with Camarilla vampires or even shapeshifters. The thrill of realizing that one's chosen direction is equal or superior to that of a Lupine is perhaps the most human emotion such strange Kindred ever experience.

The greatest crucible is the Jyhad itself, and thus elder metamorphosists are exceptionally dangerous. Instead of retreating to contemplate their philosophies in seclusion, they actively use their knowledge in the Eternal Struggle. Sabbath leaders put up with much to retain the services of these powerful beings — though the metamorphosists display less loyalty to the sect than archbishops and cardinals would like.

The mastery of Vicissitude (in conjunction with diablerie to lower generation sufficiently to develop unique manifestations) is a primary goal. Animalism is nearly equally valued, to form bonds of understanding with different species (and to attract legions of minions).

### FOLLOWING THE PATH

The core tenet of this path is to transcend the undead limitations of the mortal and undead body and soul. Great practitioners speak of combining characteristics of life, death and undeath into a composite entity that controls all such states. Rather than merely maintaining an uneasy balance between life and death, metamorphosists must encompass life and death.

### THE FINAL STAGE

Raw power and enlightenment go hand in hand in Metamorphosis. Transcending vampiric limitations ultimately means developing the capacity to do so. There are few to no 13th-generation metamorphosists with Vicissitude 1 who've achieved more than a few dots in the path.

Diablerie is therefore a matter of even more urgency for metamorphosists than it is for most Sabbat. Changers eagerly attack elders beyond their capabilities, or even each other to garner the raw strength of blood to achieve their goals. A general rule of thumb is that a being should have a dot in Vicissitude per dot in the path as a whole — though that ideal varies considerably, especially in later nights.

And what of those beings who do achieve ratings of 8, 9 or 10 on the path? Few know for certain. Around level 7, metamorphosists begin severing ties to clan and sect, withdrawing as much as possible from the Jihad (at least as the Jihad is understood by the players of the sects). They wander into Lupine-infested wilds or hide in the underworlds of strange cities, there to prepare themselves for whatever enlightenment brings.

Whether the ultimate apotheosis in fact occurs is another subject of debate. Later editions of the *Phrygian Codex* list several infamous metamorphosists who supposedly "found the true way." Other editions claim that, to date, none have pursued the path to its final end.

In the process, advocates routinely change the composition of their bodies and brains, the better to experience existence from a variety of perspectives. Once enough perspectives have been accumulated, metamorphosists seek to assimilate, synthesize and combine them into new and heretofore unknown forms.

(In game terms, metamorphosists often deliberately cultivate derangements, and then Willpower is spent to remove them. Only by experiencing eternity from a variety of bizarre reference points can enlightenment be achieved. At the Storyteller's option, Blood or Willpower might be spent to shift one or two dots among Attributes and Abilities as practitioners mutate themselves physically. Such accomplishments can't be made on the spur of the moment, though, say in combat. The Storyteller should impose a cost similar to a wound penalty until a character takes a full night to acclimate himself to his new shape.)

Unlike some path followers, who actively seek to demonstrate the supremacy of their teachings, followers of Metamorphosis are reclusive and secretive (qualities perhaps inherited from the path's primary clan). Supporters hold no public (and few private) gatherings, cultivate no *ritae* and do not seek to integrate components of their beliefs into the function of the Sabbat. Service to the sect is viewed as a "day job" — something useful, serving a valuable purpose, but ultimately not the reason for unlife.

High-level members of the calling often retreat from Sabbat gatherings — the very presence of lesser vampires is a distraction to their aims. They seek out secluded locales — often in out-of-the-way parts of Africa and South America — to set up havens and gather experimental subjects. They remain "on call" to the sect, but those calls often go unanswered, much to the anger of the sect's movers and shakers.

Rumor speaks of a grand laboratory somewhere in the world. Most rumormongers, knowing Tzimisce territoriality, assume this edifice is somewhere in Eastern Europe or Russia. A few say the laboratory is deep in the Amazon or somewhere in the Indonesian archipelago. At any rate, the facility is said to be a monastic meeting place and haven for advanced followers. Some of the most alien minds among vampires go there to escape the wearisome demands of the Jihad, and to exchange ideas and experiment on themselves and others. This rumor, if true, seems to contradict the path tenet of "share no knowledge," but practitioners refuse to enlighten outsiders one way or the other.

#### Virtues

Followers of the Path of Metamorphosis practice Conviction and Instinct.

#### Common Abilities

Metamorphosis relies on a Cainite's scientific and medical education. Characters must have good scores in Academics, Medicine, Occult and Science in order to understand even a fraction of what goes on around them. Good amounts of Security are helpful in the modern nights, both to help keep a codex secure and to help get one's hands on others' information.

#### Preferred Disciplines

As discussed previously, Vicissitude is an absolute requirement of this path. In fact, having it at 4 or higher is the only way to experience the true glory of Metamorphosis. Animalism and Auspex are too convenient to avoid, and Fortitude allows a character to survive really gory attempts at self-modification.

## PATH OF NIGHT

#### Nickname: Nihilists

Among the kine, psychologists, law-enforcement officers and philosophers argue about the nature of "evil." Does it exist? Can it be measured? Isn't all action and intent relative?

The vampires on the Path of Night answered these questions long ago. Evil exists. It hungers. Vampires, the Damned, are emissaries and harbingers of Ultimate Evil — the Abyss, Hell, the dark, all-consuming Void. Only by accepting their nature and duties as monsters can the Children of Caine free themselves from the thrall of the Beast.

Evil, to these creatures, is the embodiment of the forces that tear at the great order of things. Vampires, as beings unnaturally suspended between life and death, are the most unnatural and thus the most evil beings of all. It is their role

in the system to be the viruses that break everything down. If the system is strong, it will resist. If not (and it doesn't seem to be), Cainites will eat it away so that a newer and perhaps better world can be born. Being evil through and through, followers of this path would seek to dismantle even the most exalted of paradises.

This is a lonely and terrible course. Its followers are among the most Beast-wracked undead in existence; that within must be truly awful if one must escape it in this fashion. Vampires dedicated to this way are some of the most brutal, monstrous, foul beings in existence. Their only consolation is that they, not some uncontrollable force within themselves, direct their theater of misery.

## BASIC BELIEFS

Nihilists filter all their opinions about mortal and vampiric society through the lens of their perceived duties. To them, the world is a purgatory and they are Hell's agents on Earth. Damned by the will of higher and lower powers, they inflict evil not by choice, but by sacred obligation.

Every thought, word and deed is analyzed for the harm that it can deliver. They must constantly remember their duties as satanic pathogens, cancers on the face of the planet. Only by rigorous focus can they avoid the call of the Beast — they already commit worse acts than any the Beast could inspire and they do so for a higher (or lower) purpose.

Interestingly, not all nihilists believe in a Dark Overlord, Satan, Beelzebub or Prince of Darkness. Younger ones, those raised in an age of science, often consider themselves mere agents of a great void — a malevolent yet empty nothingness. Their calling is to break down everything, physically and spiritually. Evil, for them, is not a fiery or icy Hell inhabited by the souls of the Damned. Evil ultimately leads to emptiness — a sunless, starless, barren womb without rebirth.

Some nihilists hope that in pursuing their goals they will discover peace of a sort. They believe that, in following their abominable duties to the letter, they will be granted mercy by some power. These cultists tend to keep such prayers to themselves lest they be ridiculed by their peers, but such beliefs are actually pervasive.

## ABYSS MYSTICISM

Most nihilists are of Clan Lasombra, and most Lasombra practice their signature Obtenebration Discipline. This capability lets them conjure and manipulate the stuff of shadow. Indeed, a cult has grown around the Discipline. Members, called "Abyss mystics," claim that Obtenebration in fact allows a practitioner to reach beyond space and time, into a parallel shadow-dimension.

Mystics teach that the void and the entities within are shapes predating Creation. When God said, "Let there be light," it was into the Abyss that His radiance reached. But He did not create the Abyss itself. It was there before. Thus, by employing the Abyss, vampires can tap into a power more ancient and terrible than that of God Himself.

Certainly, the Abyss is not merely a static force. Most Obtenebration practitioners sense looming "presences" beyond. The shadows they call forth display sentience, sometimes personality and always hunger. Travel through the void, accomplished only by powerful Cainites, can be a perilous endeavor. Occasionally, the Abyss manifests spontaneously around a careless or powerful user. Unsought things creep through shadowy doors into the mortal world, or material creatures or even places simply disappear.

For many Lasombra, the Abyss is a tool, albeit a valued one. There is simply too much to accomplish in the worldly night to worry about the "cosmic night," too. But nihilists, taken with the grandeur of the Great Abyss concept, often incorporate its doctrine into their path teachings. They see the void not as a mindless dimension, but as the embodiment of evil itself. Because the Abyss may have existed before God, it is considered good, not evil. The latter is the fault of the upstart God. By revering the Abyss, mystics serve and pay homage to the true source of Creation.

Abyss mystics form a sub-path within the Path of Night. Though they practice the same teachings and *ritae* as other nihilists, they tend to form their own packs and hold their own rituals, far from the eyes of other Sabbat. Even fellow nihilists might be shocked at mystics' sacrifices — not due so much to the atrocities committed as to the sheer audacity of the tenebrous forces unleashed. More than one rogue pack has been consumed outright by the amorphous shapes brought forth.

Recently, with the advent of quantum physics, the old doctrine of Abyss mysticism has found neonate adherents. More scientific nihilists, aware of "dark matter," black holes and similar phenomena turn to ancient Abyssal texts, and wonder. If the universe is composed largely of dark matter, might the entire staging ground for the Jihad be swallowed in an instant? And might that be a desirable end?

These nihilists occasionally seek out mortal mages, particularly those whose magic leans toward science and technology. In exchange for services, nihilists learn more and more about the true nature of the cosmos. It's not an alliance per se, but an uneasy bargaining. These wizards, reviling nihilists as monsters yet realizing their utility, occasionally let slip more than they intend. And thus, the power of the cult grows by the year.

## HIERARCHY OF SINS

Rating	Moral Guideline
10	Killing a mortal for food
9	Acting in the interests of another
8	Failing to be innovative in your depredations
7	Asking aid of another
6	Accidental killing
5	Bowing to another Kindred's will
4	Intentional or impassioned killing
3	Aiding another
2	Accepting the superiority of another
1	Repenting your behavior



### ETHICS OF THE PATH

- Leave no being untouched by one's taint. All beings must experience the touch of evil. The weak must be destroyed. The strong must be destroyed or corrupted. Those too strong or peripheral to be destroyed or corrupted must at least be scarred in passing.
- Tempt and horrify those around one's self. The weak will fall, while the strong will be tempered by the test. Vampires, as creatures of life and death, have been sent as emissaries from the other side. It is their duty to break down the physical and spiritual resolve of all whom they come in contact. Nihilists, however, recognize that some beings are fated to serve other powers than those of evil. If it is clear that a being is as spiritually pure (or simply different) as the vampire is corrupt, it is part of the natural order to allow that being to be what it is. Nihilists are also soldiers of darkness. Just because a foe is respected doesn't mean it can't be destroyed.
- Inspire others to accept their inner darkness. As emissaries, nihilists are "PR agents" of evil. Every being turned to its own darkness is another soldier in the great cosmic struggle between light and shadow.
- Experience every sensation possible, and then some. Just as a master craftsman must be familiar with all his tools, so must a master of evil understand all mediums in which he can work. Even "good" or "pure" sensations must be experienced. It is easier to work against a noble victim when one has knowledge of

nobility, a pure victim when one understands purity, a loving victim when one understands love.

- Death is a means, not an end. A vampire has died, true, but has not experienced the entirety of what lies beyond death. It is not one's place to meddle with the planes beyond. If it were, a vampire would not have been sent back to the living world. Since it is one's lot to scourge this world, not the next, victims must be kept in a vampire's sphere of influence as long as possible. A dead victim is beyond one's reach. A living victim may experience evil in all its manifestations.
- Vampires, as souls damned by God, fulfill their purpose by preying on mortals. Few things are more horrifying than the idea of being eaten. For this reason alone, vampires must prey on mortals. Though the undead must spread as much evil as possible in the living world, it is sometimes their duty to act as shepherds, sending a soul to its final reward (or preferably to perdition).

### DESCRIPTION OF FOLLOWERS

This path was developed primarily by Lasombra, but vampires of all clans are attracted to its tenets. The following promises power, a commodity that all Children of Caine desire.

Despite the name they've acquired, devotees aren't truly nihilistic. This path attracts vampires who care deeply about questions of morality, and who strongly espouse the power of "evil." Whatever else they are or aren't, indifference is not one of their qualities. They see the world as a battleground between



good and evil. Having been anointed by the forces of darkness, they throw themselves into their roles with rabid zealotry.

Usually alienated in both mortal and Kindred existence, nihilists find self-worth in accepting and trumpeting their damnation. They are dark messengers, heralds of Hell, the black messiahs... anything that sounds impressive, dangerous and "e-e-e-e-e-e-e-evil."

Accordingly, many nihilists affect outward poses to accentuate their "darkness within." Freakish fashion and unilifestyle choices predominate. They seek to intimidate, shock, unnerve and above all be noticed. Black clothing and contemporary (don't you dare say "trendy"!) "freak" accouterments and symbology mark path members.

All these trappings, of course, hide rampant insecurity; few nihilists have very high Social Attributes. This path has been called a "desperate" one, and a cursory inspection of its followers reveals some of the scars of that tension. Bitter, fearful and incapable of peace, they finally accept their own terror and pain as the only forces they can understand. Little wonder that many Lasombra view nihilists with the contempt they'd reserve for dogs — feral dogs, rabid dogs, dogs best handled cautiously and at a distance, but dogs nonetheless.

Some nihilists progress past this point, though, and are "satanic majesties," indeed. The thought of a "mature monster" is scary in its implications. Nihilists with high levels in the path look their beasts right in the eye and do them one better. They make no excuses or rationalizations for their atrocities, but carry them out with dutiful, mechanical precision. Committing evil isn't a way to lash out or strike back, it's a job description, one they perform as implacably and mercilessly as a predator shark.

"Know thine enemy" is among members' mantras. Like most extremists, followers of the Path of Night place as much focus on their sworn foes, the forces of good, as they do on themselves. Many nihilists have vast knowledge of and contacts in churches, nonprofit organizations, philanthropic institutions, scholarship funds and other charitable works. Thus, they can act with surprising efficiency to thwart the best efforts of the "better half."

Interestingly, the path is not nearly so monolithic as one would think with regard to its beliefs. Two primary sub-sects exist.

### THE WORLD MAGGOTS

The World Maggots believe that evil should stay hidden as long as possible. Pointing to corporate scandals, government conspiracies and monstrous atrocities committed by "respectable" citizens, they argue that subversive, "wolf-in-sheep's-clothing" wickedness has the potential to do far more damage than in-your-face monstrosity. Simply put, a murderer, thief or child molester who's never caught can commit more crimes than one who is caught. A fraudulent executive who rises to CEO can do more damage than one who's shut down at the assistant VP level. After all, the Maggots argue, vampires live forever. Why expose one's plots immediately when one can nurture them for centuries, like gardens of dark fruit?

In keeping with their nature as deceivers, World Maggots often pose as vampires of other sorts, infiltrating Camarilla and Sabbat alike. Once ensconced within a sect, these nihilists foster ill-considered aggression, internecine feuds and simple poor planning, with potentially horrific results for undead and kine alike.

Other World Maggots set up shop in particular communities — suburbs or towns. Over generations, they commit horrors, foster familial hate, spawn crime and corruption, and destroy industry — all the while posing as respectable citizens or remaining entirely hidden. Eventually, the entire community is a degenerate, spiritually void shell of its former self.

### THE BLACK ANGELS

Conversely, the Black Angel division of the path is dedicated to promulgating open, symbolic evil. Black Angels are monsters through and through, and they stop at nothing to foster as overt grotesquerie and revulsion as possible. Freakish body modifications, bloodbaths in the streets, shrieking satanic death-metal bands, genocidal Third World regimes, mindlessly gory video games, and cacophonous cries define them. Black Angels aren't interested in subtlety. One Sabbat archbishop derisively referred to them as "Marilyn Manson vampires." If the Black Angels had their way, the world would resemble a Slayer album cover even more than it already does.

Black Angels aren't stupid or suicidal, merely direct. They don't mind sneakiness and stealth. They simply want a big payoff in the form of overt, blatant destruction and pain. Nosferatu *antitribu*, with their love of the grotesque, often become Black Angels. In the cult's worldview, everything that is ugly, heinous, horrific, vile and painful leeches Cainite and kine spirits that much more.

Taking the same example of the murderer, thief or child molester, above, the Angels argue that while he remains free, he's just a criminal. Once his evil is exposed to the world, he becomes the icon of a dark mythology. Charles Manson, for example, underwent a metamorphosis from the hick guru of a few loser hippies to a cult figure for millions of alienated youth. In the process, he destroyed much of the goodwill that the countercultural movement had fostered, and negated much that was potentially good about their values and goals. In captivity, he became a far stronger figure of menace and terror than he was while free.

### HISTORY

Night supporters say their path has existed since the Fall, and that Caine or Lilith was the first member. Most tales of Caine's early exile refer to Nod as a "land of eternal darkness," after all, and similar stories suggest that he found Lilith already waiting there. Other vampires scoff at this claim, probably justifiably. The rudiments of the path likely lie in Persia, with the rise of monotheistic faiths such as Zoroastrianism. Records indicate the presence of "angels of Ahriman" who might well be early practitioners of this path, or a precursor thereof.

Certainly by the time of Christ the following existed and its adherents were known among the Cainites of southern Europe and the Near East. Even among pagan cultures, supporters represented themselves as emissaries of nether and demonic powers — dark deities or the children of titans. By varying turns, members of this path claimed to speak with the voice of Pluto, Saturn, Nyx and Elder Chaos.

But it was with the rise of Judeo-Christianity that advocates came into their own. That collective religious emphasis on the world as a struggle between primordial good and evil meshed perfectly with the Cainites' own monstrous nature. To make the philosophical leap between the undead and ultimate evil was simple enough, particularly for those whose mastery of darkness transcended even other vampires'.

This path, though open to any creature depraved enough to walk it, was the peculiar province of the Lasombra. Fragmentary records dating from the age of the Apostles hint at an uneasy minuet between the nihilists, the elder Lasombra of the age (including the childer of the still-extant Antediluvian), and the early Church.

Still, Lasombra nihilists are unique in their reverence for the dead Antediluvian. This respect is not doctrinal, but simply a folk legend of sorts. Nihilist Lasombra occasionally claim that their clan founder allowed himself to be sacrificed to his childer in a mocking parody of the Crucifixion. In this way, the Antediluvian took the mantle of Antichrist and descended into Hell as its lord and master. At the heart of the void, these Lasombra claim, the eldest is now the keeper of all evil souls and the master of all vampiric beasts. And on the night of Gehenna, he will rise from the Pit to wreak vengeance on his unfaithful childer.

Though few among even the Children of Caine were around to remember, nihilists claim their path influenced the rise of Christianity over Mithraism in the Roman Empire. Far more opportunities lay in the Christian faith, these elders say. To this night, adherents seem unusually, dangerously attracted to the Church. They flirt with the faithful who can potentially send them screaming into remorseful madness, merely to test their own capacity for iniquity.

During the Middle Ages, nihilists fostered the spread of devil worship, tutoring (well, duping) would-be witches and warlocks, then sending their pawns out to foment evil for its own sake. The monsters on the Devil's Road solidified their beliefs in their own unholiness.

Perhaps these excesses led to the rise of the Inquisition. Certainly, the arrogant nihilists proved some of the most visible targets, and though the Inquisition far exceeded its bounds, it did rid the night of many a nest of evil.

Driven into hiding like the rest of the Kindred, nihilists lay low out of sheer necessity. About that time, the fall of the Lasombra Antediluvian led to the rise of the aforementioned Antichrist myth, and some covens of nihilists espoused apocalyptic principles. Though abhorred by the founders of both sects, it is thought that hidden nihilists influenced the creation of both. Two vampiric sects meant double the amount of potential damage that could be

inflicted on the world. And if the two sides warred, why, there might be no end to the carnage. At least, that's what some nihilists want other Cainites to believe.

In reality, the history of the nihilists since the early Renaissance has been coterminous with the history of the world. Where there is evil, the followers of the path batten and parasitize. They are not so creative as they think. While they certainly fanned the flames of New World genocide and Old World holocaust, African Diaspora and industrial callousness, they created none of those things. By and large, nihilists act alone or in small bands, ever skulking on the fringes of the great sects lest they be uprooted and destroyed.

Still, the past two centuries have proved fruitful and followers of the Path of Night hope the 21st century will be the richest prize yet — the last great revel before the impending Gehenna.

## FOLLOWING THE PATH

There is no "one true way" to practice this path's tenets. It is ultimately utilitarian. Whatever works, works. At heart, each nihilist must do evil as he sees fit. Were he to follow an inherited scheme of indulgences, they would quickly cease to be really evil and would become mundane transgressions.

Most high-ranked path followers seek to cultivate evil as a principle rather than as mindless carnage. In other words, evil must be proved to be inevitable, a natural outgrowth and end of the cosmic cycle. It must be shown to be an inherent part of the world rather than an aberration. Anyone can write off a serial killer or genocidal dictator as a monster, a freak. That's too easy. To demonstrate true mastery, a path follower must show that evil is mundane, within all beings.

Simply put, followers of the path are forces that eat away at the integrity of the natural order. More than provoke entropy, practitioners malevolently seek to break down the balance of things, to exceed and shatter boundaries of flesh, mind and spirit, and to force others to join in.

And it's believed best to create evil from a perversion of good. It's fine to use a weapon of war to inflict destruction on a community, but it's better to cause a power plant — a force of civilization and progress — to break down and inflict the same result. In such a way, people come to understand that everything they create for a noble purpose can ultimately cause harm and misery.

Another classic "object lesson" is the "getting what you wished for" effect. An example of this is a nihilist who rewards a poor but honest worker with vast wealth, only to watch him turn into the selfsame industrialist tyrant he formerly despised, and to proceed to inflict misery on others like his former self.

Nothing earns a follower more respect than setting two well-meaning forces or persons against each other with destructive results. A nihilist might exacerbate tensions between a company's creative visionary (who wants to create new and wonderful advances in products or services) and that company's cautious CEO (who wants to ensure the company's solvency).



The end result might be the needless dissolution of the company and the laying off of hundreds of employees.

Still, mindless rampaging destruction has its place, particularly among less advanced path attendants. One must understand the “how” before the “why,” and atrocity for its own sake is indulged... to a point.

#### **Virtues**

Followers of the Path of Night practice Conviction and Instinct.

#### **Common Abilities**

Characters on this path specialize in Abilities that allow them to bring woe to others and that corrupt the natural order. Brawl and Intimidation allow them to abuse others with impunity, while Finance and Law help them bring down complex social systems from within.

#### **Preferred Disciplines**

This path’s association with the Lasombra leads most to learn Obtenebration as early as they can. Their interest in corrupting others’ activities and sowing distrust makes Dominate and Dementation both attractive, as well.

## **PATH OF ORION**

**Nickname:** Stalkers

### **BASIC BELIEFS**

Vampires, at their core, are hunters. Predators. But in the modern nights, they often accept the roles of scavengers, preying on mortal society’s castoffs. Rather than relishing in their glorious destiny at the apex of the food chain, they can cling to the tatters of their former lives or lose themselves to frenzy.

Most Sabbat vampires consider such debasement pathetic. They loathe their own kind who do not stand up and seize their deathright. For vampires on the Path of Orion, Humanity and the Beast alike are the greatest offenses to the Children of Caine. Both are impediments to a Cainite’s understanding of her destiny and place in the natural order. The species as a whole will progress, they say, only when those who lose their intellect to passion are wiped from the ranks of the undead. It is the stalkers’ holy crusade to be the instrument of purification, and to test the extremes of their own capabilities.

Followers of Orion are the hunters of hunters, the kings of predators. For them, unlife itself is a great safari, a mythic journey into the wilds of the unknown. By confronting and destroying the Beast in other Cainites, stalkers hope to confront and quell the creature within themselves. By facing and destroying vampires who cling to the weakness of their Humanity, they seek to overcome their distractions of nostalgia and sympathy.

Sometimes acting in packs, sometimes alone, stalkers stand slightly apart from the ranks of the Sabbat, even as they protect the sect. They must be ever vigilant against the human or Bestial taint that can bring down the most perfectly evolved predatory species on Earth. It is not only the Beast within that must be overcome, but the Beasts that reside in the souls of all vampires.

## HIERARCHY OF SINS

Rating	Moral Guideline
10	Failing to hunt an overwhelmingly powerful foe
9	Failing to hunt Lupines
8	Siring an unworthy childe
7	Failing to hunt a more powerful foe
6	Failing to hunt a high-Humanity (8+) Cainite
5	Failing to hunt a Beast-ridden Cainite
4	Failing to hunt a vampire in Golconda
3	Allowing frenzy to lead you astray
2	Showing cowardice
1	Hunting only beings weaker than yourself

## ETHICS OF THE PATH

- The vampiric species is the height of evolution — it should always be strengthened, never weakened. While stalkers accept that vampires have weaknesses and pendants, qualities such as compassion and the Beast are akin to an appendix — parts of one's self that should atrophy from disuse. Their urges must be suppressed in one's self and others. Vampires who have been poisoned by either "humor" must be corrected or destroyed for the good of all. Likewise, vampires who display weakness (not cunning or the ability to dissemble, but genuine failing) should meet Final Death.
- Those who have fallen to the Beast are atavisms and must be eliminated. These undead are threats to Cainites as a whole. They are as feral and dangerous as any predator, but they are out of control, like rabid dogs. They must be put down for the good of the species.
- The mark of the ideal predator is its capacity to conduct the perfect hunt. Vampires are much more than killers, but hunters first and foremost. One's skills can be honed on the streets, in clubs or in high society, and are always foremost on the mind of the perfect stalker.
- The Beast is a guide and tool, not a master. It is useful to a point; it would not be part of vampiric makeup if it weren't. The mark of a true vampire is one's capacity to leash the Beast, drawing on its strength without letting it run rampant. The Animalism Discipline is therefore prized among path followers.
- Vampires who seek to retain ties to their past morality — or worse, who seek Golconda — are deluded and must be shown the error of their ways or be destroyed. Golconda is not only a myth, it is a fatal distraction. It keeps a vampire focused on ideals directly counter to those in his best interests — survival, strength and power.
- Do not sire needlessly. Vampires are a species in transition. Best not to Embrace many before the Beast has been thoroughly purged.

## DESCRIPTION OF FOLLOWERS

A marginal calling among the Sabbat, the Path of Orion appeals to vampires who are alienated loners, even for that sect. Members find a camaraderie (and *Vaulderie*) with

similarly minded undead. While both the Path of Honorable Accord and Path of Orion seek to better the Children of Caine, stalkers see themselves as lonely outsiders, grim vigilantes who protect the vampiric race from itself.

Followers come from any clan, but the path has a natural appeal to Brujah, Nosferatu and Gangrel. Few Lasombra and Tzimisce assume it, but a fair number of Panders see the duties of the path as a means to glory and control. In any event, adherents must be capable fighters and hunters, capable of acting both alone and in a pack.

The calling is answered primarily by paladins and templars — path founder Lord Wilkshire is himself a templar. Few bishops and no archbishops or cardinals practice it, although some respect its tenets. While a few stalkers have joined the Black Hand, the Hand considers them less than reliable — devotees are prone to make "executive decisions" about choice of targets rather than obeying orders.

Alternatively, the path has gained status in the Sabbat Inquisition. To the stalkers, demons are merely another manifestation of the Beast, or perhaps something even worse. Lord Wilkshire has as yet to release an official doctrine regarding demons, but has acknowledged them as legitimate targets. Thus, many stalkers serve the Inquisition willingly, clashing with supporters of Evil Revelations in the process.

While path followers seek to correct the behavior of the most extreme "deviants" among vampires, they do not do much to recruit new members. Most Sabbat paths are recognized as legitimate expressions of the vampiric condition so should not be winnowed, and it's understood that not all vampires are cut out for a stalkers' existence. A sire whose childe displays aptitude for another path should let the neonate go with her blessing.

Stalkers are viewed with suspicion by many Sabbat, particularly by young or degenerate ones (those with low path scores). Stalkers act as "white blood cells," against other vampires who have succumbed to the Beast, and these weaklings can take steps to discredit or harm the judges.

## HISTORY

The Path of Orion is a relatively recent innovation, with few adherents. It has its roots in other paths such as Honorable Accord, Harmony and Power and the Inner Voice. While some Cainite historians claim to find traces of its existence during the Sabbat-Camarilla wars of the 17th century, its first known practitioner and guru was the Brujah *antitribu* Lord Aaron Wesley Wilkshire, also called the Silver Death for his practice of hunting Lupines.

The mortal Wilkshire, a member of the British peerage at the height of the Victorian era, was renowned for his skill at the hunt. He routinely undertook the most dangerous of safaris into the darkest depths of Africa and Asia. At home, the lord was equally reviled as a monied, violent, drunken, blaspheming, fornicating brute without character or scruples, the antithesis of the genteel English aristocrat. Only his lineage kept him out of jail for various assault- and liquor-related offenses at taverns, gambling dens, brothels and

other places of ill repute. Some have said that Stevenson's description of Edward Hyde was modeled on his passing acquaintance with Wilkshire. In any event, the lord embodied all the ignoble qualities of the literary character. He was truly happy, truly at peace, when stalking lions in the African veldt or tigers in the bamboo forests of the Raj.

Like many Brujah, Wilkshire had a strong, nearly uncontrollable Beast. Unlike many Brujah — and surprisingly, given his temperamental nature — he was profoundly disturbed by this sway held over him. He was no stranger to brutality or cruelty, particularly after his Embrace, but he preferred to be the one directing the carnage, not the other way around. Thus, he threw himself into the study of the Sabbat paths with a diligence heretofore unknown for the impulsive ne'er-do-well.

He dabbled in Honorable Accord and Power and the Inner Voice the way others flip through a book. Nothing fit. He could not stomach the regimens of the knights, being too much like the stuffy ways of the peerage from his mortal life. He shared the Path of Power and the Inner Voice's love of challenge, but the philosophy was too calculating, too tradesman-like for his savage soul. Conversely, the Path of Harmony was too animalistic and primitive — he hunted game, he didn't run with them. While he reveled in the pleasures common to the Cathari, he considered them diversions, not sacred rituals. And all the while, he could hear the Beast howling as his fleeting hold on Humanity slipped away. Finally, despairing of his miserable soul, Wilkshire hurled himself into the Lupine-haunted wilds of Central Asia. No one expected to see him again.

He returned years later, noticeably calmer, bearing several Lupine pelts and a philosophy.

Darwin had recently claimed that man was descended from animals, and Wilkshire agreed. The Sabbat claimed that vampires were superior to kine and again, Wilkshire concurred. Rather than perceive the categories of animal, kine and Cainite as separate, distinct types, however, Wilkshire concluded that he held all these elements within him.

As Darwin implied, the natural order was in a continuous state of evolution. The Children of Caine were a race not in decline, but in dawning. Until such time that all vampires tamed their bestial and human sides, however, they would never truly know what it meant to be Children of Caine. Wilkshire had experienced great trials and revelations in the wilds of Turkestan; he had burned away his remnants of man and caged his Beast. In order for vampires to survive and prosper as a race, he believed they would have to do the same.

One must select the fittest among the race of vampires, Wilkshire said, and the first task of doing so is to purify and purge one's own species. Since the vampire is a hunter, he must hunt. The hunt provides a natural spiritual cleansing. In external tracking, stalking and feeding, a vampire may undergo a spiritual evolution of quest, trial and reward. But vampires should not stalk just any prey. There are two "questing beasts" for which to be alert.

The Beast seeks to make one an animal, and if one succumbs, he must prepare to be hunted. Therefore, Wilkshire vowed to pursue those Cainites who fell to their own souls and the souls of the Damned race. And yet, since mortals are Cainites' chosen prey, those vampires who retain too much of their kine nature must also be brought down. They have chosen to be gazelles rather than lions and they must not be allowed to weaken the spirit of the predators around them.

Wilkshire went back to serving the sect and made little attempt to recruit followers. But a few vampires found wisdom in what he said. Soon, there were enough Sabbat on his path that it acquired a name — Orion, after the mythic hunter.

Since its inception, the calling has had a short but bloody and glorious history. Followers boldly lend their strength to sieges and war parties. At least three Methuselahs have fallen under their fangs, one reputed to be a member of the secretive Inconnu. Although distrusted as a "cult" by some Sabbat, members' irrefutable service in purging the sect of threats within and without has won them a reluctant acceptance among Sabbat leaders.

Lord Wilkshire still exists. A templar, he wanders from pack to pack, domain to domain, enacting the will of the sect's cardinals. He is the prophet and guru of all stalkers, although Sabbat of greater standing still command him and his followers. As a founder of his own faith, Wilkshire has considerable prestige and influence.

#### CURRENT PRACTICES

Followers of the Path of Orion are found almost exclusively in the Sabbat. They are templars and paladins and readily participate in war parties. Sometimes they receive "special dispensation" to carry out solitary, extended (decades-long) hunts of particularly dangerous enemies of the sect.

This is not to say that the hunt occupies all of a follower's nights. A vampire must improve himself in all aspects of undead existence. As Sabbat, stalkers participate in *Vaulderie*, torture, revelry and *ritae*. They are among the most devout foes of the Camarilla; members of which they consider mewling cowards nostalgic for their breathing days.

During sieges, stalkers have a secondary role: "Talking down" fellow Sabbat who lose themselves to frenzy. Because they are good at controlling their own Beast and often have Animalism, stalkers stay close to frenzy-prone warriors, making sure these vampires direct their rages appropriately and "snapping them out of it" (preferably by nonviolent means, but whatever works) if the berserkers spin completely out of control.

Stalkers are sometimes chosen to stage assassination attempts against powerful Camarilla figures. They tend to accomplish such efforts through stealth rather than espionage. Ironically, their rejection of all things human makes it difficult for them to blend in with Humanity-retaining Kindred.

It should be noted that the teachings of the path — that vampires are in a state of evolution — runs counter to both

the beliefs of most other Cainites, and to what might seem self-evident. Namely, that the eldest vampires, those embraced long ago, tend to be the most powerful and strongest of blood, not weaker than those who have been created at a “higher” point of evolution. To this, stalkers reply that given the scarcity of vampiric blood, elders have simply had time to hoard it. Even elders who do not deserve their continued existence may carry on if they’re duplicitous enough.

This state the stalkers seek to amend. Like most Sabbat, they are rabid diablerists. Hunting and killing elders “unfit” to carry the blood is nearly as holy a tenet as hunting and killing the spiritually imperfect. The latter supersedes stalkers’ drive for diablerie — they are mandated to destroy a Beast-ridden neonate over a more tempting elder — but they are otherwise free to indulge in the Amaranth. Wilkshire himself has fed twice on the blood of powerful elders, and intends to do so again.

Most stalkers have some degree of capability to survive in the wild, so they often agree to quests and missions into rural and unknown territory. They occasionally act as advance scouts in Lupine country. Werewolves can be prized as trophies as bestial vampires, if not more so.

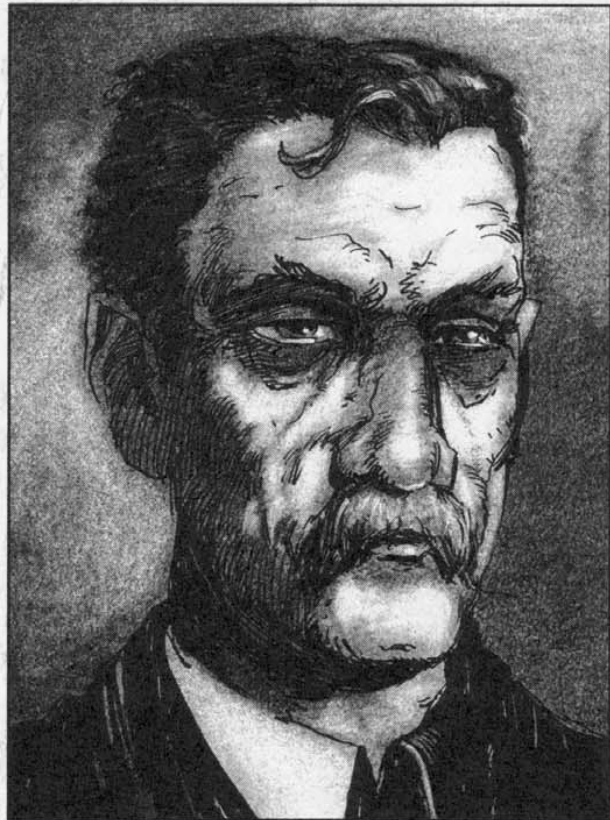
Once every decade, all path followers who can spare themselves assemble at a hidden location. There, under the eye of Lord Wilkshire, they hold a great and bloody revel, featuring dangerous *ritae* and ritual hunts of armed human prey. At the end of celebrations, Lord Wilkshire decrees a “wild hunt” for a particularly dangerous Kindred target — usually a vampire said to be in Golconda or an especially savage Beast-ridden creature. The practitioner who can bring down this target within the next year gains prestige and bragging rights among his fellows.

## FOLLOWING THE PATH

The hunt is everything for those on the Path of Orion. Their unives focus on tracking the most dangerous game — vampires of either very low or very high Humanity, Lupines and similar prey. The hunt is not always a physical challenge, however. It can involve decades of subterfuge and infiltration as easily as a crazed chase down back alleys. No matter its form, a pursuit must be maintained single-mindedly. By focusing on the task at hand, a follower can drown out the call of both the Beast and memories of life.

While most stalkers are Sabbat, the path is very selective about siring. In this sense, adherents employ something akin to the traditional Camarilla model of pursuing, Embracing and nurturing a childe. It is important that a creation be a credit to the vampiric race, and a path follower who sires poorly loses respect among peers. Lord Wilkshire himself spent three decades tracking and eliminating one of his own childer who’d dared to stray from the path in favor of Golconda.

Some Sabbat simply come to the path. Those who do are typically targets of suspicion among their old packmates. The path is relatively new, poorly understood, and its followers are sometimes branded fanatics more interested



**LORD AARON WESLEY WILKSHIRE,  
THE SILVER DEATH**

Because the founder of the Path of Orion is an active member of the Sabbat, and “only” an ancilla, characters might have more direct dealings with him than with the hoarier members of other paths. Characters who answer Wilkshire’s call, given their “survival of the fittest” mentality, could end up allies or targets of the templar. (Note that Wilkshire himself has only a 9 rating in the path. It’s possible that a Cainite of superior focus and merit could supplant him as visionary of the path.)

Wilkshire earned his sobriquet by hunting Lupines. Characters in a *Werewolf: The Apocalypse* game might run afoul of him as well.

**Clan:** Brujah *antitribu*

**Generation:** 7th (originally 9th)

**Nature:** Competitor

**Demeanor:** Bravo

**Attributes:** Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 6, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1

**Abilities:** Alertness 5, Animal Ken 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 5, Dodge 4, Firearms 6, Intimidation 5, Leadership 3, Linguistics 2, Melee 4, Occult 4, Science 3, Stealth 6, Survival 6

**Disciplines:** Animalism 3, Auspex 1, Celerity 5, Obfuscate 3, Presence 5, Potence 5

**Backgrounds:** Resources 4, Status (Sabbat) 4

**Virtues:** Conviction 4, Instinct 5, Courage 5

Path of Orion 9

Willpower 8

in personal visionquests than in the good of the sect. Orion is therefore most popular among loner and nomadic Sabbat.

To progress as a stalker, one must understand the hunt not only in the physical sense, but in the emotional and spiritual sense. Predation is a metaphor for all of existence. As one enters the unknown night in search of victims, he undergoes the hero's journey for spiritual purity. He leaves the boundaries of the known world behind.

All features of a hunt have mythic resonance. A vampire must stay alert for the smallest signs, portents or chance meetings. Each outing has a lesson to teach, and as a follower accepts increasingly challenging quests, deeper insights are gained.

Beyond hunting, a vampire must remain alert for dangerous lapses among his own sectmates. Wilkshire warns disciples to be cautious and subtle in dealing with others. Stalkers are not, nor do they wish to be, perceived as crazed cultists or Inquisitors who accuse everyone of "sin." Only when they're sure a vampire has degenerated to the point that the sect and species is in danger do they act — swiftly, surely and mercilessly. They've proved correct frequently enough that most archbishops grudgingly give them leeway to conduct such purges.

#### **Virtues**

Followers of the Path of Orion practice Conviction and Instinct.

#### **Common Abilities**

Nearly every Ability in the Talent column is of some use to a follower of this path. In the modern nights, Firearms, Stealth and Survival also rank up there. Those rare modernist stalkers who track their quarries electronically might get more use out of Computer, Finance and Investigation than Wilkshire and his cronies do.

#### **Preferred Disciplines**

Animalism is of paramount importance to stalkers who participate in Sabbat war parties. Auspex and Protean rank similarly. And although most followers of the Path of Orion would prefer that they never get into an actual fight (making a perfect kill, instead), Celerity is valuable when things go wrong.

## **PATH OF PARADOX (MAYAPARISATAYA)**

**Nickname:** Shilmulo or Rakshasas

Its name was Ravnos — maybe. It is said that he (she?) had 10 heads, 20 arms, and eyes that burned of fire. One thing is certain: He was the king of the rakshasas. Within his ancient kingdom of Lanka, he slept. From the forests of that tainted land to the vastness of the sub-continent, in and beyond the world, his dreams commanded his children. They say he was the thrice born, the guardian of the place between places, and his third death would allow him to walk again among the *asuras* of Heaven.

When Ravnos was born, the heavens screamed. Every other child born that day died, and every mother wept. His

mother was a demon, his father a fallen saint. For a long time, Ravnos was an ascetic. He prayed for salvation on mountaintops, but was not given godhood. Instead, he received invulnerability and power over dreams, fire and shapechanging. He could take the form of a corpse, rock, monster or fire from above. He made Lanka his home and filled it with a harem of captured women, food for his lust and hunger.

Some of his victims he made rakshasas. Others, he ate. But ultimately he became a lord of demons, of pale thieves of the forest who stole children, lives, blood and souls. Eventually, Ravnos fell into slumber, the death-slumber of the ancient Damned. But his children continued. These demons ruled India and beyond for an age.

Some small number of the demons left the domain of their king and wandered the world. In time, they changed subtly, no longer the creatures of the woodland night. They forgot Ravnos' terrible rites of torture, cannibalism and fire. The wanderers — whom westerners would later call "vampires" — took their pleasure among wandering tribes of mortals. The elder ancestors of these Ravnos had little interest or pity in the lessers' mortal companions, and hunted down their errant childer over the course of decades. Some of the Ravnos' mortal companions, including the Romany, thought themselves to be capable of confronting and defeating the ancient monsters from Lanka. Most of them were wrong, but the fates of the survivors were forever entwined with the undead among them.

The eldest children of Ravnos sat in their torture pits and sacrifice gardens, dealing with spirits of death and the servants of the Yama Kings. Sometimes they reached out to the wandering prodigals, tempting them with vile deals. Sometimes the prodigals succumbed. But these masters passed in the end, too, with no trace of their existence save for a philosophy.

## **BASIC BELIEFS**

The Mayaparisataya Dharma is known as the Path of Paradox by westerners and outsiders, because at its heart it asks adherents to accept several inherently paradoxical arguments:

The elder children of Ravnos bring horrific pain and suffering and are an instrument of God's grace.

The path offers hope for enlightenment and awareness beyond the illusion that is the world, but demands that an adherent understand and totally accept that illusion.

Vampirism is a curse; vampirism is a gift.

Followers of this path say: *Within paradox, one finds definition.* By accepting two contradictory truths, one can glimpse a greater reality.

According to Paradox, all vampires are locked outside the Great Cycle, the *Samsara*. Vampires, undead immortal things, are denied the correct way, the cycle of life and reincarnation. They have lost their *karma* and are forever separate from the proper laws of existence. Yet each vampire has a destiny and a purpose in the Great Cycle. What that purpose may be depends on the creature in question.

To understand destiny, one must contemplate the falsehood of the world. This illusion, which the ancients called *Maya*, is powerful and complex. Everything the senses may define, everything considered “of this world” is an illusion. The higher truths of a greater reality are hidden in the subtlest and least obvious parts of *Maya*. Since the illusion only masks the real world, the broken parts of the illusion — paradoxes and inconsistencies — must reveal the truth beyond. By seeking incongruities to properly understand the illusion, a vampire can attempt to grasp at a perfect state, one that balances the Beast with the soul, and thus approach Golconda. By meditating on this destiny, a vampire learns his purpose in unlife, his *svadharna*.

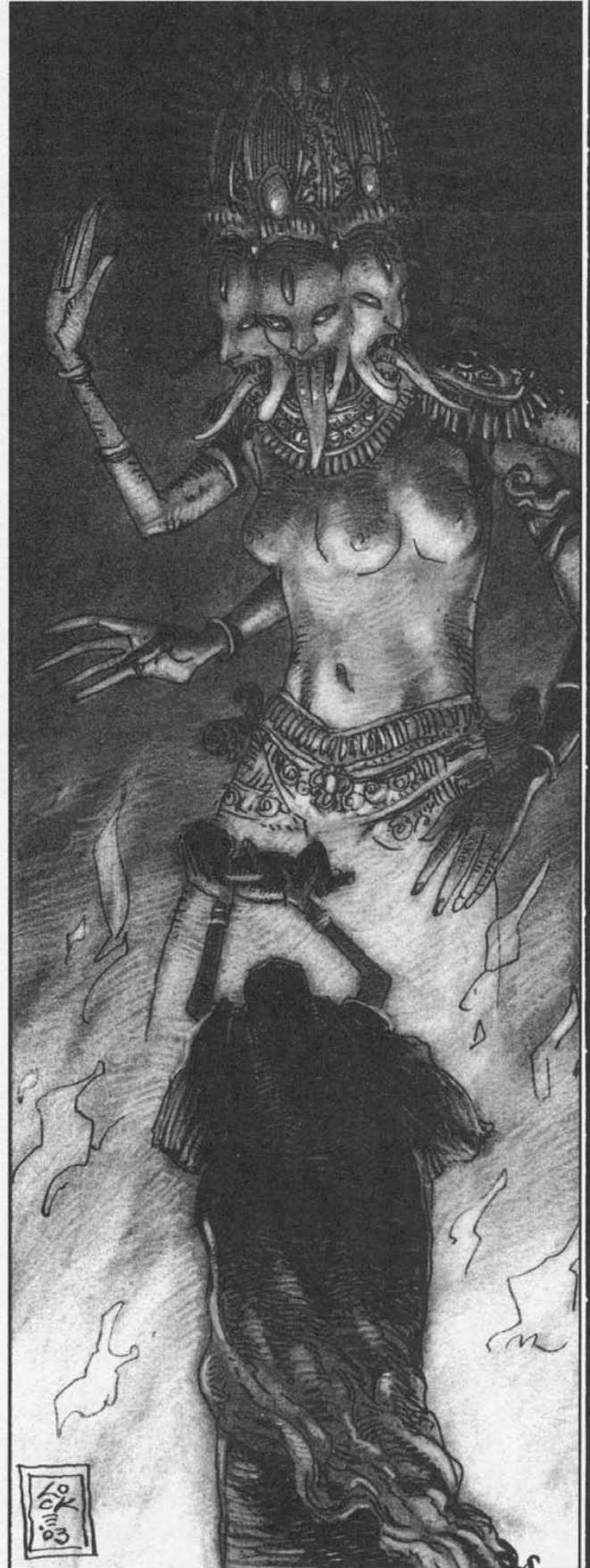
Once a vampire has discovered his *svadharna*, he must dedicate his existence to that purpose. A Cainite’s *svadharna* can take many forms — one rakshasa might be driven to catalog all the stars in the sky, while another might find that her fate is to destroy all of her mortal descendants, only to be destroyed at the hands of the last of them. Others might learn less of their own specific destiny, perhaps being confronted with riddles or being shown archetypal roles that they might play, instead.

Dedication to a *svadharna* is not passive. It’s not enough to merely *know* what is required. One must *do* what is required by destiny. Vampires who see their fate as a series of tasks might have a clear course before them. Those who learn their destiny in the form of a riddle or mythical archetype often wander for years, trying to find a means to enlightenment hidden within *Maya* itself. A vampire must beware adopting another’s destiny; the followers of this path value freedom. A *shilmulo* might learn from an older or wiser vampire, but she must not follow in his footsteps for too long lest her own goal be obscured.

Once a Cainite takes to this path, the only law that binds her is her own fate. Each calling is unique, but many on this path choose to become teachers. Some become crusaders, seeking to tear away the veil of ignorance from fellow vampires. And some crusaders grow weary of attempting to instruct others, seeking to inflict that simplest destiny — Final Death.

Followers of this path understand that they are rakshasas, the demonic wanderers of the night from Indian legend. They grasp that their karma is lost and that they are cursed monsters, but through their curse they become agents of destiny. By being monsters, revealing others’ fate and enforcing it, the rakshasas fulfill their own purpose. Adherents know that there is no point in pretending to be other than monsters.

The Ravnos Antediluvian understood the precepts of this path. Certain of his childer recorded them in defiance of his will. Followers teach that Ravnos was both saint and demon, a living metaphor of the universe. A terrible, hungry thing of death and destruction, yet a source of wisdom. Some say Ravnos suffered and gave up his karma, his humanity and his soul so that his children could regain a little of their own. Now that the Ancient is destroyed, the time has come for those who were spared during the Week of





Nightmares to judge the unworthy and whisper the words of their dead god.

This is not a path of goodness or redemption. Followers consider themselves beyond good and evil, indulging in murder and cruelty to “awaken” victims to their destinies. The path rewards freedom and indulges the Ravnos clan curse.

### HINDUISM AND THE PATH OF PARADOX

The Path of Paradox has adopted many Hindu principles over the years, but the following is not a reflection of Hindu culture or concepts. Many tenets and teachings may be attractive to a vampire who was a Hindu in life, but many lessons are also monstrous and wicked. Hindus may say that their Sanatana Dharma is one of peace and compassion. The Mayaparisataya Dharma urges its followers to indulge in their inhumanity and to slay others like themselves. A mortal Hindu presented with Paradox’s code of ethics might think vampires to be hypocritical at best, blasphemous at worst. In the end, the Mayaparisataya Dharma is the creation of vampires and Hinduism is not.

#### HIERARCHY OF SINS

Rating	Moral Guideline
10	Embracing a woman
9	Embracing outside of the tribe to which you were born as a mortal
8	Destroying another on the true path
7	Killing a mortal for sustenance
6	Not killing another vampire
5	Killing a mortal, unless the death fulfills the victim’s destiny
4	Failure to help fulfill another’s destiny
3	Allowing sect affairs to take priority over the path
2	Becoming blood bound
1	Embracing needlessly or out of personal desire

### ETHICS OF THE PATH

- Embrace only when absolutely necessary and then only from a selected, trusted, mortal family line (be it a Romany or Bengali dynasty).
- Find and interpret the *svadharma* of others and help them fulfill it. If they refuse to accept it, force them.
- All vampires are unnatural, cursed things.
- Destroy other vampires who do not accept their *svadharma*.
- Seek to know the illusion utterly. Experience all it has to offer. Then and only then may one peel back the illusion and behold ultimate truth.
- Deception, theft, murder, lies and pain are tools. They are trappings of the illusion. Do not fear to use them.

### ZAPATHUSTRA’S CHILDREN

Many young, western Ravnos believe they have better things to do than listen to weird Indian claptrap about dead gods and demon-kings. They understand the Path of Para-

dox and wish to follow its tenets, but they don’t want the hand wringing that goes with it. Such vampires often reject the mythology of their predecessors. They identify the Ravnos clan progenitor to be Zapathustra and accuse remaining “eastern elders” of infernalism (although these young vampires are careful to make such accusations when safe in Sabbat strongholds).

Such “progressive” adherents emphasize concepts of personal destiny and the undermining of established laws, which are regarded as barriers to personal destiny. Instead of discussing “illusory reality,” they debate concepts of chaos theory — that everything is energy until it is defined. As wielders of “chimerical” powers, these path followers are close to that energy. By spreading chaos and destruction (and killing vampires), they believe the energy of the universe is released.

### DESCRIPTION OF FOLLOWERS

The majority of adherents of the Path of Mayaparisataya are Ravnos, but that doesn’t say much. There are fewer than 100 clanmembers active in the Final Nights. While these vampires Embrace childer regularly, few neonates have joined the path since the Week of Nightmares. Hardly 20 vampires practice this faith any longer. Most are ancillae operating in the Sabbat, or old vampires who survived the massacres in India.

Vampires of Clan Ravnos are not the only ones who follow this path, however. A few Indian undead of Clan Assamite, Ventrue and Toreador answer the call. Their numbers are even smaller than those of their Ravnos brethren. Many path members lived in Calcutta and fell in the Week of Nightmares; the remaining few belong to sects known as the Brahmanists and Dakini (see *State of Grace* for more information on these minor cults).

Legend names the elder Ravnos Brahmeparush and Gayal. Those two — and their descendants — are the true predators of the Indian night, reveling in warfare in Sri Lanka, Kashmir and Gujarat as opportunities to explore their pleasures. They call themselves “rakshasas” and may comprise the largest groups of the children of Ravnos.

Rakshasas who leave southern Asia and join with greater Cainite society find themselves most at home among the Ravnos *antribu* of the Sabbat. Rakshasas aren’t concerned with the race, color or creed of prospective childer, but they do want descendants to be young, beautiful and amoral. They believe that their Embrace changes a subject completely, wiping away any last traces of humanity and morality.

Utterly decadent and utterly corrupt, the rakshasas believe they still rule the Indian hinterlands (although myriad forces oppose them, including Cathayan vampires, Indian wizards and tiger shapeshifters). And despite the decimating effects of the Week of Nightmares, some Ravnos claim that a few elders (reports vary as to which) still sleep beneath the earth, guiding followers of the path through dreams.

**The Saints:** There are only a handful of these Cainites alive in the Final Nights. They are not a formal group and have no recognized hierarchy; this title is simply applied to individuals by other path followers. Saints are Ravnos followers of the Path of Paradox who have achieved their destinies and reached a state of "Holy Balance" (they approach Golconda or something like it). Not all "saints" have reached Golconda, but those who are given this title are known to be wise and insightful. The so-called False Prophet, a western half-Gypsy Ravnos named Paul Forrest, has another spirit coiled around his heart, a spirit that is incredibly knowledgeable about the Path of Mayaparisataya, but whose messages are not what other Ravnos want to hear. For more on Forrest, see p. XX.

**The Saddhu:** Paradox's teachers, these few Ravnos are all members of the Sabbat. Other adherents consider them less enlightened than saints, but more comprehensible and therefore better instructors. The Saddhu take Paradox's ideals of freedom and morality to heart. Now that the Ravnos Antediluvian is dead, the priests claim, the clan may step forth to lead the Sabbat against the other founders. The Saddhu seek to convert solitary Ravnos to both the Sabbat and the Path of Paradox. They have worked hard since the Week of Nightmares, learning all they can about the fall of the Antediluvian, and accounting for surviving clan members. Those they cannot convert, they ignore — there are too few Ravnos left to kill every trickster who turns her face from the truth. These holy men particularly seek to convert peers who function as pack priests (or those further up the hierarchy) in the Sabbat. By spreading the path amongst such influential Ravnos, they hope to make Mayaparisataya a dominant movement throughout the sect. Several Saddhu make their homes in Mexico City, and others lurk in the Middle East. Each hopes to find like-minded Cainites among the clusters of vampires in those areas.

Saddhu are skilled blood magicians. Such characters can be created using the Indian blood-magic rules in **Blood Sacrifice**. Their power is nothing compared to the magic of Ravnos elders who still dwell in India, but they have a critical edge over western contemporaries.

## HISTORY

The rakshasas ruled the forests and hills of prehistoric India. Those creatures, cannibals and soul-stealers, haunted the nights of the cultures that arose in that land. For millennia, the monsters warred with mortal heroes and the magicians of the Tal'mahe'ra, carving out domains of flesh and spirit.

Stories tell of terrible rites that split the sky, as children and innocents fueled spirit fires. Others describe awful beings — devils, demons and worse — conjured from utter darkness. The domain of Ravnos, the stories say, was the domain of evil.

Over the World Mountains, the Ten Thousand Immortals watched and saw the Kings of Hell, their eternal enemies, grow powerful and extend vile talons across the mountains. The rakshasas, with their love for debauchery

and the fiery rites of damnation, allied with the Kings of Hell. The immortals thus took up arms against the rakshasas.

They warred for decades — but they also traded, intrigued and parleyed. As they did so, the Cathayans' paths of morality and insight echoed among the rakshasas (and vice versa, it is said). Over centuries — well after the war ended — Ravnos Cainites developed their informal code of behavior into a deep and subtle Path of Enlightenment, based in part on the patterns they found among the Cathayan philosophies. The name of the elder who formalized the Path of Mayaparisataya has been lost to antiquity, although the few learned Ravnos who survived the Week of Nightmares ascribe the feat to the ancient known as Gayal.

The eldest rakshasas followed all the tenets of what modern Cainites think of as the Path of Paradox, but they claimed that to be a true son of Ravnos, one had to accept the role of dark god of the night. Far from merely exploring the nature of the illusion through sin, vice and murder, these followers tested their own limits, rejecting the shackles of any morality, save that of respecting Ravnos. It was the actions of these vampires that spawned the fearsome reputation of tonight's Ravnos.

Even without an epic history, the Path of Paradox has an impressive pedigree. It has a clear relationship with Hinduism and claims to be the eldest Path of Enlightenment. While Cathayan scholars assert that their principles had enormous influence on the development of the Cainite paths, knowledgeable adherents of Mayaparisataya hold that their path influenced the Cathayan *dharma*s. Hinduism's influence can be found far to the east and west; similar concepts exist in Taoism, Buddhism, Persian magical thought and Christian heresies.

Parallels to the Path of Paradox can be found in newer callings, as well. The themes of accepting the world's illusion and a vampire's monstrous and sensual nature as divine appear in the Path of Cathari and amongst some factions of the Path of Redemption. Rakshasas hold that these eternal truths were carried north and west by Ravnos vampires, following the great war with the Cathayans.

And yet, even after that war, the Ravnos did not predominate. Perhaps it was Gayal's formalization of the Path of Mayaparisataya itself that brought the Ravnos down, or the overabundance of young, weak vampires who showed mortals how the undead could be destroyed. The rakshasas never hid from mortals as modern vampires do, but they faded from history. Indeed, centuries of their existence passed quietly.

When the British came, the Tal'mahe'ra betrayed India to the invaders, praying that powers behind the newcomers could break the hidden demons, once and for all. Demonic sorcerers and rakshasa vampires fought terrible battles in the streets and tunnels of Indian cities, while British troops raped, looted and burned. Finally, Tal'mahe'ra magicians performed horrific rituals in the Underworld, destroying the rakshasa as they slept. The vampires were defeated and India was broken by the will of the British

Empire. Grievously wounded, undead survivors crept deep into the mountains and forests, and waited.

Some survivors fled toward Europe in a second diaspora. Most Ravnos who did so did not truly understand the Path of Mayaparisatya, and had to develop their own codes in order to keep their Beasts at bay. It may have been some memory or remnant of the “true,” elder interpretation of the path that inspired the form of Paradox practiced by western Ravnos until recently. As Ravnos stirred in his slumber, Indian elders traveled the world, warning some westerners that such heresy could not continue. A few repented. Most did not. There may well still be adherents of the “fallen” path, but their blatant and violent ways are no longer tolerable. Such outré devilry and mass murder are considered to have no place in the modern world. If these outcast followers still exist, they practice in secret.

During their brief spate of panicked activity after the Antediluvian’s awakening, rakshasa elders used their powers of Chimerstry to assume hideous forms and to terrify mortals. These vampires liberally interpreted their mission to find and judge others’ destinies. Their victims were obviously fated to be eaten, they said. Otherwise, they would never have been encountered. Then, like most other children of Ravnos, the rakshasa elders were destroyed.

Now Ravnos is dead, killed by the magic of his enemies and the fires of Heaven, and he took many of his chider across the world with him. If the old stories are true, the Ancient was destined to have three incarnations. This would have been his third. With his death, adherents of the Path of Mayaparisatya whisper that their lord has ascended to Heaven once more to serve as Gatekeeper of the Celestial World, from whence he fell an eternity ago.

The Path of Paradox — a legacy of fire, death and murder — is Ravnos’ only remaining gift to his children.

### CURRENT PRACTICES

Vampires who follow this path do not merely destroy other vampires to help them fulfill their destinies. Rakshasas strive to test all undead with whom they come in contact. By playing the “stereotypical” Ravnos, followers can judge a great deal about an individual’s soul from her reactions.

These nights, most adherents concern themselves with survival first and foremost. With so few followers, the path must grow again if it is to endure. The most likely converts are fellow Ravnos. Attempts at forced conversion are known to be violent; after the Week of Nightmares, few Ravnos are willing to gather in a grand alliance of the clan.

### THE FATE OF THE DARK GOD

If the path’s faithful are correct in their assertion that their god has progressed toward a new birth, then he will not be reborn as a vampire Antediluvian. If, in your game, you decide that Ravnos has ascended to a new form, the Path of Paradox could become the focus of a new religion that venerates the ancient Indian deity in his final, destined incarnation. If not, well, Ravnos is dead and life and unlife go on.

*The Blood Diaries* — the writings of a path follower lost in Ravnos’ death throes — are distributed among adherents. The book is valued for its insight and as a cautionary tale on how *not* to walk the path.

## FOLLOWING THE PATH

Members, whether they support the western or eastern clan, have always held other vampires in contempt. The undead are considered sins or flaws in the nature of the universe, and to be destroyed.

In the aftermath of the “liberation” of Ravnos (as some call it), adherents of Mayaparisataya have become obsessed with prophecy. They do not wish to be caught unawares again. They record their dreams and even stoop to using mortal fortune telling to catch any glimpse of the future. Many path followers fear that a “second liberation” of the “mad one” will come one night soon and will herald a terrible shift in the world and the illusion. Practitioners have not decided whether to fear this change or anticipate its coming.

### Virtues

The Path of Paradox emphasizes Conviction and Self-Control.

### Common Abilities

Followers are spread all over the globe and do not make many demands of each other’s capabilities, but Alertness, Empathy, Subterfuge, Stealth and Investigation are all useful in any situation.

### Preferred Disciplines

The clan Discipline Chimerstry is integral to the teachings of this path. Fortitude is also advantageous for self-protection. Auspex is common, and blood magic is practiced by a small number of followers.

## PATH OF POWER AND THE INNER VOICE

### Nickname: Unifiers

A few crippling weaknesses notwithstanding, vampires are more powerful than mortals, at least as most define “powerful.” The undead are simply more capable of affecting the environment, of imposing their will on the world. Whether that will acts in accordance with what weak-minded mortals consider “good”... well, vampires who still cling to their morality from life spend endless nights agonizing over such questions, and fall to the Beast as a result. The Path of Power and the Inner Voice seeks to overcome such dangers by divesting morality from power. Strength, force, dominance — these qualities are valuable in themselves. Whether the ego is directed toward altruism, self-interest or malevolence is irrelevant so long as the will steadily gains control.

This path promises few mystic secrets. It guides and tames the Beast through sheer determination. Control of one’s passions leads to control of one’s blood, which in turn leads to control of one’s thoughts and control over one’s

environment. As within, so without. Only through self-mastery can one master the world. If one truly tames the Beast, one dominates his environment as naturally as... well, breathing, were a vampire still mortal. Thus, the mere fact of power intrinsically proves one's worthiness to possess it.

In some ways, this path isn't so very hard for mortals to understand. People read self-help books that promise to unlock the power of positive thinking or the secrets of success. We can win friends, influence people, make millions overnight and have it all. Some might therefore argue that the rudiments of this path already exist among certain kine. Many path followers would agree.

This calling doesn't really care about being esoteric and incomprehensible. If kine can comprehend its precepts, so much the better. Power is direct. Force is direct. Mastery is direct. A means to those goals should be simple and clear. This philosophy bridges the abyss of the soul with a gleaming razor blade. Can you comprehend it? Of course. Can you understand its purpose? Perhaps. Can you walk it? Ah, there's the trick.

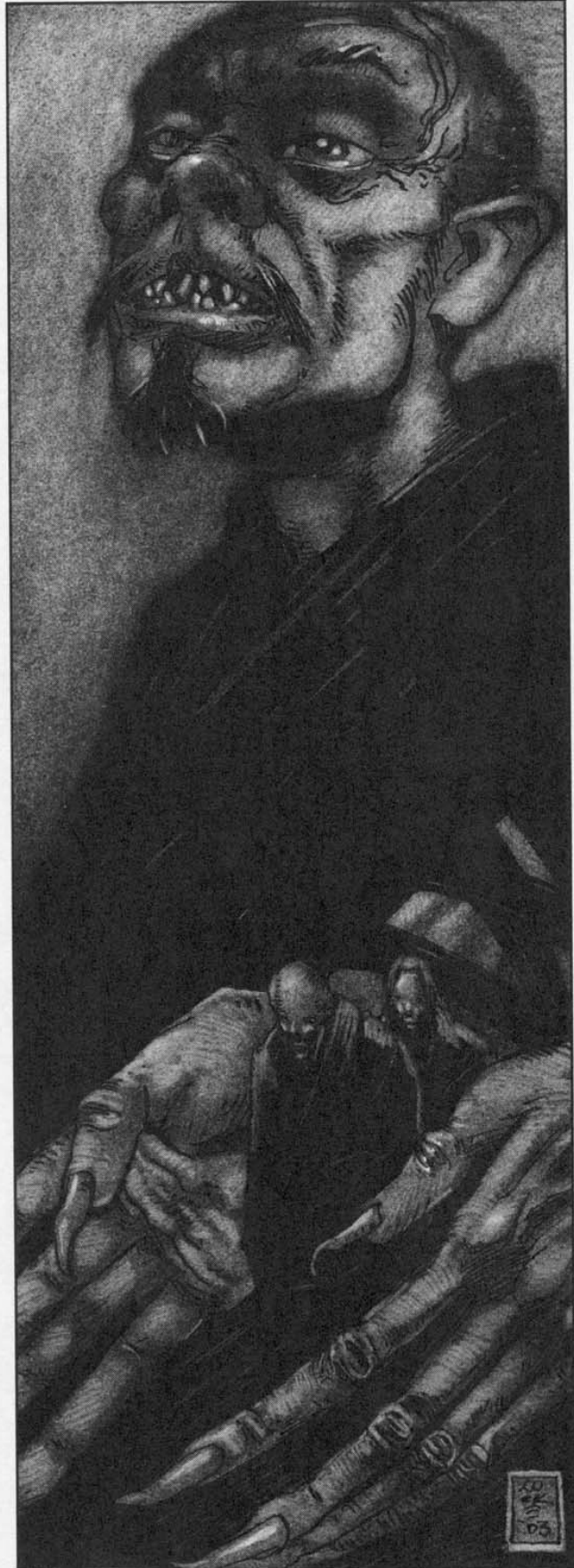
Any instrument, properly honed, can be used to advance a vampire's standing. The undead are, however, creatures of blood. They realize that pain and fear teach far more lasting lessons than love and loyalty. Love can wane, loyalty can be subverted, but the older, more primordial emotions are rooted deep in all creatures. Thus, beings on this path act in ways that, while often considered tyrannical, are simply effective. To coin a phrase, "the end justifies the means."

## BASIC BELIEFS

The previously stated "as within, so without" maxim summarizes this path's philosophy perfectly. External power is not coincidental; it is as much a reflection of one's spiritual development as the look in one's eyes or the expression on one's face. For members of this path, there is no such thing as luck or fate. Everything can be controlled by those who have the will to do so. After all, if everything were the result of chance or fate, would the scales not have balanced out by now? There are clearly those who earn more rewards than others, those who impose their agendas, and in so doing they erase the lesser wishes of the weak. And that's good. The weak would lead the whole astray. It is the titans who must forge the stuff of Creation for the good of all.

The state of the early 21st century causes many path practitioners to smile. Power, they see, inevitably coagulates toward the deserving few. Economically, the rich get richer, the gulf between the haves and have-nots widens, and the distinction between the great and the mediocre is broadcast across the globe in microseconds. This evolution is natural, the unifiers argue. Eventually, the bulk of resources gravitate into the hands of those who merit them.

But material power, while useful, merely mirrors the more constant, controllable medium of real power. Blood power. Spirit power. The raw capability to bend the world



to one's will. If a mortal spends a lifetime of toil and pain accumulating a fortune, only to sign it away in minutes to the first Cainite who Dominates her to do so, who has displayed the greater mastery? Money, influence, status — all are worth seeking, but they are subject to the vicissitudes of rivals or incompetent subordinates. When one has learned how to rip asunder a steel door or move like the wind or control another's mind with a glance, one has a weapon and tool that persists until Final Death.

Unifiers strongly espouse the "values" of negative reinforcement, of monstrosity and tyranny. They do so not to be "evil," as do nihilists on the Path of Night. They simply recognize the benefits of pain and terror as unchanging, effective implements. After all, what is "good" varies according to culture, age or other zeitgeist. In the world of an immortal, there is no place for such dross. The best methods of control are the time-tested ones, the ones that worked as well in Babylon as they do in Baltimore. Coax a follower with money and someone else can always distract him with more money. But find out what a subordinate dreads and hold that over him and he will serve forever.

#### HIERARCHY OF SINS

Rating	Moral Guideline
10	Denying responsibility for your actions
9	Treating your underlings poorly
8	Failing to respect your superiors
7	Helping others when it's not to your advantage
6	Accepting defeat
5	Failing to kill when it's in your interests
4	Submitting to the error of others
3	Not using the most effective tools for control
2	Not punishing failure
1	Turning down an opportunity for power

#### ETHICS OF THE PATH

- Do not tolerate failure — including one's own. Punish it visibly and harshly. It is a proven fact that negative reinforcement produces greater efficiency than positive reinforcement. So long as punishment is not fatal, one can learn from the consequences, then seek to overcome once more. Failure, by contrast, leads to weakness and weakness to corruption and corruption to the Beast. And once the Beast takes hold, the consequences last for eternity.
- Be sparing with rewards. Drive followers to excel, but never let them assume that reward follows excellence. It takes no blood or eternal life to know this; Machiavelli taught the same thing to the kine. Followers who go unrewarded for merit have no motivation, but followers who are rewarded for every act of merit soon learn to do only enough to earn a reward. Even animals can be guided to greatest efficiency in this fashion.
- Strive for control by any means. Dominate the world around one's self and bend it to the will. Control or be controlled. If one does not remain in control at all times, he reveals a chink for the Beast to slip through.

- Use the most effective tool for any undertaking. Hate, fear and anger are among these tools, but feign benevolence if necessary. This path is not about the satisfaction of unleashed emotions. Such puerile pleasures are the currency of the Beast. A master guides her words and deeds according to the needs of efficiency, not gratification. That said, remember who it against which one struggles in the Jyhad: monsters. Use the weapons of monsters against them, that one might be the greatest monster of all.
- Show respect to those in authority, but usurp them when they falter. By definition, those in positions of superiority have learned more. They are models by which one can learn to subdue the Beast. This is true exactly as long as they remain superior in deed and thought as well as title. Each case is unique. The first step on the path to mastery is knowing when one has surpassed one's teachers. When that happens, continuing to follow is the gateway to degradation, not advancement. Eliminate any chance of such decline by eliminating unworthy models.
- Deal from a position of power. Do not show weakness. Or, as some kine say, "Act as if." Even mortals know that the first step to true power is to feign that power. If one is weak, emulate strength. If one is poor, act as though wealthy. If uncertain, deal from a position of surest confidence. Oftentimes, such posturing can carry one through.

#### DESCRIPTION OF FOLLOWERS

This avocation is popular in the current age, with its emphasis on materialism, status and self-centeredness. Some unifiers would argue that they merely blazed the trail that the rest of the world follows.

Not all powermongers are as frighteningly effective as one would imagine. Most are exceedingly confident in their capabilities, though. As one Sabbat archbishop proclaims, "Overconfidence is a temporary condition. Either one becomes as good as one imagines oneself to be, or one dies."

Like Honorable Accord practitioners, followers of Power and the Inner Voice involve themselves heavily in the Sabbat's superficial dealings: *ritae*, pageantry and war parties. Unlike knights, who do so in an attempt to strengthen the sect's cohesiveness and their own resolve, these devotees do so for political reasons. They also seek to demonstrate their superiority and competitiveness.

High-level advocates understand that true power is often most effective when hidden or used behind the scenes, while low-level followers vie for titles such as pack leader, bishop, templar or whatever they can achieve. Although it sometimes seems that a disproportionate number of "titled" Sabbat are followers of this path, the vampires in question are not necessarily enlightened or particularly formidable.

Unlike members of many other paths, those of Power and the Inner Voice are rivals as often as allies. Control, like other resources, is scarce and finite, so for every gain in power, someone else has to take a loss. There are few win-win situations, even when several unifiers collectively attempt to do the path or sect's bidding. Mongers are happy

to help out their path mates, but such help always has strings attached.

Practitioners try to be generalists, but sometimes specialize out of necessity or because they develop a particular aptitude. Most try to raise clan Disciplines as high as they possibly can. No single clan dominates the following; Lasombra and Tzimisce are attracted to it thanks to being the “favored” Sabbat clans. An equal number of status-crazed Panders and overcompensating Nosferatu also take spiritual solace in the path’s teachings. Perhaps the only clan not well represented is the Malkavians. With the notable exception of compulsive or monomaniacal types, the madmen and women are too “internal” and capricious to do well on this path.

## HISTORY

When asked about the founder of their calling, advocates can smile and reply with a simple word: “Caine.” The first step along the path, they contend, was the slaying of Abel. Caine freed himself from the yoke of servitude, expectations, and from submission to others’ hierarchy and values.

Recorded Cainite history, however, traces the foundation of path precepts to about the 16th century, when a Lasombra named Lord Marcus first made his presence felt on the stage of the Jyhad. A scion of the turbulent mortal courts of the time, Marcus brought a heretofore unknown degree of political sophistication to the (then) crude and anarchic Sabbat. If the sect did not deign to play courtly games in the fashion of the Camarilla, Marcus argued, it was best at least to have the knowledge to counter one’s foes — or to force them onto battlegrounds of one’s choosing.

Lord Marcus espoused his principles in a small folio called the *Lexia Tenebrus*, or the *Shadow Maxims*. At first largely ignored by the nascent sect (which, after all, had “important” business to take care of such as warfare and hunting), the *Shadow Maxims* gained popularity with the Black Hand. That faction used the principles to wage one successful siege after another. Lord Marcus himself rose rapidly within the Hand as a result; he was a dominion at the time of his untoward disappearance in the mid-19th century.

The *Shadow Maxims* were not dissimilar to books such as *The Prince* or the (as then unknown in the West) *Art of War*. Its primary distinction lay in openly acknowledging the use of specifically Cainite forms of battle, subterfuge and manipulation (blood, Disciplines, ghouls). Unlike some previous works, which had primarily focused on gaining and maintaining a principedom, *The Shadow Maxims* addressed subverting and bringing down princes and anarchs alike.

At first primarily a practical handbook, *The Shadow Maxims* soon developed a cult following of students, who ascribed a philosophical significance to what had until then been a political treatise. They recognized the maxims as pillars of not merely external political domination, but as metaphors for how to govern one’s own spirit. Although Zen was unknown at the time, the maxims assumed a koanlike significance. The “territory” to be controlled was not merely a principedom or fiefdom, but a vampire’s own soul.

### AN EXCERPT FROM *THE SHADOW MAXIMS* On the Vigors of Caine’s Vitae

When contesting with another of the Blood, it is best to call upon the Gift freely; for if one wins the contest, the vanquished’s own Gift lies forfeit, while if one is vanquished, one can expect no mercy from our murder-cursed brethren. When contesting with one of lesser order, such as a Ghoul, it is best to call upon the Gift only to the extent that the situation demands; if the Ghoul is the Thrall of a greater Power, sent to test the Childe of Caine, it is best to dispatch the minion with seeming ease and thereby preserve the façade if not the reality of one’s station.

The “enemy” was not merely the Camarilla, but the Beast itself. As one dominated the physical landscape without, one could come to dominate the psychic landscape within. This idea of unity between maxims and internal energies gained momentum among path followers, who accordingly became known as unifiers.

Did Lord Marcus himself develop all of these innovations? Probably not, though he was certainly savvy enough to take credit for the rapidly developing path, and to cement his own standing in the process. Historical records presents evidence that his rivals who attained status on the Path of Power and the Inner Voice met with fatal challenges “for the good of the sect.”

The path gained significant momentum during and following the Industrial Revolution. So many new models of power — not just nation-states, but economic and scientific engines — displaced old ideas such as God and king. Results could be measured, studied, calibrated and assimilated into greater structures. The nascent science of psychology began to explore not only what people did, but why they did it and how they could be manipulated to do something else entirely. Socialism, imperialism, communism, czarism, manifest destiny — the world was a veritable laboratory of struggle, victory and defeat, dominance and concession. Moreover, these models were no longer applied to control of a single territory or fiefdom. Winners could dominate entire countries, continents, empires “where the sun never set.” Or, the unifiers speculated, “never rose.”

But the 20th century was to prove the greatest workshop of all. World-spanning corporations, Thousand Year Reichs, Iron Curtains and wars fought across continents... such complex structures, so rich with opportunity and challenge, had never been seen before. The Final Nights are a rich harvest for young unifiers who manipulate databases, elections, cartels and parties in ways their elders can barely comprehend.

### CURRENT PRACTICES

Followers of this path are in the Sabbat. Since the surest ticket to political power is advancing within the sect, members take pains to become exemplars of what the sect states

a vampire should be. Unifiers take care not only to participate in *ritae*, sieges, war parties and similar sect activities, but to outdo other Sabbat in these activities whenever possible.

Naturally, unifiers (especially young ones) gravitate toward titled positions. If one is in a pack, she makes a bid to be pack leader, then bishop, then archbishop. It's thus important that titles remain important in the chaotic sect and the unifiers take considerable pains to rein in their more anarchic brethren's disrespect or disregard for hierarchy. The Sabbat is not the Camarilla, with its princes, primogen and elders, but unifiers insist that merit be recognized and honored, even if age and bloodline aren't.

For all their rhetoric of being Sabbat through and through, path followers often behave in ways remarkably similar to those of their alleged foes. More so than most Sabbat, unifiers participate in and manipulate the sunlit world for their own ends, extending their reach into crime, business and culture. Other Sabbat acknowledge these activities as (occasionally) necessary, but unifiers' seeming eagerness to snub Sabbat supremacy in favor of self-interest earns them some raised eyebrows from idealistic brethren.

## FOLLOWING THE PATH

At the beginning of one's progression along this path, one follows. This station is accepted and understood. Arrogance gained through centuries of success and wisdom is to be cultivated; blind, foolish arrogance is worthless.

Most unifiers take a mentor. They follow this teacher's directives in the process of accomplishing deeds of greater or lesser importance and recognition. Even as a lowly follower, though, one strives to begin individual progression. A unifier always look for ways to perform a given directive better, more efficiently, more quickly than expected. Vampires who perform only as expected and no better are probably not good candidates for the path's more refined teachings; they'll hover at the lowest levels or fall into the Beast's clutches.

And there are others, others who serve, who seek to climb the path's ladder. These are rivals — allies in the sect, to be paid lip service, but ultimately competitors. The first task of a path devotee is to outdo as many fellow neonates as possible.

Failure at one's assigned tasks is unacceptable. If one does fail, one should expect — indeed, demand — harsh punishment. If the cause of one's failure lies in the incompetence of a fellow path mate/rival, that vampire's spiritual development is only enhanced when her error is pointed out and corrected. Thus, one saves two undead souls from the Beast.

Eventually, one must cease to follow. The tenet of "lead, follow or get out of the way" is especially applicable to vampires on this path. The best way to earn leadership, at least initially, is to make one's mentor look especially good. Doing so serves three purposes: it ingratiates oneself to higher-ranked path members, it causes a mentor to develop so many responsibilities that she has no choice but to delegate some, and (most importantly) it deludes a mentor into overestimating her own capabilities. This last is crucial in ultimately supplanting a teacher.

At this stage, one hopefully comes to lead one's pack or leaves a pack entirely and pursues the role of templar or

paladin. Unlike most Sabbat, unifiers commonly take ghouls, using them as minions and as living lessons on which to enact the teachings (and punishments) of *The Shadow Maxims*. The fate of these ghouls is rarely pleasant. A few might survive to become powerful, brutal, trustworthy minions at best.

At high levels, a vampire has become a leader in his own right, often with a title (bishop at the least), and certainly with a wealth of spiritual might. The ideal unifier has developed capabilities in all things: high Attributes, strong Disciplines, enduring Willpower and a high path score. He should have few glaring weaknesses for a rival to exploit (or they should at least be well hidden).

While unifiers (verbally) stress loyalty to the Sabbat, they occasionally seem less than cooperative with packmates. Acting altruistically directly violates the highest precepts of this path's teaching. Ultimately, by helping others — even allies — one trains those allies to depend on him. Dependence leads to weakness and weakness leads to the Beast. Better that allies try — and fail and suffer punishment and grow stronger — on their own than accomplish something only through the help of others. Such a way leads to spiritual dissolution.

The ultimate resource in the Cainite world is the blood of Caine itself. Unifiers practice diablerie with a zeal unmatched by any save those on the Path of Blood. Unifiers and Blood cultists often maintain heated rivalries over "salvage rights" to the vitae of powerful elder targets.

### Virtues

Path followers develop Conviction and, seemingly odd, Instinct. Although unifiers can seem cold and calculating, they know that their Beast is ultimately a tool to be guided, not suppressed.

### Common Abilities

Adherents have little choice but to study Subterfuge, Intimidation and Leadership. Those without find it very hard to advance along the path. Etiquette and Politics prove useful tools, as well.

### Preferred Disciplines

Dominate is primary for unifiers. Presence runs a close second. (It's not surprising that these are the top two given the number of Ventrué *antitribu* on the path.) Beyond that, some followers apply deceptive Disciplines such as Obfuscate, or alternately Auspex to prevent blood-fueled deception.

## PATH OF REDEMPTION

### Nickname: Martyrs

God has not turned from the Children of Caine. They are His creations, His dark angels, and a chalice in which the blood of sin might be transformed into the blood of salvation.

Vampiric history began in the settlements of Mesopotamia, ten thousand years ago. The stories of those people, as they warred, farmed and prayed, gave birth to

myths that endure into these Final Nights. Over time, the mythology gave way to religion. The human race still remembers Lilith's hunger, Utnapishtim's Ark, Tiamat's Hell. These sagas influenced religions: the Magians, the Zoroastrians, the Jews. And vampires remember these stories, because they were about the First City, the Great Flood and the land between the two great rivers. If vampires exist, then there must be truths to those stories. If vampires exist, then perhaps God exists.

Yahweh, Allah, Ahura-Mazda... these are three of the thousand names of the Almighty. God is merciful, but He is also a hard master and a distant father. Mankind has disappointed Him terribly, with its weaknesses, its lusts and its sins. But mankind also has the tools for salvation and the way to accept God's teachings.

Perhaps there are no angels anymore. Perhaps God needs new messengers. Perhaps vampires are the new angels under Heaven.

## BASIC BELIEFS

The martyrs hold that vampires are God's punishment on humanity, an instrument of His vengeance and a tool for salvation. Those chosen for the Embrace are not selected by their sires, but by the Curse of Caine itself. Those chosen are punished for their sins — but they are also tested, forced through a purgatory on Earth and can be remade into a new thing: a saintly servant of God.

To be a vampire is to be denied the ideals that are most important to a mortal — the sun, love and God's grace. But that denial serves to make the soul stronger, and a strong soul can be purged of sin and can enter Heaven and God's favor. Those vampires who follow this path seek to explore the limits of their vampirism so that they can know a little of God's plan. He cursed Cainites and that means that God is present in the world. By resisting the compulsions of the Curse, the childer of Caine immerse themselves in the power of God Almighty. They reject the Beast so that they may be made pure, that they may do God's work, and that they may hunt down those who fall to the Beast or the Devil.

This path draws heavily on the ideals and morals of the Jesuit order. The Jesuits hold that they are Christ's soldiers. Martyrs consider themselves Christ's enforcers and destroyers. By purging themselves of sin and bringing terror and death to God's enemies, followers use their undead nature to save themselves and others. The Society of Jesus is a scholarly organization that prizes research and scientific investigation. Martyrs follow suit and use much of their immortal existence to research mysteries and to master as many fields of study as possible. To a vampire, this dedication can mean the practice of Disciplines, the honing of skills or the study of occult or scientific lore.

Some see the Curse of Caine as a challenge, a penance handed down. Others perceive it as a tool to examine the nature of sin itself. Adherents choose progeny depending on a prospective childer's beliefs. Some Embrace only those who are faithful (and only those who are faithful Catho-





lics), while others select sinners, but those who have some spark of divinity burning inside them. Either way, martyrs believe themselves tested, like Job, by God and His enemy.

Many martyrs espouse that mortal sin is inherent to the vampiric form. To be a vampire is to be a sinner beyond any mortal. The Beast is a temptation to mortal sin, which not even confession can fully purge. Followers, however, strive to deny these sins. God poses a greater challenge to His vampiric servants than He does to his human ones.

All path members agree that Caine was the first sinner, and though worse sins have been committed since his transgression, it was Caine's prideful disobedience that was most grievous to God. Caine did not ask for forgiveness. It's therefore up to Caine's childer to seek redemption for the Dark Father and themselves.

### CARDINAL SINS

Of particular concern to followers of this path are the so-called "mortal" or "capital" sins. This list does not appear in the Bible and may have been composed by St. Gregory the Great (A.D. 540-604). The concept of such "sins beyond sins" has been cheapened in the modern era, but that does not detract from their seriousness.

The Path of Redemption maintains that a vampire is prone to all seven of these sins, that these are part of the essential nature of the Curse. Devotees use the familiar medieval phrasing of the sins, but it is likely that they were identified in antiquity, too.

- Pride: A Cainite's natural physical talents
- Greed: Acting as domitor to a ghoul
- Lust: Siring a childer
- Envy: The blood bond
- Gluttony: The hunger of the Beast
- Anger: The Beast
- Sloth: The lethargy of daylight hours

### HIERARCHY OF SINS

Rating	Moral Guideline
10	Neglecting your duty; not following the ethics of the path
9	Putting physical necessity before spiritual
8	Refusing the penitence of the Divine Tide
7	Refusing to heed the words of those beyond you on the path
6	Refusing to offer others the opportunity for redemption
5	Refusing to take or give confession
4	Blasphemous or heretical acts
3	Allowing a cardinal sin to go unpunished
2	The murder of innocents
1	Refusing to acknowledge the necessity of redemption for yourself or others

### ETHICS OF THE PATH

- Caine was placed under God's protection so that no harm would come to him and that he could, in the end, seek forgiveness and redemption from the Creator. Caine has

not sought forgiveness yet, so all vampires must seek it for him and for themselves.

- Mortal and immortal sins dwell in one's heart. Understand them so that they may be put away and one may seek forgiveness.
- Mortals — the Children of Seth — are truly God's children. Study them. Drive them to extremes of good and ill and watch them. Reawaken their understanding of their place in Creation.
- Embrace only those who have some faith left. The masses have forgotten God. Choose only those who will use their undead state well. This faith can guide all of the undead.
- Submit to the ebb and flow of the Divine Tide. By experiencing the controlled cycle between grace and sin, one can learn of God's glory and find personal understanding.
- The vampiric state is one of God's tools. It challenges a vampire's soul and inflicts judgment on mortal victims. Understand it.
- Confess sins to those further advanced on the path. Accept confession from those less so. Confession is sacred and secret.
- Watch those who exult in the curse. They must be destroyed when the time is right.
- Meditate and pray to God. God shall reveal the way to wisdom.
- Find those who have faith and teach them the truth.
- Those who reject God and turn to the powers of Hell must be hunted and destroyed.
- The word of God is law. *Deus vult.*

### DESCRIPTION OF FOLLOWERS

Followers of this path tend to have been believers in life, from a Christian, Judaic or Muslim faith. Elders promote unity by focusing on the teachings of the commonly accepted Old Testament, with a veneration of Roman Catholic ritualism. The path has also inherited the Jesuit commitment to scholarship and learning. Martyrs attempt to study all potential source materials, including Islamic texts, Mesopotamian carvings, Hebraic rabbinical texts and Kabbalistic records. They seek both a clear understanding of God's works and a more complete view of the events surrounding the Flood and the destruction of the city of Enoch.

Less scholarly martyrs simply seek to gain a little respite from the despair and horror of being undead. These adherents may not even have been believers in life, but with the obvious exposure to the supernatural that the Embrace brings, they seek a higher path and deeper answers.

An initiate is baptized with holy water and swears before an altar to reject Satan, control the Beast Within and to do God's work. The vampire is then led to her first penitential rite (see "The Divine Tide," below). When the penance is over and the first frenzy has passed, the vampire is said to have set foot on the Path of Redemption.

Sabbat adherents support the work of the Inquisition, rooting out infernalists. Some path followers are Inquisition members.

Redemption is organized in mockery of the Catholic Church. Priests minister to followers and lead the faithful in prayer. Outside of the Sabbat, "ashen priests" are vampires who have progressed roughly to a path rating of 6 or more. Amongst the Sabbat, priests are those who have both progressed on the path and have been appointed by the sect. Some in Europe have even revived the tradition of sanctuary for the faithful. Vampires make their domains in active churches, sleeping by day in the rafters or catacombs. Martyrs claim these churches for their ceremonies. Inside the Church, followers say, politics has no place. Most take this prohibition to apply to sectarian loyalties — Camarilla primogen and Sabbat bishops could sit side by side and pray.

The most important priesthood of the path is the Shepards of Caine in Montreal, although another Montreal-based pack, the Scholars, includes an important philosopher, Father Juan Carlos. In Paris, the Camarilla coterie of the Order of Ste. Joan conducts High Mass for Kindred seeking penance.

## HISTORY

The First City was Enoch's and was named after him. Enoch who became Metatron. Enoch that was cursed, everything all at once, the man and the city. It was such a beautiful place, they say, built as a reflection of the great city in Heaven. But the Children of Caine dwelled there. The vampires corrupted the population and promiscuous mortals lured the very angels down from Heaven and offered them pleasures of the flesh in return for knowledge. And all the while, the vampires looked on, pampered and grotesque. Even in those nights of the First City, some vampires sought to placate God, to find peace for their souls and perhaps a respite from the judgments of the four archangels. Adherents of this path say that Enoch was a holy man, Embraced by Caine, who plead for deliverance from God's impending wrath. Enoch gave himself to Heaven, the curse was burned from him and thus the vampires were spared the fury of God's wrath.

The Path of Redemption, however it is pursued, is an attempt to walk Enoch's road, to be purged of the curse and to walk with God.

In the Middle Ages, such vampires followed the tenets of Christianity, Judaism and Islam. They turned to Heaven and prayed as mortals. Those undead sought to save their souls and save themselves from the Beast through faith. They said they walked the Via Caeli, the Road of Heaven.

The path itself is a more recent development. It was born in the town of Ville Marie, on the Island of Mount Royal, in New France in the late 17th century. Jesuit priests, Embraced by the Sabbat, kept their faith after their transformation. This human True Faith in God, infused with a vampire's insight, searing passion and visions of the blood, conflicted and eventually synthesized into a new philosophy.

These early Jesuit converts to the Sabbat provided a spiritual focus for the sect in New France and codified their beliefs. Under the guidance of Father Ignace, discussions became the basis for a new Path of Enlightenment. Ignace, like many who would follow, was both ambitious and pious. He was fascinated by the essential contradiction between being a monstrous vampire and the potential for great service to God. He saw the Sabbat as a tool of God to both challenge the Antediluvians — who must have been offered the same opportunities as later Cainites — and to challenge humanity's weakness.

Apocryphal stories tell of these first converts — three Jesuit Toreador *antribu* Embraced by members of the Acadiens pack. They emerged from their graves, not as broken, screaming, mad things, but simply *changed*. They were interred in the earth for a full month. When they emerged, they claimed that God had granted them a vision. Some would later speculate that God sent His angels to look over the holy and sanctified men. Other histories tell of how their sires, Louis Levasseur and Marianne Jibrac, brought the priests into the night as an experiment. Either way, they arose from their graves quietly, calmly. They did not seek to sate their brutal hungers, but began to preach.

The Sabbat Litany records their sermon. The founders of the path decreed that God "had exiled Caine so that he could experience the darkness of his deeds and find the light of salvation within himself." Caine was marked so that no lesser thing could interfere with his exile or his quest for forgiveness. The martyrs' canon has expanded in the centuries since, drawing from Jesuit philosophies, the Roman Catholic Church and biblical apocrypha.

The path began as a North American phenomenon, but it spread to Europe, South America and Africa, where it was adopted by Sabbat with ties to the Jesuit order.

While primarily a Sabbat path, this philosophical system has found favor among some autarkis and Camarilla elders in Europe. Those few elders who have learned the strictures and doctrine hear echoes of the ancient Road of Heaven. The modern path is more unified, however, and does not suffer from the endless fragmentation or schisms of the "Via Caeli."

Enoch is a key figure of the Path of Redemption. Noddist lore names him as the Prince of the City of Enoch. (Perhaps the city was named for him. More likely though, his name is a historical anachronism, adopting the European notion of naming a prince for his domain.) Enoch is also said to have been one of the second generation, those first vampires Embraced by Caine. The Bible says that Enoch "walked with God," however, and apocryphal books go further to say he was "translated" into Heaven and became an angel. Later lists of angels name Enoch as the angel Metatron, God's chief messenger. Somewhere in this contradictory story, scholars of this path believe, lies the key to redemption for all vampires. The legends contradict each other. The holy patriarch was a righteous man who was God's messenger to His fallen, or he was the unholy patriarch of a corrupt city, a vampire prince of the night.

Followers of this path suggest that both stories are true. What if Enoch's life story is a metaphor for the vampiric condition? What if Enoch was the patriarch of the First City and was taken by Caine, later to become God's voice to warn the angels, and finally translated into Heaven? What if such a destiny could await other vampires? If that was all true, then salvation might be available to all Cainites.

### CURRENT PRACTICES

Sabbat followers of this path form part of the Inquisition and take their role as God's servants among Cainites seriously. Non-Sabbat disciples organize into small "churches" of adherents, gathering to pray and discuss their plans and purpose under God.

Many martyrs of all sects are scholars and spend time studying non-canon biblical works and religious texts that might shed light on the actual events at Enoch. Followers of this path say that the Flood was not caused by the vampires of the First City, but by the corruption of God's angels. These scholars frequently work in conjunction with various Noddists, but they eschew the latter's obsessions and seek to find a correct means to return to God's grace.

### FOLLOWING THE PATH

To answer this calling, a vampire must accept that he is a monster in search of God's grace. God knows liars, fools and dissemblers for what they are. Vampires must accept their nature and admit their sins before Him. They must accept the heavy burden of God's judgment and mercy. If one is found wanting, there is already a place for him in Hell — perhaps a worse place (betrayers are damned more so than mere murderers, after all).

Followers of this path are nicknamed martyrs and suffer for their sins and for those of the Children of Caine. Temptation lures each of them through the hungers of the Beast. Those who overcome understand that the old saw, "A beast I am lest a beast I become," is meaningless. The Beast must be denied, as Christ denied Satan. Yes, the Beast must be explored and understood and its ways mastered, but ultimately it must be defeated, utterly.

Despite their overtly Christian or holy ways, followers care little for humanity. Mortals may be God's children, but martyrs suspect that humanity has offended and disappointed God far more so than vampires have. The undead are God's curse on *humanity*, after all. Testing, tormenting and killing people is not merely accepted, it's a martyr's destiny. Some of the High Masses spoken in "cathedrals" such as the tunnels of the Underground City in Montreal or the Catacombs of Paris have been the scene of vast "sinner" bloodlettings, all in the name of God.

### THE DIVINE TIDE

The redeemers of Montreal maintain a ritualistic practice that allows adherents to experience both blasphemy and devoutness. This sacrament, the Divine Tide, traps the Beast in a cycle of indulgence and purging, by which the entity is allowed free reign over time, and then slowly trapped inside and denied. The duration of this cycle varies

depending on the vampire in question. Some are based on the lunar month, others the lunar year and still others are based on obscure calculations. Martyrs who wish to advance on the path are expected to experience at least one full cycle.

The Divine Tide is meant to be a daily experience. By carrying out some seemingly arbitrary pattern, martyrs follow timetables of piety and indulgence. This approach has proved too artificial for many vampires, however. Over the years, an alternative version of the Divine Tide has been developed. Adherents of this practice are either staked and submerged in a river or chained to the keel of a boat on the open sea and left floating below the waves, where sunlight cannot reach them. The subject is left there for three nights. In this time of isolation and darkness, the beast is indulged and purged, and its limits are explored. As the Beast rages, driven by fear, loneliness and despair, the martyr prays and struggles with the darkness inside. When released, he is allowed to frenzy, releasing his pent up anger and violence. The fury eventually subsides, the Beast is lulled to sleep and the follower can proceed about his nightly existence. But this alternative cycle of penance must be repeated, be it in a cellar, the sea or some other place, and must occur frequently.

Many vampires have been lost in the Divine Tide and have moved to other paths or been destroyed.

### THE SAINTING

A practice peculiar to the Montreal-based redeemers, the Sainting is a process whereby an adherent who has reached the apex of faith is ritually bound and mummified so that she may be freed of the Curse and made one with God. No other followers of this path have ever attempted to imitate this practice and the rite seems to have fallen out of favor, even in Montreal. Mummified saints, however, are still on display in the Montreal communal haven.

### HIGH MASS

High Mass is a nocturnal version of the Catholic Mass. Held in Latin, it occurs on the eve of certain feast days (Candlemas, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, St. Swithins, the Annunciation and Christmas). The ceremony lasts three hours and martyrs from far and wide are expected to attend.

Vampires drink holy wine brimming with blood of "sinners" kidnapped for the event. Being vampires, they do not take a bread communion, but some ritually consume a sanctified piece of bread, expelling it before allowing themselves to be overcome by convulsions.

### OTHER PRACTICES

Certain rituals are followed only in particular parts of the world or have fallen into general disuse. Many surround feast days. Some Cainites flagellate themselves unto unconsciousness as a means of mortifying their undead forms and punishing the Beast. Others go on a "wild hunt" before Mass is performed, stalking and killing infernalists or sinners. Still others observe Lent and Advent as times of privation, drinking as little as three "cups" (blood points)

of cold blood a night so they may survive, stay awake and be functional enough to pray.

#### **Virtues**

This path teaches Conscience and Self-Control.

#### **Common Abilities**

The calling emphasizes proficiency in Leadership and Expression in those who would be priests. Those who follow as initiates are expected to have some knowledge of Linguistics, Law and Occult (with specific focus on "apocryphal" religious texts). Others are effective at Academics and Politics.

#### **Preferred Disciplines**

Auspex, Fortitude and Obfuscate are particularly prized Disciplines. Conversely, blood magic is often considered unholy or even infernal.

## **PATH OF REVELATIONS**

**Nickname:** Infernalists or "Edimmu" (from the old Babylonian word for vampire)

The oldest rebels turn their faces to Heaven and prepare for war. Eschatologists believe that the Earth continues to survive only because of the fractiousness of demons. Should they resolve their conflicts, they will turn their faces on the world and move to claim their prize. Together,

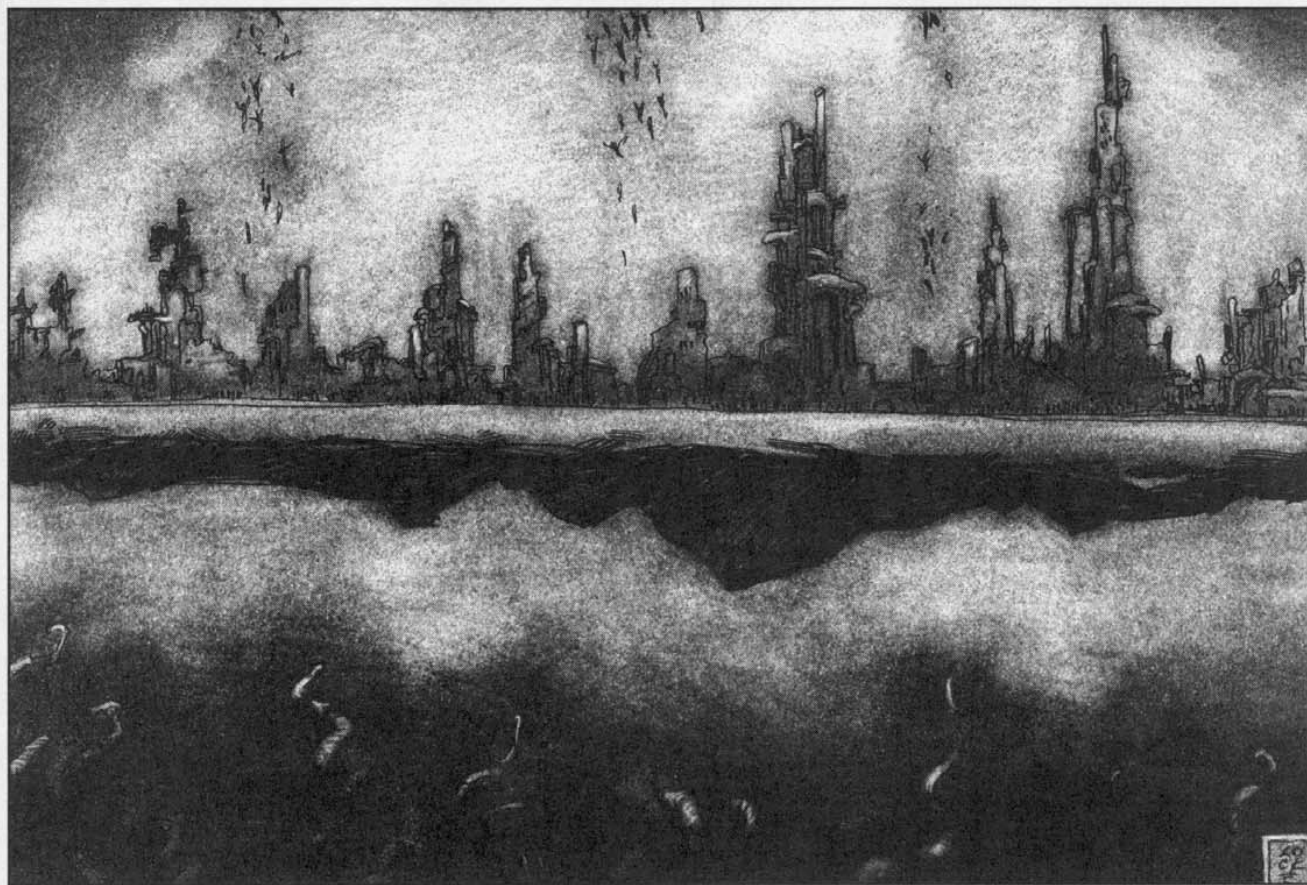
they outnumber the Host of Heaven and all those on Earth who could oppose them. When they kill all the angels, they will storm Heaven and offer up the charnel house remnants of Creation to God as a sacrifice, and will take their thrones as God's new angels.

These new thrones, this new Heaven, this New Jerusalem will be made of bones and lit by the fires of human souls. And things will be the way they used to be, in the beginning, before the Sons of Clay stole God's love and His attention. God is a senile father, the demons know, but they desire His love nonetheless.

At the beginning of all things, the light of Heaven falling on Creation formed a deep, endless shadow that stretched through the void. In that shadow, things were born to the darkness.

Some say these things were older than God, intelligences that waited in the utter night before the Word was spoken. Others say that these things — called the Qliphoth or other, secret names — were shells of God's Creation, scattered broken and forgotten in the night, away from the world.

Perhaps these intelligences whispered treason — or bravery — into Samael Lightbringer's heart. Perhaps he sought them out in the night. Infernalist poets sing of the Lord Lucifer surging down the void, finding the empty, dead world in the shadow of Creation, and there speaking with the sleeping Dragon.



## HOW MANY HELLS ARE THERE?

There are thousands of infernal realms. As far as vampiric infernalists are concerned, there is one Hell, which they call the Inferno.

The Inferno is the place God imprisoned the rebel angels and from which the fallen rail against Him. Vampires acknowledge the existence of other places, shadows of Hell, which are closer to our world, but those are pale reflections or tributary realms at best. Vampires do not tend to deal with denizens of these lesser places. They prefer to cooperate with upper management, not franchise holders.

The Edimmu have made maps of Hell over the ages. The earliest (drawn in the decades before Christ) showed a great Pit descending into the darkness, cast by the shadow of Heaven. At the bottom, where the light could not penetrate, Lucifer built Dis, the Hell City. In the cold ashen shadows, at the top, those mortal souls who were not gathered into Heaven and God's grace were drawn. Some would linger there before fading from existence. Others would be pulled further into the Pit. As the millennia passed, the maps changed. The Pit became deeper and the shadows near the surface expanded endlessly. Ghosts built cities and empires there. An abyss of shadow and wind and fire separated the surface from the Pit. Eventually, as ghost storms lashed the surface, the gulf widened to infinity. For hundreds of years now, no soul has been gathered into the Pit, into what the Edimmu call the true Inferno. Up near the surface, lesser demons have built realms, fortresses and dungeons and named these place "Hell." Only mortals and other idiots believe them.

The maps made by the Edimmu are in great demand by many different forces.

In rebellion, Lucifer was cast out, thrown from the light because he demanded knowledge of things that were forbidden. God denied these secrets, worshippers say, because they could undo Him or reveal His madness. God hid these secrets, because all of them confirmed one thing: That He is a fool, an unjust, grasping father who plays favorites with His children, and who taunts Creation with lies.

There are thousands of hells. They are scattered across the void, places of death, pain and fire. The hells are home to demonic figures of unimaginable power that plot, counterplot and trade in souls. But they are limited. They cannot walk the Earth until Creation cracks open before the last battle. These devils may defy God, but His commandments are still binding.

The Lords of Hell need souls. Each of them needs to harvest mortal spirits, not just the poor things made from their orchards. Souls grown in Hell are blank slates, bereft of experience, suffering and love. Mortal souls, those of men and women who have fought and struggled and suffered in life, are far more valuable.

Devils need worshippers to bring them these souls, to drink of their power. They need influence on Earth, and

strange as it may seem, they need knowledge. The infernal powers see a lot that happens in the world, but they cannot truly understand or experience it. By drinking souls, they participate vicariously in the world that's denied them. They may not be able to physically walk the Earth, but they know much that happens there. To a vampiric blood magician, that is enough. A deal is struck. The vampire offers service, doing his new master's work on Earth. In return, a lord of Hell offers power and knowledge.

## BASIC BELIEFS

Being "good" does not mean redemption, but assimilation. Being good means behaving. By being "evil," one pushes the boundaries of morality and philosophy, exploring, living, experiencing and doing. By being "evil," a vampire transgresses, transcends and learns what the universe has to offer.

There is evil in the world, but that which others call "evil" is merely that which is real. Those safe in their sanctimonious smugness have decided what is "good" and what is "evil." The real world exists in the shadows; the truth is hidden and forbidden. Followers of this path aim to find this truth, explore it and make it their own. This is the path of moral and intellectual exploration, delving into these secrets and adopting them.

Enemies of Revelation have described the calling as a philosophy of submission that accepts that vampires are servants of old, black powers. The Sabbat Inquisition has deemed that this path is in conflict with the sect tenet of freedom. But these are lies and half-truths fostered by those who do not understand.

Vampires are evil. Vampires were cursed by God to be His punishment on humanity. Vampires carry within them the seed of redemption. Vampires can be "good." But vampires transgress; they dwell in the darkness, they hunt humans — God's Children — for sustenance and pleasure. They exist, immortal, against the natural order. Surely, then, a vampire must accept his "evil." Other paths teach similar ideals — a vampire must learn to accept his condition — but the Path of Revelations forces vampires to confront the inherent damnation and alienation that is their destiny.

Indeed, it is not enough to merely "accept one's evil." Cainites on other paths do that. Followers of this course consider "acceptance" a starting point. By adopting this way, a vampire becomes a servant of a greater, ancient evil, that of the infernal. By submitting to the will of Hell, a vampire can both control his Beast and grow powerful.

## DUALISM AND THE INFERNAL

Modern-day occultists construct complex and ornate theories to describe the universe. "Belief defines reality," they say, or "spiritual creatures are the development of the sub-conscious mind." To these occultists, there is no Heaven, Hell, God or Devil. Reality is merely what humanity imagines it to be at the time.

"Bullshit," answer the infernalists. They reject a reassuring view of Creation in favor of millennia of recorded

experiences amongst their own kind. Vampires are immortal, after all. Worshippers have a view of Creation that is not far removed from those of familiar monotheistic mythologies. Only the nomenclatures and texts change. There is a God who created the universe. There is a Satan, the title given to Samael Lucifer after his fall. There is a Heaven and a Hell. Others are free to believe otherwise, but most vampiric infernalists come to the same conclusion after a while. Worshippers may toy with New Age notions of the demons they deal with being “spirits of entropy” or “archetypes of balance,” but in the end they all speak of devils and fallen angels as servants of Hell.

#### HIERARCHY OF SINS

Rating	Moral Guideline
10	Acting by any laws save those of Hell
9	Failing to observe the rituals set down by your patron
8	Altruistic acts
7	Not grabbing temporal power or wealth when the opportunity presents itself
6	Showing self-interest
5	Refusing to support infernal atrocities
4	Failing to serve your patron's goals
3	Allowing yourself to be defeated by the enemy, those who serve God
2	Not striving to do infernal work
1	Disobedience against your patron

#### ETHICS OF THE PATH

- One serves infernal powers. If one serves them fully and well, he will be rewarded.
- Vampires are evil. Accept that. Ensure that others who do not accept it are tortured and enlightened. Kill those who still refuse.
- The Beast is a tool, for one's self and masters.
- Evangelize for one's master and set moral traps for others into which to fall.
- Reject humanity. A vampire has transcended and belongs to the night.
- Those who serve “God” or “goodness” or other foolishness are to be destroyed. They are distractions.

#### DESCRIPTION OF FOLLOWERS

The lords of the darkness have grown choosy. Where they once welcomed vampires blatant enough to do their bidding and revel in evil, in the Final Nights demons have turned their attention to vampires who can serve their interests in the long term. An infernal lord may offer a neonate thug a small investment in return for her soul, but the demon favors older, more respected vampires. Adherents of the path are typically highly intelligent, sociable and charming. They are rarely obvious targets. Blatant followers of the path draw too much attention from the Inquisition to be bothered with.

Devotees are typically of the Toreador, Tremere, Ventrue or Malkavian clans and their *antitribu*. Tzimisce

and Lasombra followers are extremely rare; both clans celebrate vampiric power and consider infernalism to be a weakness. It is also rumored that demons are afraid of the Tzimisce and Lasombra. A few Assamite infernalists exist, but they are the subjects of multiple blood hunts in many places. The Assamites remember that the Baali were the most obvious and blatant followers of this path. Since Ur-Shulgi awoke, the Children of Haqim have been exceptionally busy hunting these vermin down. Any Child of Haqim found associating with the Baali or their demonic masters are to be destroyed.

#### HISTORY

Vampires have sought the favors of the darkness since time immemorial. The Path of Revelations is a distant descendant of the ancient “Path of the Devil,” which in turn was an extreme version of the Via Peccati. Those ways sought to placate the Beast through sins beyond mortal imagination, daring to lure the dark lords from their thrones. The so-called Road of the Devil ossified in the Middle Ages, lost followers and was eventually replaced by the Cainite Heresy. This is not to say that there were no infernalists in those nights, but the more recognizable Road lost a great deal of influence.

The Path of “Evil” Revelations dates back to the 1600s. The first vampires to walk it were a small pack Embraced from a coven of mortal death cultists whose necromantic practices had earned the attention of darker things. Turned by a Brujah as a tool against the mortal Inquisition, the three vampires soon learned that their unholy patrons had not neglected them.

After they murdered and diablerized their sire, the neonates joined the Sabbat and were the subject of much discussion amongst sect scholars. Perhaps indulgence in a spiritual evil could offset the evils of the Beast, the philosophers said. The three Brujah combined their sacrificial rites, traffic with demons and unholy researches into a Path of Enlightenment. They called it the Path of Revelations. Their critics called it the Path of *Evil* Revelations. Other, older Cainites saw echoes of the Road of the Devil. Many Sabbat believed the sect's cry for freedom included a freedom of religious practice. “Vampires are cursed by God. Perhaps they should name themselves allies of the lords of darkness,” they rationalized.

But as time passed, followers of this path paid too high a price for their suppression of the Beast. In 1804, the Sabbat Inquisition was formed in response to the prevalence of small covens of demon worshippers throughout the sect, groups that operated outside leaders' dictates and that pursued their own agendas. The Inquisition won a series of early successes against infernalists. The three original founders of the Path of Revelations were burned in Lisbon, and a dozen covens were rooted out.

But at the turn of the 20th century, the Inquisition became more of a political tool for silencing rivals amongst Mexican and European elders than a means to save the Sabbat from demon worshippers. The Inquisition came under tighter control of the sect's elders. And where the

light didn't shine, the vermin scuttled. Followers of the path met in secret. Most were neonates brutalized by sect politics or those whose sanity was lost to the ravages of the Beast. The constant sect warfare of the 20th century created casualties who would sell their souls to the lords of Hell in return for power, sanity or safety.

Worse, as the century progressed, the Camarilla seemed more stable, more secure. Crusades became more violent and less effective. The Sabbat fragmented during its third civil war. Disastrous expansion attempts in Asia and Canada sapped sect unity. A steady stream of new recruits sought to salve the doubt in their souls. With the Inquisition and Sabbat leadership distracted, and the Sword of Caine shattered, it was almost pitifully easy for the Path of Revelations to usurp control. While bishops set the Inquisition on each other, more elders became fascinated by the path's promises. Infernalist elders could keep the Inquisition at bay and throw neonates to investigators.

In the mid 1990s, the Sabbat Inquisition sent a series of quiet reports to trusted cardinals in Mexico City, saying that infernalist influence had spread to all reaches of the Sabbat, and that if the extent of the path's influence were to be revealed, the sect could collapse. A series of high-profile Inquisition investigations and executions in Montreal, New York, Hamburg and Milan seemed to confirm the worst fears. The lords of Hell had finally turned the Sabbat into a tool.

But things have changed. Though infernalists may have secret powers and demonic assistance, they are still Sabbat and there is what can be euphemistically described as a "high turnover rate" of Sabbat membership. The launch of the masterful East Coast crusades in the late 1990s sent a lot of infernalists to Final Death. The Inquisition grew in influence, and teachers of other paths such as that of Cathari and Death and the Soul watched out for vampires with an interest in dark matters, and recruited them. Sect propaganda changed and the Sabbat quietly purged itself of the Path of Revelations. Where once the path could claim two or three thousand True Sabbat amongst its members, now it could scarcely claim a hundred.

The path has not died, though. There may be few Edimmu left, and those who remain are elders based in Europe and other places where the Sabbat Inquisition is weak. But as the sect becomes more obsessed with power struggles, the Path of Revelations may be set to grow again. Gehenna approaches and the infernal lords stir. Old vampires recall the glory days of the Road of the Devil. Throughout vampiric society, there are a few from all clans, sects and covens who have quietly given themselves to the darkness in exchange for power.

### CURRENT PRACTICES

"Infernalists" are not a unified cult or organization. The Sabbat has largely purged the cult of demon worship from its body politic, and dealings with infernal forces are considered a breach of the Camarilla's Masquerade. Most

followers contact demonic masters themselves and keep their submission a secret.

The most risky time for an infernalist is when she attempts to bring others into the fold. A demonic patron rewards a worshipper if she is successful, but by revealing herself a follower risks destruction or worse. Yet many adherents do bring others into their patrons' service. Deals between a demon and new acolyte are usually personal and kept separate from deals made with other members of the path. On rare occasions, a small coven of worshippers works in the service of a single patron.

Path advocates possess the ultimate tools to doom others. They offer the lure of cheap power, without apparent strings. The possibility of insight beyond that of the "average" mortal or vampire is a temptation too great for many to resist. Worshippers are not merchants for their patrons' favors. Rather, an infernalist uses his own powers and insights to hook greedy souls into his plan, and then blackmails victims into serving his demonic masters. When a victim's usefulness comes to an end, she is fed to the demons. Followers of this path cultivate dozens of such "marks," to be used until their utility is exhausted.

The exact nature of a worshipper's rituals and practices depends on the demonic realm or lord he serves. There are many demonic powers in the night — the Decani, lords of disease; the Chykas, the lords of strife; the Dukes of Malfeas; and more.

## FOLLOWING THE PATH

The first hint of a supplicant's journey into darkness is always his magic, be it Thaumaturgical practices or the way his Disciplines operate. His rituals work faster, better, more effectively. But they also become indefinably *wrong*. The policeman he was trying to incapacitate suddenly dies, twitching in pain. The child whose mind he tries to read is driven insane by the ordeal.

As time goes on, other things happen. The adherent's eyes may darken to an unnatural, inhuman hue. He moves differently, walking with stunning grace or staggering like a drunk. The magician's body changes. Whatever extra fat the Embrace left might burn away, his heart might beat again, his skin could turn colder, he may become morbidly obese or crippled with the weight of the black power inside him. But vampires on the dark path serve figures of utter, inhuman beauty. If the change wrought on an infernalist's body makes him ugly, he may be willing to do another terrible deed in exchange for elusive beauty.

Eventually, a worshipper cannot walk out into the night. Plants and grass wilt at his touch. His corruption spreads like a disease to the world around him.

### INVESTMENTS

Infernalists do not sell their souls to a devilish patron. Souls may be the currency of Hell, but vampires' souls are damaged goods. They are defaced coins, of little value. But even as a vampire magician's soul is no prize, a vampire's service has great value.

The basic exchange in any agreement is certain services in return for knowledge and perks of power. In return for furthering a demon's plans, an infernalist can be rewarded with awareness of an enemy's intentions or access to blood-magic powers that could not have been gained otherwise. Beyond these playground bargains are investments. As the name suggests, an investment represents power spent by a demon on a follower, which the patron hopes will yield results.

Investments include such benefits as extra stamina and strength, utterly seductive beauty, bones made into infernal metals, being made mortal again for a day, or senses heightened sufficiently to see beyond the veil between this world and the next. A minor investment requires some small deed, perhaps a few killings or a desecration. A major investment such as true immortality (free of Caine's curse) may require some horrendous work — the death of a saint, the destruction of a nation or the slaughter of a people. A major investment involves small print, as well. One's soul, useless as it is, now belongs to the darkness.

#### SUBMISSION AND DOMINANCE

All adherents are submissives at first, but as they progress they become more dominant and powerful. The relationship between an infernalist and her demonic patron is not unlike the relationship between a child and her sire. The patron is a paternalistic figure, but also a rival. The patron is a mentor and the infernalist is a student, but both know that the student could eventually become the master.

The currency of Hell is souls, and a patron's debt can be paid with souls, blood or service. Demonic debts are binding, but vampires are old, clever and devious; it is not uncommon for a patron to be usurped by a cunning follower. The infernal hierarchy does not frown on betrayal. That is the way of things in Hell. Thus, as a worshipper grows more potent, she can reach a position where she can negotiate with her patron as an equal and demand more investments in return for continued service, or the contract can be nullified in return for some price.

What becomes of vampires that have bought their investments back from patrons is unknown, though many suspect that they join Hell's hierarchy. Edimmu demonologists believe that several "succubae" and "incubi" that inhabit the Earth are not, as demons claim, descendants of Lilith, but vampires who have purchased their bond and transcended the vampiric form.

#### Virtues

The Path of Revelations upholds Conviction and Instinct.

#### Common Abilities

Adherents of this path study Occult. Successful ones are also capable in Subterfuge, Etiquette, Intimidation and Empathy. These Traits make hiding amongst fellows easier. Violent followers are adept at Brawl, Dodge, Melee and Firearms.

#### Preferred Disciplines

The most common Discipline found among followers of this path is the so-called Dark Thaumaturgy. Demons seem to appreciate the ritual nature of this "true" form of blood magic. Other worshippers develop Presence and Auspex.

## PATH OF TYPHON

**Nickname:** Theophidians, Typhonites or Corrupters

In some ways, the Setite-derived Path of Typhon is seen as the most "evil" of all paths. While practitioners of Night, Revelations and Lilith mortify and scourge their own souls, the Path of Typhon teaches that enlightenment is found not only in self-abasement, but in the active debasement of others.

Different followings attempt to teach how to rise above the tides of chaos and instinct. The Path of Typhon indulges no such folly. As its adherents point out, given a vampire's (theoretically) infinite unlife, there will be an infinite number of temptations and opportunities for corruption. The Beast, even a weak one, is the equivalent of the adage about a million monkeys on a million typewriters. Simple entropy decrees that no matter how strong one's spiritual structure or foundation, something will eventually make a Cainite fall.

Thus, the Path of Typhon has a twofold dogma to avoid or at least delay the inevitable. The first tenet is understanding and acceptance of weakness in both oneself and others. Yes, one will eventually fall, but just as a chronic alcoholic has a far greater "tolerance" for alcohol than his body mass might suggest, so by exposing oneself to the "poisons" of sin and corruption can a Typhonite build up a tolerance to the call of the Beast.

More importantly, corrupters actively seek to lure others into degradation. Simply put, if followers of the path can debase and ruin all other beings before they themselves lose all vestiges of sanity, they "win." To return to the drinking metaphor, Typhonites see unlife as a vast drinking contest, with the Beast as the "shots." Since everyone is a hopeless, chronic alcoholic, teetotaling is not only a delay of the inevitable, it makes the eventual drunkenness worse by reducing the body's tolerance. Typhonites aim to force all other Cainites into the contest and then drink everyone else under the table.

The second creed of the Path of Typhon is the preeminence of the mysterious Antediluvian Set. To corrupters, Set is more than merely an Antediluvian. Set is a god, the Dark Lord who alone among all beings has mastered the Beast.

## BASIC BELIEFS

Typhonites espouse Set's literal divinity. To them, he is not merely a vampire lord. One need only look at the records. Whereas other Antediluvians are hidden, piling bloodsuckers cowering in their crypts lest they be hunted down and destroyed, Set has written his name across the very tapestry of kine mythology. He was, in fact, a divine, immortal being even before his Embrace. Set, the lord of trickery and





cunning, deceived Caine into Embracing him, the better to manipulate Caine's children into fulfilling his greater agenda. This plan transcends Cainites' Jihad. Set would, in fact, reshape all of Creation in his image. This is his destiny and right. As the eldest sibling of the Sun-God Ra, he is rightful heir to the universe upon the coming of Gehenna and the end of the Sun Age in favor of the Endless Night.

There are other mythical beings in the world, too, mighty in their own right. Long ago, these beings plotted to deprive Set of his inheritance. They drove him to the outer darkness, perhaps a physical place, perhaps a metaphorical construct of dreams and torpor. This deed is embodied not in Egyptian myth, but in Greek, in the story of how the gods united in a treacherous alliance to defeat the thousand-headed serpent king Typhon. While most myths paint the gods as heroes, a cursory reading of the myth makes clear that Typhon is the rightful ruler.

Typhon is destined to rule and only the unnatural acts and treachery of lesser gods keep him from doing so. For now, and that state will not last forever. Perhaps Set lay down willingly, the better to deceive his enemies and strike at them when the time was right. At any rate, Set has called his vampiric childer to free him. Just as Typhon has a thousand heads, so Typhon-Set will use a thousand minions, a thousand stratagems, to enact the will of Creation. As a Typhonite, a follower is one of the thousand heads of the great serpent, the World-Eater, the Hydra. Yes, here and there a head is lost, but two spring up in its place. To save one's undead soul one must not only revere and emulate Set, one must prepare the world for his rebirth.

When Set awakens, he will judge his children by what they have accomplished. He will destroy the weak and gather the worthy to be his army in the last battle, the one in which Set will ascend to his rightful throne as Lord of Life and Death. Following this, he will remake the world into a utopian paradise for himself and his childer, and will either cleanse his followers of their Beast or teach them to master it — a sort of dark Golconda.

#### HIERARCHY OF SINS

Rating	Moral Guideline
10	Pursuing your own indulgences instead of another's
9	Refusing to aid another follower of the path
8	Failing to destroy a vampire in Golconda
7	Failing to observe a Typhonite religious ritual
6	Failing to undermine the current social order in favor of the Typhonites'
5	Failing to do whatever is necessary to corrupt another
4	Failing to pursue arcane knowledge
3	Obstructing another Typhonite's efforts
2	Failing to take advantage of another's weakness
1	Refusing to aid Set's resurrection

#### ETHICS OF THE PATH

- Gather information, secret or otherwise, and learn how it applies to the resurrection of Set. Clearly, Set has chosen to leave the world, deliberately posing an enigma

to his followers, or he has been forced into torpor by the combined might of jealous inferiors. In any event, the binding of a god is not accomplished lightly and the rituals to perform this task must have been the products of millennia of study. They won't be overcome by pouring a bucket of cold water on the deity's form. Lore and knowledge have been diluted and spread over the world, particularly in this new Information Age. One must gather the far-flung truth and wield it as a weapon against one's enemies, just as the lesser gods flung thunderbolts at mighty Typhon in the nights of yore.

- Contribute to the clan's greater goal of reviving its slumbering master. Sometimes knowledge must be replaced by deeds. The End Times are near. The time to strike for Set's liberation is now, not a century or millennium from now. In this goal, even Typhonite elders feel and project a sense of urgency. All who follow the path must make it their first priority to take action in pursuit of this agenda.
- Bring others under one's sway, thereby increasing influence and capability. A nest of vipers is far more deadly than a single snake. There is no room for antisocial loners on the path. To take the necessary actions for Set's resurrection, one must "be" in several places at once. One must delegate important tasks to agents. In some senses, the path is the ultimate multilevel marketing scheme. The cult of Typhon represents the mythical Hydra, and the Hydra must always be ready to sprout two heads when one is lost. This is the holiest of doctrines.
- Subjugate the Beast; its reckless wiles serve only itself. The Beast drives one away from cunning, from society, from the path of creation. Those who follow the Beast belong to neither Great Set nor to any lesser god. They are outcast, lost in the void rather than its masters. Properly trained, the Beast can be a good hunting dog, but one must never let the dog determine direction. Set is holy because he alone among Cainites has mastered the Beast rather than succumbed to it. All Typhonites must strive, however imperfectly, to emulate his feat.
- Maintain a veil of secrecy, for others look ill upon this path's means and ends. The Path of Typhon is ultimately dedicated to war. This struggle may be hidden, fought on a battleground of words and souls rather than through overt violence, but it is war nonetheless. All who follow the Serpent's path must keep their affiliations to themselves in the presence of enemies — and all who are not allies or minions are enemies by default.
- Look for Set's hidden signs and act upon them. Even in torpor, Set is not helpless. The deity's merest thought is a dark portent upon the world. Learning to recognize these signs is the hallmark of a Typhonite. The minions of the other powers are cunning, but Set is more so, and his cryptic messages to his childer filter out into the world. Those who routinely recognize them have honed their minds to within a respectable fraction of Set's own mighty will, and they are honored accordingly.

## DESCRIPTION OF FOLLOWERS

Typhonites come from all walks of unlife. Perhaps the only quality all have in common is that they're sneaky, through choice and necessity. This path is reviled by Camarilla and Sabbat alike, and a Typhonite who doesn't learn to blend in with her surroundings is not long for the world.

Most corrupters, of course, are Followers of Set. While adherence to the path is not a necessity among Setites, many elder members of the clan answer this calling. In any event, existence among Setites is certain to drain one's Humanity, so most eventually study at least the rudiments of Typhon.

For fanatics, corrupters are experts at putting up false fronts and hiding their beliefs until the "right" moment. Unlike many zealots, whose extremist beliefs make it difficult to interact with more centrist beings, Typhonites have little difficulty adopting the façade and attitudes of even antithetical groups. They can feign sympathy and decency with those of high Humanity, then turn about to revel and raven with vampires lost to the Beast.

Accordingly, there are more non-Setites on the Path of Typhon than one might think. The Followers use many tools, and though most are discarded after use, a few retain value over prolonged periods. Cainite puppets and slaves occasionally demonstrate aptitude for this path's teachings — more than one Setite has been shocked by her "victim's" appetite for depravity. Other vampires, seeing the cunning and power of the Setites, deliberately seek out their "hidden lore." If Followers deem such Cainites worthy and if the Cainites in question can survive the grueling initiation rites, they can walk the path as readily as a Setite. As a very general rule, Ventrue and Toreador are more readily corrupted than some other Kindred, due to their rarefied tastes. Surprisingly, a fair number of Assamites fall into the Serpents' clutches. This is due to a combination of geographical proximity and the fact that beings from such a rigid culture tend to fall far and fast when finally tempted to stray.

Corrupted vampires make remarkably effective agents *provocateur*. Although fully (or at least tentatively) committed to the Typhonite way, they remember their old attitudes and, under the Typhonites' tutelage, learn to project a convincing image of their "old selves." The Cainites in question might seem a little more jaded and cynical, at times indifferent and at others curiously interested in extremes of sensation and debauchery — but most vampires become so over time, and this personality shift is little remarked on.

Most Typhonites take an interest in occult lore, though the degree of their interest varies according to personality and cognitive ability. Members are expected to understand at least the "how" behind mystical and occult phenomena, if not necessarily the "why." It's enough for a vampire with less than stellar faculties to know that "chanting the Four Keys of Solomon on the autumnal equinox when Aldebaran is on the horizon will channel mystic energy that aids us in locating artifacts attuned to Great Set." Typhonites of sharper mental acumen are expected to delve deeper into ancient history, mysticism and occult lore. Such vampires gain commensurate respect on the path.

## HISTORY

As with much of Setite lore, the origins of the Path of Typhon are deliberately shrouded in cultivated ritual and apocrypha. The path is clearly among the most ancient. Inscriptions describing it can be found on desert obelisks and the interiors of hidden chambers in Egyptian pyramids. Its rudiments were certainly practiced during the heyday of Egyptian culture, possibly taught by Set himself (if such a physical being exists or existed at all). It is certain that many of the Fourth Generation who rose against the Antediluvians were Typhonite followers, whether in service to Set or otherwise.

Followers of the path migrated among Near East and Fertile Crescent lands during biblical times. Even then, they had begun their practices of setting up and/or infiltrating existing cults. Vampires with Christian or Jewish origins occasionally claim that Typhonites used the cults of Baal and Dagon as screens for their nefarious activities, though such claims must be interpreted through the lens of the claimants.

It is thought that Typhonites were particularly prevalent during the decline of Egypt and its occupation by Rome. It is probably overstating the case to say that cult decadence and manipulation were responsible for Egypt's fall, but the land certainly provided a comfortable haven and laboratory for the masters of the corrupt. Some of the more terrifying names that appear during this time are Lowly Saatha, Nepthu-Ka and The Black Scorpion.

Interestingly, what few fragments remain imply that "corruption" and "weakening of one's enemies" were a byproduct rather than a focus of the cult at that time. Such activities were primarily political in nature, undertaken for the necessary but pragmatic purposes of controlling herds, weakening vampiric rivals, and orchestrating changes in human cultural dynamics. The inner mysteries of the cult, it is believed, were aimed at something entirely different. Some Cainite scholars speculate that the path was originally martial, one designed to produce warriors rather than deceivers. Do traces of this so-called Path of the Warrior still persist? Few Setites follow the closest alternatives — the Path of Orion and the Path of Honorable Accord — so some observers wonder precisely where loyal warrior Setites end up. Certainly the storm-god Set was once feared as a warrior himself.

It was during the Roman imperial period, however, that the Typhonite creed first assumed its current form and tenets. Rituals (perhaps influencing or influenced by Christian and Mithraic cults of the time) spoke of Set's "resurrection" or "return." Whereas Set had previously been merely a teacher, albeit a wise one, now he assumed the clear function of Dark Messiah. Typhonites, caught up in the apocalyptic fervor of the age, espoused the coming of Set and the transformation of the world into a new and better place.

For this to happen, the current era would have to wither away. It became the Typhonites' primary purpose to accomplish that end. They had little difficulty among the decadent courts and coliseums of Rome's latter years. Whether whispering atrocities in a caesar's ear, arranging to have worthy

## LOWLY SAATHA

One of the most terrifying and revered Typhonites was also one of the most ignominious. This creature came to Rome in the guise of a slave and spent lifetimes among the courts of the world's most monstrous tyrants. It is thought that Saatha served/used Nero, Caligula and Carracalla, among other kine.

Saatha understood the overweening nature of pride as few beings could. His vampiric rivals, when they appeared in public at all, donned the togas of the patrician caste and maintained lavish estates. Never would they have consented to do their work by lowering themselves to appear as slaves — and they could not imagine that another Cainite would stoop to such a level. Thus Saatha, by doing just that, rendered himself invisible to his rivals, even though he acted in plain sight for centuries. Oftentimes, even fellow Typhonites failed to discern Saatha's maneuverings until he revealed himself and told them what to do next.

When Rome fell to the Visigoths, Lowly Saatha disappeared. Speculation suggests that he resurfaced, still a slave but with a new name and guise, among the Moorish courts, manipulating their efforts against the Christians of Europe. This rumor is unsubstantiated, but most Typhonites believe that Saatha exists to this night, doing the Dark God's bidding.

civil servants assassinated, or dulling the populace with bread and circuses, Typhonites rode the crest of human debauchery and helped blind the empire to its own doom.

Ironically, Typhonites encouraged the spread of the monotheistic religions of Christianity and Islam during the Dark Ages. They realized that, where there is a God of light, there is an Adversary of darkness. They knew that a certain type of person would always be more attracted to darkness than light. As the churches and mosques spread, the faiths calcified and added stricture after stricture, offering infinite opportunities for temptation. Forbidden fruit is doubly sweet and Typhonites waited in the darkness to lure laymen and clergy from the path of righteousness, and then exposed iniquity and demoralized even more people.

No vampire, corrupter or otherwise, predicted or encouraged the mortal Inquisition. It's likely that a few Typhonites used this or that witch-hunter as pawns, as did many Kindred. Ultimately, however, Typhonites fell to fire and cross as readily as any other vampire — and their natural tendencies toward cultivating sin and excess made them obvious targets if they could be found at all.

During the High Middle Ages and the foundation of the sects, Typhonites largely retreated or laid low, at least in western and northern Europe. They preferred to remain well behind the crescent curtain of Islam, waiting while the sect was played out, remaining neutral and only occasionally offering assistance to this side or that.

Such subtlety might have been a miscalculation, though. When vampires initially spread into the New World, Typhonites were few and far between among the settlers.

Many colonist groups fled oppression and corruption in the Old World. Typhonites as a group arrogantly assumed that few opportunities awaited them either on the primitive continents or among the scattered colonists. They preferred to search for Set's lore and hone their weapons among the familiar and ancient surroundings of the Old World.

This is not to say that no Typhonite lurked among the New World colonists. Vampires of all stripes follow humans for reasons as simple as blood. But in general, Typhonites didn't take a serious interest in the Americas until the 19th century. Certainly, opportunities for corruption and degeneration existed — colonial Protestant cultures, by their very strictness, set themselves up for enterprising tempters. The few Typhonites present found areas of French-dominated North America to their liking, particularly the port city of New Orleans and the island of Haiti. But what was ultimately the point? The vampires of the New World were on the periphery of the Jyhad and the keys to Set's resurrection would be found at its epicenter.

Or would they? In the late 18th century, the ancilla (now elder) Jason Lustrius gave a remarkable interpretation of a passage from one of the Typhonites' most holy works, *The Thousand Nights of Sutekh*. Lustrius pointed out that Set generally hunted and held court "in the nighted regions where the sun-barge sinks from the heavens." Previously, this had been interpreted as the hours of night itself. But what if it was literal? The sun sinks in the west. Could Set await resurrection in the unknown continents of the New World?

Following Lustrius' revelation, Typhonite occultists crossed the ocean in search of clues. They found the region to be primitive, but a land of opportunity. New York, New Orleans, Chicago, the Caribbean islands and the plantations of the South all presented ample herds and social facades for enterprising corrupters. And the "manifest destiny" of the American people was an obvious blind for Typhonite incursions into the West.

Thus, Typhonites came to riddle the New World, perhaps more so than the Old World. Today, a sizable contingent of path followers resides throughout North, Central and South America. Over half the followers of the path espouse Lustrius' revelations and actively believe that Set will rise in the Americas.

## FOLLOWING THE PATH

A Typhonite walks a fine line between zeal and caution. Despised equally by Sabbat and Camarilla, path adherents must cultivate patience and deliberation or die. Even more so than most vampires, they cloak themselves behind groups of followers and cults. They maintain the Masquerade religiously — not because they believe in it, but because it serves their purpose so effectively.

Typhonites divide their time between searching for occult lore and cultivating temples and cults. They avoid the inner circles of Camarilla and Sabbat society, instead targeting and befriending those on the margins — autarkis, anarchs, neonates and other relatively clueless and easily misled sorts.

Low- and mid-level corrupters know they can't take down the sects by themselves — that's not their purpose. Instead, they chip away a bit of mortar here, a brick there.

Typhonites generally operate through human ritual and sinfulness. By fostering cults promising power and luxury, they lure in the pawns they seek. The typical corrupter operation is three-layered. The outer layer consists of completely secular fronts — drug dens, prostitution rings and the like. By observing the clientele (and operatives), devotees determine which kine are ripe for initiation into the lesser mysteries of the next level — the religious cult.

This circle, which can be contacted through agents in the secular circles, promises mystical power (and sex, wealth and temporal power) in exchange for service. Most of the beliefs are hocus-pocus concocted by the Typhonites to appeal to the lowest common denominator. But still, a kine at this level might receive occasional mystic aid — a one-shot talisman or the infusion of a single blood point — to foster belief in the cult's power. Most servants are led no deeper; they don't need to be.

The core of the cult consists of ghouls and favored kine, those who have been selected after decades of service. Not even they know everything about Set, Cainites or the path (all of which comprise the third tier of corruption), but they learn enough to be effective operatives.

Typhonites take comfort in Card X of the Tarot, the Wheel of Fortune. The serpentine and jackal-headed beings ascending and descending on the Wheel are thought to be emblematic of Set's fall and inevitable return. The other apocalyptic creatures of the Tarot represent the other Antediluvians and supernatural powers of the world. These icons stand vigilant at the corners of the Earth, guarding

### THE SERPENTS OF THE LIGHT

The "anti-Setites," the Serpents of the Light, are as dire an enemy of the Typhonians as one can imagine. The Serpents are a branch of the Setites that defected to the Sabbat and are now sworn foes of their former clanmates. The Serpents, knowing the Typhonians as well as they do, are the deadliest threat to the survival of the path. Or so the Serpents think. In reality, corrupters strive to change their methods and surface philosophies, always slithering one coil ahead of their erstwhile brethren. Elder Typhonians occasionally set younger brethren against one or more Serpents, hoping to eliminate a foe or a foolish neonate.

Such is the Serpents' paranoia that the more cunning Typhonians find it easy to bait them. By revealing a portion of a cult, one composed primarily of disposable pawns, elders can goad Serpents into motivating an entire Sabbat city in a direction of the Typhonians' choosing.

It is all the sweeter when a supplicant of Typhon brings a Serpent of the Light into the path's coils. Such a creature is perhaps the most devious, cunning double agent in all the Jyhad.

against Set's return, but because they fear the Great Wheel, they cannot fully engage the god on his terms.

### THE ABD'AL-SOBK (SLAVES OF THE CROCODILE)

A splinter sect among the Typhonites, the abd'al-Sobek place emphasis on the legend of the crocodile-god Sobek, child of Set. Lesser in power than the serpent-god, Sobek nonetheless distinguishes itself with its ravenous appetite. Less interested in pursuing new truths, the abd'al-Sobek maintain Typhonite temples, promulgate sinful behavior, and "prune" areas and demographics already somewhat under Setite sway. Admiring the gluttony and hidden strength of the crocodile, the abd'al-Sobek foster excess and inequity at every turn. "The rich get richer, the poor get poorer" axiom is the muddy pond in which these monsters do most of their work.

Supposedly, the sect is administered by its founder, Sobek itself, a child of Set also known through the ages as The Great Cocodrill (crocodile). Rumors state that The Great Cocodrill is an abomination, a horrid hybrid of vampire and Lupine. A few among the inner sanctum whisper that even that is false. While the Cocodrill is in fact an abomination, it was not a wolf-shifter in life, but a monstrous crocodile-shapechanger. Forever barred from the sun and the reptilian solar magic that sustained it, The Great Cocodrill now serves the darkness. Its hunger is immense and it occasionally emerges from its lair, assuming the shape of a monstrous albino reptile.

#### Virtues

The Path of Typhon honors Conviction and Self-Control.

#### Common Abilities

Typhonites favor Abilities that help them achieve their goals. That's a sufficiently generic statement that suits nearly any Trait, but followers specifically prefer Empathy, Intimidation, Streetwise, Subterfuge, Performance, Academics, Investigation and Politics.

#### Preferred Disciplines

Theophidians practice the Serpentin Discipline to the highest level possible in order to best serve Set's will. The Dark Lord also inspires them to pursue his other favored powers, Obfuscate and Presence.

## MINOR PATHS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Like human cults and philosophies, vampiric Paths of Enlightenment wax and wane depending on the times, contemporary attitudes and the influence of the sects. Thus, while there are 16 major Paths of Enlightenment that are followed by contemporary vampires, several more exist. These last are followed by only a few, however. Some are specific to particular factions and some are specific to minor bloodlines.

## PATH OF ENTELECHY

Nickname: Philosophers

### BASIC BELIEFS

This is either a truly old or a very new path. It has been developed by European Brujah. The philosophers' path is about protecting one's fragile humanity and finding a light of truth in a dying universe. But more than that, founding Brujah want to drag their clan out of the muck of their fallen state and be named among the princes of vampires again.

This path teaches that the soul is eternal and a vampire's damned state traps the soul in base matter. But followers hold that good can come of being undead, that God has a plan for them, and that an immortal vampire has an incredible opportunity to learn. The Beast may gnaw away endlessly at one's sanity, but it must be defeated. This path offers the tools to force the Beast into quiescence, and that makes it attractive to members of Clan Brujah.

The focus of this calling is intellectual exploration. By learning, developing one's intellect and exalting knowledge, one can transform the vampiric "condition" into an opportunity. Gifted with incredible powers and enhanced senses, a vampire can accomplish so much.

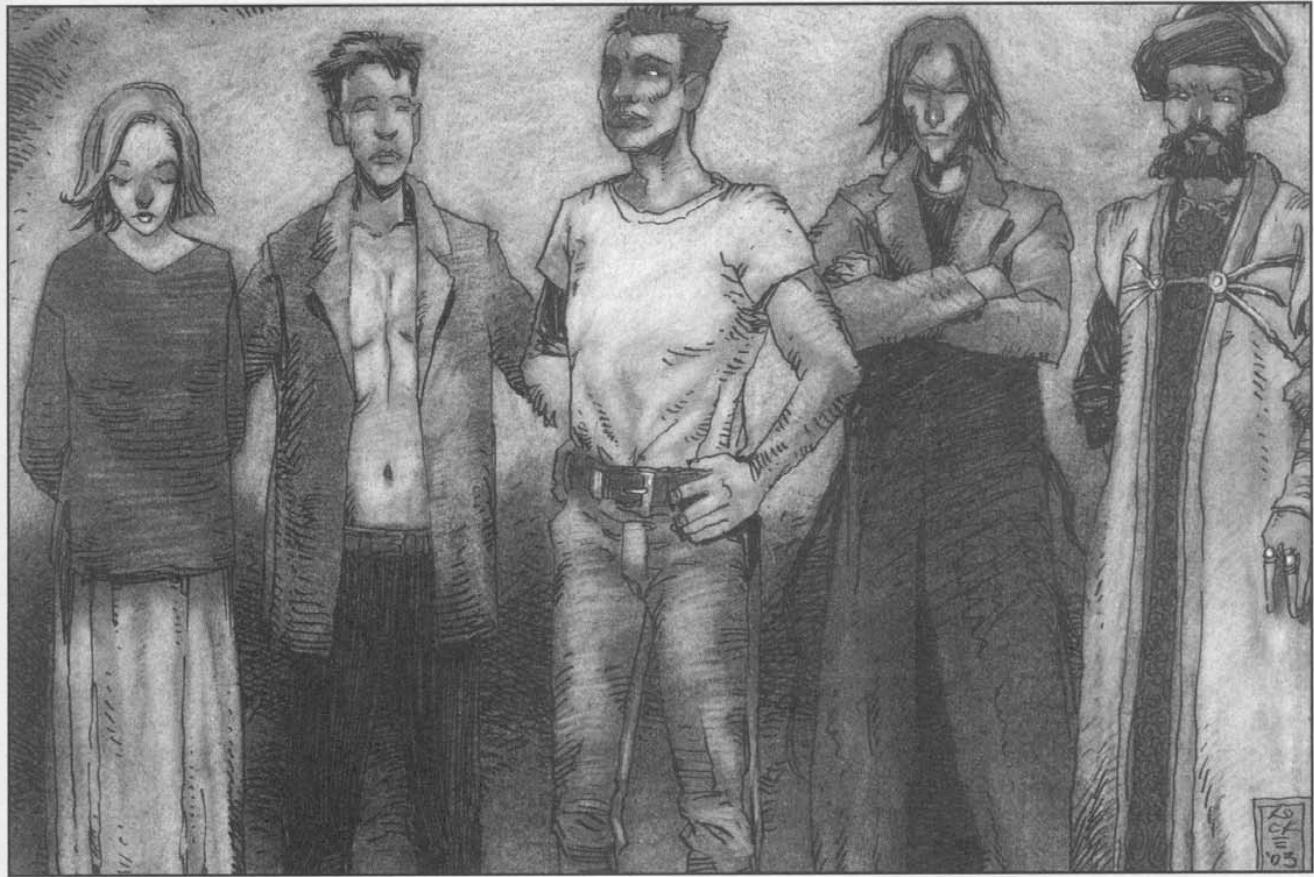
Followers of this path profess three essential concepts, three truths on which to base their philosophy: *Enkrateia*, or inner strength; *reie*, which they take to mean courage; and *saphrosyne*, control of the self. These were once essential characteristics of Brujah Embrace candidates. Now they are seen as most lacking amongst the fallen clan. Once, young candidates were expected to pursue *entelechy* before the Embrace. Now, elders say, all Brujah should strive for that state. Thus, path adherents constantly hone and test these qualities through study of philosophy, physical training and development of one's powers.

Merely following *Humanitas*, advocates say, is a passive thing. There is no time for idleness. One must actively strive against the Beast.

### HIERARCHY OF SINS

#### Rating Moral Guideline

- |    |                                      |
|----|--------------------------------------|
| 10 | Ill-defined or idle thinking         |
| 9  | Allowing others to fall to the Beast |
| 8  | Acting on impulse                    |
| 7  | Theft, robbery or vandalism          |
| 6  | Causing deliberate harm to a mortal  |
| 5  | Feeding from an innocent by force    |
| 4  | Succumbing to the Beast's violence   |
| 3  | Allowing a crime to go unpunished    |
| 2  | The murder of innocents              |
| 1  | Aiding a follower of another path    |



### ETHICS OF THE PATH

- The Beast is weakness. Be strong and command it to be silent.
- Master one's own true potential. Learn all that can be learned about one's self.
- As an heir to a great legacy, never show cowardice.
- Mortals must not be taken for granted. Feed to live, no more.

### HISTORY

The Path of Entelechy is a product of the Final Nights. It grew from the despair of several half-sleeping elders of Clan Brujah. As they watched, their children seemed to degenerate. Where they were once named a high clan, with undead monarchs and princes of the blood, now the Brujah are a joke. There must be more than mere violence and death, they whispered to one another in their dream state. *We must dedicate ourselves once again*, they said. Even as the Cathayans descended upon the Anarch Free State, the elders recruited the first followers of this path.

### CURRENT PRACTICES

Perhaps 20 Brujah currently uphold Entelechy. More than half of them are from Europe, but some are refugees from the battlegrounds of North America. These vampires seek to "perfect" themselves before attempting to recruit more followers. Rumors of the path's existence have spread, however, and many Brujah seek the few active teachers available.

Instruction takes place in a series of small ruined temples in northern Greece, and on the island of Crete. One teacher takes at maximum of three pupils at a time. All four of the extant Cretan teachers are ancillae.

### DESCRIPTION OF FOLLOWERS

One sponsor of the path is the Brujah Methuselah Menele. The elder seems to be in contact with his contemporaries in Greece and Turkey, and guides potential candidates to philosophy teachers. Since the fall of the Anarch Free States, some mendicant Brujah have heard the call and traveled to Greece to study at the feet of the masters.

Those who guide the cult look forward to the day when the Brujah may once again take their place as leaders amongst the Damned. Some fear that time grows short and they urge the group to redouble its efforts. But those voices are wrong. Time has already run out.

### FOLLOWING THE PATH

To walk this path, one must pursue personal excellence; the Beast is all that is weak and base in the vampiric form. Lusts, frenzies, hungers and passions are weaknesses that must be purged. The Beast is not part of one's nature. It is external and must not be allowed free reign.

Elders on the path constantly seek to test followers by organizing challenges, driving adherents to

higher peaks of endurance and accomplishment. Leaders attempt to keep these challenges within limits, but the possibility of going too far is high.

#### **Virtues**

The path extols Self-Control and Conviction.

#### **Common Abilities**

Followers are expected to perfect themselves at Athletics, Alertness and Expression, as well as in Linguistics, Academics and Science.

#### **Preferred Disciplines**

The Brujah "standard" Disciplines of Celerity, Potence and Presence are favored. By excelling in these, neonates can challenge any foe and save themselves, and can train the mind as well as the body.

## **PATH OF THE HIVE**

**Nickname:** Who?

### **BASIC BELIEFS**

There are things older than Caine, older than the Flood, older than the Earth itself. These things sleep, trapped in a world made from their own dreams and lusts. Some say that these forces are angels cast from the heavens before Lucifer's rebellion. Others that they were ancient intelligences, waiting in the darkness, before the Word was uttered.

No matter.

Sorcerers of the first tribe of man, which roamed the empty plains of the East before the Flood, learned that names have power. They discovered that the blasphemous titles of the things that slept beneath the Earth were especially puissant, and that a little of that power could be stolen. But they also knew that should these things awaken, the world would be flayed of all life. Horrors beyond all imagining lurked in the sleepers' dreams. Thus, these sorcerers sought to ensure that the entities remained asleep.

The Baali bloodline was drawn from these hideous sorcerers, with their carrion wells and torture pits. Atrocity lulled the sleepers, and atrocity freed a little of their power. The Baali became vampires, but they did not forget that there was still work to be done.

To ensure that the great task would not be lost, Baali sorcerers developed the Path of the Hive. The calling unites all of the Baali to ensure that the sleepers remain passive and trapped.

The Path of the Hive is the ancient ethos of the Baali clan. It demands loyalty of other paths' followers, and tireless effort in flattering the sleepers' dreams and hideous desires. The path is not infernalistic, although it seems to revel in demonic trappings. Instead, it pays homage to a concept of the Swarm, as if the Baali who follow it are somehow special to the Lord of the Flies.

An apocryphal tale recounts how the Baali woke one of the sleepers — a thing that spoke in the voice

of the swarm — and consumed its spirit. Perhaps it consumed them, also. The thing's voice scabbled in their souls, but gave them unity and gave them power. By absorbing one of the sleepers, the vampires could learn the secrets of others and keep them all asleep.

To follow this path, they say, one must let the voice of the swarm into the soul. But others whisper that the swarm knows no loyalty to its host. Perhaps one night the swarm may cast the Baali aside if they grow weak — or if their purpose is ever fulfilled.

### **HIERARCHY OF SINS**

<b>Rating</b>	<b>Moral Guideline</b>
10	Arguing with another follower of the Path of the Hive
9	Taking sides with an outsider against another of the path
8	Acting on impulse
7	Acting against another of your nest
6	Betrayal of an ally
5	Feeding from an innocent by force
4	Not sharing knowledge or a victim with others of the path
3	Acting for causes other than the cause of the nest
2	Betraying an elder of the path
1	Betraying one to whom you are bound

### **ETHICS OF THE PATH**

- Combat the predation of the Beast through the support of others on the path. Be ready to support one's fellows, as they must be ready to do the same.
- Loyalty is all. Be loyal to one's own sire, then to coterie and then to others on the path.
- The sleepers are trembling close to wakefulness. To ensure their continued slumber, flatter their hungers. Kill, torture, maim and mutilate, and whisper to them.

### **HISTORY**

This path, developed by Baali cultists a thousand years ago, has long since declined into obscurity. While rumor and legend accord the Baali as base infernalists, those who know better speak of the Baali's millennia-old obsession with keeping the oldest of the damned asleep in their stone tombs.

The path was long the salvation of Baali demonologists, and although their numbers were never replenished, the joint, coherent purpose of the path helped the bloodline survive.

In 1998, however, the demon Kupala awoke from its prison beneath Romanian soil. Surviving Baali flocked to the region — some to greet the new dark god, others to attempt to lull it back to sleep. But Kupala had allies — Tzimisce ancillae, childer of the Oradea League — and he set them against the infernalists. None of the Baali returned from Romania, but in the months that followed several Tzimisce

ancillae started practicing this path, trying to free themselves from Kupala's dominance or perhaps to gain greater favor and insight from the demon.

These Tzimisce ancillae are as yet disciples of the way and now travel the world seeking teachers amongst the last Baali. Those Baali who wish to share the path's tenets are rewarded. Most refuse. It matters little. The Tzimisce are most insistent and happily tear the knowledge free.

It is as if the diseased knowledge of the path wishes to live on after the Baali are gone, and reaches out, finding new hosts.

### CURRENT PRACTICES

The Baali have been decimated. The Camarilla hunts them as a threat to the Masquerade. The Sabbat hunts them as infernalists. The Assamites hunt them for revenge. By the time of their disastrous incursion into eastern Europe, their numbers were perilously low. Still, some survived. Yet some now say the Swarm has deserted them and found a new host. This new "host" — Tzimisce of the "Old Clan" and the Oradea League — comprises enthusiastic students who hunt down other Baali of the path to learn more.

The Swarm seeks to live on, and to live on it needs to keep the sleepers imprisoned. Followers of this path study demonology to learn the secret names and resting places of the old beings. Members of the Hive accumulate incredible amounts of forbidden knowledge and seek to learn more. But this knowledge is a means to an end — to learn the names of the sleepers and to supplicate them for power and ease them back asleep. Followers of the path are noted occultists and powerful blood sorcerers.

### DESCRIPTION OF FOLLOWERS

This path, guided by the hive-voice, seeks to ensure that the sleepers remain in their prison-slumber. Followers are all distant and inhuman. They are influenced by the Swarm and influenced by the needs of other adherents. Members do not have a "hive mind," but they do focus on certain issues as a group, to the detriment of other things. They are not infernalists; they are demonologists. They seek to learn secrets and steal power from demons, not to submit to the powers of Hell. Acolytes do not actively seek converts, but sometimes the Swarm chooses a candidate and followers act to initiate her onto the path.

#### Virtues

The Path of the Hive revels in Instinct and Conviction.

#### Common Abilities

The Hive emphasizes proficiency in Leadership and Expression in those who would be priests. Those who follow as initiates are expected to have some awareness of Linguistics, Law and Occult (with a

specific focus on "apocryphal" religious texts). Others are adept at Academics and Politics.

#### Preferred Disciplines

Auspex, Fortitude and Obfuscate are particularly prized Disciplines. Blood magic, however, is considered a weakness.

## PATH OF THE SCORCHED HEART

Nickname: Unforgiving

### BASIC BELIEFS

The Path of the Scorched Heart seeks to reject the Beast utterly by emphasizing logical thought, cold observation and rational existence. Strong emotion is of the Beast, and such an inner demon is the antithesis of rational thought. The Beast can therefore be opposed and ultimately beaten into submission by refusing to indulge in its emotional and intellectual weaknesses.

Love, affection, trust — these are all ways by which the Beast can enter. Hate, rage, frustration — these are all passions on which the Beast feeds. By rejecting them, one forces the Beast to sleep. Thus, by stepping beyond the normal interaction of humanity and vampires, followers of this path may stay the hunger inside. With no ties of love, there can be no emotional frenzy. With no irrational enmity, there can be no hate.

But this path is not merely about rejecting the Beast. It's about the pursuit of truth. The world is ultimately definable. Ambiguities and falsity are products of emotion and wishful thinking. No, the followers of this path say, by shutting out the Beast, the soul is open to the truth. By following such truth, reality can be understood and quantified.

In many ways, this attempt to stand outside the feints and illusions of the Jihad has made followers of this path invaluable to certain factions of that very struggle. After all, vampires lie. Histories, motives and thoughts can all be clouded by the Beast and manipulated by enemies. Free of the Beast and beyond the weaknesses that make other vampires easy dupes, adherents of the Path of the Scorched Heart can be relied on to provide as rational and factual an analysis as possible. Only a minority of Kindred have ever heard of the unforgiving, and even fewer would ever approach the path's advocates. The observations that members offer can cut through one vampire's self-delusions as effectively as another's lies.

Those few Cainites who claim to be the "true" Children of Troile developed this path. Some say the Brujah Antediluvian himself developed the calling as he meditated to find a way to calm his raging anger and lust. Caine cursed the clan founder, stoking the raging Beast inside Brujah's soul. Once, he had been possessed of a fierce intellect and a poet's heart. Now



his intellect warred with the Beast. There could be no more pointed questions, no more philosophical musings. The only salvation lay in forcing those emotions away. Only the “true” heirs of Brujah’s legacy, the unforgiving claim, seek the same salvation in logic.

Followers of this path do no proselytize. Right and wrong are atavistic emotional concepts, dead holdovers from the living world. Morality is merely an impediment, a conduit for emotion, and not an effective way of finding truth. This is not to say that devotees have no ethics; they do. They do act when necessary. Otherwise, they know that they should wait, investigate and find out all the facts, and only then decide what course to take. When threatened, the unforgiving are swift and merciless.

Those of the Scorched Heart prize near-perfect or eidetic memory. When selecting potential candidates for the path, they look for superb listeners, scientists and others who value knowledge.

#### HIERARCHY OF SINS

Rating	Moral Guideline
10	Making assumptions
9	Relying on others
8	Destroying another on the path
7	Passing up an opportunity to acquire a new Discipline or knowledge
6	Not killing a destructive mortal or vampire
5	Killing a mortal for any reason beyond fulfilling the victim’s destiny
4	Killing an innocent mortal
3	Falling to frenzy or Rotschreck
2	Emotional outbursts
1	Making decisions based on emotion

#### ETHICS OF THE PATH

- Do not feel emotion. Emotion is itself the Beast. Do not love; it makes one vulnerable. Do not hate. Reject anger. It is the Beast’s way.
- Trust only what one can verify.
- Secrets are currency. Knowledge is power and the way to truth. Seek all secrets incessantly. Finding solutions to even seemingly trivial secrets makes for useful mental exercise.
- Trust no one. If alliances must be made, know all that can be learned about would-be allies.
- Do not kill mortals unnecessarily. Survival is essential, but mortals are free of the Beast and therefore must be allowed to live.
- Make no precipitous action and know when action is required. When action is required, act decisively.

#### HISTORY

Many of the precepts of this path were laid down by Brujah himself and recorded by his childer. But

their methods of rejecting the Beast did not become a path until the 14th century, and were modeled on the Sabbat-inspired conversions of Roads to paths. A True Brujah named Rathmonicus, a confidante of Lady Zara Slatikov (see Appendix), collected the alleged Brujah on the matter and compiled various practices to quiet the Beast. He recorded these findings in a codex called the *Book of the Empty Heart*. Rathmonicus has long since been destroyed, but copies of his work have been translated into Latin, and lately English. Scholars say that only three verifiable Latin copies of the book survive. English ones are known to surface on occasion, but those copies can rarely be verified. Path adherents seek out such texts, to be confirmed as accurate or destroyed.

The Scorched Heart is in terminal decline, with a dozen followers or less. When the “True Black Hand” was destroyed in 1999, most of the path’s teachers and scholars met their Final Deaths. The philosophy was never common or influential. Its passing will not be missed. The recent Final Death of Nehemiah, one of the way’s most influential members, has left the path floundering. The True Brujah have sought alliance and shelter with the Setites in Egypt, but the Setites’ ethics do not coincide with those of the unforgiving.

#### CURRENT PRACTICES

With few practitioners, the path is an irrelevance, practiced only by those True Brujah who do not dwell in Egypt. Rumor has it that the Setites murdered the two path followers who sought refuge with them. Those dwelling elsewhere still follow the course’s precepts, but it is said that they seek Golconda or contact with the Inconnu. The “passivity” the path requires makes practitioners even less visible in the modern nights.

It is known, however, that some True Brujah — and maybe two or three followers from other clans — sell their unique insights and services to the highest bidder.

#### DESCRIPTION OF FOLLOWERS

Adherents are observant, quiet and somewhat passive. This seeming docility does not mean they are helpless; they simply are not prone to extravagance or hasty action. The path has a few followers in the Sabbat Black Hand and at least one Ventrue elder subscribes to its tenets.

#### FOLLOWING THE PATH

One of the unforgiving is withdrawn and non-confrontational. She sees no benefit in blatant displays of emotion, and little use for argumentative debate. If presented with a contrary (and by unforgiving standards, false) argument, a follower seeks to quietly offer the factual position and merely ignores anyone stubborn enough to continue to believe otherwise. But one thing that followers always do is observe.

## Virtues

The Path of the Scorched Heart uses Conviction and Self-Control

## Common Abilities

The unforgiving prize high Alertness scores, as well as Investigation, Linguistics and perhaps Occult. Those who follow the path typically strive to hone their inherent Attributes and develop their Knowledges. Most unforgiving characters have high scores in Academics and Lore.

## Preferred Disciplines

Auspex is prized for the greater awareness it offers. If Animalism is used intelligently, it can be a source of knowledge — and defense. Physical Disciplines such as Fortitude and Potence are studied, too. The unforgiving may be observers, but they must be capable of self-defense.

# PATH OF SELF-FOCUS

Nickname: Internalists

## BASIC BELIEFS

Like the Path of Paradox, the Path of Self-Focus owes a great deal to contact with so-called “Cathayan” vampires. The path addresses a Taoist notion, one summed up by the mortal teacher Laozi’s concept of “Wu Wei” — “conscious inaction” or “non-doing.” The path teaches a degree of acceptance of the world. To use a pop-culture phrase, “You cannot change the world, you may only change yourself.” The universe, internalists believe, follows its own course and one must follow along or be destroyed. Mastery over the world is an illusion. Having purpose is an illusion. If one “wanders without purpose” and allows the universe to proceed of its own accord, there is no conflict. Where there is no conflict, the Beast is quiet.

Internalists teach that meddling in the affairs of others is wrong. The *tao* must work through each person, as it will by nature. By interfering, one rejects the *tao* and strives against the tide. If a friend asks for help, then it is just and honorable to help; that is the way of things. But if a friend does not call for help and you interfere, you undo destiny and undo the *tao*. Worse, by interfering, one assumes a degree of superiority over the other and assumes a course of action that can endanger oneself and the friend.

All answers to all questions can be found within oneself. The universe has gifted all sentient beings with the tools to understand all things. If you cannot understand a thing by looking within, then it is not your place to know it. But while one may possess the tools of understanding, one must work to understand those tools before beginning. By honing self-awareness, can one learn what needs to be learned.

Internalists know that there is no future — what comes will come, and the past is dead. There is only the now. Actions occur properly only when they are

spontaneous, natural and the result of the needs of the moment. Acting for the future is foolish and acting for the past is wasteful. Vampires on this path frequently quote Lao Tzu: *The work is done and then forgotten. And so it lasts forever.* Such focused, undistracted action leaves no room for angst, passion or any consideration other than the moment. Free from such baggage, the spirit is free of the Beast.

But the Beast is part of every Cainite. Sometimes it needs to roam free. Vampires need to feed. When the Beast is required to come to the surface, it should be welcomed. The horrors wreaked by its awakening are also part of the *tao*. It is only when the Beast comes to the fore, when it is not required, that is wrong. By knowing oneself, one can know the Beast and know when it must rear its head. If one is weak, if one falters, then the Beast rears its head of its own accord and that is a failure. The destruction so wrought disrupts the *tao* and the flow of things.

## HIERARCHY OF SINS

### Rating Moral Guideline

10	Overconfidence
9	Laziness — mental or physical
8	Not treating others as you wish to be treated
7	Relying on others
6	Seeking to control others
5	Struggling with one’s self
4	Restraining the Beast when it must be freed
3	Not meditating regularly
2	Frenzying
1	Being a slave; submitting to the blood bond or a boon

## ETHICS OF THE PATH

- Live in the moment, with no thought to what has been or what is to come. Neither can be affected.
- Know one’s self, intellect and Beast utterly. The visceral and intellectual are equal parts of vampiric nature.
- Do not mourn those who fall to one’s predation, provided such predation occurs at the correct time and place. When hungry, feed. When threatened, kill. To mourn suggests that the *tao* is wrong.
- Do not be overconfident. The overconfident do not know their limits. But equally, do not underestimate one’s self.
- Judge others (and one’s self) by what they do and how they do it, not by their words.
- A being is responsible to itself and only to itself, not others.

## HISTORY

Around the time of the Battle of Talas in A.D. 751, when Chinese and Muslim armies fought an indecisive battle, vampires from East and West met. Like their mortal prey, Muslim and Chinese vampires

fought, but also traded in goods and ideas. The Muslims learned the secrets of making paper. Cainites learned the secrets of certain Chinese philosophies. As time passed, these outlooks developed and grew, influenced by Zen Buddhism and Taoism. Middle Eastern vampires, especially the Muslim Ashirra, were interested in such doctrines, but did not fully adopt the foreign precepts. Rather, a small group of non-Muslim vampires studied these ways in secret.

They might have died out, too, but for the actions of the Tal'mahe'ra, who recruited the followers and nurtured a path's evolution. The Tal'mahe'ra, the so-called "True Black Hand," believed that by channeling the excesses of its members into experimental paths such as that of Self-Focus or the Scorched Heart, they could better work to defend humanity.

Self-Focus was never a popular path, however, and did not have more than a hundred adherents.

In the Final Nights, only a few vampires who've had contact with either the "True Black Hand" or with Cathayan undead follow the path. Certain concepts upheld by Cathayan vampires' own paths are similar to the precepts of Self-Focus.

### CURRENT PRACTICES

Internalists do not seek to increase their influence, and do not evangelize their ways. They are, however, interested in both discussion of the "mortal" Tao and the Cainite equivalent. They have been known to choose Taoists for the Embrace. Vampiric scholars who show interest in so-called "Eastern" philosophies are sometimes invited to study this path. The following actually grows — slowly — and claims as many as 50 adherents in the modern night.

Several internalists are active in California, acting as mediators between Cainites and Cathayans, or seeking to learn from both.

### DESCRIPTION OF FOLLOWERS

Some Kindred dismiss internalists as being slow and passive, but most have learned to leave the followers alone — they are more than capable of defending themselves. All seek to learn from experiences, and hope to glimpse a little of the workings of the universe from each new sensation. They are not idle dilettantes. Rather, they meditate on every new thing and seek to rationalize it.

Internalists believe in God or a higher being, but they do not fool themselves into believing that vampires are part of some greater plan. Vampires are there, a part of things, but nothing more.

#### Virtues

The Path of Self-Focus draws on Conviction and Instinct.

#### Common Abilities

Etiquette, Brawl (Martial Arts) and Expression are especially prized. Anything that aids in the "knowing" of one's self and the bettering of one's body and spirit" is to be pursued. Internalists also typically excel at the meditation specialty of Occult.

### Preferred Disciplines

Auspex is valued, because of its capacity to help transcend the mortal plane and allow its user to experience the spiritual world. Internalists often learn physical Disciplines as self-defense. They tend not to practice such powers as Dominate or Presence.

## SHARIA EL-SAMA

Nickname: Ashirra

### BASIC BELIEFS

There have always been vampires who would try to assuage God's wrath and attempt to adopt His laws to the cursed existence of the undead. But few have stood in front of a prophet of the Lord and acknowledged his words. In the city of Medina, in A.D. 623, a Cainite by the name of Suleiman ibn Abdullah asked for an audience with the Prophet Muhammad, thinking to use him as a pawn in some game of the night. But the vampire was struck by the man's divinity, and bowed before him.

Suleiman ibn Abdullah became the first of the Ashirra, the Brotherhood, the vampires who kept God's holy law as set down by His Final and Greatest Prophet Muhammad. The Ashirra hold that the revelations of the Prophet counterbalance the raging of the Beast, that the demon within may be silenced, and that a vampire may seek forgiveness from God through prayer and unbreakable faith.

Islam teaches that life is about moderation and balance. No part of human experience is cursed or base; all can be enjoyed in moderation. It is to indulge in the extremes of such experience that is forbidden. Therefore, the Ashirra say the Beast must be allowed a certain latitude. A vampire must feed when hungry or be violent when threatened. Killing mortals is frowned upon, but Allah created all things and all things have a purpose, even vampires. Ashirra acknowledge that a Beast denied can grow strong, and when that final release occurs — and occur it will — it is overwhelming.

### HIERARCHY OF SINS

Rating	Moral Guideline
10	Failing to follow the Five Pillars of Islam, nightly
9	Not enlightening others outside the faith to the truth of Islam
8	Failing to be charitable, when necessary
7	Embracing an infidel
6	Enslaving another
5	Theft
4	Breaking an oath
3	Murder
2	Slaying those under your protection
1	Turning away from the law of God

### ETHICS OF THE PATH

- Do not feed from an unbeliever.
- When feeding from a believer, he must not be slain or left too weak to perform his daily duties to God.

- It is preferable to feed from animals, but an Ashirra must never feed from pigs.
- Do not Embrace an unbeliever.
- Do not Embrace a believer unless he has given his consent.
- The blood bond is a form of slavery. Ensnare only non-believers in its trap. If one under the bond shows piety toward God, free him.
- The enemy has many servants who would prey on believers. Defend those who follow God's law.

### HISTORY

This path was once known as the Tariq El-Sama, the Road of Heaven. The Ashirra developed its precepts in the nights following Abdullah's conversion.

The path peaked in the Golden Age of Islam, when the holiest of empires stretched from the Iberian Peninsula to the mountains of Afghanistan. In those nights, when Baghdad and Medina were the greatest cities on Earth, thousands of Cainites followed these laws.

As Islam fractured and stagnated, so did the path. As the mortal descendants of the Prophet and his followers became more concerned with temporal matters, and European civilization pushed back the boundaries of Islam, fewer vampires sought to live by this way. The path split into different sects — Sunni, Sufi, Shi'ite and still other, heretical beliefs. While the Ashirra attempted to remain above such quarrels, they were dragged in and the following weakened further.

By the late 20th century, perhaps no more than a hundred vampires still retained their old faith. The Ashirra were mostly concentrated in the lands now called Saudi Arabia, Iran and Afghanistan.

### CURRENT PRACTICES

The Ashirra do not care for mortal Jyhads or uprisings. Such distractions are more related to temporal pursuits, despite loud claims of divinity. Rather, the Ashirra seek to defend Islam from the predation of vampires and other, damned things. They rarely seek converts; Islam may be a powerful, growing religion, but some amongst the Ashirra

remember the first caliphs and rarely believe today's mortals or vampires worthy of their name.

### DESCRIPTION OF FOLLOWERS

There are perhaps 100 followers of this path active in the Final Nights. They are all elders; the youngest is 300 years old. Adherents are somber, composed, dignified and thoughtful. They insist on good manners and modest appearance, but think nothing of striking down a neonate who offends them. Most dress traditionally: women in the full *hijab* and men in acceptable garb. Most, however, know that the word of the Prophet is not Arabic custom and ultimately demand respect for God and his teachings, not for local traditions.

### FOLLOWING THE PATH

Ashirra are detached and proper, but are also exceptionally traditional and hidebound. Adherence to the wisdom of the Prophet has saved their souls from much of the weight of ages, and many are truly old. The modern world scares them. They see it as a threat to the faith they helped nurture, and to themselves.

Ashirra always show respect to those who have faith and to those who seek knowledge. In Islam, the pen is mightier than the sword. Ashirra once evangelized their path. Now they just hope to open others' eyes to the jewels of wisdom of the Prophet's words.

#### Virtues

The Ashirra maintain Conscience and Self-Control.

#### Common Abilities

The path emphasizes proficiency in Leadership and Expression in those who would be priests. All have some knowledge of Linguistics, Law and Occult. Others are adept at Academics and Politics. Many have high scores in several Lores.

#### Preferred Disciplines

Auspex, Fortitude and Obfuscate are particularly valued. Blood magic is looked upon with suspicion, and "cursed" Disciplines such as Serpentinis, Daimoinon and Vicissitude are forbidden.



trabbold



# CHAPTER FOUR: KNOWING THE WAY

To follow a Path of Enlightenment is to sell your soul in return for sanity. A path protects one's identity against the Beast. By sacrificing Humanity, by altering your outlook, you remain yourself. All it costs is your soul.

Humanity is an overused word in *Vampire* games. "Humanity" is not a sliding alignment scale. It does not merely measure morality. In a crude way, it measures the capacity to love, feel, empathize, care and to enjoy experiences. As Humanity falls, a character loses those capabilities, but more importantly she sees those capabilities as liabilities. Humanity is a precious thing, holding with it the possibilities of love, redemption and contentment. But as Humanity slips away — and it will slip away — the Trait itself becomes a sign of weakness. The Beast leeches away at the soul. It becomes easier for a vampire to give in. Humanity carries with it idealism, dreams, new ways of thinking. As the Beast takes hold, stasis sets in.

Once lost, Humanity is almost impossible to regain. A Path of Enlightenment offers the distant hope of somehow staving off the Beast, to maintain something of one's self. But the price is high. Humanity must be utterly rejected. You sell your soul.

By starting on a path, you admit defeat in order to enter a new contest.

## VAMPIRES—IN AND OUT OF CHARACTER

Stoker called vampires undead demi-demons. Vampires are products of human fascination with sexuality and mortality. They are tightly bound to Catholic iconography, fetish pornography and glamour. They're like

old movie stars or the *Picture of Dorian Grey* in reverse. Old movie stars get old and die, but their false faces remain, bigger than the mortal actors could ever be. Vampires are like that. Forever young and beautiful and unconstrained, they are true decadents, able to indulge in anything, with all eternity in which to do it. Whatever makes them human eventually grows old and dies, but their false face — their glamorous, seductive and erotic image — never fades.

Some in the World of Darkness would say the spawn of Caine are walking corpses held together by the Curse that animates them. Others speak of a "static" state, trapped between life and death. These are valid observations, but none can define what a vampire is to any satisfaction.

Either way, one key concept emerges to define Cainites: perversion. Vampires are the essence of perversion.

Plenty of *Vampire* players discuss whether the Damned can have sex, or whether their feeding is rape or in any way morally justifiable. In the end, the undead go long past conventional morality. The only vampire to stand on the moral high ground is one already dead. To feed is to rape, to demean, to kill, to dominate, to move so far past petty concepts of sin as to make the discussion laughable. The Kindred are evil. We all know what evil is. We know and we pretend we do not. The Kindred are evil and we are their food. Their humanity is an idle thing, an immaturity, like an adolescent's belief that he will one day marry MTV's latest goddess or change the world. Cainites' attempts to reach "enlightenment," their obsession with retaining human morality, are nothing more than a sadomasochistic compulsion, a desire to

feel — something, anything. But they become jaded. It happens a little at first, slowly, and as the years and decades pass everything gets easier. Lies are difficult to maintain. The truth is always less trouble. Trying to remain humane is a lie and lying, even to oneself, is a challenge. Eventually, all lies fall away.

The key to vampiric sexuality, philosophy and identity — and the Paths of Enlightenment these things spawn — is that perversion. In the same way that vampiric hunger is a perversion of mortal hunger, Cainite biology is perverted. (Forget concepts of “trapped in stasis” or “animated corpse”). Perversion permeates them. They are flesh and blood, but no longer human. It is a hellish transubstantiation. They are wrong things walking, creatures from the fringes of the forbidden. It's worth considering what that means. They're not “unnatural” in the New Age sense, not “trapped away from the Life Force” or anything like that, although those concepts are true in their own way. *They're simply something that should not be.*

Of course, the paths can ward off the last and worst aspects of perversion, or make the descent seem like less of a loss, but once Humanity, the soul, is gone, only the monster awaits. And thus is the nature of vampirism.

## A STORYTELLER'S PERSPECTIVE

Paths make good story fodder. Paths offer motivation for Storyteller characters. They're McGuffins to dangle in front of your players to initiate stories, and they offer ways to explore the stranger elements of the World of Darkness. Followers of the Path of Caine seek Noddist lore, and compete with each other as scholars and rivals. Followers of the Path of Blood seek to out-do one another in their efforts to serve the teachings of Haqim and to come closer to the sight of God.

Followers of a Path cannot sit still and wait for enlightenment. They must pursue it. If a supplicant does not move forward, she does not move at all. A character who does not progress is in imminent danger of stumbling back down the path. By adopting a course, a player commits her character to your story and chronicle. Your challenge is to tailor developments to reflect the character's newfound priorities. Once you make these changes, the path character becomes an integral part of the proceedings. She wants to pursue the goals you hint at or lay out. Instead of trying to find new ways to motivating different characters (and their players) to take action, having a character follow a path is akin to getting her player to “sign on the dotted line” and involve herself fully in your chronicle. The character is obligated to do and act.

Paths of Enlightenment can also be used to highlight some of the core themes of **Vampire**: personal horror, the struggle with the Beast and the relationship

of a damned thing with its god. Say a player portrays a thug of some sort, perhaps a stereotypical Brujah gangbanger. They've been involved in the game for a while. The player has managed to make his character reasonably interesting and successful, but he's bored. He feels as if he's experienced everything the character can do. One solution might be to create a new character, or the existing character can be reborn by adopting a Path of Enlightenment. By adopting the Path of Entelechy or the Path of Honorable Accord, the character can be renewed in many ways and his motivations can be bound more tightly to your chronicle.

Paths are also excellent ways of “buying back” accumulated experience points. Particular paths encourage certain Attributes or Disciplines to be improved. No, the player can't have his character go off and learn Dark Thaumaturgy. His Path of Death and the Soul prizes Linguistics. The character's mentor expects him to learn new languages. If the player refuses, that's the basis for an interesting (if painful) story.

### THE PATHASA FRATERNITY

Some paths focus on individual pursuits and their adherents form few social groups. But most are shared churches of interest, supported by dozens of vampires of similar nature. Many have pecking orders based on advancement and internal politics. Others have extended and baroque hierarchies rivaling those of any mortal congregation.

Paths are fraternities the way clans are not. Path members can be expected to support each other, and they tend to have similar goals. Followers have fraternal gatherings as well — High Mass for the Path of Redemption, and celebrations of the words of the First Vampire for the Path of Caine, for example. These gatherings can involve all vampires of the same devotion in an area. And where vampires gather, politics always ensue. A priest of a path could make a sermon condemning a local Sabbat bishop who doesn't share the path's code of ethics. A noted scholar of another course could call for deliberate action against a “common foe,” work to discredit a rival or even ask for help in finding a piece of information. Some cities are considered important to certain path members. Even Sabbat leaders are loath to upset the Path of Redemption in Montreal or the Path of Death and the Soul in Toronto due to the political influence of those groups' members. A character in your chronicle could lead the entire pack into unlife as social and political forces or outcasts.

Such fraternal politics can add an extra dimension to a **Vampire** chronicle. Sometimes, to create a change of pace or to cover up for the absence of several members of the troupe, characters on a path might be invited to a fraternal “conference.” Perhaps other roleplayers in your area could be invited and players could interact as their characters, debating the nature of their calling. Granted, such a meeting might not reflect the events of one's chronicle world, but it would be an interesting departure.

## CHALLENGES

One of the hardest things for any Storyteller to do is create morality-driven obstacles for path characters to face. No philosophy should be a perfect fit for any character, given the inherently strange and foreign nature of paths. The unfortunate truth is that many players choose the Path of What I Was Going To Do Anyway, leaving it up to the Storyteller to fit the difficult parts of a character's morality into the game.

Morality has always been at the core of **Vampire**. ("A Beast I am, lest a Beast I become" was the mantra of the first edition.) By choosing to take her character down a Path of Enlightenment, a player implicitly asks the Storyteller to build storylines and roleplay around the character's morality. One of the responsibilities of the Storyteller, then, is to make sure that players are aware of the consequences. Inform your troupe up front that if they intend to walk their characters on Paths of Enlightenment they won't find the experience to be trivial or easy.

That's not to say that characters on paths should be abused per se, but in an "ordinary" **Vampire** story characters face a minor crisis of Humanity roughly every night — do I feed or not? A Storyteller might not play up that challenge during every evening of every story. In general, though, characters on paths should face minor and ordinary crises as often as a Humanity-driven characters would.

As Storyteller, there are several general ways in which you can pose moral roleplaying challenges. You can present a situation that creates tension between two different tenets of a path. You can create tension between a path and a character's immediate goals. Or you can create tension between two characters on different paths. But be careful. Don't make each situation too contrived or players will lose their suspension of disbelief. They'll recognize that "this is the point in the story when we have to make a moral choice." Your goal isn't to force the characters to fail in goals that aren't related to paths, or to cause them to fail in their callings. Your goal is to encourage meaningful, exciting and memorable roleplaying.

### GOALS

Your first and probably easiest choice as Storyteller is to arrange an upcoming story so that the pack's goals are in opposition to one or more characters' paths. A group including Cathari vampires might be sent into a Camarilla stronghold to quietly spy and gain information about the local Camarilla. The nightly restraint necessary to pull this off is a violation of the level-10 sin for these characters. Avoiding the sorts of hedonistic debauchery that the Cathari thrive on is sure to inspire some angst within the pack.

You need to be aware of the goals of your troupe's characters in general and once you are, you can set up situations in which the their paths and goals collide. A follower of Power and the Inner Voice may need to spend a year in a city controlled by a powerful vampire who seems to

be a fool. A Cainite on the Path of Night who wishes to become bishop of a Sabbat city has a hard time coinciding the necessary politics with his path, and as Storyteller you should have no problems dropping obstacles in his way.

Of course, many paths are structured so that ordinary unives are difficult enough for followers. It is a level-2 violation of the Path of Lilith to *fail* to dispense pain and anguish. Bahari must wander around, inflicting suffering, or they must commit a crime as serious as casual murder is to a Humanity follower. It is an act of utter and hideous debasement for a follower Night to say, "I'm sorry." You don't have to do a lot of work to force characters following paths to deal with the limitations of their morality. Again, make sure that players know going in that their characters will be forced into an inhumanly nasty code. Forewarned is forearmed.

### TENETS

A more complex story possibility is to pick two tenets of a given path and come up with a situation that sets them in opposition. A follower of the Path of Blood must fulfill a contract, but he cannot act against another one of the Children of Haqim. What if he takes a contract not knowing that his target is another Assamite? Perhaps a Metamorphosist discovers that a particular sort of bodily modification is extremely pleasurable. Should he stop, knowing that pleasures of the flesh are forbidden, or continue, knowing that body modification is mandatory?

### CROSS PURPOSES

Members of certain paths naturally come into conflict with one another. Their aims are so contradictory that they cannot help but collide. Members of the Path of the Bones deliberately kill just to learn about death. Members of the Path of Night keep mortals alive in order to let people "earn" more sin. The Path of Paradox encourages violations of ordinary morality, while the Path of Honorable Accord focuses on self-discipline and loyalty. When coming up with story ideas, look for points where the callings of two or more packmates could collide, and insert story hooks at those points.

### ADVANCING ON PATHS

In game terms, you must spend a number of experience points equal to twice the desired rating in order to increase your character's path rating. But in story terms, it's not that easy. Course advancement makes certain demands. In most cases, a Cainite must have a teacher to guide her. She must prove that she is learning and must undergo a change of outlook. Neither of these feats is easy to accomplish.

### THE TEACHER

A teacher is a vampire who is advanced in the path and who leads less-enlightened Cainites into the strange philosophies that they must comprehend. Depending on his own path, Nature and ideals of a prospective student, a teacher may require a boon for his services. Generous



teachers or those who wish to evangelize their paths are unlikely to require payment. Introspective masters or those confronted with prospective students who do not appear serious or compatible may demand a great favor or may refuse outright.

A new student must pass through an initiation to prove herself worthy of a mentor's time. A Noddist instructor might force a vampire to meditate on the Book of Nod, all the while preaching about how the applicant has failed as one of the undead and is unworthy of attention. A Cathar teacher could afflict a character in a particularly intense *consolamentum* that nearly destroys her, but that somehow equips her to plunge into her quest to tame the Beast. Such initiations are typically highly ritualistic — they are a communion with the spiritual core of a path. Others are highly intimate. Both may be best suited to occur in downtime, unless a Storyteller doesn't believe a character (or player) is suited to a path and needs to be shown why.

Or you can turn the pursuit of a teacher into a plotline of its own. Ten years ago, the majority of True Sabbat followed a Path of Enlightenment. Now, perhaps half that number does. Many may be on an equal or lesser footing in the sect than your troupe's characters. Some teachers evangelize and recruit followers, while others expect followers to come to them. The players' characters therefore have to earn an instructor's time, proving themselves over all other applicants. Sect politics and intra-clan and path rivalries also play a factor. A Sabbat teacher on the Path of the Beast does not adopt a Camarilla Gangrel (though he might accept autarkis Gangrel). A Lasombra on the Path of Night does not indulge an *antitribu* — or worse, a Ventrué student. A teacher of the Path of Revelations ensures that students do not associate with followers of other paths. Would-be students therefore have to demonstrate their worth and readiness.

If a teacher is needed to follow a character's path, that trainer should be "paid for" as a Mentor Background. This instructor can join any existing Mentor in a character's unlife (which could lead to rivalries between them). The Storyteller could also permit a player to migrate his character's Mentor Background points from an old instructor to a path teacher if the character becomes more reliant on his new guide.

Experienced characters with high path ratings may themselves attract students, if they answer a call that encourages the dissemination of knowledge. As Storyteller, you can use such relationships to pull longstanding characters into the politics and activities of newer characters. In most groups, having students is a status symbol, but characters must be careful what students they take and how they teach them. Having ignorant or failed pupils causes a teacher to lose face, too. Players do not need to spend Background points to represent the acquisition of students, since novices represent work and provide few short-term benefits to their masters.

## PROOF OF ADVANCEMENT

Few teachers take the time to educate a Cainite who does not truly wish to progress down a path. If a sin roll fails, a student has languished at her current level too long, or has not followed the rituals and procedures of the faith, it is hard to convince a tutor to continue. Proof of a student's good intentions can include participating in path rituals regularly, and having a damned good excuse when they are missed. A Noddist who fails to appear for a ceremony because she's off on a crusade has a valid — and admirable — reason. A follower of the Path of Redemption who never attends High Mass because she is "busy" does not.

A path demands more than simply "following the rules." It expects effort and commitment on a character's part. In the write-ups for each of the Paths of Enlightenment is a list of "Preferred Disciplines" and "Common Abilities." A character who shows promise in these Disciplines and Abilities is more appealing to a teacher than one who doesn't.

## CHANGING

Before a character can advance down her road, the player must roleplay her pursuit to the satisfaction of the Storyteller and (depending on the group's style) the troupe. This demonstration is not trivial. The player must have roleplayed the path well. You can inspire players by encouraging them to read their path write-ups in this book, and by educating them through the examples and lessons of any teachers. A caveat, however: Pursuit of a Path of Enlightenment is a highly individual exercise. If you ask a hundred followers of the Path of Honorable Accord to define "honor," you might get 50 different answers. Final judgment must therefore always come from the Storyteller. It may also prove worthwhile to consult the player in private. He might not feel that his character has advanced sufficiently to justify an increase in rating, even if you and the rest of the troupe feel otherwise. The player's preferences in this matter should certainly be paramount.

## ADVANCING

You may wish to leave path advancement entirely in players' hands once the criteria of starting down a course are fulfilled. Or you might want to use game-mechanic advancement as a tool. But just because a character has fulfilled some requirements of advancement does not automatically mean a precious path point is gained. By accomplishing her goals, a character can get a note in the Storyteller's book for future reference. If you need a plot point in a hurry, a teacher might ask for a small favor from a character and then acknowledge her progression, or if s player is absent that week, her character's Mentor "unexpectedly takes her to a secret haven to teach her the next secrets of the path." A character's progress in a path can occur at whatever pace best suits the development of events in your game.

## AFTER ADVANCEMENT

Once a character advances on a path, her problems change. By developing, she earns responsibility and her actions are increasingly restricted. Yes, there's truth and enlightenment and perhaps the distant hope of Golconda, and she has established some emotional distance between herself and the Beast, but she must act in an ever less humane manner. She has fewer options, less wriggle room in her decision-making. Her unlife belongs more to the path than to herself. Each advancement comes with a higher price in experience points, and a much, much higher price in terms of roleplaying requirements.

## USING THE HIERARCHY OF SINS

Morality has always been a crucial part of **Vampire**. The ultimate enemy in the game is neither the Sabbat nor the Camarilla. It's not Lupines. It's not the Antediluvians. It is oneself. You can fight against the Sabbat or flee from Lupines. You can work to halt the Antediluvians' waking, but the Beast will always get you in the end. **Vampire** is a horror story. It's not about fanged superheroes. Few undead fight for some higher cause. Most merely seek to occupy themselves, come to terms with their natures, and buy themselves a little freedom in their nocturnal existence.

Cainites must weigh every moral decision carefully. There is no easy way to escape the Beast, and each action or decision could trigger a descent toward it. As Storyteller, you can manage the tension in your game by carefully choosing the moments that require degeneration checks. Calling for rolls when a vampire does *anything* offensive toward his avocation might grow tiresome. And yet, calling the checks only once per session takes emphasis off such a crucial element of the game.

A good rule of thumb is for degeneration checks to happen once per scene, maximum. You might also call for them each time a character makes a decision that is crucial to the plot currently underway, but that conflicts with the tenets of his existence. If in the initial scene of a night's play a vampire hurts one of her vessels unthinkingly, a degeneration check might be appropriate. If a character commits a minor transgression in the process of advancing the story (making the game proceed), then use discretion. If, however, a character comes to after a frenzy at the climax of a scene and realizes that the mobster he was interrogating has been torn to shreds, then that is a potentially dramatic and justifiable time to call for a degeneration roll.

Discuss the timing of such rolls with your players. Do not avoid asking for rolls merely because the players say rolls are restrictive. That's the point of degeneration checks: Paths are restrictive. Only if the players feel that rolls hamper the flow of the story might consider their pleas, and then roleplaying should compensate for true or wayward behavior.

## PATHS AND THE TROUPE

Following a higher purpose can be difficult to roleplay. Humanity is challenging enough to play con-

## OPTIONAL RULE: HARSH HIERARCHY

Hierarchies of Sin work by narrowing a character's moral choices. If a character is at level 4 on the Path of the Beast, a degeneration roll must be made for him if he shows mercy to a dangerous opponent, even if there is perfectly good reason to spare the foe. The logic is obvious. By not following the path's precepts, the path is of little use in defending one's sanity from the Beast.

What if Hierarchies of Sin worked differently, though, inclusively? Human religions tend to expect a worshipper to accept the whole of their teachings. Imagine if it was the same amongst the undead. What if any violation of any of a path's tenets could trigger a degeneration roll, no matter a character's rating? Your vampire may be at level 4 of the Path of the Beast, but what if she slays an enemy that doesn't directly threaten her? That's a level-7 sin. If you decided that all tenets of a path are enforceable upon any follower, all sins might be punishable.

Under this optional rule, the Storyteller may call for a degeneration roll if a character violates *any* tenet of his path. If the roll fails, there are two possibilities. If the violation is below the character's path rating, the character loses a rating point as he normally would. If the violation is above his path rating, a second roll is made. If that is a failure or a botch, your character's path rating is reduced by one. By sinning against any part of one's path, even at a low rating, a vampire might doubt his suitability for that calling.

This is an awfully harsh optional rule, but it's excellent for separating the wheat from the chaff where followings are concerned. And perhaps that's how it should be. It should be *challenging* to resist the Beast, and characters who pay lip service to their paths may quickly learn that they're fated for monstrosity. Storytellers should clarify any such rule with players before a character adopts a Path of Enlightenment. Indeed, if you enforce this rule for paths you should probably enforce it for Humanity as well (unless the theme that you wish to express is that Humanity is preferable to any path).

vincingly — its foundations can be so intuitive for us that we can't grasp how we're human. We just are. That said, Paths of Enlightenment are exceptionally difficult to depict. They're recommended for experienced roleplayers only. The fundamental problem with followings is that few players can *really* get into the "headspace" a path demands. Devious players may have their characters adopt paths merely to save their heavily "statted" creations from being whisked away by the Storyteller. Such players could merely scan the Hierarchy of Sins to see what they can "get away with." They look at the Path of the Bones and decide that since their characters are level 5, there's no choice but for their vampires to kill mortals indiscriminately. "The opportunity presented

itself," they might say. Such people can be disruptive to the game.

There are two problems here. Be careful not to conflate them. The first is the problem of the player searching for the "Path of What I Wanted to Do Anyway." The second is the (in-game) problem that a Cainite on a heinous path causes to his environment, by callously killing mortals and so on.

As Storyteller, one of your responsibilities is to talk to players before their characters start down a path. Make sure that a player who looks for the Path of What I Wanted to Do Anyway is aware that any calling has roleplaying challenges, some of them doubtless not exactly what he really wants. If he still chooses a particular course, don't go out of your way to punish his character with the "hard parts" of his direction, but don't stint either. Enforce degeneration rolls. If the character is on a path that encourages him to kill without regard for the consequences, make sure to hit him with Storyteller characters who he ought to kill but needs to keep alive (or likes). If he's on a very insular path, one that discourages interaction with outsiders, make sure that elders and mentors on that path regularly question him about the time he spends with his current coterie or pack, implying that the others are not trustworthy or worth his time.

As to the ramifications of a character taking on a very "liberal" path (one that lets him kill mortals and Cainites as he pleases), have the word spread in-game and in-character that the vampire is not to be trusted. Make it difficult for the character to find support and aid outside his path. Have other Cainites demand boons in return for any kind of help. Suddenly the appeal "of doing what I want when I want" may prove a burden and indeed a hollow promise.

### STORYTELLER CHARACTERS AND PATHS

When running Storyteller characters on paths, remember that vampire callings are evil and monstrous (by human mortal standards). Many paths are purely intellectual pursuits; ordinary emotions are secondary. Play this monstrosity up when introducing path-adherent characters of your own. Be distant to everyone. Deliberately (in character) violate decorum and social mores. When asked a question, pause before answering, as if barely tolerating the interruption. Have Storyteller characters obsess about their paths' tenets. Ask other players' characters for their judgments on tenet issues and then dismiss those opinions. Treat others' ideas in general with a degree of polite (or overt) contempt.

Write down why your character walks this path and how it influences his actions toward others. Make a set of guidelines for yourself to represent the character, based on the Hierarchies of Sin and path profiles in this book. Define the character's relationships with others—his following undoubtedly changes those for the worse. The character's calling drives his agenda, so it can be an important plot element. Your players may be able to use your character's path against him, or their unfamiliarity with it may make him unfathomable.

Played well, your character can be feared and mistrusted.



### OPTIONAL RULE: BONUS DERANGEMENTS

Paths are particular, obsessive views on reality. By charting a course, it's likely that a character has already crossed the Rubicon of sanity more than once. As Storyteller, instead of subtracting points from a character's rating when he violates tenets, you might impose a derangement. In this way, the character manages to avoid the Beast for a while longer, but his transgressions break something inside. In the **Vampire** rules, a failed degeneration roll results in a loss of path rating. When a degeneration roll *botches*, however, a character loses a point of path rating and Conscience (or Instinct), *and* gains a derangement. As an alternative, a character could gain a derangement on a failed roll instead of losing a point of path rating. This approach wouldn't have to occur on every failure. You may choose to apply it only when the character violates his path when his temporary Willpower is low, or when he violates one of the core tenets of his following (a level 1 to 3 violation, rather than a relatively minor violation of the 7 to 10 tenets). If a botch occurs, the normal rules apply.

This is an optional rule, of course. Storytellers should be aware that it actually applies more strictures on characters' actions than the ordinary gain and loss of path rating would. A lost point makes it harder for a vampire to walk the high moral road, but incurring a derangement can impact all parts of his existence.

### PATHS AND THE LONG-TERM CHRONICLE

Players and Storytellers familiar with **Dark Ages: Vampire** may note a similarity between **Vampire**'s paths and **Dark Ages**' Roads. The similarities are deliberate. Roads are the forefathers (sometimes distant, sometimes near) of modern-day paths. There are significant differences between how the Roads and paths work, however.

(Specifically, incompatibilities in Hierarchy of Sin mechanics, and the **Dark Ages** Aura rules.) So what does that mean for a long-term chronicle? If you and your group are running a game similar to that of "The Transylvania Chronicles," how should you manage changes in morality over time?

Paths are not Skills, Attributes or Disciplines. Walking a path may be a lonely, obsessive experience, but they can be social as well as psychological guides. To follow a course without reinforcement from other followers is difficult. So how would an adherent of, say, the Road of Sin progress to the Path of Cathari? Unless the character was one of the Sabbat seen in **Giovanni Chronicles 2** who actually sat down and categorized the Path of Cathari as an "acceptable" Sabbat pursuit, a lot of Cathari practitioners are new and somewhat unfamiliar to a Sin follower. Eventually, sometime long past the end of the Dark Ages, the character finds himself without support or teachers. The aged vampire can no longer realistically advance on the Road of Sin. The only option for future progress is to adopt the similar, but still different, Path of Cathari. There is a penalty, though. How much of a penalty depends on the Storyteller and fellow players, but a good rule of thumb would be for the character to take up the path at one or three points lower than his former rating (one for low-level Road characters, three for high level). Another possibility is to simply convert Road rating over to path rating and ruthlessly inflict degeneration rolls for a few game sessions. Alternatively, if a character's Road rating is not an important issue or if the character followed the Road of Kings, Road of Heaven or Road of Humanity, just convert the character back to Humanity at half rating.

Or else, just assume that a transition from a Road to a related path goes well, and differences between Hierarchies of Sin are a result of changed focus and not an issue.



# APPENDIX: FELLOW TRAVELERS

Every Path of Enlightenment has its notable figures. As opposed to those of most mortal religions and philosophies, it isn't a given that a path's founder has died in the centuries since the movement came into being. Of course, the founders of the most ancient callings (such as the Path of the Beast) may be lost to the mists of time. If such creatures still exist, they are surely in torpor and immensely dangerous to any fool who dares disturb them. Indeed, many of the founders of the recognized Sabbat paths were at their prime in the 17th century and have faded from activity in the subsequent centuries.

Some of the most influential path followers in the Final Nights therefore aren't founders, but active adherents. Some proselytize, spreading the word of their faith, while others are repositories of knowledge or masters willing to teach the worthy.

The characters in this chapter can figure into a chronicle as mentors, students or fellow travelers. Players who read the following text should not assume that these characters' backgrounds or motivations hold true in their chronicles. Storytellers are encouraged to change and revise each of these Cainites to fit their needs.

## FERGUS ALEXANDER, GANGREL ARCHON

13th generation, childe of William Luft

**Clan:** Gangrel

**Nature:** Masochist

**Demeanor:** Deviant

**Embrace:** 1993

**Apparent Age:** Late 20s

**Morality:** Path of Harmony 4

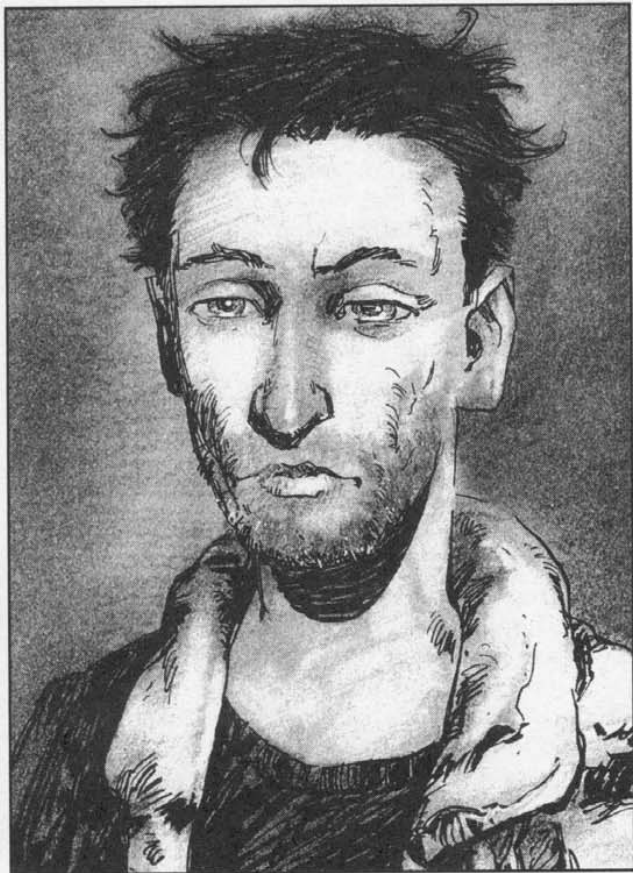
**Willpower:** 5

**Quote:** *Bugger off.*

**Background:** Fergus Alexander was born to a shit-poor Irish family that had moved from Belfast to the slums of Manchester. His father was "foreign" — Turkish, Bosnian or something like that. Alexander didn't know — his father didn't stick around. The kid grew up hard as nails, cynical and disillusioned. He was tough, but he yearned for peace and freedom. After turning 18, having no other prospects, he left Manchester and joined the British army.

For the first time, he felt at home. Enduring, smart and brave, he was just what the army was looking for. A series of postings followed: Belfast, Sarajevo, the Gulf and then a tour back in the Home Counties. Hereford seemed the next stop — a commission and a transfer to the SAS.

But his record was marred by blemishes. Like the time he caught three Irish thugs knee-capping a 16-year-old boy for the crime of smiling at one of the thugs' girlfriends. Or the time he and his squad killed three Serbian "snipers" in the hills above Sarajevo. And then there was the fact that he was some kind of dark-skinned half-breed.



So, promotions were delayed. He knew who he was dealing with when he committed those offenses: different faces put on the same, old gangsters, all pretending to follow a cause. He knew that dozens if not hundreds of people were still alive because he and his boys did what they did. But, right or wrong didn't seem to matter. And Alexander's disillusionment only intensified as the government's soft approach to the Balkan crisis reduced British troops to mere witnesses to mass murder.

It was on leave, on the rough end of a bender in a Liverpool pub, that Alexander met the woman who ended his life. He had been talking to her drunkenly about Sarajevo, and she said she had been there. She kissed him sometime later, and when he awoke....

Alexander has been on the move ever since, going wherever his feet take him. The Ventrue "consultant" Frederick Van Tongeren hired him as a killer in London, and his success there led to an appointment as an archon to Gangrel Justicar Xaviar. Following Xaviar's defection, Alexander worked frequently with Van Tongeren in his role as "freelance strategist." The pair traveled constantly, helping Camarilla princes fight off Sabbat attacks. It was enjoyable for a time, but the constant destruction took its toll.

Alexander eventually had to face the damage he'd wrought. One morning, he found himself on a rooftop in Ottawa, surrounded by piles of dust that

had been Sabbat vampires moments before. It was then that he realized he was losing his soul. The others whom he had helped seemed unperturbed. Alexander instinctively knew better. He went into the wilderness alone that night and was not seen for months. In Labrador, he encountered the Cainite Celeste. She had fled the Sabbat since the purge of her harmonist path, and she initiated him in return for his protection. Alexander has returned to Europe since and has resumed communication — though not employment — with Van Tongeren.

Alexander is a typical follower of what's left of the Path of Harmony. He seeks to balance the remnants of his humanity with the powerful urges and instincts of his undead nature. He has accepted his Beast, and his feral side, but retains a very human nature. He is personable if gruff, and has a black sense of humor. He has not lost his identity, but is deadlier than ever and has fervently returned to his duties as an archon.

**Image:** Alexander retains a little of his father's dark skin in unlife. He is scruffy; Embraced with three days' beard growth. His hair is longer than army regulation, and similarly unkempt. Alexander dresses in jeans and boots, but keeps his old army flak jacket.

**Roleplaying Hints:** A former British soldier, you were tough and cynical. You've always been quietly confident, having proven yourself to the nastiest of the Sheffield squaddies. Now you're a vampire — tougher and stronger than ever before, yet something of a fallen knight. You were one of the best of the best... but now what are you? You're quick to anger and you fight without mercy. If you see gangsters or bullies or thugs preying on anyone, you can barely control yourself. You refuse to see this as a weakness. Yours is not a killing rage; it's cold, methodical violence. No one has beaten you yet. The Path of Harmony offers you the freedom to indulge your Beast on occasion. Speak with a harsh, working-class Belfast accent. You have a very dry, cruel sense of humor.

**PAUL FORREST,  
FALSE PROPHET OF PARADOX**

9th generation, childe of Ganesh

**Clan:** Ravnos

**Nature:** Monster

**Demeanor:** Rogue

**Embrace:** 1997

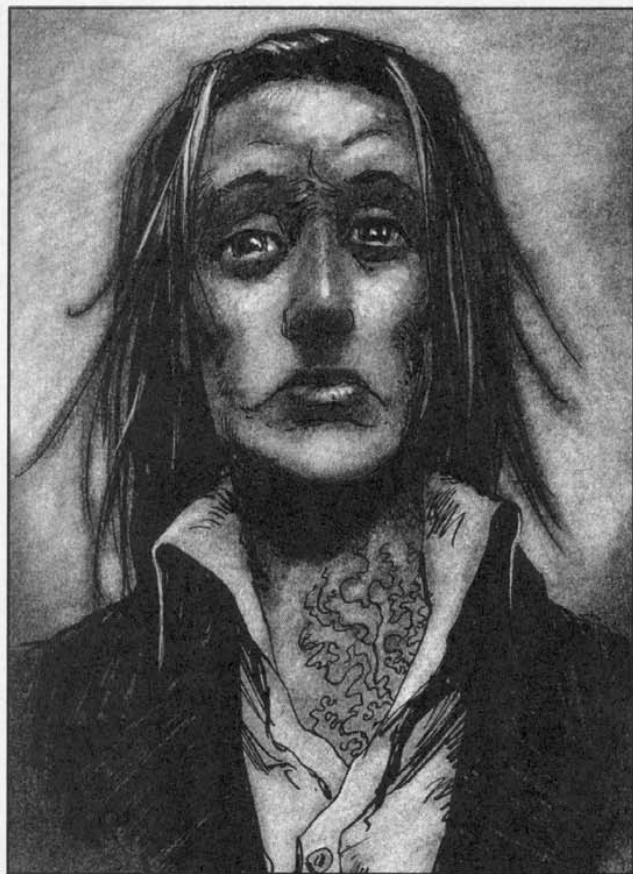
**Apparent Age:** 23

**Morality:** Path of Paradox 6

**Willpower:** 4

**Quote:** *I don't know for certain who I am, but I know what you are.... I know only too well.*

**Background:** Forrest was the adopted child of wealthy Philadelphia parents. He went to an Ivy League university after a prestigious private school. He never wanted for anything.



His college years were a blur of shining exam results, sex, beer, parties and drugs. He made it all look effortless. Moving on to a well-paying job in sales at a Fortune 500 company, he was on the way up. He had a head for figures and a heart for business, his boss Mike Goran said proudly. Forrest was “his sort.”

At least, Forrest was the right sort until he noticed a pattern to Goran’s behavior that didn’t make sense. His boss missed whole weeks of work at a time — said he’d built up a ton of comp time on some big projects the previous year — and invariably returned looking gaunt and exhausted. If the time off was supposed to be vacation, it certainly didn’t have the desired effect. And when Goran was in the office, he spent a lot of time in late-night meetings with mysterious clients whom he never referred to by name — “the Paris client” and “the Moscow customer.”

Then things started going wrong in Forrest’s life. He lost his job — Mike blamed the “new-economy competition” and “this Internet thing.” His credit rating evaporated. Before long, his savings account was empty. Then, at the end of his rope, unable to go on and subsisting in a flea-ridden motel, a stranger barged his room. The man simply announced that he was going to take Paul home.

The vampire — “the Paris client” — attacked Forrest, drank his blood and then opened his own wrist to a dying mouth. Forrest became one of the

Ravnos. He was told he had all of eternity before him, but that time was not on his side. The year was 1998, and things were stirring far to the east. Forrest’s sire owed a sizeable favor to a distant elder. Forrest found himself dispatched to Kosovo to intercept a thief who had stolen an important relic from an elder in north-eastern India. Having retrieved the artifact, Forrest made the mistake of examining it. The thing contained within — perhaps the spirit of some long-dead Ravnos — sliced into his soul. It gave him understanding. It gave him knowledge. But Forrest existed in excruciating pain.

He hid in the German city of Bonn after the Sabbat siege. Each day as he slept and sweated blood, the thing whispered to him, to his soul, speaking of the Mayaparisataya and the lord of the rakshasas, Ravnos. The titan was going to rise, it told him. In July 1999, when the Antediluvian awoke, the ancient possessor forced Forrest to witness everything.

Forrest came to understand that the entity seared into his spirit was once a Saddhu of the eastern Ravnos. The ancient, its name long forgotten, was a saint of the Path of Paradox, the true Path of Illusory Truth. Fate had chosen Forrest to be the voice of the lost and forgotten following.

The Ravnos are a mere few now, and the old soul demands that Forrest find each one. He travels Europe and North America in search of surviving clan members, sharing with them the secrets that the thing within him whispers. Some see him as a prophet, others as a pain-maddened fool. Perhaps they’re both right.

**Image:** A former 20-something yuppie. The road has been hard on Forrest. His hair is long and frayed, and his eyes are constantly bloodshot. The scar where the spirit invaded his body is evident. A series of black veins snakes across his chest to his neck.

He still wears Armani suits, though.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You have not stopped running, but you are still the wonder kid with a MBA. You are smart and insightful, and you always keep an eye on the prize. One night, you’ll find some way to avenge your death and the fate that’s befallen you. But for now, you’re a pawn in a bigger game. Something has its claws in your soul and you’ve crossed the brink of madness more times than you can remember. Yet your possessor’s revelations about the true Path of Paradox and the history of the Ravnos allow you some focus, something to drive away the insanity — at least for a while.

#### JUSTINE CHEN, INNOCENT ABROAD

12th generation, childe of Monique Kim

**Clan:** Toreador *antitribu*

**Nature:** Masochist

**Demeanor:** Deviant

**Embrace:** 1999

**Apparent Age:** Early 20s (she seems younger, perhaps mid- to late teens)

**Morality:** Path of Cathari 3

**Willpower:** 5

**Quote:** *No, I've never seen anything like that before. Come here and show me again.*

**Background:** Justine Chen was born in Montreal, Canada, in 1977 to a conservative Chinese family. While her parents were successful, they considered life in Montreal simply as something to be endured before returning to the homeland. Members of Chen's family had worked in North America for over a century, but always returned to their ancestral village in Taiwan. Every generation of Chens did its best to shelter the next from the most decadent influences of the West. Chen Yi named his daughter Meihua, but in school she took the name Justine — to flout tradition and to better fit in among her classmates. Meihua was educated in French and English, but her parents never let her forget that she was Chinese.

As the years passed, however, the family business faltered; it became a matter of pride for Justine's father. He would return to Taiwan a wealthy man or he would not return at all. Overhead, taxes and rising labor costs kept that goal out of reach. Perhaps Justine would not be forced to leave, after all. Maybe she could get used to life in Canada. Indeed, when she entered high school, she slowly, quietly experimented

with the little rebellions that most western kids do. In time, university brought that rebellion to full flower. As a fine-arts student, her experiments with painting and poetry were frequently diverted by experiments with sex and drugs. She created intense, disturbing, poetic plates with perfect English and Chinese calligraphy, set against beautiful illustrations of her body, her dreams and fleeting glimpses of the city. These works chronicled her emergence as an adult. But her relationship with her parents had soured to the point that she was alone and destitute.

That's when Monique Kim found her. Kim was drawn to Justine's intensity, innocence and compulsion to resist conformity. The girl was beautiful and childlike. The Toreador *antitribu* saw great potential for corruption and pain in her. Kim Embraced Justine and brought the child into the Widows pack. The Cainites treated the newcomer as a slave, at times luring her down paths of depravity, at other times beating her and using her as a servant.

But in the Widows' lair, packleader Creamy Jade still encouraged the girl to paint. Her pieces chronicled the neonate's descent into the Beast. Justine dimly understood that Jade was making her existence a work of art, that all the depravity was a performance, and that the Widows were recording her fall.

Finally, Justine escaped. She returned to her parents, who refused to accept the ragged thing as their daughter. Justine frenzied. When she regained her composure, she realized that she had murdered her family. She took what money and possessions that she could and fled Quebec.

In the dead of winter, on a lonely road in Nova Scotia, she sat weeping beside the bodies of her latest victims. That's where Gangrel Archon Alexander finally found her. Instead of killing her as he had been charged, he took the neonate under his wing and brought her to London. But before long, she fled again and went to Paris where she fell in among fellow clan members.

Even now, however, separated by miles and months, Justine thinks she can feel Monique Kim and the others touching her soul, tempting her back to Montreal. Sometimes in moments of weakness she knows that she was allowed to flee, and her new life, such as it is, is merely part of the Widows' ongoing experiment. That experiment chronicles her development on the Path of Cathari, but it also measures just how far she can be lured from humanity — and how far she can lure others.

**Image:** Justine is a small, slim girl of Asian origin. Like many others born in North America, her mannerisms are more akin to her white, MTV-bred contemporaries. She is beautiful, with short hair. Her eyes changed to night-black with her Embrace. She is winsome, ephemeral and graceful. She speaks softly, but with a quiet passion.





**Roleplaying Hints:** You are still a young, untainted vampire. Even with all the horrors that you have endured — and committed — you are a relative innocent abroad. This naivete makes you attractive to other Cainites. It's as if they all want to be present at your final moment of corruption. This allure makes others susceptible to your charms. Vampires who should know better must resist confiding in you.

**LADY ZARA SLATIKOV,  
SCHOLAR OF ENLIGHTENMENT**

6th generation, childe of Razkolnja

**Clan:** Tzimisce *koldun*

**Nature:** Perfectionist

**Demeanor:** Director

**Embrace:** 1218

**Apparent Age:** Varies wildly

**Morality:** Path of Metamorphosis 8

**Willpower:** 7

**Quote:** *You keep asking me questions as if you honestly expect me to answer.*

**Background:** Zara Slatikov manages to retain some status as an influential Sabbat philosopher, despite her advanced enlightenment on the Path of Metamorphosis — a calling that typically prevents students from sharing any information. She remembers when the ancient Cainite Roads were codified as



paths, and she continues to be fascinated by the ways of Enlightenment.

Zara was born to a now-extinct Revenant family in service to the *koldun* Razkolnja. The chaos of the War of Princes impressed upon her the Metamorphosist philosophy: that the only truth in the world is constant change. She adopted that credo even without any form-altering magic. Zara's adherence to a personalized Metamorphosis led Razkolnja to Embrace her. Afterward, Zara distinguished herself further by achieving deep understanding and mastery of Koldunic Sorcery.

Once Zara learned the laws of Caine, *koldun* and Metamorphosist philosophy, Razkolnja sent her to Transylvania as a representative to other Fiends. Zara spent a great deal of time traveling for one of Tzimisce blood, and became familiar with Prague, Bistria, Belgrade and the cities of modern Romania. She spent time studying under High Priest of Metamorphosis Yorak, is said to have visited the Cathedral of Flesh, and was a contemporary and ally of Radu Bistria.

Though Zara participated in the Anarch Revolt, she initially resisted joining her clanmates in the Sabbat, believing that the sect would calcify into a collection of hidebound elders. Eventually, personal relationships with some of the Sabbat's founders led her to become one of the sect's earliest teachers of Koldunic Sorcery, despite her misgivings.

Her work as a teacher prevented her from progressing too far down the Path of Metamorphosis. Zara never taught students out of a desire to see them learn, but rather out of arrogance. The awe that younger Cainites showed for her knowledge and enlightenment was addictive, and her ego kept her from becoming truly enlightened for centuries. And yet, that ego allowed the Path of Metamorphosis to disseminate throughout the nascent Sabbat.

Not long after her induction into the Sword of Caine, Zara spent some months in the Black Monastery in the Swiss Alps, helping to codify several of the modern Paths of Enlightenment. As one of the foremost experts on the various Roads of morality, both inside and outside the Sabbat, Zara has received all the more demand as a mentor. Some of her students even survive their instruction — she does not tolerate failure. Zara has dwelled in Transylvania for centuries, and her knowledge and mastery of both Koldunic Sorcery and the Path of Metamorphosis are profound.

She remains a crucial link between the Sabbat of eastern Europe and the bloodlines of Tzimisce elders who still claim the lands between Berlin and Moscow. She respects them all, and they send their childer to her for instruction.

Zara has studied — and some say battled — the dread spirit Kupala for countless years. When Kupala awoke, the Baali came, some to offer homage, others

to quiet the monster. Zara united her fellow Tzimisce for a time to hunt the Baali down. In the process, she learned of the Path of the Hive and the “sleepers,” and how to quiet the spirits. Her hatred for the foul and degenerate Baali that swept into her lands drove her to distraction, but she has since overcome her wrath in hopes of tearing the secrets of the Hive from her foes’ minds.

In the aftermath of the battles with the Baali, Zara has reached new heights of awareness. She has contained her arrogance to a sufficient degree that she no longer feels a craving to teach. But on occasion, she still leaves lessons for younger Tzimisce to pick up on, even though she veils her points so thoroughly that “students” who are anything less than brilliant are unable to understand.

Though Zara is still honored as a master of the Path of Metamorphosis, other paths fascinate her. She does not respect other callings — she regards them as games — but she understands their importance to the Sabbat. She therefore does her duty and guides others to followings and mentors that suit them. Ultimately, Zara believes that all other paths, when studied to their finite ends, reveal the hidden secrets of the true course, that of Metamorphosis.

**Image:** Zara’s image is rarely the same from night to night. Born from peasant Revenant stock, she was reasonably pretty in life, with ruddy, rural Slavic features, dark hair and blue eyes. She sometimes assumes that form now and uses it to deal with enemies or with strangers who appear young, naive or weak. When they fall for that ruse, she demonstrates her command of the *zulo* form.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Reinvent yourself constantly. Do not tolerate fools, but always remain open to alternate viewpoints and new debates. A battle- and pain-hardened elder of the Sabbat, you nonetheless respect and appreciate the experiences of other Cainites. You always allow strangers to explain themselves, and you excuse any initial gaffs or mistakes. If, however, someone seeks to study under you there is no room for excuses. You demand perfection.

### VIRGINIE, PRODIGY IN EXILE

8th generation (12th when Embraced, 8th through diablerie), childe of Alison

**Clan:** Lasombra

**Nature:** Monster

**Demeanor:** Child

**Embrace:** 1989

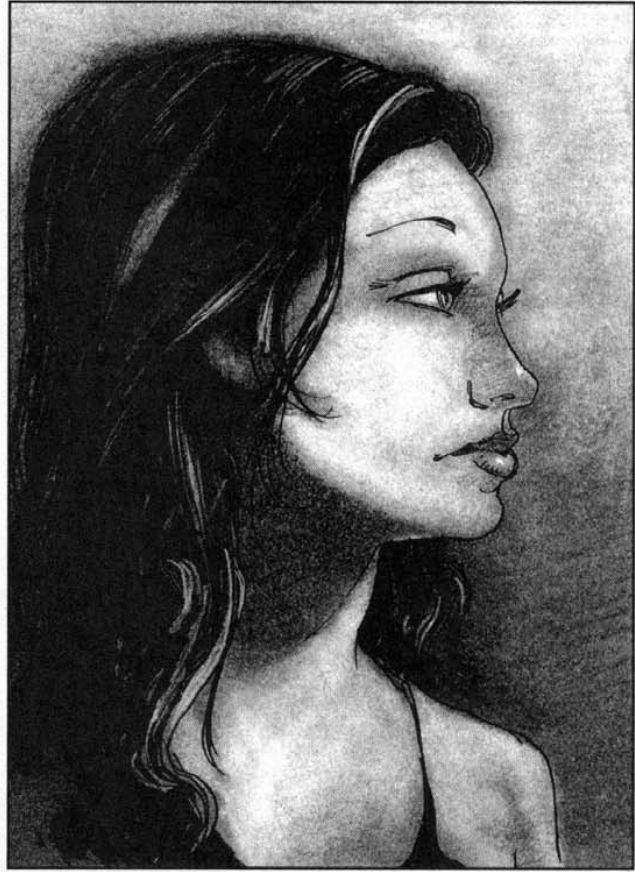
**Apparent Age:** 14 (though Embraced at 17)

**Morality:** Power and the Inner Voice 6

**Willpower:** 7

**Quote:** *Aww, I’m sorry. Did that hurt?*

**Background:** Born in the 1970s, Virginie was the daughter of eccentric parents in southern France. Mistreated and abused, she was taken to England by



an appalled aunt in the late ‘80s. Free at last, Virginie could “indulge” herself. She fell in with a circle of rich students — friends of her aunt’s — who had grown bored of their luxuries. They took Virginie in as a family might adopt a pet. Their wealth offered the girl opportunities beyond anything she had known, but precious little freedom. She grew to revel in the decadence and depravity that the group offered. It amused them to watch her explore their vices, and though she was never unhappy compared to her old existence, her life grew darker through the long days.

Months later, Virginie and her then-lover brutally murdered another of the students in the circle. A reward was offered for information on the perpetrators of the gruesome crime. Virginie’s aunt knew precisely what had happened. Though neither of them were immediately suspected of the crime, Virginie was quietly packed off back to France. Word of the crime had spread, however, and Sabbat with their own taste for death identified the girl as the killer. They butchered her family and took her as a ghoul. When she proved her usefulness, they Embraced her and used her as a messenger and spy.

The life-ending change of the Embrace pleased Virginie. Her warped upbringing allowed her a taste for killing. Indeed, her cheerful disposition didn’t wane even while she committed hideous murders. Her newfound powers and strength permitted her a

freedom and safety that she had never known before. For nearly a decade she led one of the most feared packs in France, striking at Camarilla cities with impunity. Several Camarilla ancillae and elders fell to her claws. So, the choice to save her soul wasn't made out of fear, but out of a desire to continue her reign of terror. Thus Virginie found herself on the Path of Power and the Inner Voice.

Focused by her path and tired of simple random violence, Virginie discovered that she had a talent for making tactical and strategic decisions. In the late 1990s, she led a successful Sabbat crusade against Marseilles. She was promoted to ductus and was enticed with a bishopric of her own should she continue to prove her worth.

That proof came in 1999, when she led a successful war against Dublin. Members of the Camarilla "Connachta" fief were slain, and the city was claimed by the Sabbat. After a ridiculously short existence, Virginie had become Bishop of Dublin and settled down to consolidate her gains.

In time, however, she has realized that she's been tricked. Her glorious crusade has come to naught. The city is spoiled goods. Something about it is destroying her subordinates, driving them insane. Her advancement on the path has saved her so far, and as a true unifier she seeks to find the source of the "curse" and overcome it. Now Virginie realizes that she was never really in control of Dublin at all, but was set up to claim too grand a title, and the rest of the Sabbat derides her as a result.

**Image:** Virginie is skinny and wan, which makes her look rather innocent and harmless. She has large brown eyes and a tan face, even in undeath; she almost seems mortal. She chooses clothes based on the situation: a beggar woman's costume, a business suit or a regal dress. Sometimes she wears the hand-me-down dresses of her youth, torn and ragged as they are.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Pretend to be nice. Pretend to be kind. Pretend to be helpful. Couch all questions in a "poor little me" manner. But when you get angry, lose control and reveal your Cainite nature. Ultimately, you are completely ruthless. To those who have helped or saved you, you give your all. Strangers deserve nothing.

#### FATHER JUAN CARLOS, PENITENT, PRIEST AND EXPLORER

8th generation, childe of DeSalle

Clan: Brujah *antitribu*

Nature: Masochist

Demeanor: Conformist

Embrace: 1435

Apparent Age: Mid-50s

Morality: Path of Redemption 6

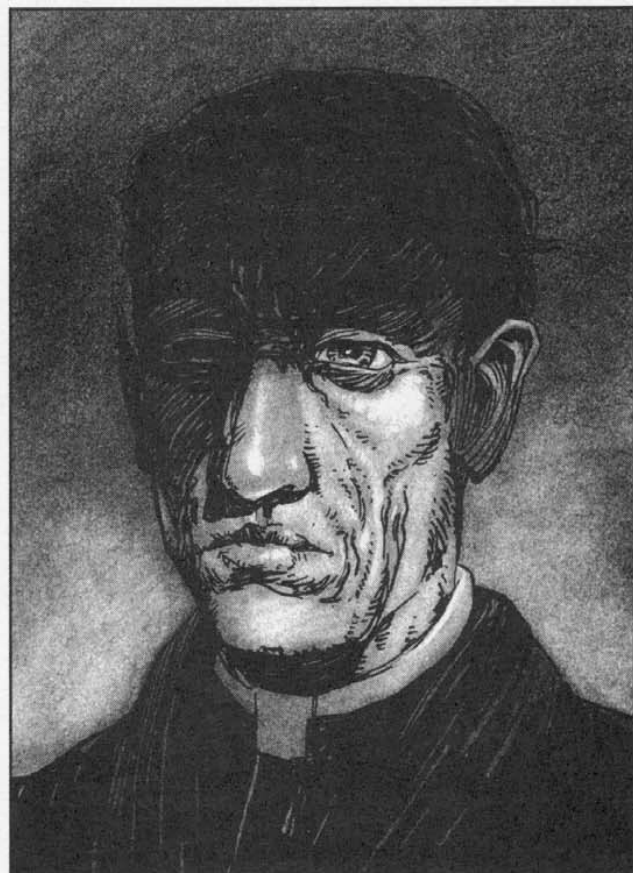
Willpower: 8

**Quote:** *Yes, I understand, but were there any breakthroughs tonight, my child?*

**Background:** Since the demise of the Tremere *antitribu*, the Sabbat has lost a crucial edge. Most of those vampires were destroyed in a conflagration in Mexico City. One by one, the few who were not present walked out to meet the sun over the weeks and months that followed. The Tremere *antitribu* are gone, and their knowledge of blood sorcery has passed with them. The Sabbat claim they never needed the betrayers, but that's a lie. The sect needed them as a shield against the efforts of House Tremere. Without the hated, needed skills of the *antitribu*, the Sabbat lost New York, and now their footholds in Toronto and Boston weaken.

In desperation, the Sabbat turns to the City of Black Miracles to plumb the occult depths. A new pack, simply known as the Scholars, has been created with a simple mandate: Find the secrets of the Tremere *antitribu*, learn them, and be rewarded. The Scholars have been granted safe passage from the Sabbat Inquisition. And in Montreal, in a dank, broken building on St. Laurent, the Cainites explore the darkest mysteries of their destroyed sectmates.

The Toreador scholar Juan Carlos, a Jesuit missionary in life, has been chosen to lead the research. He was made the leader and spokesman of a coven based in Montreal and Toronto. Juan Carlos works



out of Montreal, but is more content to deal with coordination of others' research than with the hideous experimentation in which his fellows indulge. He keeps the others at a distance, with a personal haven on the far side of town from the Scholars'.

Juan Carlos was an early convert to the Path of Redemption, and in these nights he is conflicted between his loyalty to God and his loyalty to the Sabbat. His research has led him to unnatural and unholy discoveries, but he knows that the sect needs every sliver of magical knowledge it can find to avoid collapse and ruin.

Carlos' conflict could break his spirit and herald the Beast.

**Image:** A kindly, well-spoken priest of Spanish descent, years of travel and hardship in mortal life have left Carlos with a dark, weathered face. He still wears his religious trappings, but has adapted to the times and wears a black suit and a Catholic priest's collar. His hair is gray and thinning, and his hands are callused from hard work.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You are a priest of God, called to minister to the Damned. You are also a Jesuit, and part of your ministry is research. But in the end you are a monster, and one who wishes to survive. You pray and encourage others to join you, but you fear that one night the Beast will win and God will strike you down. You are a practiced politician, capable of making others do your dirty work. Yet, you constantly wrestle with your conscience.

### MAIOR, HELL'S FOOL

12th generation, unknown sire

**Clan:** Tremere

**Nature:** Architect

**Demeanor:** Bon Vivant

**Embrace:** 1652 (though born around 100 B.C.)

**Apparent Age:** Early 20s, but looks much older in these nights

**Morality:** Path of Revelations 3

**Willpower:** 3

**Quote:** *If you don't leave me alone, I'll tell you far more than you want to know.*

**Background:** The vampire who calls himself Maior has been many things in the long years of his existence: soldier, slave, gladiator, prostitute, magician. Before Rome's fall, as a young man named Valerius, he caught the attention of the wrong sort of patriarch: a pedophile and infernalist named Varro, a member of the Hermetic Cult of Mercury. Varro groomed Valerius to be a sacrifice. The young man was taught just enough magic to make him attractive to a vizier of Hell.

But the sacrifice was refused. Varro's soul was consumed, and as for Valerius... there are several stories. Some say he was trapped in a magical sleep for centuries. Others say he was taken to Hell by the



demon that Varro summoned. Still others claim the entire story of Varro and the demon is a lie, and Valerius was Embraced long before Clan Tremere's ascent.

No matter what truly happened, Valerius was one of the most powerful of Clan Tremere's enforcers and scholars in the 17th century. It is said he was a candidate for the inner circle of the house, only to lose his seat to a rival. Valerius was regarded as a living encyclopedia of magic, from his contact with the infernal to his master's tutoring.

Then he changed.

He sold part of his soul to a demon. Maybe it was Varro, or the demon Varro had summoned long before. It could have been that the grip of whatever creature dragged him to Hell for centuries could not be broken completely. Regardless, Valerius fled the Tremere and joined with the *antitribu* of House Goratrix. He never partook in Vaulderie, though. Nor did he ever "officially" join House Goratrix. Rather, he was one of a few traitors who sold their services to the Black Hand.

Valerius was named on the Camarilla's Red List and hunted by justicars. Try as they might, they never found him. For a while he worked to gather other vampires on the Red List together, to assemble an effective force in the Jyhad. He then worked to extend the Path of Evil Revelation's influence amongst the Sabbat.

As the years passed, his corruption intensified, and the demonic thing inside drove him to greater depths of depravity and sadism. But sometimes, very rarely, something of his old personality rose to the surface.

Finally, in 1998 the Tremere *antitribu* were summoned to Mexico City — and were destroyed. Those few who did not attend the ceremony were caught on the wave of magic and were driven to suicide afterward. In Valerius' case, the uncontrolled magic tore the demonic presence from him and left him a husk.

Or so the story goes.

Witnesses now attest to a strange vampire with mismatched, hollow eyes, wandering the inner cities of western Europe. They say the being has no aura. Young, ambitious blood magicians of Clan Tremere and the Sabbat have sought this being out to learn who he is and what he knows. And the thing now called Maior knows a lot. He no longer has the power or will to apply his knowledge anymore, but he seems content to share his experiences with the right audience.

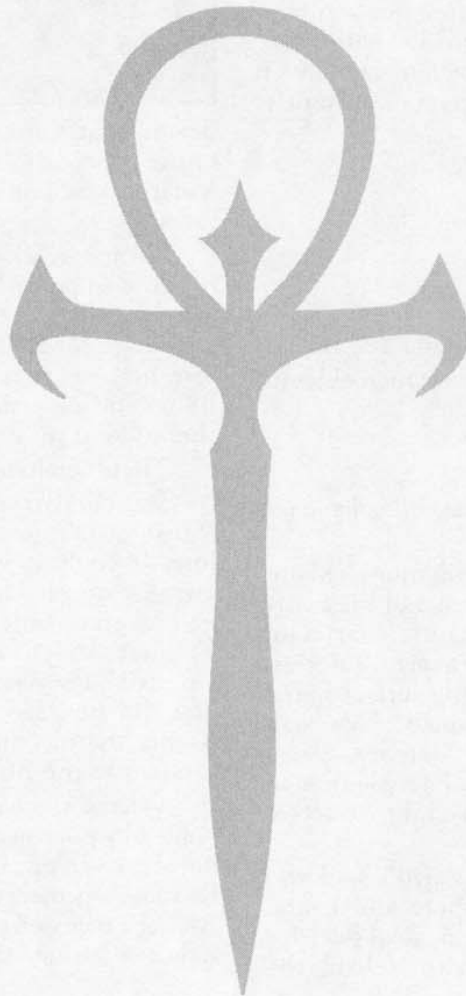
Rumors claim Maior was at the center of a Sabbat attempt to recover the secrets of Thaumaturgy lost when House Goratrix burned. Others hold that at odd intervals he can be found in the Tremere chantry

in Mayfair, London, in the company of George Hammond, the vampire who apparently saved him from destruction.

**Image:** Maior is a gaunt, tall man, with close-shaved black hair. It was long once, but it burned off when the demon was driven from him. His eyes are mismatched, but both hollow and tired. He no longer stands up straight, but stoops, leaning on a walking stick. When he speaks, he is slow and hesitant.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You have seen the face of Hell and lived to tell the tale. You are a broken, lost, wanderer, seeking only sustenance and shelter. You know what is coming. You know what the night holds. You know almost everything, and that knowledge slowly destroys what remains of you. You can still hear the screams of Hell in moments of silence. Talking eases the pain a little, or at least drowns out the clamor. You don't really care who you share your knowledge with. You have no power to speak of anymore, but if someone hurts you, you can retaliate instinctively with a host of infernal gifts.

**Note:** Maior has no powers, but he retains enough knowledge and enough demonic investments to prevent anyone from doing him serious harm.



# CHAINING THE BEAST

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