

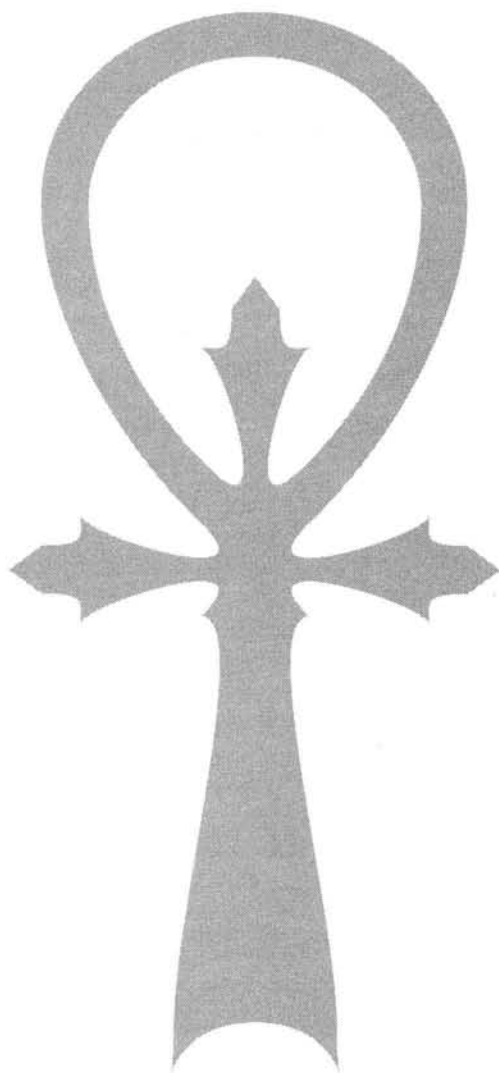
# Counsel of DRICHOGEN™



A sourcebook of camarilla politics for  
vampire: the masquerade®



Counsel  
of  
DRIEHOGEN



By KRAIG BLACKWELDER, CHRISTOPHER GUNNING,  
ARI MARMELLAND CYNTHIA SUMMERS  
VAMPIRE CREATED BY MARK REIN•HAGEN

## CREDITS

**Written by:** Kraig Blackwelder, Christopher Gunning, Ari Marmell and Cynthia Summers. Vampire and the World of Darkness created by Mark Rein•Hagen.

**Storyteller Game System Design:** Mark Rein•Hagen

**Developed by:** Justin Achilli

**Editor:** Janice Sellers

**Art Director:** Richard Thomas

**Layout & Typesetting:** Kieran Yanner

**Interior Art:** Vince Locke, Mike Danza and Matt Mitchell

**Front Cover Art:** Mike Danza

**Front & Back Cover Design:** Kieran Yanner



1554 LITTON DR  
STONE MOUNTAIN, GA  
30083  
USA

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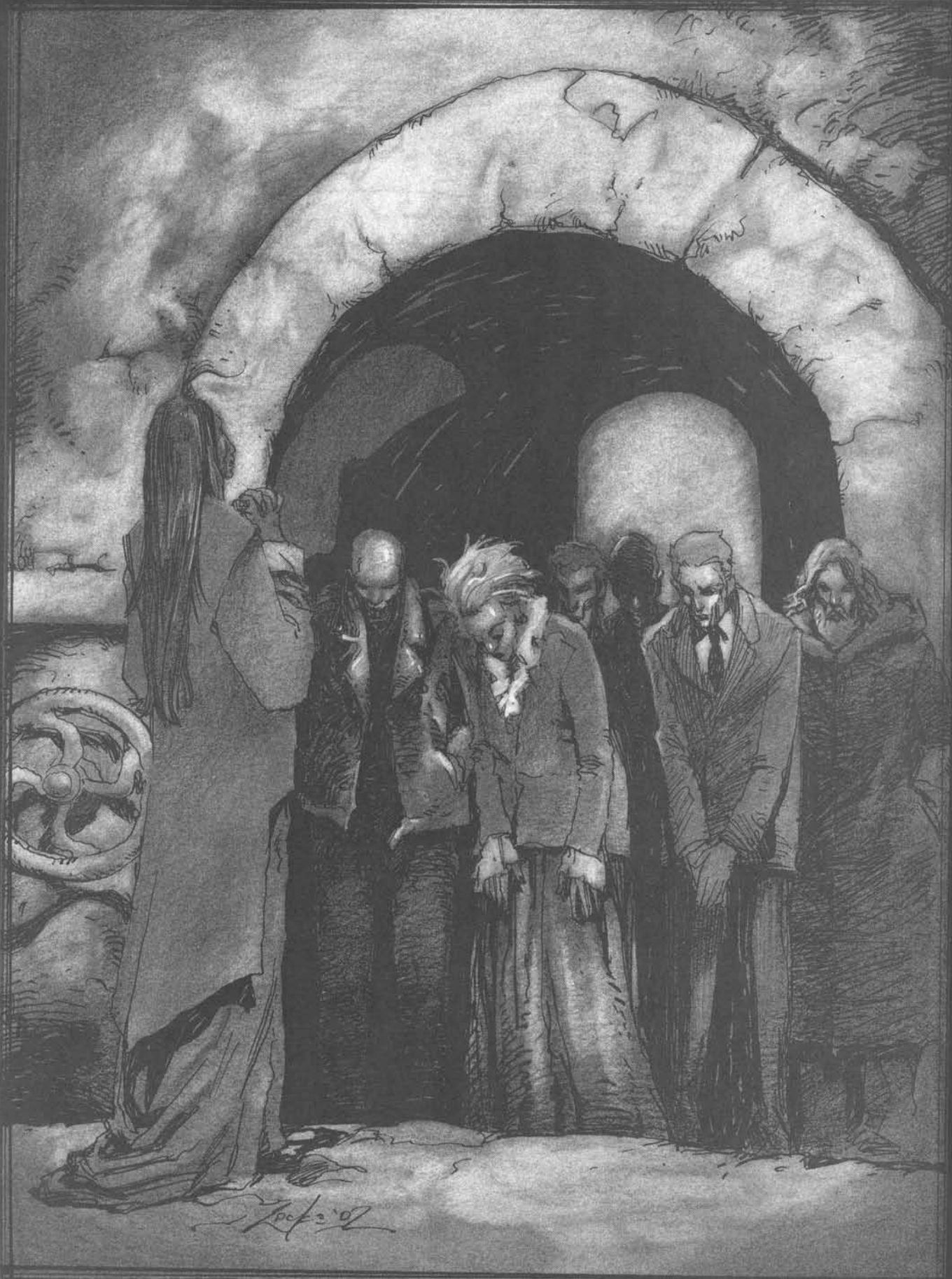


# Counsel of DRIFT AOGER™



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# INTRODUCTION

*To rule is easy, to govern difficult.*  
— Johann W. von Goethe

They dwell at the heights of Kindred society, where the shadows are thickest and the voices of the fledglings fade to barely audible echoes, too faint to draw attention. They are the true movers of the Camarilla, directing Kindred affairs from on high, their puppets twitching and dancing on endless invisible strings. They are old, with the wisdom of ages past and the might acquired through centuries of struggle. At their merest gesture, sheriffs and scourges leap, blood is shed and Kindred meet Final Death. Even the prince must pay heed to their words, for in their hands rests his own borrowed authority. Experts in the manipulations and the ways of the Jyhad, they are the epitome, the very embodiment, of the Camarilla's twisted heart.

They are the primogen — and as long as the gullible neonates on the street believe crap like this, they'll stay firmly on the top of the heap.

We haven't, to date, said all that much about the primogen. Even the **Guide to the Camarilla** devotes only a few paragraphs to them directly, and that silence has engendered an unfortunate tendency toward apathy, or at least inertia, among Storytellers. Many players and Storytellers seem inclined to dismiss the primogen as squabbling elders (which, admittedly, they often are) who, in terms of political importance, play a distant second fiddle to more prestigious or focused positions such as the scourge, the sheriff, the seneschal and, of course, the prince.

Time was when the primogen were figures of mystery, of awe, even of outright terror. In the early days of **Vampire**, elders were frightening — and the primogen feared above them all. These ancient, enigmatic creatures, centuries removed from anything that once made them human, were a constant presence looming over entire cities. Every move the characters made almost certainly intersected with their own schemes and efforts, and while the notion of being constantly used and manipulated may be repugnant, it was preferable by far to the hideous thought that you might have accidentally interfered with one of the primogen's Machiavellian intrigues.

As additional books and even editions came and went, however, the political focus of **Vampire** shifted ever so slightly. The spotlight narrowed more tightly on the prince, obviously the central figure in most Kindred social orders to begin with. Other titles and positions arose, each with its own delineated duties and activities. The primogen were overshadowed by sheriffs and seneschals, not because these positions are any more important or powerful — they are, in most instances, far less so — but because they're easier to define. Players, even Storytellers, have no need to question their purpose. Any given sheriff may have her own agenda, but the specifics of her office are almost certainly the same as the sheriff in the next city over, or in the previous chronicle.

In order to fit in more easily, the primogen became, in the eyes of many players and writers alike, a regimented organization with fixed rules and procedures. If more than X members of Clan Y dwelt in a city, they had a representative among the primogen. Each clan was permitted a single voice; the council met and debated on a set schedule, either supporting or opposing the prince with almost clockwork precision.

Why haven't we said much about the primogen in the past? Because with this sort of regimented, moderated, *let's-redraw-the-map-to-enlarge-the-Brujah-district* notion of the primogen, there simply wasn't that much to say.

The thing is, widespread stereotypes to the contrary, that's *not* how the primogen need to be used. Oh, certainly some primogen councils do indeed operate in this fashion. For every council with precisely one representative for each clan in a city, however, you're going to find another where none of the Nosferatu felt like participating, or where the Toreador are numerous enough to force

the local Kindred to recognize more than one Toreador primogen. For every senate-like body that formally presents its decisions and findings to the prince for his approval, you'll find a primogen council consisting of conniving, manipulating plotters who make every attempt to run the city for their own benefit behind the prince's back.

It's time to take a closer look at the structure and the inner workings of these assemblies of elder vampires that direct so much of the world's largest undead sect. It's time to make it very clear just what the primogen aren't, and what they are.

What they are is a truth hidden in the thick miasma of lies and rumors and misinformation that still keep quaking neonates awake late into the day. Because the primogen *are* old. The primogen *are* masters at the game of the Jyhad. The primogen *are* concocting all sorts of schemes as they look down upon the Camarilla from on high.

The primogen *are* terrifying.

Ignore them, or dismiss them, at your own peril.

## THEME AND MOOD

It would be easy — perhaps too easy — to turn a book entitled "Counsel of Primogen" into a treatise about how power corrupts, and absolute power results in pithy clichés. We're not going to do that. **Counsel of Primogen** isn't about how power corrupts, because we're dealing with Kindred here, and, for the most part, elder Kindred. They're *already* corrupt, so far as that word has any meaning for the unliving.

No, the theme of this book is balance. Each primogen — from the power-hungry, self-serving manipulator to the bumbling incompetent who serves on the council purely at the whim of some other figure to the rare and precious few who actually do want to see their clanmates receive the best representation possible — is caught in a juggling act. Duty, ambition and authority are the three machetes each primogen has to keep circling in the air above his head, and while each may find his own balance, even the most crooked schemer can't afford to ignore any of them completely. This applies not merely to what the primogen do but to their initial motives as well. Why do those Kindred who claim the title of primogen do it? Every primogen, in every city, claims that title because of some balance of these same three factors: duty to her fellow Kindred, the need for authority over those Kindred to better advance some other scheme

or desire, or simple, selfish ambition. Once you understand why someone sits on the council, everything else about her tends to fall into place.

The mood of **Council of Primogen** is twofold. We're taking you back, back to the nights when the elders of the primogen were dark, menacing creatures, figures of awe and fear rather than political necessity. Every shadow holds another rival. Every act you contemplate almost certainly fits neatly into the plans of an elder more ancient than your family name, who thinks in ways so alien that you could never hope to understand him. Most hideously of all, each of these inscrutable monsters is almost assuredly nothing more than the pawn of yet another creature, cloaked even further in the veil of deepest night.

Mystery is the goal here, as much as fear. One of the reasons elders in general, and the primogen in particular, were so frightening in earlier incarnations of **Vampire: The Masquerade** was because so much less of the World of Darkness had been explained and exposed in print. It's high time to reclaim some of that obscurity and that mystery. Kick it old-school.

"Wait a sec!" we hear you say. (Go ahead and say it. We're running with this assumption anyway, and besides, it'll really freak out the guy sitting next to you.) "You're going to recreate some of the mystery from before there were so many **Vampire** books by giving us another book? How does *that* work?!"

Think about it. You haven't even read through the introduction to **Counsel of Primogen** yet, and already many of you know less about the primogen than you did when you picked up this book. All you can be sure of, suddenly, is that the common and traditional view of these elders is no longer accurate; in fact, it never was. What follows explains what the primogen do and how they go about doing it — but it does not, cannot, cover the full spectrum of who they are, what their ulterior motives and ultimate goals may be.

At the end of it all, you'll have a much greater understanding of the primogen, true enough — and also a much greater realization that no mere neonate, let alone the (relatively) normal mortal gamer who is portraying him, can possibly fathom the true depths of the machinations and the depravity of these ancients.

Welcome back to the mystery. We've been expecting you.





## WITHIN THESE PAGES...

Revealing everything you need to know (though not remotely everything you might *want* to know) about these elders called primogen is a daunting task under the best of circumstances. It would be all but impossible to structure what follows in such a way as to make a clear delineation between common knowledge that most Kindred on the street might have, and more esoteric information that only more experienced elders, perhaps primogen alone, should possess.

Frankly, neonates should know almost nothing of what follows. To most of them, the primogen are that mysterious, cloud-shrouded coven on the mountaintop (or in the skyscraper penthouse), pulling strings and plotting all sorts of vileness. More experienced characters might have a better notion of what happens within the council, and primogen characters, of course, probably know at least most of this information.

While this is not, then, a Storyteller-only book, it does contain substantial information that many characters shouldn't have. We'll leave it to your discretion as to whether you're going to expose the secrets by reading what follows — or just gain an edge against your fellow primogen.

**Chapter One: Hallowed Halls of Power** is the core of **Counsel of Primogen**, the main course, as it were. In this chapter you'll find the most basic and yet the most vital information on the primogen. What exactly do they do? How do they operate? What decisions do they make, what sorts of actions can they initiate? What are they for? Read this chapter, and you'll never be stuck with "Uhh... the primogen advise the prince on... some stuff!" again.

**Chapter Two: Around the Table** covers the "how" to chapter one's "what." It explains how the primogen go about enforcing their decisions, or at least persuading others to go along with them. What are the tricks of the trade? What separates a Kindred who merely claims the title from one who actually gets things done? What's likely to befall the poor idiots who find themselves in the way?

We've already hammered home the point that the primogen council is not a homogenous, one-dimensional elder's club; **Chapter Three: Shaking the Foundations** runs with that concept, detailing

### SPECIALIZED VOCABULARY

The primogen across the Camarilla domains have developed a few specialized terms, a collection of titles and subjects pertaining directly to the agents and activities of the council. None of these are particularly secret — that is, the primogen make little effort to hide their meaning from other Kindred — but neither are they commonly encountered or used outside the ranks of the council itself.

**Myrmidon:** Originally the precursors to the archons, tonight the title refers to a bodyguard or enforcer working for a specific primogen.

**Primogeniture Assembly, the:** The name Lord Jürgen von Verden gave to his council of advisors and aids, from which the term "primogen" evolved.

**Scribe:** The individual responsible for recording the important points of meetings of more formal and structured primogen councils.

**Senate:** Initially the title of the elder councils in ancient Rome, modern primogen often use the term to refer to any earlier or primitive form of Kindred council.

**Steward:** Something of a subset of the Keeper of Elysium, the steward is responsible for maintaining and protecting the meeting place of those primogen who choose to gather outside the recognized Elysiums (and thus away from the eyes of the prince).

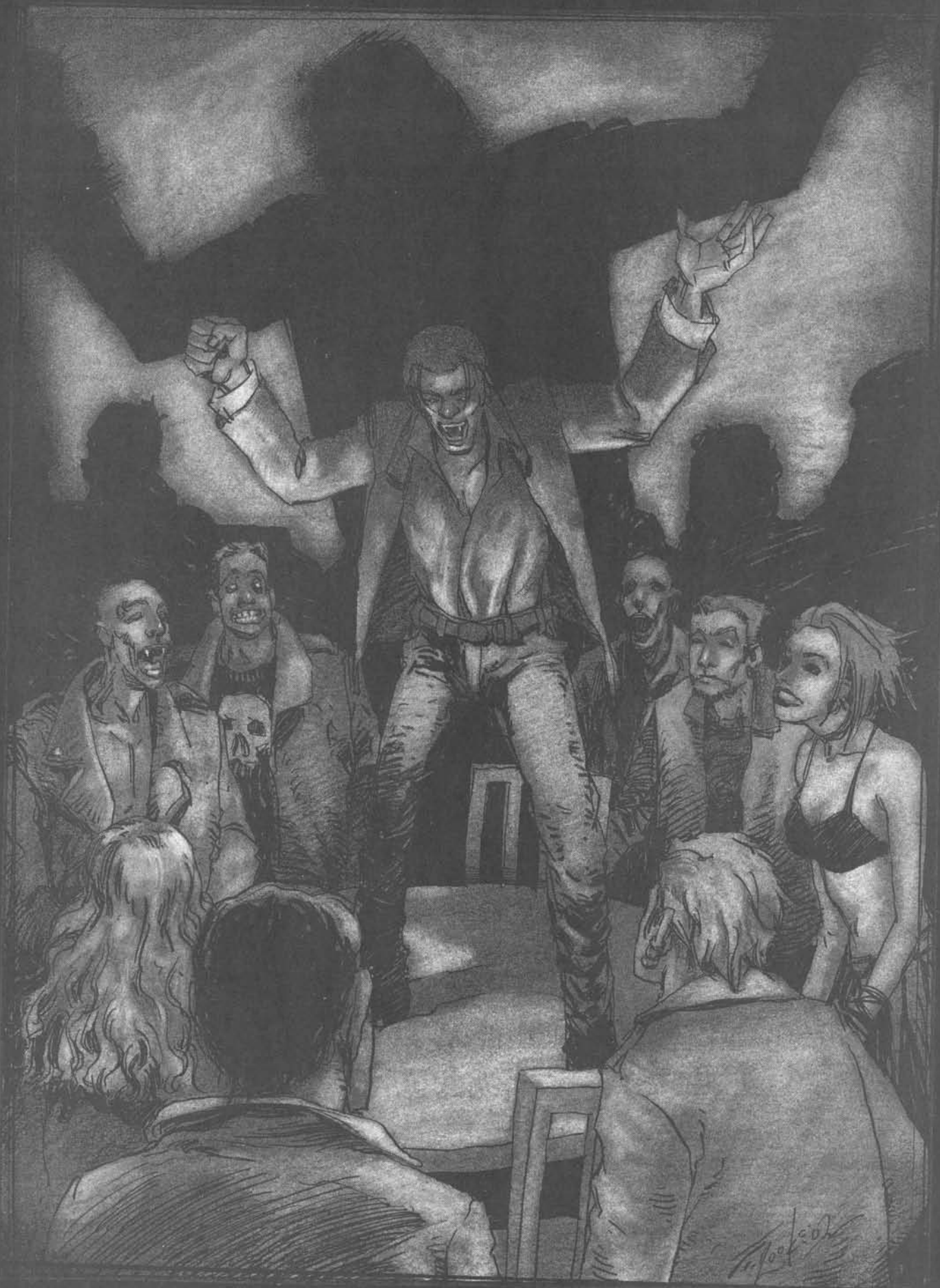
and discussing many of the anomalies to the "standard" structure of the council. Unusual or downright bizarre clans and bloodlines — can there be an Assamite or a Samedi on the council? — are addressed, as are variations on the makeup of the council itself.

**Chapter Four: Who Holds the Reins** is the character creation chapter. This does not include another brand-new creation or point-allocation system; a new system is unnecessary. Instead, the chapter covers the development of concepts, character histories and personalities that best fit with the concept of the primogen. It includes new facets, new Merits and Flaws, and an in-depth discussion of the morality (or lack thereof) to be found in most primogen.

Finally, the ubiquitous Storytelling chapter. **Chapter Five** contains tips and suggestions for running any sort of chronicle involving the primogen. From elder chronicles in which the players portray a city's entire council to "staggered" stories involving a single primogen and his agents, to non-Camarilla chronicles in which the primogen are the hideous elder enemy whose

machinations must be thwarted (or simply survived) — all these and more are discussed with an eye toward enabling the Storyteller to create as gripping a story as possible. With this chapter you can do just about anything you like with the primogen. Be careful, though; no matter how devious your plot may be, you're probably doing exactly what they want you to.







# CHAPTER ONE: HALLOWED HALLS OF POWER

*For in reason, all government without the consent of the governed is the very definition of slavery.*

— Jonathan Swift

Schoolchildren are often surprised, even shocked to the very core of their beings, to run into their English teacher at the supermarket, or their algebra teacher down at the local YMCA swimming pool. In their naïve, one-dimensional view of the world, their teachers' entire existence revolves around school; they have no life, indeed no substance, beyond the classroom. The notion that teachers are people can be, for these children, profoundly disturbing.

Considering how much older they are than the average kindergartener, it's astounding how many Kindred (and, to call a spade a spade, how many players) seem to hold an equally limited view of the primogen.

Before we even delve into the murky depths of these councils of elders, one vital point must be addressed.

The primogen, first and foremost, above and beyond all other considerations, are still Kindred.

The shocking fact is, most primogen spend the greater portion of their time doing the same things other elder Kindred do: feeding, pursuing their own agendas, strengthening their influence and resources, maneuvering and backstabbing to advance their social standing and in essence making themselves the most effective societal parasites they can be. The concerns of "governing," in the eyes of many primogen, come in a distant second on the priority list.

Remember that. It doesn't apply to *all* primogen, by any means. But if you keep in the back of your mind the notion that many of them, even most of them, have a dozen other things going that have nothing to do with running a city or speaking for a clan, you're most likely better off.

The primogen, as all other Kindred, are individuals first and titles second.

### INFORMAL OCCASIONS

Another facet of the position of primogen that should be noted if you really hope to understand these elders — or at least to understand what it is that you don't understand — is that the title doesn't really mean much of anything.

Think about it. Justicar, archon, sheriff, scourge... they all have very specific duties, tasks they must perform, jobs to carry out. Even the whip, for all that many elders see the position as something of an "also ran," has a specific job description: "Assist your primogen."

The primogen themselves, however, have little in the way of concrete responsibilities. Sure, they're supposed to "speak for their clans," but uncountable interpretations of that "duty" exist. As long as the right Kindred are happy with a given primogen's performance (or at least as long as those who aren't happy lack the power to do anything about it), these elders really have precious little they're specifically required to do.

Pay close attention to that key word: "specifically." Gaining the title of primogen is most assuredly not an excuse to laze about and do nothing. The position is no less fraught with difficulty, no less important and certainly no less powerful than any of the above. It is, however, far less formal, far less codified and thus far more open to interpretation.

Primogen are not, under most conditions, appointed by the prince, though exceptions do exist, in cities that claim particularly powerful and despotic princes. Similarly, most aren't elected by any specific group of "constituents" and thus need not worry about being voted out (although, again, exceptions exist in particularly democratic Kindred communities). Finally, while most princes can be relatively certain that several ambitious Kindred are constantly watching for the slightest slip-up, yearning to take their places, the position of primogen — while still quite enviable — doesn't invite the same sort of ambition. What this means is that the primogen rarely have to answer to anyone with the direct and formal power to remove them, nor do they labor under the constant threat of usurpation. In most cities and under most circumstances, it requires a concerted action by multiple elders to remove a primogen from her position, an undertaking only rarely worth the hassle. This lack of a bona fide superior — even the prince can be said to be "above" the primogen only by a matter of degrees — makes it nearly impossible for an outside authority to impose a unified set of rules or restrictions on the primogen councils of the Camarilla. In that respect, the primogen have a level of freedom to pursue their goals and their duties in whatever manner they choose that most other titled Camarilla officials, even the princes or the justicars themselves, often lack.

This makes the primogen largely unpredictable, for all that other Kindred tend to pigeonhole them as advisors. Perhaps the only universal aspect to all primogen is that whether they're fulfilling what they see as their duties or using their position to further their own ends, they're rarely going to act in the way you expect.

Unless they want you to *think* you have them pegged....

Everybody — well, almost everybody — thinks of the primogen as a collection of stuffy elders who advise the prince. It's true, by and large, as far as it goes. It's also true to say, "Vampires are humanlike creatures who drink blood." Yeah, it's true, but it doesn't really tell you much of anything.

"Advise" is one of those words that, at least where **Vampire: The Masquerade** is concerned, has been unfortunately watered down through overuse. It's rather like "control" or "corrupt" in that regard. Everybody

knows it so well, nobody bothers to question what it actually means anymore. How do the primogen "advise" the prince? What do they advise him on? How do they know what suggestions best benefit their clanmates? What else do they do besides sit around and kibitz?

Quite a bit, actually. The primogen, left unchecked, are some of the scariest sons (and daughters) of bitches you're ever going to have the misfortune to meet. Before we discuss what they are, however, let's take a moment to examine how they got there.

## A BRIEF LOOK BACK

The primogen council in its current form is a recent development — recent in Kindred terms, anyway — as it first seemed to coalesce in the years following the formation of the Camarilla. The notion of a council of elders, however, can be traced back far longer, and the seeds of the primogen were planted well before most major modern religions.

### THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

Strangely enough, the closest model to the modern interpretation of the primogen sprang briefly into existence during the fourth century B.C. in republican Rome. The Ventrue Collat, who was present and active when Rome first threw off its Etruscan rulers and became a Latin state, functioned as the Cainite Prince of Rome for several centuries until he was replaced (some say assassinated) by Camilla, his successor. During his principedom, Collat realized swiftly that in the chaos of new government and the beginnings of Roman expansion, no one vampire could steer Cainite society on his own.

Borrowing from the kine around him, as all wise Cainites do, the Ventrue created a council of Cainites modeled after the Roman Senate (albeit much smaller,

of course). He desired at least one representative of each clan to claim a reasonable population within the Roman Empire, preferably more. He also needed a means of selecting Senators that would prevent the ascension of anyone powerful enough to challenge his supremacy, yet one that would not open him up to accusations of favoritism.

His eventual solution was simple yet elegant. Anyone who wished to claim a seat on this “Cainite Senate” could step forward. He then, however, had to be elected by a vote of every other prospective senator. The votes of his own clanmates counted twice, weighting any given election toward the desires of the clan being represented. Furthermore, candidates were not permitted a vote.

The result was a senate full of squabbling, boon-laden elders who were in no position to challenge Collat’s own power. Because every election inevitably involved more candidates than it did open positions, the political maneuvering required substantial deal-making and compromise. This ensured that the victors of the elections were, to the last, not the most qualified, but the least threatening. As the Ventrue prince had anticipated, upon learning that they could not vote for themselves, the elders each voted for those they thought would be easily influenced from behind the scenes, or



those whom they assumed nobody else would vote for and thus couldn't possibly win. Collat had what princes of the modern world could only wish for — an advisory council that was truly in a position to do absolutely nothing other than advise. Collat cemented his position even further by granting the senate the ability to overrule his decisions, but only with an absolutely unanimous vote. Since the odds of these squabbling Cainites all agreeing on anything were somewhat less than the odds of Collat himself becoming a sun-worshiper, his power was secure.

This "senate" of Collat's lasted only as long as he did. When Camilla became Prince of Rome, he disbanded his predecessor's council of advisors. Camilla was far more heavily involved with Rome's mortal government than Collat had been, maneuvering for seats on the Roman Senate rather than worrying about his own. Although he continued to solicit advice from the elders around him, no formal body of elders existed again for some centuries.

Throughout the existence of the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire, then, any advice a prince or elder solicited from his fellows was largely informal, and most alliances between elders were aimed at accomplishing a specific, short-term goal. Again, that's short-term as the undead measure such things. The Kindred are creatures of inertia and the status quo, and this tendency didn't change until the world itself was reshaped in a new, far more fragmented image.

## THE DARK AGES, THE LONG NIGHT AND THE WAR OF PRINCES

Once again, we see that as go the kine, so go the Kindred. When Western civilization broke apart and reformed as a collection of squabbling, culturally deficient states, baronies and principalities, the notion of the far-reaching "over-prince" went with it. Cainites who had claimed dominion over the largest cities — in some cases, whole portions of empires — now lorded over a few hundred acres of land, a dozen peasant villages or, if they were truly lucky, a single city that hunkered, frightened, within its dilapidated defensive walls.

This perceived weakening of the very title and position of prince led rapidly to the growth of elder coteries. Some banded together out of mutual defense, realizing that each alone was incapable of defending her domain from enemies who might seek to reestablish a widespread sphere of influence. Perhaps the most famous of these, if not the most successful, was the

### TRIBAL CULTURES

Actually, it would be more accurate to say that no *large-scale* formal body of elders existed again for some centuries. Rome may have been the greatest power in the Western world for much of its existence, but it was hardly the entirety of that world.

On the isles of Britannia, in the Scandinavian north, even among the native tribes on the yet-to-be-discovered New World, Cainites dwelt amid numerous tribes of people the Romans would no doubt have classified as barbarians. Many of these cultures operated in various tribal or clan-oriented fashions, and while many were led by a single chief or shaman, others were governed by a council of clan elders.

Once again, the Cainites of the time stole shamelessly from their "food." Kindred anthropologists and archaeologists studying ancient Cainite interaction with primitive cultures have determined a substantial historical correlation — better than 85 percent — between forms of mortal government and the forms of nearby Kindred societies. Cultures and regions ruled by a single mortal ruler tended to have strong Kindred princes; areas ruled by councils, or in which the single monarch was surrounded by powerful helpers and advisors, tended to have councils of vampires sharing (or more often squabbling) for control.

This tendency actually faded somewhat as the modern nights approached, particularly from the late nineteenth century onward. More on this below.

Ventruue-dominated Council of Ashes, founded in 1150 to maintain order in the domains of multiple fiefdoms in Transylvania. Some Kindred historians suggest that the Council of Ashes led, in fact, to the eventual formation of the Camarilla some three centuries later.

Other elders banded together for the exact opposite reason: namely, a great prince who had heretofore proven untouchable was now vulnerable to the machinations of his rivals if they could manage to cooperate long enough to take him down. Once these aggressive coteries had succeeded in seizing the domain they desired, of course, they were left with a dilemma. They either had to divide the domain up into smaller regions, one for each of them; or they had to find some means of

determining which of them should claim the region entire as prince; or they had to agree to share authority and function as a unified council, rather than as individual sovereigns.

Perhaps surprisingly, a substantial number of these elder coteries chose the third option. Some did indeed divide their territory, but these tiny domains were so small as to be practically indefensible, and many such “mini-princes” wound up reuniting with one another for defensive purposes. Some few attempted to determine which of them would head the domain, with the others serving as advisors, but this could rarely be accomplished without bloodshed. Shared authority seemed to be the only way for all parties involved to come out of the struggle with some modicum of real power and some small degree of safety from their fellows.

Nobody was more surprised than the elders themselves when these elder councils actually proved viable. Over the length of the Long Night, several coteries of elders — such as the particularly well known cadre of Cainites who constructed the fortress at Tihuta Pass at the turn of the thirteenth century and held many of the surrounding territories — proved far more successful and powerful than many individual princes. (See the **Transylvania Chronicles**.)

#### COTERIES OR COVENS?

The aforementioned elder coteries were, by and large, informal affairs. The elders involved participated for their own purposes and only rarely formalized their relations through treaties.

The Tremere proved the primary exception to that rule. Partially due to their system of numerical symbolism, but mostly because a lone Tremere lord was little more than a large target, the Warlocks made a habit, where possible, of placing even their smallest territories under group, rather than individual, authority. Nobody in the Camarilla tonight acknowledges it, but it was likely the Warlocks’ tenacious example, as much as any other historical precedent, that convinced the Founders and the early princes that a recognized semiformal council of advisors might prove prudent in the maintenance of a domain.

Some individual princes, faced with the combined might of a coterie of elders slaving to take their lands, assembled a similar group of Cainites from their own territories as allies and advisors. These groups rarely proved as effective as the coteries of equals, however, because vampires are less inclined to labor on someone else’s behalf than they are for their own goals. These

councils of “military advisors” never really became popular, but they’re worth mentioning because they do bear a striking resemblance to modern primogen.

At the height of the War of Princes, the formation of political councils had once again fallen into disfavor. Elder coteries still existed, and some still thrived, but in the martial atmosphere and constant warfare in which many Cainites dwelt, the ascension of individual overlords once more became the paramount method of vampiric authority and status. The Cainites simply felt, by and large, that they now had more to gain by conquering their own domains than in cooperating with neighbors as one among equals.

#### THE PRIMOGENITURE ASSEMBLY

The Ventrue Lord Jürgen von Verden, Prince of Magdeburg and the power behind a massive division of the Teutonic Knights, is believed to have coined (or at least inspired) the actual term “primogen.” On several different occasions during his wars of expansion (including but not limited to his abortive attempt at taking Transylvania from the Tzimisce), the Ventrue would assemble a council of allies and advisors consisting of the eldest childer of his chief rivals and enemies. He was never foolish about his choices; his agents approached only those who were truly ambitious and displayed little overt loyalty to their sires. Lord Jürgen would offer these Cainites their sires’ old domains, as long as they would aid him in taking the territory and swear fealty to him as their overlord.

Jürgen called this his “Primogeniture Assembly,” after the common European law of primogeniture, which declared that the eldest child (or, more frequently, the eldest son) of a family would inherit all its wealth and properties. These assemblies rarely proved particularly effective — few of the Ventrue’s rivals had disloyal childer who proved particularly useful — and Jürgen eventually ceased using the tactic. Apparently, however, the use of the term “primogeniture” to refer to his elder advisors had stuck and even spread to other domains. Thus, if elder Kindred who tell this tale are to be believed, even when his advisors had nothing to do with being “firstborn” of anything, the title remained and was eventually contracted to “primogen” in some regions.

Other theoretical etymologies of the word exist, including a belief held by a very few linguistically oriented Kindred who maintain that “primogen” in fact *predates* the term “primogeniture” and its related words, and that the mortals, in fact, borrowed the term from the Kindred, rather than the other way around. Still, the story involving Jürgen is the most widely accepted.



## THE ANARCH REVOLT

The Sabbat and the anarchs of the modern nights would probably be disgusted to the point of vomiting blood to realize just how much influence their spiritual forebears, the original anarchs, had in shaping the Camarilla. It was during the Anarch Revolt, after all, that many elders — not most, not even a majority, but a minority easily large enough to prove significant — once more gathered in coterie and worked together as advisory councils. Their impetus for such unheard-of cooperation had nothing whatsoever to do with a change in Cainite nature or society, no relation to the renaissance of culture and (to an extent) morality that would sweep the mortal world in the relatively near future.

No, the elders cooperated for the only reason that elders ever cooperate: out of fear. Fear of the anarchs — or, more precisely, fear of the sizeable packs in which the anarchs operated — was enough to make even normally arrogant and hostile elders band together for mutual defense. The death of Hardestadt the Elder was particularly terrifying to those elders who learned of it, and some say it was that event that truly cemented the bonds of the quasicoterie to which he already belonged and which would eventually go on to become the Camarilla's Founders.

### OTHER POSITIONS OF IMPORT

It's worth noting that several other Camarilla offices date back to the Anarch Revolt as well. Most notably, the forerunners of the archons — Cainite soldiers called myrmidons — operated in the names of the Founders. See *Archons and Templars*.

In 1493, the Convention of Thorns formalized substantial aspects of the Camarilla that are taken for granted in the modern nights. Much of the new political entity was based around the notion of coterie or group activity — a deliberate move by the Founders that attempted (with only moderate success) to de-emphasize the individual conflicts for which the War of Princes was known. In a premeditated effort to prevent any one Kindred from acquiring supreme power, they formed a council of justicars to lead the sect (which was later divided into two separate groups, the justicars and the Inner Council). The concept of the primogen still wasn't formalized, but it was now only a matter of time.

## THE EARLY YEARS OF THE CAMARILLA

Well into, and well beyond, the Renaissance, the Camarilla and the primogen as we know it tonight were still taking form. Many princes, particularly in the regions most threatened by the remaining anarchs and the newly formed Sabbat, adopted or maintained the practice of surrounding themselves with a forum of elder advisors. In an odd way, the very fact that the Camarilla itself was governed by a council made the assembly of a primogen far more acceptable to even the most status-conscious Kindred than it once had been. An unspoken sense of "If it's good enough for the Founders..." spread throughout much of the sect.

Because the princes wanted the most skilled (or at least the most useful) of their compatriots on their councils, they began the practice of offering substantial boons to members of the primogen council. Suddenly, taking a seat at the prince's table was more than just the ability to say "I advise the prince!" — a status-boosting position in its own right. Now, the primogen were frequently granted valuable hunting domains and access to some of the prince's plans before they occurred. Most valuable, however, was the sharp rise in influence Kindred could gain by becoming primogen. The prince was under no obligation to heed her primogen's advice, of course, but a coterie of elders often had sufficient combined power to bend their "lord" to their will. Even those with insufficient might to force an issue could at least be relatively confident the prince would hear them out before refusing their requests, as a prince who made a habit of ignoring his primogen often found himself without one.

In fact, the presence of a respectable primogen became something of a status symbol. Princes competed with one another to assemble the eldest and most respected Kindred of a region. This fascination with assembling "the finest examples of our race," as Toreador Founder Rafael de Corazon once phrased it, petered out quickly, however. It finally became apparent, after a swift and bloodless coup in the mid-sixteenth century that overthrew the powerful Prince of Marseilles, that the princes were essentially gathering around them all those regional Kindred who might have both the desire and means to replace them. From this point onward, those princes with sufficient might to do so often kept a much closer rein on their councils. By then, however, the presence of the primogen council had become so pervasive that it was nearly unheard of for a prince of any sizable domain to do without one.

Throughout its first centuries, the Camarilla had no “standard” by which to measure the primogen councils. The theory that the council should consist of one representative of each major local clan is not, even in the modern nights, as pervasive as many believe it to be, but at the time, the notion had yet to take hold at all. To this point, most primogen councils consisted of any combination of Kindred who were old enough and powerful enough both to take and hold the position, and who were either sufficiently nonthreatening or sufficiently powerful that the prince would not or could not remove them.

As has been the case with the Camarilla throughout its existence, it somehow managed to survive despite the constant internal bickering. The Sabbat, which had waged open guerrilla war on the Ivory Tower since its earliest nights, was all but crushed throughout most of Europe. No way of measuring the precise impact of the primogen on the sect war exists, but it’s clear that many princes would not have survived, or at least maintained the sanctity of their domains, without their primogen. The presence of other powerful elders bolstering the prince’s own resources provided additional manpower when direct conflict was unavoidable; provided others to whom the prince could delegate certain responsibilities, allowing him to focus more thoroughly on the Sabbat threat; and, should the worst happen, ensured that powerful Kindred who already possessed a working knowledge of the domain were ready to step up and assume control should the prince himself fall.

For a time, this haphazard and semiformal nature of the primogen became the status quo and, as we all know how much the Camarilla loves the status quo, seemed unlikely to change.

Then Christopher Columbus sailed forth in an attempt to locate a fabled shortcut to India and turned the entire world, Kindred and kine, on its ear.

## THE NEW WORLD

If the primogen were important to the survival of the Camarilla in Europe, they were absolutely vital to the sect’s growth in the Americas. Those Kindred who traveled to the New World were almost exclusively younger, less powerful and less experienced than their European brethren. They lacked the knowledge of how best to manage and defend a city or other domain, they lacked influence with the growing mortal societies and they lacked the immediate presence of sect authority from whom they might beg assistance.

What they had, however, was a substantial number of Sabbat vampires who had set up shop in the New World first and were determined to defend it from Camarilla incursion.

A true elder might have had the wherewithal to defend her domain, but most “elders” in the New World were barely worthy of the title and would have been considered ancillae, at best, back in Europe. Where the personal power and nascent resources and influence of a single Kindred were insufficient to hold the Sabbat at bay, multiple elders functioning as a cohesive unit — well, as cohesive as Kindred ever are, anyway — was often sufficient to stem the tide. It quickly became clear that the primogen was becoming as much an institution among American Kindred as it was in Europe, if not even more so.

### ONE CLAN, ONE VOTE

The notion of the primogen council as a representative body, containing one member from each local clan, has become the standard of measurement in the modern nights. Not all councils fit this mold, perhaps not even a majority anymore. Still, it is the assumed default, and this is what most newcomers to a city’s Elysium and society expect to find.

Where did the notion come from? It certainly appears democratic in nature, or at least more democratic than the primacy of the eldest that dominated Europe for so long. Many younger Kindred tonight assume that, like so much else, this notion of the primogen was stolen from mortals — in this case, observation of the nascent American system of government.

It wasn’t. It’s true that the “one clan, one vote” primogen council originated in the Americas, but it actually predates the American Revolution by several decades.

In the 1750’s, Philadelphia was the largest city in the American colonies, and that meant bad news for Prince Isaiah van Holden. More experienced in matters of Kindred politics than most American princes, the Brujah was still proving incapable of warding off the constant and increasing Sabbat incursions on his city. In desperation, Isaiah sought allies.

As the most thriving community in the Colonies, Philadelphia had far more than its share of Kindred. For a period of years, the ratio of Kindred to kine was nearer one to 1,000 than to any of the “acceptable” figures. Malkavians, Nosferatu and Ventruue made up most of that population of 20, but the eldest Kindred in the city, those who would traditionally make up the primogen council, were Brujah who had arrived with Isaiah.

Isaiah “bought” the aid of the other clans by offering them representation on the council. The voices of their own primogen would be equal to the elder Brujah, despite the age difference. All they had to do in exchange was to acknowledge and support Isaiah’s authority and aid him in defending his domain from the Sabbat.

The idea spread like the proverbial wildfire. Other princes took to purchasing the loyalty of Kindred and clans that had, to that point, wanted little to do with the policies and practices of governing a new territory. For a time, the American primogen council was a combination of both age and clan demographics — that is, there might be more than one member of a given clan on the council, if there happened to be more local elders of that particular clan. The notion was that everyone would have at least one voice, not an equal number of voices. As less well represented clans began to throw a fuss, however, and the notion of equal representation began to spread throughout the fledgling America (you knew that had to enter back into it sooner or later, right?), primogen who adopted the representational model limited themselves to a single member of any given clan, regardless of how many elders of that clan might be present.

This, of course, put off more than a few prospective primogen, which goes a long way toward explaining why the representational model — while quite common in America and now rather popular even in Europe — was never universally accepted.

For the record, some Kindred suspect that about this time the position of “whip” first saw widespread usage. The original intent of the position was purely symbolic. It was created as a means of granting someone an official title — and thus making it appear that his clan held more local authority than others without a whip — without actually giving him the power to do much of anything. The position quickly evolved into that of the primogen’s assistant largely because it served no other useful purpose.

## THE CAMARILLA IN RECENT YEARS

The world began to change at an unheard-of pace after the American and French Revolutions, a process that has accelerated dramatically as we approach the Final Nights. Once again, however, the static nature of the Camarilla seeped in. In all the decades between the early years of the United States and the turn of the millennium, the primogen council changed very little in any ways that matter. Details fluctuated, new means of selecting primogen were introduced and old ways eliminated, and the spread of the “default” style of council waxed and waned in popularity — but nothing radical happened to the fundamental nature of the primogen.

### ON BOTH SIDES OF THE POND

It’s worth taking a moment to note that, throughout most of modern history, multiple cultural styles — perhaps “interpretations” is a better word — of primogen

have existed. Even when they look the same on the exterior, follow the same trends, allow for the same selection of members, European and American primogen are, at heart, two very different animals.

American Kindred are, on average, younger than their European counterparts. Similarly, Kindred born and raised in the New World tend to think largely in terms of representative and democratic forms of government. When the average Lick on the streets of New York or San Bernardino thinks of her primogen council, odds are good that she thinks of them as something of a Kindred House of Representatives. That’s not to say that they act that way — anybody who mistakes a primogen council for an elected body that’s going to pander to its constituents has a harsh lesson coming — merely that this is the lens through which they’re often viewed. Because young American Kindred often think of their primogen in these terms, they feel that they have more say in policy and the prince’s decisions than they actually have (which is to say almost none).

European Kindred, on the other hand, tend to view their primogen councils not only through a different governmental model but also with a much longer view of history. Younger European Kindred, like their American counterparts, often view the council as an echo or reflection of the government to which they are accustomed. British vampires, for instance, often think of their council as a parliament, whereas Kindred from the isolated towns of Romania and Hungary still think of them as gatherings of boyars and other town leaders.

Elders, on the other hand, tend to view the primogen council as a royal court or panel of advisors. Kindred Embraced during the reign of Louis XIV, Richard the Lion-Hearted or Andreas II may still think in the idiom of kings and courtiers. The primogen are the dukes and barons who manage the individual territories that make up a prince’s domain, or else the generals, lawyers and viziers who advise their liege, and who handle the little matters (and little people) with whom the prince cannot be bothered. Those Kindred who still survive from ancient Rome may think of their primogen as senators, Native American Kindred may think of them as tribal elders or shamans, and so forth.

All of this, of course, defines the average Kindred’s perception of her local primogen council, not necessarily the reality of it. Princes and primogen operate as best they see fit, handling their domains using whatever methods prove most effective and most personally advantageous. That said, the primogen of a given city often evolve (or perhaps mutate is a better word) to fit their local image. This is due partially to a desire on the

part of at least some primogen to actually be what their clanmates desire and require of them, and partially due to turnover in the ranks. A younger primogen, newly come to his seat on the council, is going to behave as he expects primogen should behave, regardless of whether those expectations have any basis in fact.

As a side note, this cultural disparity also means that European Kindred tend to hold their primogen in slightly higher esteem than their American contemporaries. After all, a royal courtier is certainly worthy of more respect than a mere congressman, yes? Of course, unwise American neonates who carry this lack of respect too far tend to wind up learning very painful lessons in etiquette.

## THE FINAL NIGHTS

The primogen on both sides of the Atlantic have remained relatively unchanged — in essence if not in minor quirks and details — for centuries. The turn of the centuries, the Industrial Revolution, two World Wars, one Cold War and the rise of the electronic global society were all insufficient to shake the Camarilla's death-grip on the status quo. The fears and upheavals that have shaken Kindred society in recent nights, however, are another matter entirely. The massive fluctuations, defeats and victories in the war with the Sabbat; the sundering of the Assamites; the departure of the majority of Gangrel; the appearance of the Red Star; the suicidal fury that gripped the Ravnos; the West Coast incursion of the Cathayan vampires... all these, and a growing population of neonates whose upbringing does not incline them to accept the notion that age equals superiority, have conspired to birth a slow but spreading shift in the fundamental nature of the primogen.

Alternate constructions beyond the traditional "one clan, one seat" are again becoming popular, though the former remains marginally more common than all the others. Some primogen react to the demands of the neonates by cracking down, accepting elder and more powerful Kindred into their ranks regardless of clan. Others attempt to placate the youngsters by adopting a more democratic paradigm, at least on the surface. This has led to some primogen opening up and listening to their clanmates far more than they used to. Others have replaced their princes and now claim to be a semirepresentative council, and some primogen councils consist of Kindred who, even a few years ago, would have been considered far too young for such an exalted position (New York, for instance, appears to be shaping up as a city of the young, in terms of the Kindred).



None can say with any clarity what form the primogen council will take in the coming years. Perhaps the shifts imposed by the horrors of the modern nights will result in a form of council the likes of which we've never seen. Alternatively, as it has so many times before, the Camarilla's gerontocracy may prove resistant to the pressures of the unwashed masses and will maintain its current form well into the next century and beyond.

Only one thing is almost certain, and that is the primogen council — in whatever form it may next take — will endure.

## RULES AND REGULATIONS

If it's going to function as a unit — or as close to a unit as a cluster of elders can manage — the primogen council must have certain guidelines to shape its interactions and operations. Given that each council is a distinct entity from all of the others, and that traditions (and Traditions) can differ dramatically in interpretation from city to city and domain to domain, no universal "Primogen Lawbook" applies everywhere equally. Still, if the primogen do not have a ubiquitous set of procedures, they at least tend to have issues and problems in common. What follows, then, is a discussion of the most common means by which primogen councils address those issues and moderate their affairs.

## TITLES AND POSITIONS

It's worth taking a brief moment to define and discuss those individuals who serve the primogen directly. As with the prince, the council surrounds itself with lackeys and agents, many of whom may get in your character's way when you try to see your "representative" in the local power structure. It behooves you, at least, to know who you're dealing with. That said, it's important to understand that, with the exception of the whip, these terms are all utterly unofficial and aren't formally recognized (or even, for the most part, recognized at all) by anyone outside the council itself. They're really more primogen slang or nicknames than they are titles. Furthermore, only the primogen of larger Kindred populations will make use of any of these assistants, and only the councils of the very largest cities will have all of them.

### MYRMIDON

Named for the precursors to the archons (and therefore, indirectly, for the professional soldiers of ancient Greece), tonight a myrmidon is any Kindred

who serves one of the primogen in a purely martial capacity. This most frequently takes the form of a bodyguard, but other purposes, of a more offensive and usually more secretive nature, exist. Less historically inclined primogen may instead refer to their thugs by a variety of other names, including but not limited to button men, bruisers or any other slang term you can think of for somebody whose job description is "beat heads and catch bullets."

It's questionable whether these myrmidons qualify as true "officials" in a Kindred domain. They answer to no one but their primogen and receive no approval from the prince to engage in their violent and often lethal activities. Does the fact that their employers and masters are primogen, rather than untitled elders, grant them any sort of official sanction to do what they do?

To date, the question's never really come up. Most Kindred who know about the myrmidons have a vested interest in keeping them active, either because they themselves employ such agents or because they're scared shitless. These "unofficial" agents lack the formal obligations of a sheriff or scourge. They're not responsible for maintaining order or pursuing (or pretending to pursue) the best interests of the city and the prince. All the myrmidons do is what their masters tell them to do, and many Kindred would actually rather face a sheriff or even a scourge than one of these enforcers. With sect officials, at least you know where you stand.

### SCRIBE

The scribe is the mortal (or Kindred) responsible for keeping notes or records of official assemblies — in this case, primogen council meetings. Some few primogen — particularly young ones — have adopted the name "stenographer" rather than scribe for this position. Very few primogen keep anyone around whose sole purpose is to function as record-keeper. Most of the time, the title applies to whichever one of the whips (or, occasionally, the steward) is responsible for taking down the minutes of any particular meeting.

Of course, more than a few primogen assemblies are of a clandestine nature, in which case no records are kept at all — or else the records are false. Other councils, those that tend to meet informally or sporadically, see little need to keep such records. In these instances, obviously, no scribe is assigned.

### STEWARD

The steward is the primogen's equivalent of the Keeper of Elysium, with several duties of the seneschal as well. If she serves one of the primogen, her duties are to maintain and manage his office, secondary haven or wherever he chooses to meet with petitioners and

clanmates. Alternatively, in larger communities, the council as a whole might employ a steward to maintain the meeting chambers, if these are not located within the Elysium or prince's own meeting place. In both cases, the steward is also responsible for keeping track of the primogen's schedule and for determining who will or will not be permitted to see them. In many instances, these duties fall to the whip, who functions as both whip and steward.

Again, this position exists only within large communities with powerful primogen.

### WHIP

As discussed in the **Vampire: The Masquerade** core rules and the **Guide to the Camarilla**, the whip is an all-around assistant and gopher for his primogen. His job is to keep his master informed of all relevant activities and clanwide issues, to keep things from getting too bogged down at council meetings (though in truth they're rarely very effective at this) and to run whatever errands the primogen needs handled. This is the only primogen-related position (other than primogen itself, of course) with which the average Kindred on the street is familiar. The whip is also responsible for keeping his primogen's clanmates in line whenever they assemble in public. Given the nature of those clans which often choose to gather in large numbers — witness the Brujah institution of the rant — most whips prove, at best, only moderately successful in such undertakings.

## A MEETING OF THE MINDS: ASSEMBLING THE PRIMOGEN

Perhaps one of the most fundamental issues is where, why and most particularly when a primogen council convenes. No simple answer exists, of course. Some councils meet once a month or even more often, while others gather but once a year. Some gather in Elysium, others in private homes, others still in random or rotating locations. The issue, then, is one of determining why a primogen council convenes the way it does. Only then can you expect to predict or understand its behavior.

To reiterate an earlier point, Kindred among the primogen have their own goals, their own agendas and their own affairs to govern. Sitting on the council is not a "full time" occupation, and elders rarely take kindly to having their accustomed activities interrupted. Primogen most assuredly do *not* meet on a nightly basis — even once a week is not terribly common, though it's hardly unheard of — unless an active and ongoing crisis is underway.

Beyond that, various factors — many of which have more to do with the other Kindred of the city than with the primogen directly — influence how often and where the council assembles.

### THE PRINCE

Cities with strong princes tend to hover at one of two extremes. Either the primogen council meets infrequently, because the prince has most of his domain's issues well in hand, or they meet often because the prince insists on constant reports and updates, as well as assigning tasks to reluctant elders who have little choice but to comply. In these instances, the primogen may not meet on a regular schedule at all, but only when one of them calls a meeting to address a specific issue or when they are summoned before an overbearing prince's "court" and wish to exchange information beforehand.

In domains with weak princes (or no acknowledged prince at all), the primogen council tends to meet on a fairly frequent basis and on a set schedule. This is partially because they likely have more political duties to which they must attend — tasks the prince is unable or unwilling to undertake. On the other hand, the primogen under a weak prince know full well that one of their own number is likely to step up and wrest control from the lame duck at some point. Constant meetings are the only reliable means for each primogen to maintain contact with her fellows and, more to the point, to keep a very close eye on their activities. Primogen assemblies in these circumstances often address little of substance, instead deteriorating into recriminations, delaying tactics and layers upon layers of spying and subterfuge. Well, okay, so that describes *most* primogen, but it's even worse in these circumstances.

When a prince is neither particularly strong nor especially weak — that is, most of the time — the primogen council sets its schedule with little consideration for the needs or convenience of the prince.

Unless the primogen council is deliberately trying to hide the nature of its deliberations from the prince, most find it convenient to convene in the same Elysium where the prince normally convenes meetings. It's familiar — to say nothing of neutral — territory for them. Some primogen do keep secret meeting sites elsewhere. This can be a chamber in one of the primogen's own havens, but few elders are that trusting. Anything else is fair game, however, from a boardroom in an office building owned by a primogen's ghoul to the basement of a museum that the prince has declared Elysium (at the Toreador's insistence, no doubt) but never visits. If the meeting chamber is not in one of the

### AN IMPORTANT DISTINCTION

We're not talking about a prince's "court" here. Most princes assemble their entourages — including, but not limited to, the primogen council — as they choose. Some have set schedules, some call for assemblies only to address specific issues that have arisen. In either case, the primogen rarely have any say in such matters, unless the prince is particularly weak or easily influenced. The only choice they have is whether or not to attend, and the decision to absent oneself may have serious potential repercussions.

What many Kindred don't realize, however, is that most primogen (though certainly not all) make a point of gathering under their own aegis, away from the eyes of the prince. That doesn't mean these meetings are secret — most princes know they occur, and some are even welcome to come participate — but rather that these are meetings of the primogen, for the primogen, rather than meetings for the express purpose of dealing with or advising the prince. Numerous Kindred issues plague modern cities, from minor criminal matters to clan relations to rivalries over a potential childe to corporate conflicts or gang wars, many of which are too low-key or unimportant to be worth a prince's attention. These problems, particularly when they center around members of specific clans as opposed to the Kindred population as a whole, are the focus of these primogen assemblies.

That's not to say the primogen don't address citywide issues at these gatherings. If they feel their prince is handling a problem poorly, or if the prince is the problem, they're certainly not going to bring that up at his assembly. Behind closed doors, however, they can plot and scheme to their unbeating hearts' content...

But wait. What if the prince also functions as his clan's primogen? Many domains have moved away from this dual role, as the prince is supposed to be concerned with affairs of the domain and the Kindred as a whole, without focusing on the needs of any one clan (and a prince who is also a primogen also gives one clan an unhealthy amount of leverage in the eyes of the other primogen — another good reason to insist on a separation of powers). Still, some cities, often but not always the smaller domains, still have a single Kindred as both prince and one of the primogen.

When the prince sits on the council, the rest of the primogen are stuck. It becomes substantially harder to convene without the prince's knowledge, and even when it can be done, it is not, by definition, the entire council. When primogen in this situation need to discuss matters without the prince's knowledge, they're far more likely to do so in a series of individual meetings and passed messages, rather than as a body. This takes substantially longer and is far less efficient, but it is the only relatively secure means of communicating without being overheard by their fellow primogen and prince.

city's Elysiums, it's usually close by. The elders want a place to run to if there's any sort of trouble, and a council assembly makes a tempting target if word gets out.

### OTHER OFFICERS

Technically, the primogen outrank any other local officials. Sheriffs, seneschals and scourges are usually experts in their fields, however, and wise primogen take that expertise into account. While regular meetings of the council have nothing to do with these other Kindred, some primogen are willing to call an emergency assembly if the sheriff, for instance, insists that he must speak with them.

On the other side of the coin, archons and justicars have the authority to call for pretty much any sort of meeting whenever the hell they want.

In both cases, however, these emergency meetings of the primogen are rare. Most of the time, in case of an situation important enough to require an emergency assembly, the officer in question will request the prince assemble her entire entourage, including the primogen. Only if the prince must be kept out of the loop for some reason (or if she herself is the problem) will an outside official likely assemble the primogen as a separate entity. Due to the need for secrecy, then, most of these meetings are held outside Elysium, away from the prince's eyes and ears.

### DEMANDS OF THE CLAN

Some primogen almost seem to forget it, in their constant scheming and personal aggrandizement, but they do answer, at least in some small degree, to their clanmates throughout the city. A primogen's schedule

— and thus the schedule of the entire council — is partially decided by the needs and the numbers of the Kindred he represents.

It might be expected that primogen in the largest cities and with the largest populations of clanmates would call for meetings most often, but the reverse is most often true. If a primogen has more than a small handful of Kindred to whom she is responsible, she likely has no time for frequent gatherings with her fellow primogen. More likely, she spends a good portion of her time addressing the problems of her brethren on her own, pulling rank, calling in favors, exchanging boons and yanking strings. Only when an issue impacts the entire city, or when a clan-related problem requires more influence to solve than she can bring to bear on her own, is she likely to bring it before the council proper. Because of their harried schedules, primogen in larger cities or with a larger base to represent prefer to accumulate big issues and then bring them before the prince or the primogen assembly at once, instead of holding frequent meetings to address these problems piecemeal. If these primogen have set meeting schedules, they likely aren't frequent, perhaps once every few months, at most. Almost half of large-city primogen do not hold set meetings (though they may still attend a regularly scheduled convocation arranged by the prince) but instead assemble only when one of their number calls for it.

Smaller or less important primogen councils, by contrast, actually have the time for more frequent assemblies. In fact, many of them prefer to gather as often as possible. Without a large population of "constituents" from whom they can demand, extort or trade for favors, it's the only way they can gather information on what the other clans and other primogen are up to.

Many primogen in larger cities keep personal meeting spaces, offices, extra havens or at least mail drops or phone lines that they make known to fellow Kindred. This allows their clanmates to come and address them, request favors of them and discuss issues that they might not want raised before the rest of the council or to other individual primogen. Of course, they frown on frivolous use of these avenues, and the vast majority of audiences with the primogen are conducted either at the prince's court or the official assemblies of the council. In order to facilitate these audiences, primogen tend to hold open councils in the Elysium, retiring to more secretive locations only when they don't wish to be disturbed by petitioners.

See below for more on meeting with the primogen.

## PERSONAL AFFAIRS

All of the above considerations, while absolutely important, pale in comparison to one final issue. Across the board, in large cities or small ones, the primary deciding factor on how frequently a primogen council meets is simply this: How often are the elders willing to take time from their own activities and deign to gather with their fellow councilors?

Wise primogen are willing to take at least a functional minimum of time to address issues of clan and city. Those who do not tend not to remain primogen. Beyond this, however, a primogen's willingness to take time for meetings varies by individual. They'll meet more frequently during a crisis, of course, but beyond this, little in the way of prediction is possible. When dealing with a new city, Kindred are advised to ask someone more familiar with the domain how the primogen behave, rather than making (probably false) assumptions based on their own experiences elsewhere.

## INTO THE LION'S DEN: AN AUDIENCE WITH THE PRIMOGEN

Once you've learned when and where the primogen meet when they're not gathering as part of the prince's court, the next step is figuring out how you get in to see them. It's not always easy, but most primogen put on at least some show of making themselves accessible. Ostensibly, after all, they're here to represent other Kindred, and it doesn't look good to the masses if they're completely isolated.

Again, keep in mind that this applies to meetings of the primogen council specifically. The prince of the city may see the residents of his domain based on very different systems and criteria than does the council. Assuming they operate in the same fashion — and, even worse, acting on that assumption — is a good way to give offense to some very dangerous creatures.

## NEONATES AND ANCILLAE

These young (or at least not ancient) Kindred represent the vast majority of those the primogen council is supposed to represent. It follows, then, in the typical Kindred age-centric idiom, that these are the very ones who have the most trouble making their primogen hear them.

Step one for a younger vampire is to meet with his own clan's primogen first in a private setting, without involving the entire council. In many domains, the petitioner must go through numerous steps or channels. Some primogen employ their whips or stewards as



seneschals — only by convincing the “doorman” that your concerns are worth his master’s time will you be permitted to meet with your primogen at all. A few of these middlemen take their tasks seriously, admitting those who seem to have valid issues and concerns. Others use the opportunity to play favorites (either their master’s or their own), offering to trade meetings with the primogen for boons or other favors, or else utterly denying those they dislike.

Assuming you win past the steward — or else that your primogen doesn’t keep a steward or whip, but arranges her own schedule — you face the same hurdles in dealing with the primogen herself. She may agree to meet with you if your cause is urgent enough, or she may insist that you owe her a minor boon even for the honor of a face-to-face conference. Furthermore, the vast majority of primogen prefer to handle any clan-related issues on their own. It requires a veritable catastrophe, or else the promise of very large favors in return, for a neonate or ancilla to convince a primogen to call for, and let him address, an entire assembled council.

You might, of course, attempt to learn when and where the primogen council meets and request an audience before the council as a whole. This sort of grandstand play really isn’t a good idea under most circumstances, however. More formal primogen — many in the Americas, and most in Europe — still cleave to older and more ironclad concepts of etiquette. A neonate seeking an audience with the council, in their minds, is the absolute height of presumption. You go through channels, like a good little Lick, or else you wait until the council invites you to come address them on their schedule and for their purposes, not yours. Any attempt to leapfrog the system is equivalent to rising above your station, and the elders frown mightily on that.

Even if you’re allowed past the door, even if you’re fortunate enough to be dealing with younger, less hide-bound primogen who might at least hear you out since you’ve taken the trouble to approach them, you will, at the very least, have gravely insulted your own primogen. You should have gone to her first — or, assuming you did so and she turned down your request, you should have trusted her judgment. By going over her head, you’ve made her look, at best, as if she lacks respect from her own clanmates. If this happens, you can be sure that she’ll do everything in her power to thwart your efforts in the future.

If you are granted audience before the council — either to discuss an issue that you’ve raised or because they require your knowledge or expertise on some matter — don’t dawdle. Go in, make your presentation, do your song and dance, answer any questions they put

to you and leave. Any attempt at changing the subject, asking for information they haven’t chosen to give or anything else that might be perceived as a waste of their time is, once again, the height of presumption (at least in their eyes it is, even if you have a different perspective). At best, you’ll be removed from their presence, and any future attempts at dealing with them will meet with additional stonewalling. At worst....

Well, this is a bunch of irritated elders we’re talking about. Let’s not speculate about “at worst.”

#### OTHER ELDERS

For presumably obvious reasons, primogen must be substantially more polite to their fellow elders than they are to the upstart whelps. This doesn’t necessarily mean, however, that elders find it easier to arrange a meeting with an entire council.

Most elders who don’t hold some sort of office must still, for the most part, approach their local primogen individually first, before attempting to address the assembly. They, too, must run the gauntlet that is the primogen’s steward (or the primogen herself) and a “very busy” schedule that may or may not allow for an audience in the immediate future. Whereas neonates are judged largely on the basis of how useful they might be, elders are admitted or rejected by slightly different criteria. When the petitioner is nearly as old and powerful as the primogen herself, the issue is not merely “How useful will he be if I demand a boon in exchange for seeing him?” but also “How dangerous will he be if I refuse?”

Enlightened self-interest on the part of the primogen, then, means that the average elder has a much easier time meeting with his primogen than the average neonate. Primogen will still be reluctant to invite such a petitioner to address the entire assembly, however. As soon as the entire council is involved, any debt or gratitude the elder might owe for a positive resolution to the issue (whatever it may be) will fall to the primogen council as a unit, not to the individual primogen whom he initially approached. Add to that the fact that allowing an outside elder into the council — even for the briefest span — is the equivalent of showing a potential rival the inner works, and it becomes clear that the paranoia most primogen share is enough on its own to keep most primogen-elder interaction down to a one-on-one level.

#### LOCAL OFFICIALS

Although he’s the first “local official” that likely springs to mind, let’s put the prince aside for a moment. The other local authorities are, of course, the sheriff, the scourge, the seneschal and the Keeper of

Elysium. Some unusual cities may have other, less common offices, but these aren't common enough to draw any universal conclusions.

How easy is it for one of these officials to meet with the primogen? Very — if they don't mind doing so when the primogen have been assembled by the prince for his regular (or not so regular) convocations. If the official wishes to meet with the primogen outside the prince's purview, however, that's a whole different scenario.

Unless the domain is in the midst of a conflict and the sheriff has been declared *Dux Bellorum* (war-leader) for the duration, none of these officers outranks the primogen. They aren't capable of demanding an audience with the assembled council — or rather, they can demand all they like, but no one has to listen. In terms of their formal authority, they have no more pull with the primogen than do any other elders.

Informally, however, most primogen know better than to make enemies unnecessarily. The Kindred who is responsible for ensuring your safety, or the one who manages the prince's social schedule, or especially the one who is licensed to commit murder at his own discretion, are not the sorts you want to alienate. Thus, unless the primogen in question really is too busy, or has concerns of his own that he dare not let the petitioner get too near, most primogen are willing to make time for a meeting if one of the prince's appointed officers requests it. Similarly, though the primogen frown on unscheduled interruptions, they'll likely honor a request to speak even in the midst of a council assembly if it comes from one of these worthies.

Okay, back to the prince now. Unlike the others, the prince very much does outrank even the members of the primogen council, at least in most instances. Some cities exist where the prince is weak and the primogen pull his strings behind the scenes, but this is, at best, an atypical situation. In most domains, the prince has sufficient clout that the primogen would be ill-advised to refuse his call for a meeting, either one on one or with the council en masse.

Even the prince, however, doesn't have *carte blanche* to barge in on primogen council meetings. When he commands the primogen to assemble, he is, in essence, calling court. When he meets with them individually, it's no different than any other conversation between elders. If the primogen council has assembled on its own, however, the prince may well not be welcome. Again, they can't really keep him out. Although they might attempt to keep the meeting's time and location a secret, if and when he shows up at the door, they'd be wise to let him in. That doesn't mean they have to discuss anything of substance while he's there.



See the “Important Distinction” sidebar, above, for more on how primogen councils that include the prince as one of their number deal with these circumstances.

#### CAMARILLA OFFICIALS

An archon or, heavens forefend, a justicar can pretty much waltz in and demand to see anyone she chooses, from the prince to the primogen — either individually or in council — on down. On a purely technical level, an archon doesn’t outrank a member of the primogen, but she certainly represents someone who does. By refusing an archon audience, the primogen accomplish nothing save to draw potentially fatal quantities of suspicion and investigation down on their heads. Unless the primogen are up to some scheme that can be completely hidden, with no trace evidence, in a matter of nights or even hours, they’re best served by offering at least a modicum of cooperation when these big shots come to town.

This hardly means the primogen always follow orders or suggestions given by justicars or their servire[\*\*?] assistants. Few elders obey orders without question, regardless of where that order comes from. It does mean the primogen will, under all but the most bizarre conditions, at the very least hear the archon or justicar out and give serious thought to what she has to say.

The fact that justicars and archons are capable of throwing their weight around, even with prince and primogen, doesn’t mean they always do so. Unless the intent is to catch someone red-handed, most officials announce their arrival ahead of time and make every effort to go through channels and obey the formalities of a given city’s domain. For one thing, they often view the prince’s and primogen’s response to their pending arrival as a clue to their activities. Any elder who tries to impede the arrival of the archon — or, alternatively, who seems *too* solicitous and eager to please — is probably hiding something and is worthy of additional attention. Many primogen, who are usually smart enough to see this sort of game for what it is, make a point of being polite but not overly friendly, cooperative but not excessively helpful, and in essence simply try to look like part of the landscape.

The other reason archons and justicars prefer going through channels is that they really do want the cooperation of the locals, and they’re more likely to receive that if they haven’t stepped on too many toes. See **Archons and Templars** for more on this multifaceted relationship.

## PLEASE TAKE A SEAT: BECOMING ONE OF THE PRIMOGEN

How, then, does one join the illustrious (or at least ambitious) ranks of the primogen? A sheriff or a seneschal is appointed, but it can’t be that straightforward for the council of elders, can it?

Well, it *can*, but it usually isn’t. The precise methods by which one rises to the position of primogen vary city to city and domain to domain, and it’s rarely done exactly the same way in disparate locations. While the details may differ, however, sufficient commonalties exist that the “standard” methods of becoming primogen may be broken down into a mere handful of types. Some are simple, some complex, but none is easy or without its share of risk.

### APPOINTMENT

Since we’ve just brought up the notion that simple doesn’t equal easy, we’ll use this first method as an example. Being appointed to the position of primogen is, by far, the simplest method of obtaining a seat on the council. Someone with the authority to do so says you’re a primogen and, presto! You’re a primogen. It couldn’t be much simpler.

Finding a city in which the prince has sufficient power over the primogen to mandate who receives a seat and who does not... convincing him that you’re the one for the job, that you’re capable enough to manage it but not so skilled or powerful that you’ll threaten his own position... dealing with the repercussions, the jealousies of those who were passed over and the hostility of your new fellows who no doubt view you as competition .... These ensure that so simple a proposition is by no means an easy one.

Only the most powerful and most despotic princes have the clout to insist the primogen accept (or, for that matter, reject) a potential member. This iron-handed approach tends to alienate those elders who feel that their own authority is being squashed, so only those princes supremely confident in their power will even risk it.

On extremely rare occasions, the primogen themselves may be in a position to choose the successor of a comrade who steps down, is slain or otherwise is removed from power. This occurs only in cities where the primogen consist of the most powerful Kindred of the domain, and even then only rarely. A primogen who is

selected by her fellows is almost automatically dealing from a position of weakness. She knows she serves only at the whim of the others, and any primogen with the power to select a member most likely has the power to depose her as well. Furthermore, the fact that she's beholden to the other primogen bodes ill for her clanmates, who will likely find the council's decisions frequently turning against them because their representative doesn't have the influence she should.

In either case, because of the inherent problems and the rarity of the circumstances that allow for it, appointment to the council is one of the least common methods of ascension.

## ELECTION

Election is far from the most common means of selecting a primogen, but it is the fastest growing in the modern nights. Although most of the clans are not particularly cohesive or tightly knit, most do maintain some means of interaction. The Brujah have their rants, the Nosferatu their sense of community, the Tremere their hierarchy, the Malkavians their — well, whatever it is the Malkavians have. In many domains, when a primogen needs to be chosen, the available members of the clan will gather and actually vote on a representative. This works only in large cities, or else when a single primogen holds sway over several smaller cities as part of a single domain, because only the largest Kindred communities claim sufficient numbers of any given clan to hold an election.

No specific nominating practice exists. When a clan gathers to choose a new primogen, anyone who wants the job can throw his hat into the ring. In most cases, the vote is held immediately, with very little time for speeches, ridiculous promises or all those other political games that are the staple of elections among the kine. Thus, in the vast majority of cases, victory goes to whichever candidate already has the greatest status and reputation. (This is, of course, a tendency and not a rule, and the Ventrue still whisper of their neonate primogen who was elected in Dallas because he was the only candidate against whom half the gathered Blue Bloods didn't have a grudge. He lasted only a year, but his policies during his tenure were unusual, to say the least.)

On occasion, clans have tried to allow some time for decision-making, allowing weeks or even months between the announcement of a vote and the actual assembly. Candidates have attempted actual campaigning, calling in boons and trying to convince others to vote for them. This very quickly became an untenable

morass of twisted lies and tangled favors and allowed the remainder of the primogen several months to operate in which they made all their decisions without the input of the clan in question, so the practice never caught on.

Incidentally, although it cannot always be enforced, a strict policy of "no Disciplines" is usually maintained at these electoral gatherings. Otherwise, the winner would almost invariably be the one with the highest Presence.

The funny thing about these elections is that they aren't necessarily binding. The primogen council is under no obligation to accept the newly elected member. That doesn't necessarily mean he isn't primogen — after all, if every member of a given clan comes to you to represent them, and you in turn take their concerns to the prince, you're primogen — but it does mean he may be left out of council meetings and other deliberations, as well as snubbed on the social scene. Whether the locals stick to their decision and keep their elected primogen, or else choose a new representative who might prove more acceptable and therefore more advantageous, is entirely up to them.

That said, few primogen assemblies refuse an elected comrade access to their inner workings and meetings. They may not like the new arrival, they may view him as beneath themselves or as extra competition, and they certainly have no interest in granting another clan a voice equal to their own. On the other hand, without a unified council — or at least a council willing to gather together and discuss the issues — the council as a whole becomes weakened. Furthermore, a candidate who has the backing of his clanmates is a powerful political force, whether or not he holds a formal title, and elders and primogen would be wise to take him seriously regardless of their personal opinions toward him. If they spurn him, those who sit in the council's favor must now divide their resources and devote at least some attention to keeping an eye on, and possibly acting against, the activities of their rejected member. They've created an actual enemy where they might have had only a rival, one who likely carries a grudge and has the support of his clanmates to bolster his efforts. Interclan tension is a way of unlife in many cities, but it can grow to all-out hostility in domains where the primogen cannot even come together for negotiation. Thus, only when a potential member is so loathed that the rest of the council would prefer these repercussions to admitting him will the primogen refuse to let an elected member take his seat among them.

## POPULAR ACCLAIM

A close relative of the election, becoming primogen through popular opinion is pretty much the same thing without the formal trappings. Sometimes a Kindred of a given clan, often an ancilla but sometimes an elder, develops a reputation for getting things done and helping out his clanmates in exchange for relatively reasonable demands of boons and favors. Whether or not this reputation is true is almost immaterial, as long as it's pervasive. When this happens, members of that clan who are in need — particularly the younger Kindred, who have fewer resources of their own — will try to see the elder in question, bringing him their problems and concerns. If he does well by them, they'll also be prepared to follow his lead and trust his judgment when he speaks for the clan as a whole. In essence, he has suddenly "evolved" into the clan's local primogen.

These "popular primogen" often prove the most effective. Those who are appointed or who seize power for themselves cannot always count on their own clanmates' support, and even those who are elected are often seen as the least of all possible evils, the best of bad options. A primogen who is elevated to his position purely on his popularity and reputation among his brethren, however, most certainly *does* have his clan's support, at least until he does something to lose it. The backing of an entire segment of the local Kindred population is a powerful thing, opening up access to resources and information that less well liked primogen do not have. Few things are more frightening to a council of self-made elders than the arrival of a new competitor with even a portion of the masses behind him. Many elders make a show of holding these "popular primogen" in contempt, sneering because they didn't have the strength to reach the top on their own, but this attitude is largely a veil over the worry and anxiety they actually feel.

As with the elected primogen above, the rest of the council isn't guaranteed to accept their new comrade. He can still function perfectly well in all a primogen's official duties but may find himself left out of some of the politics. Also as above, though, the council will usually accept the new primogen, if only reluctantly, because refusing to do so opens up a host of other problems.

## PERSONAL POWER

Some elders have sufficient status and influence within a given domain that they may simply declare themselves primogen, with no one to gainsay them. All that's required is that the prince and other primogen acknowledge your position; they don't even have to like it.

In the old nights, during the birth and development of the primogen, this was the only means of grabbing and holding a position on the council. Tonight, with so many different methods for selecting primogen and so many modern, new-fangled and radical notions of social justice and enfranchisement of the younger Kindred, the primogen who obtains his position purely on the basis of personal strength is the exception, not the rule. Still, it occurs frequently enough that it must be considered as a viable option.

So how to gain sufficient power that the prince and his cohort won't challenge your claim to a seat on the primogen? The first is through boons and prestation. If a sufficient number of elders or local officials owe you favors, you can count on their support when you stake your claim. Princes and primogen may have few compunctions about challenging you on your own, but even the most arrogant tend to balk at challenging half the city's Kindred power structure. Pull in enough favors, and you can all but write your own ticket all the way up to the principedom. Until, of course, the elders upon whom you're calling decide that you're too dangerous to have around, debts of prestation or no ....

Other forms of influence can prove just as effective if you haven't acquired sufficient boons to claw your way to the top. Certain mortal institutions are vital to the smooth running of the Camarilla machine, and if you hold any sway in those institutions, even the prince may hesitate to deny you the status and acclaim you desire. Municipal offices such as police and fire departments, the local media, shipping and transportation interests — all of these give substantial leverage in the Kindred community. If opening up a seat on the council is the best way for the other primogen to ensure that their havens aren't condemned or raided for drugs in the middle of the day, they might be inclined to do just that. Again, this can be pressed too far by elders with unskillful hands; as soon as it becomes safer to dispose of you than to cooperate with you, rest assured they'll make every attempt to do so. A better option is to offer favors. If you have influence with a local airline, you can offer prince and primogen free and safe travel to other cities without fear of Lupine attack or being delayed past sunrise. Pawns at City Hall can help cut through the bureaucracy when your fellow primogen are trying to arrange the purchase of a new headquarters for their corporate holdings. Exchanges of favors like these can get you just as far as extortion and are far less likely to result in you finding yourself on the business end of an Assamite.

### ON YOUR MARKS...

Some Storytellers might be sufficiently taken with these ideas to stage just such a contest in their own chronicle. Even if the player's characters are of insufficient age or power to be competing themselves, they may be involved as agents, pawns or impediments to the contestants. Some contest suggestions are provided below, though the Storyteller can no doubt come up with other ideas that better suit her own particular stories and characters.

#### Scavenger Hunt

Elders spend substantial time warding off boredom and ennui, and are constantly on the lookout for something to do, something to challenge their abilities without actually putting their precious unlives at risk. Scavenger hunt "salons" are not uncommon, wherein numerous elders will gather in a host's domain and each — perhaps on his own, perhaps with assistance, perhaps in teams, depending on the rules — seek out rare or difficult-to-obtain objects. The contest may continue until one contestant has obtained every item, or it may be timed, with whoever has collected the most items declared the victor.

Most of the time this is just a game, but some primogen use the same technique to select or test a potential new member — or, if their power is sufficient to make demands, even a potential new prince. The items selected for such a contest are all available within the borders of the domain but very difficult to obtain. Some may require access to the inner workings of City Hall, others the crack-houses of the Fifth Ward; still others might require the cooperation of the Tremere chantry, the Nosferatu in their sewers or even non-Kindred supernatural denizens of the city. The purpose is to ensure that the candidate has a working knowledge of the ins and outs of the city she would help govern, and that she has what it takes to survive all it can throw at her.

#### Genealogy of the Damned

Many elders still cling to the belief that skill, ability to lead and the essence of nobility itself are carried in the blood. The actual capabilities of an individual are of secondary importance to his lineage and blood relations. Lineage is important only if it can be proven, however, and guesswork and hearsay have no place in these matters.

In a genealogical contest, all the candidates are given a set period of time to identify and document their direct line of descent, starting with their sires and going back as near to Caine as they can manage. Of course, anyone who suggests to these elders that such a contest is meaningless if Caine and the Antediluvians are myths had better be prepared to make a *very* quick exit. Furthermore, they must draw and document any blood relations between themselves and as many illustrious and famous Kindred as possible. This need not be direct descent; sharing a sire or even a great-great-great-grandsire is just fine. The nearer the connection, the more impressive; claiming a connection to someone because "We're of the same clan and therefore share the same progenitor" isn't worth a damn thing. Finally, the candidate must also document his mortal line of descent if at all possible and connect himself by blood to as many famous mortals as he can. This is of less importance than one's Kindred lineage, but it does serve, at least, as tiebreaker.

Incidentally, candidates who lie or falsify evidence in order to give themselves an edge in these contests are normally punished by blood hunts and death by the elders they tried to deceive. Shocking as it sounds, this is one instance where honesty, even among the Kindred, is the best policy. (Unless one has an exceptionally clever and undetectable means of deception, of course.)

#### Ordeal or Combat

So rare as to make even the other forms of contest look common, election by ordeal or by combat is found only among those truly unusual elders who still believe that God will ensure that a worthy challenger will overcome even a stronger and more capable opponent. In such cases, the candidates are either required to face one another in battle — old forms, of course, no firearms — or are forced to compete against one another in some other fashion. Tests of endurance, pain tolerance and courage — in some cases, being exposed to open flame — are popular.

Apparently, God favors those who are stronger and faster, since most of these contests go exactly the way one might anticipate. Still, enough underdogs have pulled off surprising victories that those who wish to continue this practice have examples of "divine intervention" to point to.

It's vital that an elder have a solid and realistic measure of his position in Kindred society before attempting to simply take a seat on the primogen like this. If he's overestimated his importance, strength or degree of influence — or the other elders' susceptibility to that influence — he may find his ambitions blocked, his bluff called. At that point, he has but two options, neither of which can turn out well. One is to back down, relinquish his claim and accept the fact that he now has a reputation as an arrogant braggart who can't back up his claims to power. The other is to move against his rivals, following through on any threatened use of his resources and declaring a cold war against the primogen and/or prince. This can only result in a destabilization of the local domain until the city's elders manage to crush him — and crush him they will. Very few Kindred, no matter how old or powerful, can stand individually against the assembled elders of his city.

## CONTESTS

To most individuals born and raised in the modern age, be they Kindred or kine, the notion of choosing a leader through some form of test of skill, strength or just plain luck is inconceivable. It would be the equivalent of awarding the presidency to the NBA's most valuable player, or the reigning champion on *Jeopardy!* (Although the latter technique would, at least, ensure a minimum of knowledge and intelligence in the White House.) Many elders, however, hail from times when contests were the preferred way of settling disputes and selecting community leaders. Trial by ordeal and trial by combat are both viable systems, as God will favor the righteous, and declaring someone king because he yanked a sword from a stone is a realistic proposition.

For this reason, you can still occasionally find domains wherein primogen, and sometimes even princes, are selected via a series of contests. Usually, multiple varieties of tests are involved, determining an applicant's physical, mental and supernatural prowess. On occasion, however, a single symbolic test — the modern equivalent to that sword and stone bit again — is used. In these cases, those who don't appreciate the symbolism, such as most younger Kindred, often feel that the selection of their prince and primogen is somewhat arbitrary.

Because most of the younger generations, and even a majority of elders, reject this form of selection as outdated and archaic, it is now practiced only in a very few select cities, in which the elders are especially bound by tradition and still yearn for the days of their youths. The practice is all but unheard of in America and is rapidly fading even in the Old World.

## ACCIDENTAL OFFICE

Sometimes, particularly in smaller and less orderly cities, nobody wants the job of primogen. Maybe your clan is less numerous locally than the others and none of your brethren want to draw the attention of the city's elite, preferring to pursue their own ambitions through less open means than public office. Perhaps your city sits on the border with the Sabbat or some other hostile party and proclaiming yourself a community leader is the equivalent to wearing a fat bull's-eye and a "Stake me!" T-shirt. Maybe the prince is so despotic that nobody in their right mind would want to work directly with her. Or perhaps, startling as the notion may be, none of your clanmates in the city are particularly ambitious.

Whatever the reason may be, a clan with no primogen is at a distinct disadvantage in its dealings with other local Kindred. With nobody on high to watch out for them, they have few resources on which to call if things get rough and nobody to whom they can take their concerns about their position in the city.

As the saying goes, "It's a dirty job, but somebody's got to do it." Civic-minded Kindred do exist, and not every primogen is in the game solely for the power and prestige. Many of them honestly do seek to improve the lot of their brethren — and some of those wind up in power not out of any desire of their own, but simply because nobody else would.

The process is similar to becoming primogen through popular acclaim, as described above, save that it's somewhat reversed. In the former situation, the Kindred begin coming to a particular individual because they feel he can do the job. In this case, however, the candidate has taken on the tasks of the primogen without yet being recognized, because nobody else is doing what needs to be done. Only after she's been doing the job without thanks or recognition for some time will her clanmates likely begin to understand and, she hopes, appreciate what she's doing for them.

Will the prince and the council recognize her as primogen, though? Technically, she's neither been selected for the position nor made any big noises about claiming it. She's just doing the job quietly.

Well, they aren't required to, of course, but they usually do. A reluctant primogen is actually a blessing to those already in power. After all, she's clearly capable of getting things done, yet she lacks a certain spark of motivation. She didn't *want* the job. That, to those already in power, makes her a safer candidate than those actively seeking power, and as long as she doesn't appear to be developing that ambition, they'll likely make every reasonable effort to keep her around.

## MIXING AND MATCHING

Cities in which the primogen council is particularly formal and regimented may allow for but a single method of becoming primogen. Perhaps all candidates must be formally elected, or they all must pass a series of tests. Elsewhere, if the prince holds absolute power, perhaps the only route to the council is through his appointment. In many cities, however, no single method is supreme, and any or all of the above instances occur at some point or another.

The nature of the clan in question may play a deciding factor in how its primogen is selected. Brujah are, at least traditionally if not always in fact, more likely to elect their primogen or elevate him through popular acclaim, whereas the stereotypical Ventrue probably want their officials to prove their worth through some sort of test of skill and nobility (having a pure pedigree doesn't hurt either). Meanwhile, the Malkavian primogen earned her seat only by pulling in a major boon the prince owed her and having herself appointed, the Tremere bargained for his position using his influence over the local hospital and blood bank as leverage, and the Nosferatu primogen sort of stumbled into the job because nobody else in his clan could be bothered with it.

Conflict occasionally arises due to these disparate methods. The younger Kindred of more traditional sects may grow angry that they aren't being permitted a vote when the Brujah across town have their own. The sitting members of a council, most of whom came to power through their own strengths and ambition, may not take the Brujah seriously, since he couldn't do it on his own but had to gather the support of his "cronies." The primogen appointed by the prince may be viewed as something of a "prince's pet" by the others, or even as a plant or a spy.

Still, these issues are, in the larger scheme, relatively minor. The primogen usually have far better issues to argue, fight and recriminate over. When the largest conflict is based on how one came to power, when the primogen council has no more pressing business, the city's probably in fairly good shape.

While primogen may not actively come into conflict over such issues, however, wise elders still keep very careful track of how each and every one of their fellows obtained power. One never knows when such information will come in handy, after all, and the best way to weaken a rival is to attack her support structure. If one's rival was appointed by the prince, for instance, one need merely find some means of convincing the prince that it's no longer worth the effort to support her. On the other hand, if a fellow primogen was put in power by the popular acclaim of her clan, one's efforts against her must instead be aimed at tarnishing her good name and

reputation. Wise primogen hoard information about how their fellows reached the council and make a point of hiding their own path to power since, like everything else involving the Kindred, such knowledge is a powerful weapon in the proper hands.

## GET OUT!

Our focus here has been on becoming one of the primogen, but it's worth taking a moment to discuss how one leaves — or, more accurately, is removed — from the council.

In most cities, no specific terms of office exist. A primogen holds her office until she chooses to step down; is removed from her position by some action of the prince, the rest of the council, her own clanmates or someone higher up in the Camarilla; or meets Final Death. Sometimes, those last two options are actually the same thing.

Should a primogen wish to resign, the procedure is rarely anything more formal than an announcement to the prince, the rest of the council and the other elders (if any) of her clan. It's customary to give some notice, so that a replacement may be chosen, but sudden departures are not unheard of. The result is usually either a gaping vacuum in the power structure of the city or a sudden brief but chaotic struggle to fill that vacuum. If the primogen obtained her office through appointment or popular acclaim, abandoning the position may result in not a few grudges and ill feelings, unless the position was vacated in order to claim a higher office, such as when a primogen becomes the city's new prince.

Removing a primogen from office is a difficult proposition, even for his fellow primogen and the prince. As discussed above, it's possible to function as spokesperson for a local clan even without the recognition of the rest of the council. Many primogen are wise enough to retire under the pressure of a council that wants them out; unlife isn't easy to begin with for elders in public positions, and it's that much harder when your fellows don't want you around and are making every effort to interfere with your activities. Still, some refuse to go quietly, and entire domains have been torn apart by the political squabbles resulting from an attempt to kick one of the primogen off the council.

A prince might have the power to strip a primogen of his office, but wise princes refrain from trying this under any but the most extreme circumstances. Even if she succeeds, she may develop a reputation for taking sides and playing favorites among the primogen: not conducive to smooth relations in the future. Furthermore, she runs the risk of losing her credibility entirely. If a primogen doesn't bow under her pressure to retire,



if he's able to maintain his position despite the prince's wishes to the contrary, the prince cannot help but lose face in the eyes of her domain's Kindred.

Archons, justicars and other sect officials rarely take a direct hand in local politics. Should one of these worthies insist that a given primogen relinquish his position, it behooves him to do as he's asked. Justicars have close to absolute power, as do archons when they're speaking with their patron's voice. The position of primogen is a valuable one, with substantial perks and powers attached to it, but other ways of pursuing one's ambitions are available. As precious as the position may be, keeping it is not worth the repercussions of ignoring a justicar's "suggestions."

Ironically, the weakest Kindred of the domain may be in the best position to remove a primogen from office. Should the Kindred for whom that primogen is supposed to speak lose faith in his abilities, should they cease cooperating with him and bringing him their concerns and observations and begin reporting to someone else, that's pretty much all she wrote. A powerful elder might be able to maintain some position of authority within the prince's local power structure purely on the basis of his own age, power and experience, but for the most part, a primogen with no clanmates to represent and to support him is no primogen at all.

Because removing a primogen from his position is such a tricky proposition, princes and other primogen often resort to subterfuge, extortion and other particularly — well, Kindred-like methods of persuasion.

One of the most frequent reasons for removing a primogen from office is because the elder is guilty of some crime against either the Camarilla or the prince. If the crime isn't serious enough to warrant Final Death or a blood hunt, the prince and the rest of the primogen might choose not to make the individual's guilt public. Should they announce his guilt and demand his resignation, they face a battle — politically if not martially — if he refuses to go quietly. On the other hand, using the knowledge of his crime as leverage, offering him the option of a "voluntary" retirement in exchange for keeping his crimes secret, is certainly a viable alternative.

It is not unheard of for princes and primogen to plant evidence of such crimes, to give themselves an excuse to remove an uncooperative, dangerous or simply unpopular primogen from the council. For that matter, in truly extreme cases, princes and primogen have been known to arrange the "disappearance" of one of their own number if no other method of removing him presents itself. This isn't common and the repercussions for being caught are extreme, but since when have either of those factors stopped elder Kindred from doing as they please?

## A BIGGER PICTURE

To be primogen is considered one of the easier political goals to reach by those Kindred on the outside, but those who have a few more decades under their belts know otherwise. While some up-and-comers may use it as a training ground, ignorance and unwariness have cost many a clan dearly and the ignorant one her unlife.

In conversation and correspondence, many Kindred refer to the various clan primogen solely by their clan name, unless they must differentiate between two of the same clan who are holding posts in the city, such as the Brujah primogen and the Brujah sheriff. This device is largely for convenience's sake, not indicative of the state of politics. While they do represent their clans' interests at the table, primogen are not the be-all end-all of their clans, nor are they the representative type of the clan. Any vampire would do well to remember that when she steps out into the world or comes to the table.

## PURPOSES, OR, A BUNCH OF VAMPIRES SITTING AROUND TALKING

The primogen council is probably the oldest form of the "smoky backroom." Ever since groups of men (or women) gathered to discuss the business and governance of a city, the council was there, at least in spirit. As far as any Kindred knows, there has always been some form of primogen council. From the flattering courtiers of princely courts, to the stern councils of elders seen in every city since the First Nights, to the group of concerned citizens who started meeting to pool their resources and ensure their survival when there was no prince, the primogen council is one thing of vampire existence that has always had a form, whether in formal name or otherwise.

What do the primogen do? Manage the city's resources for the good of the citizenry and the city, maintain territories for feeding and for their clans to haven in, support the regime that the city may know stability, balance the power of the prince that the younger vampires may know safety and to ensure the prince does not run roughshod, and promote and protect the interests of their clans. How do they do it? Any way they have to — the primogen chamber is a viper's nest of nepotism, backstabbing, boon-swapping and dirty fighting. It is a post that demands a Kindred take it up willingly, and the stakes can be quite high. For many Kindred, though, it may be the greatest power they ever hold.

## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

A group of vampires allowed to run wild in a city can quickly turn that city into a madhouse. Everyone scabbles for his own domain (literal or figurative), wastes time and energy acquiring and defending said domain, and no one is watching out for the bigger threats, such as Lupines or incursions from other hostile forces. Such sticky fingers are also likely to result in the fox guarding the henhouse, or, worse, precious resources that are being squandered by someone who's boasting of his considerable stock of resources, which are being used as his footstool. In these nights, Kindred cannot afford not to have the city under decent management. It may be all that's standing between them and the barbarians at the gate.

One area of management is the matter of feeding. Kindred must eat, and the best way to see this done with a minimum of Masquerade breaches or other trouble is to determine where it is safe to feed. Many times, the clans consider where in their territories such can take place; if it can, what rules visitors must follow; or if it simply isn't safe at all. In cities where the prince decides to allow clans to manage certain areas in exchange for other considerations, they must also ensure that feeding is done without threat to the Masquerade and repair breaches if they occur.

Primogen must also determine which clans have rights to which areas of a city, or, in the vernacular of young Licks, who holds what turf. In larger cities, this is a necessity — New York, Dallas and Seattle are all examples where the primogen must divide up the responsibility and privilege of holding turf. Such cities are too large for a single overworked sheriff and a handful of deputies to police and protect, and this allows the workload to be distributed a little more evenly. It can be said that the prince holds all the territory in the city by dint of the Second Tradition and his own position, but when a prince brags about his "holding," he'll of course be asked how he intends to care for it. Perhaps the prince wisely decides to permit the clans to hold territory in the city — the clan may feed in its territory, its members may set up their havens there, but it is likewise responsible for keeping its house in order, such as dealing with the Masquerade and watching out for threats like the Sabbat and witch-hunters. How the division actually occurs and how much each clan receives are one of the greater bones of contention the primogen must deal with. By numbers, by how much the primogen can bully out of the others, by areas that happen to correspond with spheres of influence? That will be the subject of many discussions, some more fractious than others. This more often than not leads to the matter of influence.



Another aspect of resource management means determining who holds sway over what projects or areas of influence. This keeps everyone happy in their own little spheres of influence and should ensure that as few toes are stepped on as possible. It should, but many times it doesn't. While it's all well and good to assume that the various clans are interested in maintaining their traditional areas of influence — the Toreador among society, the Nosferatu in the sewers, the Ventrue in the financial sector, and so on — reality may look considerably different. Consider the following example: a small, third-tier city has only a single Nosferatu in residence for some reason. Obviously, allowing him influence over the entire sewer system would risk the prince's worry that he has a second prince below, but simply informing that Nosferatu that he will not be taking care of his clan's traditional dominion nor has any rights to the place, even as a residence, risks gaining a new enemy. In this same city, the Brujah and the Tremere are fighting over who has rights over the single local university. Who is better suited to manage it? Primogen who find themselves dealing with such matters had best hope that they have good alliances, because deadlocks are more likely to be broken by the prince (who steps in and makes decisions by fiat if things get out of hand) or by the rest of the council who prefers that the prince not get involved.

Resource management is perhaps one of the greatest areas of contention among the primogen, so why would a primogen council spend so much energy on it? A city without its resources being maintained and used wisely becomes chaos. Resources squandered through fruitless arguments or left to seed while the likely managers dicker price generate no return for anyone and are more likely to become fair game for ambitious Caitiff, unaligned clans or even a Sabbat incursion. In these Final Nights, the Kindred can ill afford to be caught squabbling over whose claim to Fifth Street has merit when the Sabbat are breaking down the door.

#### CHECKS AND BALANCES

The primogen serve another vital function by providing a necessary check to a prince's heady gallop with power or balancing things out when he becomes too enthusiastic with his iron fist or gives the troublemakers a free rein. Young primogen learn this caveat quickly, and elder statesman never forget it: the prince cannot maintain his domain without the support of the primogen. They demonstrate their confidence in his leadership by their support, and many times they make it clear that this support is conditional on the prince's behavior. They may still choose to support him if he starts acting like a pig, but he will not act like a pig unchecked.

Most Kindred believe their clan's primogen is all that stands between them and the unchecked power of the mighty prince, and most times they're quite right. In cities where the prince is an elder of great age, power and a certain... temperament, a primogen's well turned phrase or right word at the right time can spare a clanmate from an agonizing death because the prince woke up on the wrong side of the coffin that night and some poor Lick wearing a color that he hates happened to appear in Elysium.

Those Kindred scholars who observe such things note that a primogen serving such a function is more frequent in the United States, England and other countries where the idea of a check-and-balance system is common to mortal government. Check-and-balance is also more common among young vampires, who have grown up with such things through their mortal lives and recognize them even in undeath.

In some places around the world, or in "courts" where *very* old princes reside, check-and-balance is something of an alien notion. There is the prince, and everyone else is below him — what else is there? In places like these, you can throw out most of what I say, because the primogen there are little more than courtiers and puppets. Europe as a whole is much more of a gerontocracy, but there can be elders who contest and balance the prince's power (not always to the benefit of those around them), and the results can mean nights of fiery debate or icy stand-offs. The primogen in these courts are more likely to act as advisors in the old manner of a king and his privy council.

#### SUPPORT THE REGIME

It is within the primogen council's interest to have a stable city and domain. How else can one have clean streets and orderly Elysiums? The example might be somewhat facetious, but the core idea is the same — stability is a primogen's friend, and the primogen are the greatest keepers of that, even if no one else recognizes it.

Bluster aside, the prince needs the primogen council's support to lead, and the primogen can make or break a new prince if they believe it within the best interests of themselves and their clans. As much as many princes would like to believe they arrived at their seats solely by dint of their iron-shod fists, their power in the first few nights is determined solely by how well they can get along with the primogen and gain their support. Usually very soon after a new prince ascends, the primogen announce their support (or lack thereof). By this, the primogen make it clear to the public at large that their weight, as representatives of their clans and elders of the city, is behind the prince. If the primogen decide that they're going to support the prince, that

throws the weight of the clans behind the new prince. Even the angriest anarch or rabble-rouser must acknowledge that the display looks impressive and encourages others to behave.

Supporting the regime also means the primogen must keep a weather eye on their clans for would-be usurpers. If they wish to keep things in a stable status quo for a while longer, they must slap down any insolent whelps in their clans if they start openly maneuvering for the principedom. When a primogen doesn't put down an agitator, it becomes a clear signal to all that the primogen has chosen to withdraw his support from the current prince.

Some primogen believe that supporting the regime also mandates that they support the prince's choices for the various offices, such as sheriff. This is not necessarily so — there is nothing stopping a primogen from disagreeing with the sheriff or the Keeper of Elysium. Some princes may claim that not supporting the sheriff or Keeper is an insult to them, but these are often elder princes who have very Old World notions about things.

#### PROMOTE THE CLAN'S INTERESTS

This is perhaps the greatest reason why any clan would want to have a primogen at the table or why one would seek the post herself. At the primogen table, a vampire can lay claims to areas of clan influence or interest, and official sanctions of some sort ensure that she and her clan can fend off interlopers without too much objection. It's far less common, but not unheard of, for a Kindred to come in with some great idea about the running of the city, and like mortals in their own political systems, he believes the best way to change or influence things is from the inside — not a few Brujah primogen come to their chairs with such high-minded ideas.

Everyone has his own idea about what is the clan's interest and how to support it. That could be making sure that the clan does not become everyone's favorite punching bag, or that the clan's particular pet projects stay their pet projects, or that they have worthwhile places to feed and for territory (if the city is inclined that way). It sounds like resource management all over again, and the two tend to coincide frequently.

There are always clans that become the whipping-boys of a city — Malkavians, Nosferatu, Brujah and the erstwhile Gangrel are the most common targets, but any underrepresented clan may find itself in the spot. When the Sabbat arrives, when the hunters are in the alleys, when something goes wrong, everyone looks at them. Did they actually contribute to the problem? Probably not, but in the meantime they make handy scapegoats

or point-men for the front line. Even some of the pillars of the Camarilla — the Toreador, the Ventrue, the Tremere — have been targeted in small cities that other clans have cemented a hold on.

A good primogen can ensure that such targeting doesn't happen by skillfully deflecting the blame elsewhere (“Our fault? The Malkavians are scarcely allowed in that area of town — that's Ventrue domain. Can't you take care of your own mess?”) or acquiring assistance from another clan (“Two Brujah can't be reasonably expected to deal with both the South Side troubles *and* the Masquerade breaches on Juniper and 21st. I think some of this is closer to Toreador interests, if they could be persuaded....”). A weak or inexperienced primogen who does not protect her clan from misuse and abuse at the hands of others will find herself looking for a strategic exit, if she doesn't die in one of these mishandlings herself.

The Tremere and the Ventrue are the most die-hard about promoting their clans' interests in a city and in chambers. For them, reaching seats of power is how their clans measure the worth of the Kindred within the city. While both clans like to claim that the Camarilla's interests are their interests, the rest don't believe this for more than a second. Like many mortal politicians, projects that benefit the clans benefit the primogen. While primogen need not worry about being re-elected, they do occasionally need to justify their existences to the elder members of their clans, and if they can point to the works that promoted their clans' interest and the stake the clan has in the city, their continued survival and posting might well be assured.

#### ON DISAGREEING AND BEING DISAGREEABLE

Predators are always very polite to each other. In the animal kingdom, predatory animals such as the great cats greet one another with a variety of signs and behaviors to indicate their purposes in order to avoid unnecessary conflict. An injured cat may not be able to hunt for itself and may even die. Kindred, as the ultimate predators, often do the same, for very similar reasons, though not always with the same results.

Primogen, like any other group of Kindred, are likely to get into some disagreement just from sheer proximity to one another. Younger primogen have noted that something about putting several Kindred in the same room seems to bring out the worst in everyone. Add in the peccadilloes of elder age and temperament, and one might have the makings of a second council — the primogen and the primogen's Beasts.

A primogen may disagree about a number of things with her fellows. What happens next will be a measure of her skill as a politician and indicate whose side she's truly on.

#### CONTESTED RESOURCES

This is one of the most common sources of conflict. Perhaps resources are scarce — the earlier example of the Brujah and Tremere contesting the single college is but one aspect of this. Perhaps everyone wants a piece of a certain pie or area of influence — the tech sector became just such a hotly contested issue in the '90s. Everyone had his own ideas about how to best run it, and everyone was quite convinced that the best way to run it was to put a certain clan in charge because it understood it best (usually his own) and everyone else should butt out. Perhaps something presses the clans into closer and closer quarters — the Lupines are being troublesome, rumors of Sabbat infiltrators, one clan seems to have grown unusually large with new residents and Embracees. Whatever the reason, the animals' cage becomes smaller, and when predators are forced into smaller and smaller areas, they turn on each other. Obviously, no one wants things to come to that, but certain matters must be handled — vampires must feed and there must be places for them to do so. Spheres of influence keep the clans busy and diminish, however slightly, the chance that they'll want to kill each other tonight.

#### THAT "SPECIAL" ASSOCIATE

A long-standing belief holds that princes favor their own, and sometimes it can be true. A prince and a primogen of the same clan who hold the same interests can become a powerhouse for getting things done, for better or worse. Consequently, the prince — knowing what his primogen clanmate values and something of her character — may be more likely to approve her projects, since he believes he need not worry about her loyalties and choices. It is a standing tradition in several cities that the primogen council may not have a primogen of the prince's clan sitting, as it gives the prince an unfair advantage in pushing through anything that he wishes. Furthermore, even if the prince and the primogen council are locked in some struggle for control or power, the primogen suffer at least one strike against them because the primogen of the prince's clan will certainly be carrying word back to his clanmate of everything that's occurring, which opens the door to princely pronouncements that trump everything the council has been working toward.

Most experienced primogen dismiss such things as rot. In the first place, nothing prevents a primogen of the prince's clan from sitting on the council if she chooses and is of the appropriate age, standing and character. Does she give the prince an unfair advantage? Contrary to popular belief, nothing states that every member of a clan is of the same mind regarding everything. A Brujah primogen whose instincts run toward military-style preparedness for all situations (whether or not they merit it) and a Brujah prince who prefers diplomacy and intelligence to fisticuffs are not going to get along, and certainly not going to give each other any sort of advantage. That said, why should the primogen go running to his clanmate if he hears of something untoward? They are not in the position of supporting each other, and perhaps he believes that a little shake-up will do her good. The rest of the primogen may not know or care, though, and that suspicion can rankle at a primogen who's doing his best not to be a toady to his clanmate but who cannot seem to get the benefit of the doubt from the rest of the group.

Most of the above examples are described in terms of the prince and primogen being of the same clan. Nothing stops a prince from favoring one of another clan for some reason — he's enamored of her, he owes her sire some favor, she has something he wishes to keep close for a while. Likewise a primogen can do nothing if the favor she's receiving — to the dismay of all involved — is coming from someone much higher. The favored one may lash out at the closest targets, since she cannot touch the one who's actually part of the problem, and the closest targets might well be her fellow primogen.

#### THE VAMPIRE WHO WOULD BE PRINCE

Every council seems to have one — a Kindred who views her spot as merely a stepping-stone to greater things, specifically the principedom. Many princes watch their inner circles very closely indeed, believing quite rightly that many threats come from within. That is all well and good, but many primogen can tell the curious about equal numbers of times when the threat that carried away the prince came from some spot no one had thought to scrutinize.

Primogen who want to be prince frequently disagree with the prince's policies. They are more likely to drag out arguments. They disparage the prince in semi-public gatherings and then proceed to speculate aloud where a better candidate might be found. Anytime the prince is in error, they make much of the fact, citing

incompetence or even denigrating the prince's clan. They are not likely to share their information with the prince, or even with their fellow primogen, the better to ensure the prince remains in ignorance. It is spin-doctoring taken to creative new heights.

The above-mentioned are considered fairly small ventures — they are irritating and slow down the business of the night, but in the end they are relatively harmless. Some would-be princes have gambled with greater odds, risking much more than the court of public opinion and princely disfavor. These Kindred likely have a very personal stake in the matter — the prince did them an unforgivable wrong in another city or time; they have been bound to the matter by their sire or another master of the Jihad. Rather than waste time on what they see as penny-ante schemes, they take things to the next level, by creating havoc in the city that the prince cannot or does not respond to, but which they themselves have the resources and talents to deal with. They may trick the seneschal into holding the door for the Sabbat, a frightfully easy thing if the seneschal can be swayed to their side or is inexperienced. They may encourage a glut of Caitiff or thin-blooded vampires to infest the city. They may goad the prince into making irreparable mistakes, such as declaring blood hunts (which traditionally cannot be revoked). They might even bring Lupines, witch-hunters or a clan war to the streets, whether as a smokescreen to cover their own misdeeds or to create a crisis only they can handle. The idea is to have the prince be caught unawares, left scrambling to deal with the problem and failing miserably at the task.

Such tactics can be suicidally risky — smokescreens have a way of spiraling out of control. Enough chaos may bring in something the city as a whole cannot handle (and consequently neither can the offender), the primogen gets caught in the maelstrom of his own making, or the archons come calling in response to events. Again, the trick is not to get caught and to orchestrate events down to the most minute detail, or to have plans for every eventuality. He who set this hurricane of events in motion now brings in the very things necessary to clean up the mess, preferably when and where he can be best observed at his task. He then points to the prince, noting how their so-vaunted leader was completely blindsided by events and did not react quickly enough to contain the crisis that nearly engulfed their fair city. Who wants to live in a city where the prince is so incapable?

Will it succeed? If all the above measures go off without a hitch and the offender is never revealed, the answer is, "Very likely." Vampires love their unives,

and someone who preserves them is likely to incur a great deal of gratitude. Our crafty primogen bastard might not get the throne on this round due to the dust settling in various clan reorganizations and the like (possibly even new fellow primogen), but it's a sure bet that he has gained a great deal of prestige and interest from others within and without the city.

A truculent primogen without the resources or stomach to take the risks of inviting some chaotic element may choose to work within chambers to further her situation. She may withhold a swing vote in an attempt to drag prestation from the "incapable" prince and then lord it over him. Such a move is considered damned impolite by some (especially the more traditionally plain-dealing clans, like the Brujah and Nosferatu) and an acceptable tactic by others (the more socially adept clans like the Toreador). The reaction depends on the city, the council and the situation. Deadlocking the council is another favorite tactic of the throne-chaser. He may encourage deadlock, even if it frustrates him, but the discomfort is only temporary. This leads to someone outside the council (perhaps one of his cronies) noting that the prince and primogen can't get along, and someone else's keen observation that it's easier to replace a prince than an entire council.

At best such creatures are considered annoyances by more "legitimate" primogen, resulting in nothing more than wasted time and irritation. At worst they can lead to unnecessary conflict with a prince who believes that the primogen council is all on the same bandwagon, or wild tactics to forge ahead. A pretender to the throne and a paranoid prince — which is status quo for the primogen, some say — mean long, troublesome nights ahead.

### I'M MY OWN PRIMOGEN

Some cities see the occasional appearance of someone of the appropriate age and interest to sit with the primogen, but they do not come to represent a clan. In fact, they have no clan in the city. Seat and clan are composed of one vampire.

Such vampires may result in swing votes, or in someone who's too tricky to predict in terms of voting or pet projects. Since they are not beholden to other clanmates, they need not follow the typical areas of influence — a lone Toreador might choose to be active in law, a solo Nosferatu has a vested interest in public television. The lack of clanmates occasionally results in a lack of city power, but such vampires are also likely to be sitting at the behest of someone else (most likely the prince or another primogen) or are powerful enough that it doesn't matter they have no one else behind them.

How the arrival of such a Kindred disturbs the delicate balances of power and the speculations on who, what and why could easily fill several nights' worth of debate, and frequently does when the matter happens to arise. Perhaps he is a toady to the prince — a solo Kindred primogen without a clan to support him might need to be dependent on the goodwill of the prince to continue his position and perhaps unlife. If one has considerable personal power and a base of allies, though, one is less likely to be stuck as the toady, regardless of the prince. Still, bloc voting could squish the loner like a bug, whatever his power base.

A lone primogen who has somehow acquired more power than the rest of the primogen combined or, *deo prohibe*, the prince results in what young Licks term a collective "Yipe!" from the group. Without a clan or other traditional measures to judge him against, he becomes an unknown, a wild card, and vampires most definitely fear the unknown and the things which could potentially ruin decades of careful planning. What does he want? Could he be a master of the Jyhad? Could he be an Inconnu? The loner's actions will be watched very carefully for the smallest clues, and every word he utters will be practically frightened out of its meaning by the council's scrutiny. It is likely that the more everyone panics, the more likely he is to get what he wants — no one wants to risk crossing such a dread creature who might or might not be an Inconnu or Jyhad-master. He might also use the panic as a cover for his real activities, whatever they happen to be. Primogen and prince might even find themselves with the strangest of bedfellows — each other — as they deal with this hidden potential threat. Such creatures do not always come at the behest of the prince, nor are they always welcome.

Kingmakers often find their way into such spots, finding the king's own position to be too visible and the shadows behind the throne to be a very comfortable place. As mentioned above, masters of the Jyhad — or the rumors of such — are also likely candidates to become that strangely powerful primogen. This is less unrealistic than some might suppose. A primogen chair is a fine place to hide from the moves of the great game for a time — who would notice the business of ants? — and collect resources for the next gambit, although blatant mistakes and runaway greed might embolden prince and primogen to put their collective foot down. Either of these use the traditional prince and primogen set-up as a cover for their activities, as a word or two can prevent the curious from scrutinizing things overmuch, and few are likely to notice that one primogen is grossly more powerful than the other.

But if power is no object, then why don't these enigmas become princes or seneschals? wonder the curious. Princedom is not the one great goal of every Kindred, despite the propaganda for it. Becoming prince means becoming visible and active in the Kindred community — princes correspond with each other, meet at conclaves, receive visitors, hold courts and perform numerous other duties that cannot be taken care of by hiding away in a mansion or castle. That's the other edge of the blade of princedom — the position comes with a mountain of duties if the Kindred wishes to grow and improve his city and his own standing. The primogen chair requires none of these things, leaving the solo clan member free to pursue his own works. Likewise, the office of seneschal calls on a vast amount of work and very little power in the halls of power — the seneschal's power lies in his closeness to the prince and his ability to spin and manage the prince's flow of visitors and information. True, there is something worthwhile to be found in that, but meanwhile one must take notes, answer correspondence, take appointments and the like. Additionally, it looks a bit strange for one of advanced age to play such a role, unless he has gone to exceptional lengths to conceal his age. Again, the primogen chair offers a more acceptable solution — there's an expectation that those who reach the Kindred equivalent of the "age of discretion" will turn to the primogen table at some point, which rouses little suspicion when a Kindred of clearly a few centuries sits down at the table.

#### WEARING TOO MANY HATS

In smaller cities, it often happens that very few Kindred are capable of handling power. Many times only a few have even an interest in holding a post. On one hand, such Licks are to be watched warily, for their dreams are ambitious. On the other hand, the city still needs running. Such places often have primogen councils that likely have one or more individuals also working a city post, such as sheriff or Keeper of Elysium. The scourge, due to the necessities of temperament for his job, is never seen as one of these.

Some see it as a blessing. The primogen need not wonder what the sheriff will require of them during the latest Sabbat siege — the sheriff is already there and will be happy to delineate her requests further. For those who are actually attempting such, it can be a painful balancing act. The needs of the city must be tended to — jobs like sheriff and Keeper of Elysium are quite time-consuming. It is also likely that something will end up left by the wayside, and that is usually the primogen chair. Some primogen fellows find such a thing intolerable, not to mention the clan that feels its interests

aren't being tended to. In the end, it's up to the Kindred in the hot seat either to find a balance or gracefully disengage from one of the posts.

Only the smallest cities see a seneschal actually sitting at the table and engaged in primogen business. Most seneschals are kept very busy by their princes, and few have time to sit around. They may still be kept in the know by contacts on the council and perhaps they are nearby, taking notes or keeping track of the evening's work for the prince, but as part of the council? Unlikely.

### **No Room, No Room!**

The primogen table is traditionally open to anyone of appropriate age who wants to have a hand in the business of the city and does not wish the burdens of an office. That said, it's not uncommon to have more wanting to sit at the table than space available. This is not a lack of space in the physical sense — it's no great matter to rent a hotel's ballroom if it comes to that — but in the sense that there might be three Toreador, four Ventrue, two Brujah, and so on. Obviously some pruning needs to be done, but who will be pruned? How is it done?

Most times, it becomes a matter of deciding who will bring home the best bacon. Consider the three Toreador who are all potential candidates for the chair. Candidate One has long experience in city politics as a Keeper of Elysium, a post he still holds. Candidate Two sits with the harpies and is a darling of them and several vampires of advanced age, but her political experience is limited to the social arena. Candidate Three has been a primogen in another city up until about two years ago and has been noted as a shrewd deal-maker and all-around clever. All have the same amount of status, and all are approximately the same age, give or take a decade. None has exceptionally good relations with the prince, but none has poor relations either. Candidate One... is too valuable in his post as Keeper to put aside for primogen. Candidate Three... not enough is known about her to give her the chair, since she has been in this city only two years, which is not quite enough time to know the city and its workings. Which leaves... yes, Candidate Two. Sometimes the best candidate is the one who will cause the least offense. Will she serve well? If she's clever enough to keep her mouth shut for the first few meetings and learn, she'll do quite well.

Does such a candidate become a puppet? Only if she opens herself to the possibility — if she turns to someone else (perhaps one of the other two candidates) for guidance in an arena she is unfamiliar with, then yes, she is likely to become a puppet. After all, nobody gets anything for free. If she happens to have significant political acumen after all, in spite of all the





care taken, someone's bound to get a very interesting surprise. What kind of surprise will depend on how the new primogen runs her ship thereafter. If she was a compromise candidate on the grounds that she could be used as a puppet, then whoever is ostensibly supposed to be pulling her strings could be unpleasantly surprised and might start moving against her if she takes the reins, although there are certainly likely to be those who are pleased to see her take to things and like her style and stances. If she was a compromise candidate on the grounds that she would likely cause the least disruption in the city's workings, then most would let her run, provided she continued to avoid disrupting the city's workings.

### US AGAINST HIM

A primogen council that wants to make a prince's unlife miserable can do so without much effort on its part. Remember, a prince needs the support of the primogen to maintain the domain. A primogen council that has no love for its prince for whatever reason — perhaps he came to power in a bloody coup, perhaps he is considerably younger than the primogen — can make an evening's business lag until the prince has no opportunity to get anything else done. They can question his judgments (especially if he's younger than most of them), they can accuse him of favoring his clan, they can ignore his officers. A variation on this is not to disrespect the prince but to denigrate his choices of officers. This seems to be particularly popular in light of the newly resurfaced office of the scourge.

This sort of game is foolish and ultimately wasteful. Some primogen councils have used this as the means to throw out a prince whom they refused for whatever reason, but what happens when the prince decides to return enmity for enmity? What happens when the prince does leave in disgust, and they are suddenly confronted with a city in turmoil as others jockey for the domain? The variation of disparaging the officers of the prince's appointment is even more foolish and wasteful — one of those officers might end up as prince, and it's not likely they'll forget their ill treatment at the hands of the body standing before them.

A second-tier city that had just finished a long and turbulent period of conflict with Lupines, Sabbat and witch-hunters (in that order) found itself with a fairly youngish Brujah prince and a mostly older primogen council after all the dust had settled. Said prince had a great deal of popular support and was generally approved by the primogen, but a bloc of Toreador, Brujah and Tremere on the council seemed set on making her unlife miserable — demanding prestation or Status just

to get through a night's work, for few discernible reasons, beyond perhaps her clan or age. After enduring an excruciating year of this, the prince abruptly abdicated in the middle of session after an amazing display of the clan's passionate temper. The city pitched and yawed for a few queasy months before the Ventrue seneschal was able to take the throne, and the game started all over again. It was later discovered that the Toreador primogen had a great desire for the throne and little to back a claim, so she hoped that by making enough trouble, eventually, the principedom would come to her. She had plied the rest of the council with various promises and not a little blackmail — only the Brujah and Tremere had joined with her, but it was enough to make for chaos in chambers. She was destroyed a few months later after it was discovered she had tried to speed up the process by dealing with the Sabbat.

When is it proper to stonewall a prince? A prince who is hell-bent on a foolish course of action — fruitless war with the Lupines, searching for enemies borne of his paranoia, squashing a clan due to his unreasoning hatred, using a city as his personal bulwark in his wasteful war with another elder — needs to be stonewalled, at least long enough to get his mind on something else. A prince who's already on the garden path to Hell will find his trip made infinitely more difficult by a primogen council which looks like it's doing everything by the rules. Given enough time, someone's going to make a mistake and there will be calls to replace him/her/them. Vampires have learned to be very patient, and primogen who are blocking a prince can be patient for quite some time.

### THE POWERMONGER

This is something of a subspecies of the Vampire Who Would Be Prince. This creature sees the post of primogen as his chance to build a private nest egg of city resources or a personality cult and build his own power base. In the case of this Kindred, he's not looking to become prince — in fact, staying primogen for a long while to come would suit him just fine. Princes have to worry about catering to the primogen and the other Licks in the domain, and the powermonger has no interest in finding out just how many enemies he's been making while he's been at work.

The powermonger has few distinguishing characteristics about him until he opens his mouth. Age is no factor, but it can determine how much he has to work with. Clan is no factor — they've come from every group. He usually manages to anger a great many Kindred, enough that they ought to be chasing him through the streets on a blood hunt, but he is adept enough that

he can disarm potential threats by sending an ally after the offender or dropping a few words in various ears. His tentacles reach into almost every aspect of city influence, and some are lodged deeply enough that ripping him out might cause untold chaos.

A primogen who is gunning for the principedom may see the powermonger as a valuable ally and attempt to cultivate him by offering him his same job *ad infinitum*. Other primogen may play along in the hope that he, or his resources, can be bought and used for their own projects. There will always be those who find him annoying and will either squish him personally or do their level best to set him up to fall on his face.

#### INFORMATION

Many conflicts arise within clans and between primogen regarding information — who has it, what has and hasn't been shared, hoarding, falsehood, etc. One needs information to make good decisions, and lack of information — or worse, incomplete information — results in poor judgment calls, usually to someone's benefit. A primogen who does not share pertinent information with her clan is likely to find herself in all manner of hot water very quickly. Some prefer to maintain their own information networks, the better not to become dependent on other primogen. This of course then leads to someone learning something earlier than everyone else — “You knew two weeks ago that the Sabbat were smuggling themselves in via the Red Eagle Delivery Company? Why didn't you tell us!?” — and if that information is not distributed quickly enough, or is withheld to achieve a certain result, the resultant disaster may bring even more catastrophic results than the original one might have.

This issue is particularly contentious among the Brujah, Nosferatu and Tremere, all clans which value having accurate information to work with. Even the other clans are irritated not to know what's going on, though, since they must learn later rather than sooner and have little or no time to puzzle through events and pick apart the motives and possible moves of other forces.

#### MY CLANMATE THE...

“Hello, remember my clanmate, the very powerful Ms. So-and-so?” A clan that can brag a prince, archon or some other powerful person from its ranks and never hesitates to remind others of it has irritated many a primogen to distraction. A Toreador primogen of the Southeast cites a favorite example of this: a Brujah primogen liked to use the fact that his clanmate was an archon as a means of intimidation, mostly because he wasn't competent enough to do the job on his own merit. Eventually word got back to the archon that her

name was being, as she put it, “taken in vain.” The Toreador admits she does not know what happened between the archon and her clanmate, but the next meeting of the primogen saw the errant Brujah unusually chastened and never more did he bring up his so-important clanmate.

Sometimes having the sitting prince be of one's clan can be very helpful — he offers a veto that's hard to deny. A clanmate who's an archon can be a window onto helpful information that may not be so freely disseminated. Clans that have such can disenfranchise the rest of the council who are not so lucky if they wave it around enough times, and sometimes the disenfranchised will use that club against the braggart in response.

#### THE FORMER PRINCE OR ARCHON

It's a fact that anyone who survives her trip to the halls of higher power generally gets the hairy eyeball when she comes to the primogen table. The general hopes, wishes and suspicions of her clanmates alone can be staggering, not to mention the fears of her neighbors. Most Kindred assume that once one has tasted the sweet nectar of power, one wouldn't want to go back to anything less. In nights previous, that was often the case. In the Final Nights, however, the reverse is just as likely — very often these survivors are exhausted, burned out and battle-scarred. They come to the table as a means to keep themselves busy — knowing nothing else but the business of politics — or because their clanmates begged, badgered or blackmailed them into it. Many clans hope that such a prestigious posting will bring their primogen extra weight in chambers or even buy them allies. This is often the case, but they're not allies that most sensible Kindred would want — sycophants help no one.

Lesser princes usually feel threatened by such primogen, and many times the worry is only wasted energy. Any prince who feels his grip is not quite as secure on his city as he would like believes that *they* are watching him, waiting for some slip that can be used as artillery against him. He never believes the advice they give him, thinking that they are trying to mislead him, the better to retake their former post. More powerful or secure princes treat the matter with little concern, but let it never be said they are not keeping one eye on this potential threat at their table.

Former archons present a special worry for both other primogen and princes. Who knows what allies she's retained since her heady nights? What sort of special interests support her, and whose causes is she really peddling? Why on earth would she want to do

something as trivial as be a primogen? Generally such concerns are hogwash — the wise don't bring such to the table to use as a cudgel, or at least not on a nightly basis. However, should such a primogen decide to wield that weapon, the stakes are unusually high and perhaps indicative of something that hasn't been seen yet by anyone else. All things considered, former archons at the table are more worthy of sympathy than worry. Pity the former archon who suddenly has the eyes of the city on her when the Sabbat invade, a temperamental elder from the Old Country decides to "settle in" or the Lupines are being troublesome. If she succeeds in taking care of the matter, she'll be viewed as a threat by prince and council — surely she had outside help, surely she's more powerful than she lets on, when will she make a move for the principedom? If she fails — and survives the experience — she'll be publicly humiliated with fiendish delight by the prince and his cronies. She'll certainly lose some status and perhaps her chair, but she will not be shedding many tears over the loss.

#### Outside Interests

*Of course* the primogen council is a Camarilla institution. *Of course* the primogen are of unimpeachable character. *Of course* they act completely of their own volition and for the good of the city.

Only the naïve or rampantly stupid believe it.

There is always a chance that some exterior force weighs on the individual primogen. Perhaps a clan elder is leaning on her, perhaps the loudmouths in her clan are making some disagreeable rumbles about replacing her if she doesn't do this thing or that, perhaps she is a pawn in the Jyhad, or perhaps some clan outside the council or even the Camarilla is using her to maintain their interests. No cause or clan holds a particularly large stake in errant primogen — they all suffer equally.

A clan elder's attentions are not always wanted, but they're even less wanted sometimes when one is attempting to perform the business of city governance. One can't exactly tell the elder to bugger off, but no one likes to be a pawn. Someone who must drag herself through the motions of city maintenance when she despises the stance irritates the rest of the council, but they may not have much more room to deal with matters. On occasion, she may gain some sympathy for her plight, and allies may move issues through that are important to her but not her elder, allowing her the convenient cover of "I was overruled." Sometimes this may drive off the elder to find a more pliant chew-toy — and the primogen now has a few dozen favors to pay back — or this may send him into a rage that everyone must duck from.

Non-sect clans may not usually have seats on the primogen, but nothing stops them from approaching a primogen and asking for certain "considerations." Whether the primogen takes up the challenge is another matter. On one hand, perhaps the primogen stands fast and says she is not interested in any working relations with this Kindred. The spurned one has two options — gain her by more amicable means or force himself on her. Perhaps he does her a favor or two, or three, and eventually she finds herself disposed to think kindly on him and his interests when in chambers (provided they do not clash too wildly with the good of the city). What is more likely is blackmail or blood bond, though the latter is improbable. The primogen finds herself at the receiving end of blackmail regarding herself or something of her interests — perhaps her favorite childe is caught *in flagrante* by this Kindred, perhaps there's a dark secret that could ruin her in the city if it's revealed — in exchange for silence, the primogen must barter her services, offering to speak on her tormentor's interests in chambers.

Some primogen rely on the support of their clans to maintain their chairs. In clans (such as the Tremere) where they may find two or even three worthy candidates, the one who brings home the bacon — in terms of prestige for the clan, power, projects — is the one most likely to keep her posting. That said, it can rankle many when a clever, worthy individual finds herself needing to demand consideration for various matters relating to the clan, just to keep the louder ones quiet.

#### Misperceptions of Power

A frequent perception, particularly among the young, is that the primogen becomes the *de facto* boss of the clan. It's handy for keeping the rabble in line, but it is, in short, not true. The prince is the ultimate authority in a domain. The sire looks out for the interests of the childe. The domitor commands the thrall. Primogen do not rule their clans, though they may speak for them. When a childe is released from his sire, he is expected to have the good sense to give heed to his primogen, obey local custom and generally behave himself. What a primogen receives is courtesy, attention and respect. It's not up to her to enforce edicts handed down from officers of the prince's domain. She delivers the message, and that's that. Some do take on a slightly larger role of encouraging the clan to follow the latest edict, explaining the what and wherefore of it and why it's good to follow it — this is most common with clans where the majority are neonates and they look to the older primogen for support, guidance and (dare it be said) parenting occasionally.

Some primogen grew up with this delusion, no one disavowed them of it, and when they reach their seats they believe they have some measure of power over their clans. Consequently, they attempt to rule their clans with iron fists and expect the same from their fellows. So when someone is seen as letting the feral children run wild, the offended party stalks to the "offending" primogen and demands that she rein in her clan. The now-insulted primogen makes a retort of her own, and things proceed apace. How long the clan will allow its primogen to wave the velvet-shod iron fist over them is another matter entirely.

## ON DISAGREEMENTS WITHIN AND WITHOUT

Why fight with one's fellow primogen? Why fight with the prince? It would seem to go against the whole "predators are very polite to each other" underpinning of Cainite society. Predators are polite to each other only when they want to avoid an unnecessary fight. At times, the Kindred reach the point where politeness is no longer an option. Enlightened self-interest lies somewhere at the heart of all things — sometimes the only way to get what you want is to fight talon and fang for it — but the astute will notice other factors at work.

### For the Good of X Thing

Contrary to popular belief, some high-minded vampires decide to put up a fight when something they particularly value is at stake. Most times, that has something to do with the prince — one who is abusing the domain's mortals, one who is turning the city into his personal armory in a fight against some elder or similar shabby behavior. No prince may run completely unchecked, and abusive princes will eventually find their luck running out one night.

A Brujah from a small mountain-state city recalls seeing a primogen chamber almost become a boxing ring while the council tried to decide whether to withdraw its support from a prince who had become abusive with his power. The Brujah, Nosferatu and Gangrel made it clear they had no interest in continuing to offer their clans' support to a creature who viewed them as targets, not to mention his ill-advised use of the blood hunt. The Malkavian supported the prince, but nominally, as one elder to another. The Tremere and Ventrue likewise continued to support the prince, primarily because he was a Ventrue, and there were "certain agreements, you understand." The Toreador, however, happened to be balanced precariously in the middle. Should she cast her lot with the Brujah, Nosferatu and Gangrel? The prince had shabbily treated some Toreador ancillae visitors who had recently appeared in

Elysium on one of his legendary "bad nights," and after being reminded of the incident, she decided she was not in a forgiving mood. Still, he was an elder prince, the Toreador believed herself to be a staunch supporter of the Camarilla, and turning against him could put her clan in a very bad position with him, as well as the Tremere and the Ventrue. How did the vote end up? In the end, she sided with the good of the clan, of course. The results of that are left for the observant to figure out.

### Cleaning House

Sometimes, after a few decades of looking at the same furniture over and over, one decides that it's old, unfashionable, undesirable or something similar. What to do next? Get rid of that which is not wanted and bring in something new. The same thing can happen in the upper echelons of Kindred society. Perhaps information has surfaced about the Brujah primogen's involvement with a local group of disruptive anarchists, or perhaps the Tremere primogen has not been giving his work the attention it deserves. Whatever the reason, the person must go, and it's not likely he'll go quietly.

Sometimes it is a prince who needs to be swept out. Remember the example given earlier about the fight over not supporting the prince. It would eventually lead to a decision of complete nonsupport and the prince finding himself in the position of clinging to a post that would not be supported by the primogen despite his bluster and threats.

### Mismanagement

A great deal has been said regarding resource management and the primogen's roles in organizing and keeping it moving. Obviously, then, when someone isn't doing his part, or is using these as a weapon against someone, something has to give in response.

Mismanagement is frequently in the eye of the beholder. Once a Brujah primogen argued that a clanmate had been the first to arrive in a particular city, long before it was divided into clan territories and resources, and that the move by the Malkavians to dislodge her from her long-time haven was untenable. Said Brujah was well known among the mortal fringe and alternative groups, generally prized by the prince and primogen for her exemplary work in maintaining the Masquerade and watching for threats. The Malkavian insisted that he had the right, that he would not allow Brujah (or any other clans for that matter) in the clan's territory. The prince refused to take a stance, as he was on tenterhooks with the Malkavian's sire, but simply pushing out the Brujah in question out would have resulted in dire general displeasure — not that such displeasure mattered to him, but the clans would certainly make their feelings known to the primogen.

The upshot was the Brujah primogen pointing out that ever since the Malkavians had taken over that territory, no one was allowed in without jumping through a lot of hoops or passing the primogen something "for his trouble." What could he be hiding in there? This was enough for the Nosferatu to claim the Malkavian was mismanaging his territory to the detriment of the city, which of course roused the prince's interest, because now he could become involved by dint of the matter being viewed as a threat to city security.

## WEAPONS OF CHOICE

Primogen in the midst of a "disagreement" do not go into the streets to duel with pistols at dawn. They do not (usually) settle their differences by playing chess, betting on cockfighting, or equally silly measures. Few are reckless enough to attempt to call a blood hunt on the offender, unless they want to forfeit their own unives. Primogen have other means of dealing with their enemies, and the best are so subtle that the rest of the city at large, and sometimes even the prince, may remain unaware of the situation.

### You May Not Sit

Nothing in the Traditions states a prince must have a primogen council, nor is there a guarantor anywhere in the annals of Kindred history that each clan may put forth a primogen. Should the council wish to block someone from taking her seat, they may state that they do not recognize this person's authority to speak for her clan. The prince may do the same if the Kindred in question has annoyed many others, but if he does so, chances are more likely that he does so at the behest of the primogen, whose support is so critical to allowing him to retain his seat.

### Resource Wrangling

*"You can't get rid of me — I'm the only one who's taking care of this thing!"*

*"You know, you really haven't been watching this spot so well. Maybe we'll let the Brujah take it over."*

A primogen who blocks others from using city resources or certain feeding grounds that are under his clan's watch forces them to come to a decision regarding whatever he has them in the spotlight about. It has its risks, like anything, but it's also one of those measures available when a vampire must show his fellows that he is *very* serious about a matter.

Having sole responsibility for something is considered a good insurance policy by many primogen. Few will be inclined to do something drastic to a primogen if they realize that he has the equivalent of a dead man's switch under his finger. If he makes improvements and modifications to the original plan, the rest will soon

realize that getting rid of him will mean they are completely at loose ends when trying to guess how to get things under their control again. Do they want the aggravation? That remains to be answered.

Returning to the example cited above regarding the Malkavian primogen trying to dislodge the unlucky Brujah from his clan's territory, the results were the prince found no reason to "allow the Malkavians to continue to abuse the trust of the city," as he put it. The rest of the primogen fell in behind him, demanding that the Malkavian primogen open his territory so that it could be ensured that nothing untoward was happening behind the curtain. The Malkavians could all protest and risk further censure, or they could swallow hard and do as they needed. They chose the latter. The primogen council also decided that the Brujah were far better suited to performing the necessary tasks to care for this area of the city, no matter who visited. As for the Brujah who had been the unknowing center of this little firestorm (although her primogen will likely bring up the matter with her as a bargaining chip), she continued to haven in the same spot, albeit with a few more duties to consider.

Occasionally, some primogen block access to certain feeding grounds, such as the Rack, or insist that there can be no feeding downtown, or that certain populations are now strictly *verboten*. The common excuse is that the Masquerade is in danger, though the likelihood is far less than expected. Say the Malkavian has a running fight with the Ventrue, she knows he feeds on ministers and priests, and she (being the main point regarding influence in the religious community) decides to announce that feeding among religious workers is now forbidden due to possible breaches of the Masquerade — what happens next? Does the Ventrue dare turn on the Malkavian and accuse her of attempting to starve or inconvenience him? Because Masquerade breaches are so serious, not many are likely to note such measures as a political move. Starving someone into submission can work just as well among Kindred as it does in mortals.

A primogen would be wise to consider the ramifications of using these measures as weapons. Perhaps the things she's isolating from the rest of the city don't matter to the primogen she wants to target, or she discovers that her control over something isn't as secure as she believed it to be. Isolating feeding grounds is not as likely to be taken for a political move, except to the paranoid. It affects a wider range of Kindred because it forces them into closer confines and a heightened state of awareness. No one wants to be caught breaking the Masquerade.

One midsized city in the mountain states saw someone who used this as a means of overloading a clan's territory to the point of breach, then using the resulting mess to display the primogen's incompetence. The attacker promptly swept in to clean up things quickly and completely, and very few were the wiser, until someone noticed that the attacker had interests in said territory and had managed to quietly move them out of the way in anticipation of the breach.

### Filibustering

A filibuster is a moment in governance where someone decides he simply can't let something go through and does his level best to hold it up until he either convinces folks to get on his side or the sheer volume of his protests stalls something until it dies. This is common in mortal government — many Kindred positively shudder at the thought of Congressional-style filibustering — but is a relatively infrequent measure among Kindred.

Unlike mortals, Kindred cannot continue such an attack through the daylight hours, but sometimes pushing someone to the critical hour before dawn can produce results. The primogen who accomplishes this had better hope that he can implement things before he enters the day's sleep, because someone pushed thus may be stricken with "buyer's remorse" the next night

and raise a fine old stink about the way she was bullied to the point of costing her her unlife. Some princes do care about such things, depending on the target, and the filibusterer may rouse the ire of other primogen members — after all, they have other things to do with their precious, short nights. Most primogen use it only for the direst of circumstances.

### That Old Gang-up of Mine

When one is voting via a show of hands, it is frightfully easy to maneuver a simple outvote. After all, if the Malkavian primogen is the current target, and the Toreador, Ventrue, Tremere and Brujah all decide to turn on him, he can't do much about it. Younger Licks would be tempted to write it off as just an evening's fluke, but the politically astute see something else. What if this continues night after night after night? It does not matter what the target is presenting, it simply never flies. The lack of results may bring the eventuality of the clan removing the target, or the target departing of his own accord.

The gang-up is simple and brutal in its final execution, but getting there is neither. It takes a great deal of behind-the-scenes work, and they will not come on their leader's say-so. The leader needs to consider who she wants on her side and what it will take to get them there, which might be more than she can give. She must



also consider who her target is — many primogen will not turn on a peer who holds power with (or over) the prince or the appointed offices.

Bloc voting is a variation on this, particularly when a group of primogen decide to support each other against a prince or against one or two other primogen. Bloc voting likewise requires careful planning, and the rewards must be considerable for a primogen to go through the headache of accepting losses on clan interests and projects, not to mention the inevitable questions that will come from his clanmates regarding his behavior.

### **Social Maneuvers**

Status, what some have called the demon of Kindred society, is a common weapon among the primogen when the fighting breaks out. Others prefer gossip, especially when dealing with the Brujah.

Sometimes a clan may choose its primogen based on those who are noted to have the most respect among the rest of the clans, even if the clan proper doesn't much care for the person in question. The move has merit, though more qualified primogen find it distasteful — the clan hopes that one with respect from his peers will be able to have greater gains in chambers. Such creatures are more likely to be squashed from the start; they have so little to offer most times. At any rate, if a primogen can maneuver the harpies into stripping a little status from her target (just one or two points should do it), the offender will be dropped from the post by his clan, and the clan can set about choosing someone else who should be a little more tractable.

A primogen who receives little respect from his peers is not going to engender much respect among others of lower rank. Making such a lack infinitely clear in a variety of small, subtle ways — the whisper campaign, “lost” invitations, open censure, public disagreement — can cause the clan of the target to question his value to them. Who needs a primogen who can accomplish nothing for them? On the other hand, some clans may hold onto their snubbed primogen all the more fiercely, believing he must be doing something right if he's getting the establishment riled up. The continued pressure from the council versus the desperate loyalty of the clan can be a volatile combination. Sometimes the target simply waits and some unforeseen event takes out his tormentors. Other times, the target surprises everyone by just walking away when they aren't looking. The turmoil that follows tends to negate any welcome results from the person's departure.

Social maneuvers are considered the most common of weapons and consequently some of the most difficult to pull off. Many wise and/or long-lived primogen keep their eyes on the most likely offenders in their own records, the better to thwart such efforts.

## **VIEWS FROM THE GALLERY**

Every clan approaches the matter of a primogen seat differently, and every would-be primogen puts his own spin on the matter. Clans tend to see the primogen chair as a means of getting things done on a higher level and an opening into the halls of power. For what purpose varies among the clans. Individual primogen might bring in their clans' views, but seen through the lens of their own experiences and ideas of government.

### **Brujah**

As a clan, the Brujah are the sort to view the primogen chair as a form of representative government, and their primogen come in with agendas. It is a rare Brujah who does not come to the table espousing some pet cause or with a project he will not let another touch, and that tends to color their outlook somewhat. Primogen-age Brujah are more likely to be the professorial or philosopher types, though aging protester “power-to-the-people” sorts sometimes make it for lack of more likely candidates. All this happens if they can be encouraged to show up — a young group that has no clear leader or an elder in residence may simply ignore the primogen, seeing it as just another old Licks' club. These don't last long.

What do the Brujah want? As previously stated, it's a rare Brujah who doesn't have a pet cause. For most, that cause is protecting their clan's interests. Some cities grant the Brujah the filthiest, most crime-ridden territory, thinking it will soothe the lowest common denominator of leather-jacketed punks, but never mind any who still happen to have a few brains left. Some cities think the Brujah are too busy fighting to have interest in or care about anything else. Then there are those who always send them to the front lines when the Lupines or Sabbat launch yet another crusade against the city. All of these raise the Brujah's ire, and a prince or primogen who thinks it no great matter if the Brujah were to go the way of the Gangrel has not considered what the streets would be like without Brujah on the front lines or dealing bluntly with those matters that need blunt dealing.

Brujah are the most likely to be swayed by a passionate, last-minute appeal, but they're just as likely not to be moved and vote however they want. Their politics tend to be more visionary, a little more forward-thinking than most, and certainly with higher ideals. Conservative Brujah are unusual, though some primogen consider a Brujah who is stubbornly stuck in his rattle-rouser or “New Carthage!” mode to be just as conservative, as they are trying to use the same old club to hit every new problem.

### Malkavian

When it comes to the Malkavians, many primogen have found their previous observations on the subject have mostly been reduced to naught in the wake of the past few years. Previously, Malkavians generally maintained certain strictly monitored interests and followed those eagerly and could be expected to act on them a certain way. One Toreador described their changes thus: "As if they're listening to some music that's just out of the range of our ears, like a dog can hear a certain type of whistle." They have become far more prone to noting omens and shifts in the general patterns of life and unlife. A Malkavian might suddenly switch her votes or even change her previously dearly held platform, regardless of how much planning went into things, because some coincidence came up that frightened her, such as the prince and the Ventrue primogen both wearing red ties and white boutonnieres that night.

Malkavians as politicians sounds like a frightening thing only if one considers a madman with his madness well in hand and an agenda to be a frightening thing. Along with their unusual changes, they also seem to have gained a greater... stability in their madness. They have never needed to be restrained during council sessions — that is more typically required of the Brujah — but now they seem to have a strange clarity of purpose and a chilly strength. They seem to know exactly what they want, and they proceed to go about getting it with single-minded determination. Their madness seems to lie in the fact that they see these omens and patterns in what appears to others as random flotsam in unlife. What this actually means in the grand scheme most do not speculate, but it is tiring when a Malkavian is trying so desperately to make a point by connecting two apparently random things and he can't seem to understand why no one else is following him.

The experienced primogen does not allow herself to be lulled into thinking that their instability makes them inept or ineffective. A Malkavian who is calculating enough, clever enough and savvy enough to reach the primogen table is not, in the vernacular, a space cadet.

### Nosferatu

Nosferatu are a conundrum for most primogen. Some councils will not allow the Nosferatu to take a seat, citing any number of flimsy reasons. True, their hygiene may leave something to be desired, and a Nosferatu who insists on wearing his true visage to the council table in order to unsettle his fellows gets very tiresome very quickly, but it goes deeper than that. Some wiser heads believe that it is a matter of despising the sort of piercing, if not wounding, insights that

Nosferatu are capable of making, plus the occasional dirty laundry of another primogen being aired when said primogen makes the mistake of offending the Nosferatu one too many times.

Like the Brujah, political Nosferatu usually come in with their clan in mind. Too many think they can spit on the rank and file of the Sewer Rats, and the Nosferatu, with their instinctual clannishness, do not allow this. They carry the weight of history in their words, but not like the Ventrue's "We are the Camarilla" sort of thing. Their history is the sort found in dusty books carefully stored in crumbling libraries, transcribed from cracking parchments to CD-ROM. Their insights into mortal (and Kindred) nature are startling — they can pick out motives that even many socially canny Toreador wouldn't have dreamed of. The difficulty is convincing them to share. Their information is their greatest leverage, and they never forget it, even when they should be sharing with their fellow primogen. Because they are the most likely to have the best information, be sure that if one instigates some unusual maneuver, he has something greater in mind that everyone else has not yet seen.

When their childer are ready to start following in their sires' footsteps, veteran primogen give them at least one piece of advice: "On your first night, find the Nosferatu primogen and forge a relationship, after deciding what sort of appearance you wish to cultivate among your new peers before you approach him openly."

### Toreador

A Toreador primogen is unlikely to be a distracted *artiste* who doodles while others are speaking. Toreador are some of the busiest primogen seen around Elysium — so many people to keep in touch with, so much to learn before ever setting foot in chambers! Toreador were some of the very first courtiers among Kindred and kine, and even tonight wise Toreador bring a certain order and grace to proceedings. Their traditional social acumen serves them well among their peers, and if anyone is behind efforts to quell internal upsets, it is usually the Toreador, using a few well chosen words in the right ears. It must also be admitted, however, that they might have started that internal upset in the first place by the same means, just to test the waters.

Toreador primogen historically have a great grasp on the hidden social interactions that are behind all the exterior moves. They prefer to approach the harpies for the latest gossip and keep it in mind while in chamber. Even if they have not yet heard tonight's latest talk, they can often pick it out from actions in Elysium and the council chamber. As one might infer, they are also adept at stirring and settling the waters of the primogen chamber, sometimes for no greater reason than to take the pulse of the group, but also as a means to determine



what must be altered before setting some plan in motion. The Nosferatu are indeed quite capable of this discernment, but the Toreador are more likely to understand the social implications behind motives. Nosferatu are good at getting to the marrow of motive, but their interpretation is often lacking.

Politically, Toreador are considered one of the pillars of the Camarilla, but many expect that famous artistic temperament to lead to impetuous swing votes and unexpected moves in council. Sometimes some do produce the occasional surprising move — they support the Malkavians, they change their minds regarding earlier platforms, they let the Brujah take charge of the alternative theater scene — but more often they vote with tradition. Too many surprises can lead others to believe the Toreador are flighty and not to be trusted with the weight of the social contract. Toreador are also well aware that a city in turmoil for whatever reason usually allows its society and culture to languish, and tradition brings stability. When a city need not worry about survival, it can spend its energy on other things.

#### Tremere

Higher-ranking Tremere, especially those of a conservative bent, often view primogen as being an “also-ran” to the more important posting of prince. Anyone who accepts the post and stays there clearly has little ambition. Why would anyone want to stay second-string and leave the sweetest plum unpicked? This is occasionally true among some Tremere — particularly if the primogen has been passed over for other promotions or is currently spinning his wheels due to a lack of rank to rise to. Others see it as a fine place to watch the show, assist the clan politically and not get too involved with anything really messy, like being prince. The former are likely to be powermongers or looking to ride any potential coattail into something larger. They are also likely to jockey for principedom, with all that such entails. The latter are something more dangerous than their clan would guess — they are well informed, in touch with their clanmates and actively involved in the city’s business. They probably know more than their regents, and such information can be bartered appropriately as needed. These are the ones most likely to be offered positions in wartime or in a new prince’s council, simply due to their excellent showing earlier.

Regents can and do sit as primogen, though in a larger city that has two or three chantries with their own regents, the combatants find some way to hash the matter out. Who actually wins the chair has more to do with the clan’s internal workings, but it is generally related to whether a primogen seat is considered a booby prize or actually holds some real power. This can have its own worries, as the rest of the clan is dependent on their representative to tell them every-

thing that’s happening, and information flow is a fine way to keep someone dependent and well behaved. Tremere dislike being caught unprepared, and they will do their utmost to prepare for nearly every evening’s political eventuality; it may not be written down, but they will certainly have some game plan. Many arrive with a full briefing regarding the clan’s standing on whatever matters were on the docket, and return likewise to brief the clan in full.

As one of the pillars of the Camarilla, the Tremere are among the staunchest supporters of the primogen council, its business and good old-fashioned politics. They do not long tolerate a prince who keeps the primogen on his leash, nor do they tolerate fools in the chamber. For them, this is an easily reached post, acceptable to most of the Kindred at large who will not mutter about “rule by committee” as they do in the case of a Tremere prince. It is a good spot for them to shine, to gain notice in the city and abroad, and they use it to its full advantage.

#### Ventrue

Like the Tremere, many Ventrue tend to think of a primogen chair as the equivalent of “also-ran” compared to the plum of being prince. Some consider it as the training wheels to becoming prince, and indeed some do rise to principedom after seeing things from the inside. The chair is also the most likely place for a Ventrue to return after leaving principedom, provided he was not removed in a coup. Former princes now sitting as primogen tend to make current princes extremely nervous — after all, it can give the feeling that someone is critiquing their performance, but then the Ventrue tend to do that to everyone.

Politics are flesh and blood to the Ventrue clan and to the vast majority of the clan’s members. The brand of politics each plays is different from that of his clanmates, but be assured that one does not face a mere whelp in the chair across from her. The trick is learning what sort of game the Ventrue primogen plays and how best to work with it or use it against him.

Like the Tremere, the Ventrue are a pillar of the Camarilla. They cannot afford to be seen in the sorts of shenanigans that the more physical clans engage in. Unfortunately, many are old-school traditionalists in the grandest old manner possible. Conservative Ventrue are more likely to be in the chair, and they were raised (as children and childer) on the notions of *noblesse oblige*, old families, personal honor and the days when kings ruled with divine right. If they could have their way, every city would be a walled stronghold, every primogen an obedient group of courtiers and every prince a Ventrue raised in similar old-world fashion. Visionary Ventrue primogen who recognize the worth

of nontraditional princes, of wealth or power beyond the usual banks and government offices and of primogen who have better things to do than simply be yes-men do not last long if their stodgy clan leaders get wind of their activities. It's a pity, because these visionaries are the most likely to support unusual ideas and to recognize that tradition does not always serve in the middle of interesting times.

### Gangrel

Gangrel were rare visitors to the Star Chamber before the clan's abrupt departure, and in these current nights they are political nonentities. Even those few who decided to stay for whatever reason are rarely allowed in by the die-hard traditionalists of the other clans. Perhaps they fear whatever drove the Gangrel to leave the Camarilla in the first place will infect others, but more likely it's due to the notion that without power in the Inner Circle, they have a commensurate amount in the Circle's smaller incarnations. In nights past, they were most commonly seen in very large cities or cities that were surrounded by enough space and wilderness to host them and certain larger, furrier threats. When they did come to sit, they could barter with the best of them, but most of the time they preferred to watch, listen and not speak much. When they spoke, the wise listened, and when they left the chamber, it was good to excuse oneself from the city for a time.

Political Gangrel sounds like an oxymoron, but it could be true. Their continual wanderings gave them an enviable education, allowing them to see how a variety of primogen ordered themselves, plus teaching them how to barter from either a borrowed position or one of little strength. Generally, the most politicized Gangrel tended to be younger — by the time they reached greater age, they were not always in a position to delineate their thoughts with much clarity, and their appearances could be even more disturbing than those of the Nosferatu. The clan as a whole had little use for political power, beyond it gaining them admittance to halls where previously they would not have been admitted. Their allies can only wonder what the more politically adept Outlanders are doing amid the Lupines and wilds.

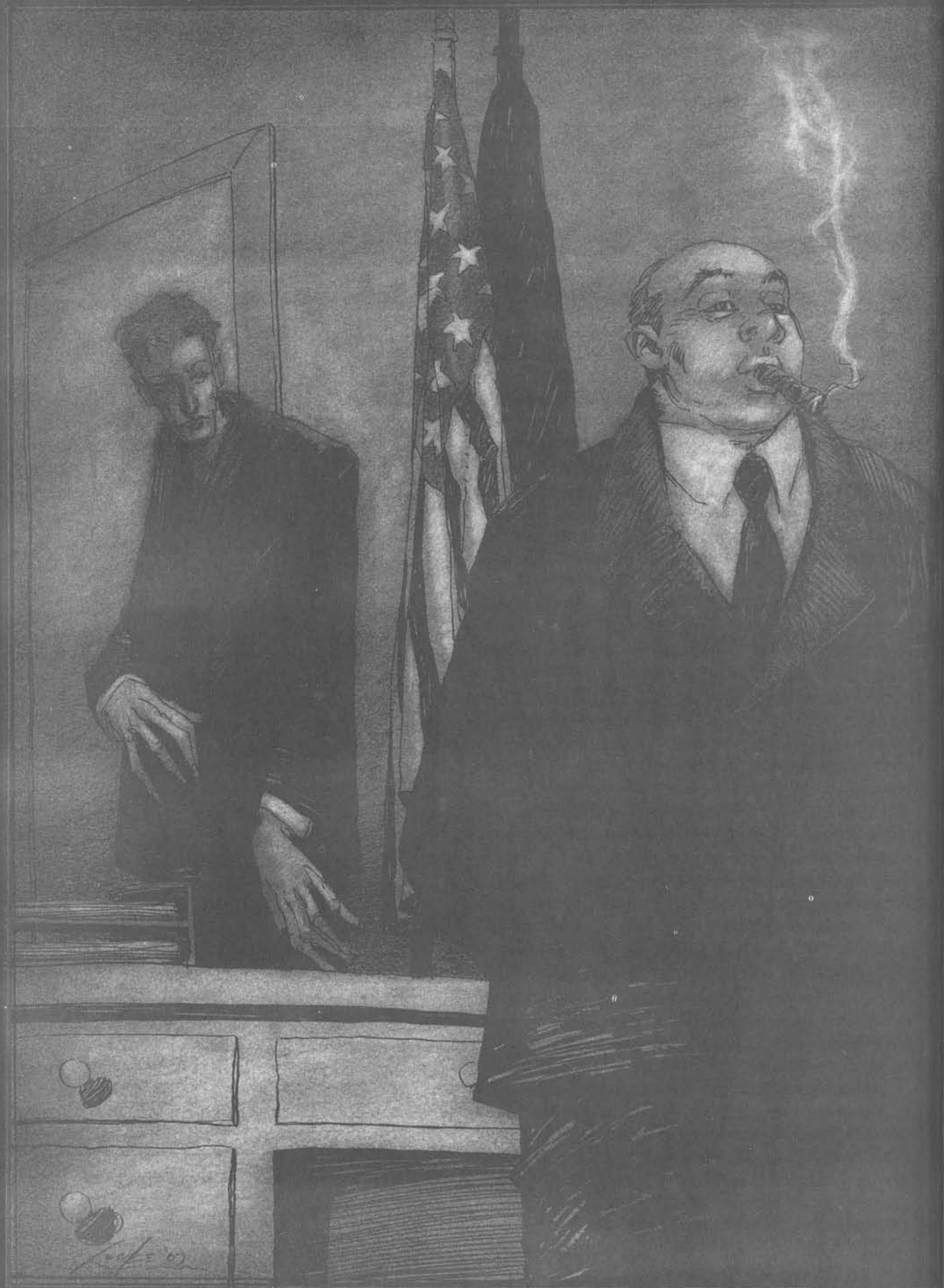
### And the Rest...

There have been cities where a non-Camarilla clan was permitted a seat — generally they are smaller, third-tier cities or isolated regions where everyone is attempting to work together for the sake of survival against the Lupines, Sabbat or some other threat. Non-

sect clans have little use for the primogen, and being seen in the middle of what is by and large a Camarilla institution does not do wonders for their social record. As mentioned earlier, sometimes non-sect clans make arrangements of one sort or another with primogen members to have their interests brought to chamber.

Vampires of the bloodlines are practically nonexistent in the council chambers. They are more likely to end up in appointed posts, like sheriff or Keeper of Elysium, or to drift into the harpies. If one of the bloodlines does take up the notion to sit with the primogen, she is likely there at the behest of someone who has more than enough power to squash any threats to her, usually the prince or an elder. This is good, because few clans look kindly on some usurper who just puts in an appearance one night. There are, of course, exceptions. Supposedly, *Lasombra antitribu* have shown up at primogen gatherings, where they are usually welcomed, more for the knowledge about their black-hearted brethren than their own scintillating company. They hark back to the old nights of being some of the most terrifying of political backstabbers, and even now their thirst for power in some form continues to pursue them. Their presence is highly rare — a primogen's chair can be a very public post, and those black-hearted brethren have a tendency to kill their erstwhile clanmates on sight.

Recently a faction of Assamites called on the Camarilla to honor their pledge and statement that all vampires under the moon belong to the Camarilla — they have petitioned the Inner Circle for the right to belong openly to the Camarilla, with all the rights and privileges granted therein. The declaration has sent shockwaves through the sect and tremors through many cities in response. Some elders scramble to figure out what new move of the Jyhad is afoot, others hark back to the nights of the War of Princes in an attempt to recall similar changes to Assamites. Some wonder if the Assamites will be allowed to take up the seat vacated by the Gangrel, while others close ranks and insist it will be a cold night in Hell before diablerists are allowed to take their place among the Camarilla. While the Inner Circle debates and the elders fret, some primogen councils are likewise considering the ramifications if Assamites are allowed to join them. A few primogen members have been making very cautious and very secret advances to the clan in their cities, trying to ferret out what new element will be added to the cauldron and doing their best to make stealthy alliances, or at least get the Assassins in debt with them before they reach the table.





# CHAPTER TWO: AROUND THE TABLE

The primogen council, even more than the prince (who may or may not ultimately have the sect's interest at heart), is the Camarilla's primary representative and governing policy-making body in the cities it holds, a humble reflection of the great Inner Circle itself. The council's responsibilities, consequently, are legion. While attending to those duties entails a great deal of work on behalf of the sect, those responsibilities are not fulfilled simply by informing the city's Kindred that one is now a primogen and snapping one's fingers. The clan leaders must be savvy, aggressive and well connected to make things happen. Luckily, most primogen wield at least as many tools as they bear responsibilities. Centuries of Camarilla trial and error have seen the accrual of an enormous repertoire of protocol, political technique and means of governance. The favored (or crucial or lucky) primogen may even have some training (typically provided by an archon of the same clan). This training takes place prior to the Kindred taking his seat at the council table if at all possible, otherwise it takes place as soon as possible afterward.

Most primogen, however, receive nothing more than a token of acknowledgement of their new position and cold congratulations. Sink or swim is the name of the game, and the cold waters of Camarilla politics are undeniably shark-infested.

## THE AVENUES OF POLITICS

Getting things done requires the proper tools and techniques. Following is a compendium of the various means by which a primogen might put her will into action.

### PRESTATION

As leaders and representatives of their clans, it behooves the primogen to be magnanimous with boons. After all, their behavior reflects on their clan, and the favors they grant immediately increase their social standing and eventually enhance their power base and adaptability. As powerful figures in the city, the primogen

are expected to be bountiful with boons, often granting them and rarely calling them in. This is frequently true. The more boons a primogen performs for others, the more tricks she will have available to pull out of her sleeve later should she need them.

### THE POWER OF BOONS

The power of a boon increases with the power of the Kindred who owes it. A major boon from a neonate is of less value than a minor boon from an elder. The primogen, therefore, do not have a great deal of motivation to enter a relationship of prestation with just any Lick. The city's elders and officers tend to swap boons among themselves but, barring unusually generous terms, are less likely to offer boons to younger vampires unless they have a great deal to gain from doing so.

That said, the elders (including the primogen) are in a position to offer a great deal to anyone who can impress them with a significant boon. This is the source of a great deal of a primogen's power. Others want access to the power she wields, and they're willing to provide their special services, whatever those services may be, in exchange.

Primogen are more likely to enter prestation agreements with younger Kindred if the elder likes something about the youngster. Does she have potential to be a pawn one night? Is he unusually handsome? Was her sire a mentor (or an enemy you want to torment)? All of these things come into play. The elder must decide whom she wants trapped in her web and whom she does not. Those she does not want to trap she will perform no favors for, and she certainly won't accept favors from them (unless she's desperate).

Young Kindred are unlikely to have the clout to offer a primogen anything of substance in exchange for political considerations. One of the few redeeming elements of the Kindred political scene is that the situation isn't nearly as corrupt as the younger Licks would like it to be — largely because the things they would like to affect, they can't. Michael the Tremere may have grand plans of offering major boons to all six primogen in order to sway a council vote his way, but if Michael is a 13th-generation neonate, there's probably nothing he'll be able to offer even one of the primogen, let alone all six of them.

### THE COST OF BOONS

No one likes owing boons. Those in power like it least of all (and inevitably, the more power the vampire has, the less he likes owing boons) because one never knows when a boon is going to be called in that will cause one to vote or act against one's inclinations or (dare it be said) conscience. After all, no one ever calls

in a boon to have a primogen vote the way she was already inclined to vote. Anyone willing to expend a boon from an elder in order to sway a vote is going to have a very good idea of how the primogen would vote if left to her own devices, otherwise he wouldn't give up such a rare treasure. Needless to say, it is considered the height of impropriety to ask how a primogen is going to vote on an issue, and no elder worth her status is going to tell anyone, least of all some idiot youngling.

If the boon runs diametrically opposed to the primogen's inclinations, a minor boon will not be sufficient to sway her, and a major boon will only be sufficient to do so about half the time; only a great boon (or the rare *extremis* boon) will always overrule an elder's preference on a vote. While that bit of knowledge isn't written down anywhere, all politically oriented Kindred learn it within their first few years of political intrigue among the undead.

### THE EXTREMIS BOON

The rarest of all boons in Kindred society is the *extremis* boon. A Kindred seeking an *extremis* boon is saying, "I will do *anything* you ask of me if only you will do this for me now." Obviously, a Kindred will ask for such a thing only in the most extreme circumstances. Many elders would rather meet Final Death than owe an *extremis* boon to another vampire.

It is considered unspeakably rude to *offer* an *extremis* boon, as it calls attention to the fact that the other party is in such a terrible position that he has no other recourse but to prostitute himself utterly.

That said, most elder Kindred will be happy at least to consider granting an *extremis* boon if one is requested. Having another elder willing to subject himself entirely to one's wishes provides excellent fodder for the kinds of nasty fantasies that make the endless

### HORSE-TRADING

Horse-trading is a flippant term for an exchange of political favors between peers. One primogen says to another, "If you vote the way I want you to this time, I'll owe you a vote at some undetermined point in the future." Not to put too fine a point on it, horse-trading is a subtle form of political corruption in which the primogen aren't voting according to their beliefs, the interests of their clan or the Camarilla, but according to the request of a peer in exchange for some vague promise of future reciprocation.

Horse-trading makes a primogen's ethical stance on an issue moot. Sure, the Brujah primogen thinks that all Kindred in a city should be treated equally, but when a vote comes up in the primogen council that limits the rights of Assamites to participate in Elysium in a particular city, and the Tremere primogen calls in a favor, or two, or three ... well, the Assamites get the shaft.

Numbers are everything in horse-trading. If Gretchen owes you five votes because of your kind consideration in the past, you can get her to vote with you even if she disagrees with you. It'll cost you all five of those horses, but if it's *really* important, then it's worth it.

Likewise, if you owe Gretchen three votes and Heinrich four votes and they both want you to cast your vote for them, poor Gretchen is S.O.L.

Refusing to participate in horse-trading is the only really ethical approach to the situation, but it has consequences. Any primogen who strictly eschews horse-trading will, inevitably, find himself in a vote that he would give anything to have some measure of control over, but without a history of trading a few horses, it's unlikely that the other primogen can be bothered to vote according to his wishes. If he needs only *one more vote* to see the issue decided his way, even our ethical hero may be willing to offer a guarantee of a vote at some later date to get his way. That's how it begins.

The ethical middle ground involves trading votes only under rare or critical circumstances, and then only enough to convince the rest of the council sufficiently indebted to you that, should an important vote come up, you have a reserve of votes to fall back on. Since the votes of the primogen in this category are particularly hard to come by, the other members of the council will only call in a vote from them in extreme cases.

The least ethical approach of all is playing the horses, that is, trading votes like Wall Street traders trade stocks. While it makes a primogen beholden to her peers, it also makes sure her peers are beholden to her. Some primogen resent voting at all unless they get something out of it. While such tactics can give the primogen a great deal of clout from time to time, it also means that others may call in a few horses of their own when they're trying to achieve a particular outcome.

## RESOURCES

Elders, especially primogen, constantly hunt for resources to bring into play in the Jyhad. Some resources, like blood, are sought by all Kindred, but the savvy Kindred comes up with whole new resources to exploit. This section unearths a number of the primary resources upon which a primogen can call in the execution of her official duties.



## THE CLAN

The primogen's clan is his sole responsibility, at least in terms of his office. He is its political leader, he represents its interests on the council, he advises its members privately, he marshals the clan in battle, and, in the case of the mildest transgressions against the Traditions or the city's Kindred, he oversees its punishment.

Likewise, any real political power he has comes from the clan. Its members are his primary resource, his informants, his source of legitimacy. As such, it is in his best interest to keep his clan satisfied, to make his city a comfortable place for his clan.

Certain small cities exist wherein the primogen is not only the representative of his clan; he is the *only* representative of his clan in the entire city. Frank Hiltz is the only Malkavian in Jackson Hole, Wyoming and he sits on the primogen council. Unsurprisingly, he wields no power (aside from his one vote on the council) and hasn't even received a nod of acknowledgement from his clan elders. Frank is obviously in a good place if he doesn't want to balance or adjudicate all the petty issues brought to him by a large clan, but the downside is that the prince may not even bother to accept his claim to primogen status unless he hopes to gain something from doing so.

In sharp contrast to Mr. Hiltz is Katarina Vanslow, the Toreador primogen of Amsterdam. Because Clan Toreador is so (over)represented in Amsterdam, Vanslow can cast a wide and densely woven net of agents, informants, fundraisers, influence brokers and the like across the whole city (and then some). Her political power, consequently, might well exceed that of the prince, though out of respect for his low generation and standing in the Camarilla, she doesn't lord it over him. Much.

Furthermore, as a long-standing and highly respected primogen of her clan, Ms. Vanslow has been made privy to many of the clan's better-kept secrets, ranging from proprietary Discipline techniques to information regarding the workings of the Inner Circle. Were she to show the slightest interest, she might be made an archon or the prince of a half-dozen smaller cities within a fortnight. As it so happens, she's content right where she is.

### DELEGATING RESPONSIBILITY

"If you want a job done right, you have to do it yourself."

That hackneyed phrase is a favorite of many incompetent primogen — incompetent in this case meaning inefficient. A primogen has a myriad of responsibilities to attend to on a nightly basis. If she

insists on doing these things herself, she'll fulfill only one tenth of her responsibilities, and her ability to represent her clan, advise her prince and serve her city will suffer accordingly.

Delegating authority is, at its worst, a necessary evil. More often than not, however, it's the best way of distributing the weight of responsibility more evenly throughout the clan. Obviously, the wise primogen delegates the more difficult and demanding tasks to the more skilled and competent Kindred. Those clan members who have a history of incompetence or who have no history with the primogen at all receive the idiot scut work.

A primogen's proxies generally do an adequate job. Under such circumstances, they are left feeling as though they have done their duty to their clan, and she will have attended to nine other projects while they've been accomplishing their one.

The problem many primogen have with delegating responsibility is that it involves relinquishing power. Worse, if the primogen's proxy succeeds in some important piece of business, it will be the proxy who takes credit. While a primogen can claim credit for the work done by her clan members, it doesn't reflect well on her and if the harpies find out it'll make for an embarrassing few weeks. If, on the other hand, the proxy botches the task horribly, the consequences are blamed on the primogen for failing to delegate the task to a more competent agent. For that reason alone, then, a primogen absolutely will not delegate many tasks except in the direst of circumstances.

The social clans have fewer hang-ups with regard to delegating responsibility. Other clans, however — the Tremere in particular — are so hung up on when, if and how to delegate that it becomes a nightly source of angst all by itself.

### RALLYING THE FAITHFUL

The primogen is the *de facto* leader of her clan. She is allowed to "make requests" of the members of her clan and they are expected to grant them. While they can ignore these requests, in the long run it's in everybody's best interest that they don't. It keeps the prince, the primogen and the other members of the clan happy. It also assures a sympathetic ear should the Lick ever need to ask the primogen for a favor or, Caine forbid, if the primogen ever needs to intervene with the prince on his behalf.

Sometimes the clan as a whole needs to be rallied to a particular cause. This might be due to a crisis affecting the whole city or a conflict with another clan. This may happen with the Nosferatu if a breach of sewer security

occurs or to the Tremere if some magical threat to the city is exposed. In such cases, the more helpful a clan member is, the more he will catch the eye of those in power, and the more auspicious a future he's likely to have in the city.

Calling on the full power of the clan is the primogen's greatest asset. While the elder might have more power, status and influence than any one or two clan members combined, bringing the full weight of a clan to bear, with its myriad strengths, resources and contacts, can be a tremendous and frightening show of power. For this reason more than any other, a primogen may talk, one on one, with her clan members on occasion about the nature of their influence and resources. She doesn't necessarily expect the Lick to tell her everything; she just wants to get a general idea what kind of clout she may be able to call upon during a crisis situation. It is acceptable (and expected) for a younger vampire to answer in vague terms, or to understate the degree of his influence, but it is not acceptable for him to lie outright, as it defeats the purpose of asking.

## THE OTHER CLANS

It is sometimes possible to use another clan's resources if, for example, one is on unusually friendly terms with its primogen (or other well respected member of the clan). It happens that the primogen of certain clans work together often and closely enough that they develop a certain rapport, the best example of this being the (once) frequent alliance of Clans Brujah and Gangrel. On a special, one-time basis, a Brujah primogen might, for example, ask the Gangrel to show him a relatively safe path through a forested area between two cities. Having fought beside the Brujah primogen a time or two (or 10), the Gangrel might be inclined to do it and not even ask a small boon in exchange. If the Brujah expects a similar favor a month later, however, his attitude may raise some eyebrows.

Other clans that may have a similar reciprocal understanding might be the Tremere and the Ventrue (because of their leadership roles in the Camarilla), the Nosferatu and the Malkavians (because of their shared outcast/informant status) and the Ventrue and the Toreador (because of their shared social interests). Regardless of their status in the Camarilla, the Assamites do not have the advantage of any sort of interclan reciprocity. Not only have they been affiliated with the Camarilla for far too short a time, but the long-standing distrust of the Assassins (repeatedly underscored by the Tremere), and the way they maintain their distance from most Kindred, keeps them segregated enough to prevent the formation of what passes among vampires as the bonds of camaraderie.

This kind of behavior may be more common among the clans of primogen who have formed a voting bloc in the primogen council. The primogen of such allied clans may cooperate so far as to allow the occasional small favor of this variety.

## COMMON GOALS

Any time two clans work toward the same result — obtaining a grander space for Elysium, for example — one primogen may delegate tasks to members of the aligned clan. Obviously, these tasks have to pertain to the goal shared by the two clans, but it can do so only tangentially. In the aforementioned example, the Ventrue primogen may ask one of the Toreador to flex some high-society influence to make sure the opera hall is open during certain unorthodox hours.

Obviously this has to be a two-way street and the primogen both must have specifically mentioned it to their clans.

## COMMON ENEMIES

Nothing motivates interclan cooperation like fighting a common enemy. That enemy can be another clan as easily as a Sabbat war pack, a group of hunters or a cabal of exotic Cathayans. Under such circumstances, petty differences fall by the wayside and the clans coalesce around their primogen and combat specialists.

## SUBSTITUTE PRIME

Under most circumstances, the whip stands in when the primogen can't head the clan. When the primogen is present, it is the whip's task to keep the clan rabble in line. If the whip isn't there, generally the remaining clan members take the helm in order of decreasing status. Very rarely, if the primogen and whip are both absent and the primogen doesn't want certain rogue elements of his clan to rein ascendant, he may ask an allied primogen to attend to certain leadership issues with his clan. This is not lightly done. It's a rare situation when a primogen trusts another elder over even the most trouble-prone member of his own clan, but it does happen. Due to the paranoia that many primogen fall prey to, such situations typically last but a brief while.

## THE WHIP

In cities with Kindred populations large enough to warrant tiers of delegated authority, the position of whip has become very popular with the primogen. Technically speaking, the whip's duty is to keep the clan in line and handle minor disciplinary tasks, particularly when the primogen is in the council chamber or out of town. Likewise, when the primogen is out of town, the whip represents the clan at council meetings. Unofficially, however, much more is expected of them.



Because the whip needs to be able to keep clan members in order, she is typically among the eldest (and likely strongest) Kindred in the clan after the primogen.

As the primogen's second in command and proxy at council meetings, the whip, colloquially referred to as the "vice-primogen," has her eye on power, but as yet has very little of her own. Rare is the whip in the Camarilla who does not covet her primogen's seat on the council, unless she's aiming straight for the prince's position. That means she values her current position very highly, that she has a lot to lose if she disappoints her superior and, consequently, more often than not it means that she'll be happy to be of use when asked to perform some service. Needless to say, whips are among the primogen's favorite tools.

The position of whip has become popular in recent years not just because busy primogen can't always make it to council meetings, but because whips serve as excellent personal assistants. After all, who can't make good use of an ambitious lapdog? Need a bite to eat but you're stuck in Elysium and can't go out to feed? Ask the whip. Need an important package delivered to a nearby city? Ask the whip. Need a few extra contacts in the mortal world to make your latest scheme come to fruition? Ask the whip.

The typical whip is under a great deal of obligation to do almost anything asked of him by the primogen, and the primogen can ask nearly anything of the whip and explain it away as "educating him in the ways of the primogen so that, when the time comes, he may effectively take my place at the council table." A primogen, therefore, can get away with asking his whip to do anything short of breaking the Traditions, and he may do it with impunity. Best of all (from the primogen's position), the whip isn't in a position to ask for a boon for his services; asking for a boon (or, worse, assuming that a boon is forthcoming) will simply result in the primogen laughing at his whip, stripping him of the title and promptly naming some other member of the clan to the position. It's not as though there's a paucity of Kindred waiting to be given more power and responsibility, after all.

The position of whip has been around long enough now that many current primogen began their political careers as whips, and having been used every which way by their primogen, they feel entitled (if not strangely obligated) to treat their own whips in the same cavalier fashion.

Primogen often feel free to use their whips' resources as their own, whether those resources are the whip's herd or mortal influence. The whip becomes

simply an extension of the primogen, an extra arm, a convenient source of extra resources. While whips rarely have as many resources to call upon as their primogen, some whips with lots of mortal influence or other advantages have the position they do because (and only because) the primogen wanted access to their influence, contacts or the like.

Ironically, some whips are, in effect, in positions of greater power than the primogen they serve. She knows the secrets the primogen doesn't have time to learn for himself; she handles, knows and may have memorized the important account numbers, the addresses, the contact info, the knowledge, facts and minutiae in which power lies. Any primogen who delegates too much responsibility to his whip has to be ready to suffer the consequences. On the other hand, any whip who gains that degree of power had better do her best to hide it from her primogen, lest she be replaced overnight. An elder whose authority is undermined and whose power is challenged, even fairly and competently, can still squash any mere whip like a bug nine times out of 10. If push comes to shove, he won't hesitate to do so, even at great cost to himself and his clan. An upstart whip is a pain in the ass no self-respecting primogen will suffer under any circumstances. More often than not the problem of overly ambitious whips can be nipped in the bud with a simple blood bond, and some paranoid primogen won't have a whip serving her who hasn't submitted to the bond.

Nor are primogen above using their whips as political loopholes. If the primogen has to make an unpopular vote, the whip can be a handy scapegoat. The primogen tells the whip how to vote and then conveniently learns of pressing out-of-town business that he simply must attend to. The whip takes the fall, the primogen has the benefit of plausible deniability, and order prevails. Similar tactics can come in handy in other ways: if a vote is coming up and the primogen is, through whatever means, so manipulated that he cannot vote the way he would like, he can simply be regrettably absent for that vote and let the whip stand in for him. When the consequences hit, the primogen makes a dramatic point of rebuking the whip in front of everyone for voting improperly and unlife goes on. A wise primogen will reward his whip generously in some fashion after such a ploy. Such tactics take their toll on even a blood bond.

It is worth noting that many whips, due to their age and status, also hold other stations in Camarilla cities. It is not unheard of for a whip to be the sheriff, scourge or harpy as well.

## THE HARPY

The harpy, as the keen-eyed, sharp-tongued umpire of the Kindred's nightly social games, easily has ample sway to make or break a Lick with few carefully chosen words. In the eyes of the primogen, that is simply one more kind of power to covet and one more resource to be used in the pursuit of their nightly duties. From time to time, they may even desire it so much that they'll enter into prestation to make use of it.

A harpy will happily take up some tasks with no reward beyond the gleeful rush of tearing into a new victim. Those are cases in which the primogen need do nothing more than provide the harpy with convincing evidence of a Lick's glaring social ineptitude and then get out of the way to let the shreds of the victim's esteem fall where they may. Few of a primogen's tasks are so simple, however, as obtaining (or planting) evidence.

Outside of such things, primogen can get little else for free from a harpy. For their part, harpies are relatively hesitant to enter into prestation arrangements. No one watches the nightly flow, accumulation and disruption of social power as closely as they and no one is clearer on its costs.

That said, few other Kindred are as studied in the strategic uses of prestation either.

The silly offers of boons from neonates and most unwise ancillae draw only scorn from harpies. They are the mavens of social order; what do they need with such petty favors? Their honor and ethics make it impossible to sway a harpy with anything so crass as a minor negligible boon.

A significant boon from an elder, on the other hand, can cause even one of these shrewd old birds to rethink her ethical squeamishness. Under such circumstances, a harpy could be convinced to scrutinize a particular Kindred and make special note of his shortcomings in Elysium, misperceive deliberately that Lick's various prestation arrangements ("accidentally" recording that he owed the primogen two lesser boons instead of one, for instance) or promulgate malicious and baseless rumors about him. Harpies are skilled at spreading around their gossip in untraceable toxic dollops. So subtle and so powerful is the role they play in Elysium that one of these irate Kindred bent on making a Kindred's unlife intolerable can turn an entire city's Kindred population against him without anyone consciously knowing how it happened.

While a harpy will consent to that degree of corruption, not even a major boon will convince a harpy to lie or change the prestation ledgers. That requires a vast boon, as it should, because the price the harpy will pay if word of her deed leaks out is staggering.

## THE HARPY HIERARCHY

While petty corruption among Kindred is a given, the harpies — due to the immense power in their hands as the bookkeepers of prestation and managers of everyone's reputation — are expected, rightly or wrongly, to adhere to a higher standard. For the most part, they do. Harpies, by and large, seem to derive sufficient satisfaction from their nightly gossip sprees and the vast power they already hold, rendering most temptations moot (or grist for the rumor mill). Only the dumbest of Kindred forget to show deference to the harpies and only the most desperate try bribing them.

By necessity, harpies have a loose hierarchy (or pecking order, as they like to think of it) of their own that they function within. This they use to spread warnings, gossip and news of events and status awards between cities. The pecking order also has its own methods of dealing with those harpies found guilty of malfeasance. Any harpy caught seriously abusing the power of her station will not only be stripped of her office (forever), she will be visited by a superior for what is euphemistically called "rectification." Hell hath no fury like a harpy of harpies upbraiding and demoting one of her own; think coldly furious seventh-generation Toreador with a keen eye for flaws and a scalpel-sharp tongue backed up by ample Presence. The few harpies who have been subjected to such a stinging and amplified verbal flaying and public airing of their weaknesses have almost always chosen to end their unlife with a sunrise rather than continue on in such a socially repugnant state.

## THE SHERIFF

Outside of his whip and the other primogen, the sheriff is the Camarilla officer with whom the primogen is likely to have the most interaction. It behooves a primogen to be not just on good terms with the sheriff, but on *excellent* terms. Ideally, the sheriff should owe the primogen a handful of boons just to be on the safe side, because, if nothing else, many times will come when the sheriff is the only Kindred standing between the primogen and an unpleasant visit to the prince's chambers to discuss the behavior of a member of the primogen's clan. The greater likelihood is that the primogen, all of them, will almost always owe the sheriff many, many

boons, making him one of the most powerful Kindred in the city (in ways that most Licks won't even pause to think about).

As the enforcer of Kindred custom within a city, the sheriff is typically the first to have to deal with Licks who have been stupid: those who have unthinkingly violated the Masquerade, those who have not hunted for whatever reason and let themselves enter frenzy, those who have simply broken the laws of Elysium, etc. In that regard, he also functions as a buffer between the perpetrator (and, by extension, the perpetrator's clan) and the prince. No primogen wants a member of his clan to be dragged into Elysium by the sheriff. At the very least it makes him look as if he can't keep his clan in line. Some elders have been known to offer major boons to a sheriff who routinely brings problem members of his clan to him instead of taking them to the prince. If the primogen is that desperate not to have his clan brought before the prince, something is likely amiss, but the fact remains that those kinds of visits to the prince's chambers are among the most despised experiences a primogen can suffer through.

That's the most common interaction between primogen and sheriff, though not the most interesting.

The sheriff has his job because he is capable, by use of whatever means, of taking down rogue Kindred. Obviously, Brujah, Gangrel and, now, Assamite Kindred are effective in the role of sheriff. The kind of raw power typically found in a sheriff, combined with the position's relative immunity to the Tradition of Destruction, makes the sheriff an ideal tool. If he sends a Kindred to Final Death, it's a relatively simple matter (assuming there were no witnesses) to say that he was put in a position where he *had* to do so. What better agent could an elder ask for? Does the primogen need a mercenary, thug, bounty hunter or hit man? The sheriff is the Kindred to talk to. These extracurricular activities are considered abuses of the office and formally frowned upon, but that makes them no less common.

Things get sticky, however, if the other clans start to notice that the sheriff seems to be doing an awful lot of extra work on behalf of Clan X. It makes the other primogen wag their fingers at the sheriff (publicly) even as they begin offering him boons by the handful (privately) to do their wet work as well. The primogen council is the body that would normally censure the sheriff for such malfeasance, but if the majority of the primogen are either using the sheriff or hoping to, he doesn't have much motivation to stop what he's doing.

It also works in the sheriff's favor because he's collecting major boons by the bucketful. Everybody wins except for the Licks who get whacked because they made an enemy of the primogen, but they're not only dead, they're dishonored, branded as violent offenders who had to be taken down.

The other common means by which a sheriff might earn boons from a primogen is by doing nothing, that is, looking the other way while the primogen (or the primogen's clan) does something dodgy. If a primogen offers the sheriff a major boon simply to "investigate" some niggling loose thread at an out-of-the-way location for an hour or two, it's generally in the sheriff's best interest to do so. After all, you can never have too many major boons from elders.

This kind of corruption, once begun, generally runs into a brick wall at some point when someone starts asking too many questions. A sheriff who plays too fast and loose with his "side job" can easily wind up sending the wrong Lick to Final Death. Maybe the sheriff offed the harpy's favorite childe or the close ally of a primogen from another city, and the wronged party calls for an investigation of the sheriff's evidence or methods. When the archons come snooping around, the sheriff will be forced to call in many of the boons owed to him by the elders just to save his own cold, pale skin.

## THE PRINCE

A primogen's relationship with the prince can determine if he looks forward to stepping into Elysium or if he dreads the moment so much that he never wants to leave his haven.

Some Kindred have the advantage of avoiding the prince altogether once they've been acknowledged. Appealing as that may be, it's not an option for those sitting on the primogen council. Consequently, it is in the elder's best interest to maintain a relationship with the prince that is at least cordial if not warm.

Civility and politics don't always blend well. At times, one interferes with the other. A prince may take exception to a primogen's stance on certain issues (Tremere princes, for example, are notorious for taking an instant dislike to primogen who push for the inclusion of Assamites into the Camarilla), and that can strain the interaction between prince and primogen. That said, the prince's personal agenda should play no role in the debates among the primogen (unless someone owes him a boon).

The prince can be a key to goals that the primogen doesn't have access to otherwise. As prince, he has resources that it might take two or three primogen to marshal. Many of the choicest influence contacts are under the prince's thumb. Likewise the prince (especially

if he's Ventrue) is likely to have access to larger amounts of ready cash, a larger herd and other types of reserves that might come in handy in emergency situations.

The prince also has access to the powers that be in the Camarilla, possibly even the Inner Circle itself if he's of low enough generation or high enough regard. While the primogen council technically has access to the sect's resources as well, the prince, as the recognized preeminent among the Kindred of his Domain, is the appropriate channel through whom such contact should be made. Anything else violates the Camarilla's chain of command and raises the eyebrows of many whose attentions are better left unsought. Woe to the primogen whose request for assistance of one sort or another brings an archon to his city — particularly when (not if) the prince is told of the reason for the visit.

### PRINCELY PRESTATION

Engaging in prestation with the prince is problematic at best. While the prince is the only officer in a city likely to have anything that the primogen can't take for his own, the cost for most of a prince's boons is likely to be exorbitant.

A primogen who wants a boon from the prince faces a quandary. Outside of political favors and support (which, of course, are not to be discounted), he

can offer the prince very little. A clever (or desperate) primogen can always come up with something that the prince is likely to want, but princes are often satisfied with granting a boon in exchange for some unspecified future consideration. Those are the ones the primogen has to be wary of, because, almost inevitably, the prince will want to collect that boon at the worst of all possible moments. When asking a boon of the prince, the primogen should always bear that in mind.

Worse, prestation between primogen and the prince can be dangerous for a city. If the elders owe the prince too many boons, then the ostensible purpose of the council — to act as a balance to the prince's power — can be subverted, even inadvertently. A rigorously ethical prince may even refuse to grant boons to primogen for exactly that reason, though princes with such highly developed ethics are a rare breed.

Alternatively, a prince who wishes to maintain the integrity of the council yet still be available for prestation in extreme circumstances may simply quote an asking price of one major influence, to be permanently given to the prince, in recognition of the boon. In the long run it makes the prince much more effective and it keeps the primogen from making frivolous requests.



## ARCHONS

Nothing forces a primogen to behave respectfully toward archons. That said, primogen rush to court, flatter and offer favors to few others faster or more enthusiastically. Few primogen ever have access to higher-ranking members of the Camarilla than archons, and many primogen find the notion somewhat heady. The proportion of those encounters that end well for the primogen is relatively low.

Primogen would love to do a favor for an archon, but the Kindred is in the same boat, or worse, with regard to the archon as she is with the prince; what do you do for the Lick who has everything? Few primogen are above trying. Being owed a boon by an archon is like having Jesus owe you a favor.

Archons are not blind to this, however, and the vast majority of them accept proffered boons only with the greatest hesitation.

## YOUR CLAN ELDERS

While it may or may not hold true in the modern nights, the primogen has traditionally been the eldest member of a particular clan in a given city. From time to time a primogen may wish to call on the wisdom of older and more powerful elders in his own clan: possibly primogen or even princes of European cities, for example. The shared blood and goals of clan members is generally enough grounding to keep this type of call from being a complete breach of protocol (especially when it's backed up by the Mentor Background or lots of dots in Allies), though it is still considered a bit brash outside of crisis situations.

Obviously, certain clans are more organized than others. Clan Ventrue has an active mentoring program for many of its primogen, while Clan Tremere's hierarchy provides something similar (though less amicable).

## A DELICATE GAME

Such calls can be dangerous. While consulting an elder in a legitimate emergency is one thing, an elder's concept of what constitutes an emergency may or may not synch with the primogen's. What the primogen has to offer can determine how involved the elder gets. Certainly prestation might be enough to bring in such a big gun, but more likely it is something else. In game terms, this is where the Mentor and Allies Backgrounds can come in handy. It may be that an elder of your clan was your sire or a close confidant of your sire. Alternatively, the elder may simply seek to instill a sense of obligation in the primogen as a means of furthering some personal goal. Those elders of greater

age and status than a primogen have been known to engage in games of manipulation for purposes known only to them. Is the elder helping because it furthers the interests of his clan or because he needs a new pawn? Many primogen have been obsessed with exactly that question.

## MORTAL INFLUENCE

The Camarilla's big advantage in many situations, and its trump card when fighting the Sabbat, is its mastery of mortal influence. The Kindred wielding the single greatest degree of influence over the mortal world is commonly the prince. Each primogen, however, also has his fingers in an extraordinary number of mortal pies and has contacts located throughout the city's myriad sectors, communities and subcultures. The pool of influence commanded by the combined primogen council is astonishing in its breadth but also in the depth to which it penetrates the institutions of the mortal world.

Were they to cooperate, the primogen could exert amazing power over the state of a city. For better or for worse, nothing short of a full-scale Sabbat invasion force is likely to elicit that response, and if the primogen council is a relatively hostile one, prone to internecine conflict, even that might not do it.

Influence, however, should not be taken for granted. The Ventrue primogen doesn't just walk up to a bank official, make his will known and expect results. Cultivation and maintenance of human mortal contacts is difficult. For one thing, vampires hardly keep standard business hours.

Primogen (like all Kindred) have to put a lot of time and effort in to their mortal influence. Some examples of what is involved follow.

## CHOOSING PAWNS

A primogen must choose his pawns carefully. Everybody wants to feed from the top of the food chain, but it's just not feasible. The major players in city politics, including the mayor, might already be beholden to the prince, and the mayor's most powerful lieutenants have probably been co-opted by various other primogen since within days after joining his cabinet (all that stress and they *still* don't look a day older than when they were hired).

A new primogen will need to make do with what she can get. While there are ways of usurping influence and stealing contacts from other Kindred, neither the prince nor the other elders are good targets for this unless you want to lose every last vestige of influence you may have had in the mortal world.

A relatively powerful primogen can wrest influence from members of her clan, however, and not have to deal with consequences on quite the same level. One furious clan member can be a pain in the ass, but not the cataclysmic trauma that not achieving her goals would be. Besides, the Kindred in question might not even have the investigative wherewithal to learn who did it.

Taking influence from an underling is considered a sad and pathetic act, and if the harpies hear about it, the primogen will be socially ruined. It is a terrible thing when even the Nosferatu pity you . . .

Stealing influence from one's clan may be out of the picture, but trading contacts and influence with clan members can be mutually beneficial ("This is my friend Mirko, he's gonna take care of what you need from now on . . .").

The ideal candidates keep late hours (obviously), are easily reached, live alone and, preferably, have a dirty secret or two that they want to keep under wraps. This profile fits astonishingly few of the people whom a primogen is likely to want as contacts. Mayors, CEOs, bankers, bishops, police lieutenants and the like don't typically fall into that category.

The result, then, is that the Kindred has to contact his would-be influences through his already established influences.

#### THE MEETING

Once the primogen has determined where in the great web of influence her contacts should come from, it is up to her to make the initial meeting come to pass. The social clans obviously have a clear advantage in this regard; a smile and a few words of conversation are enough to hook the fish long enough to start things moving in the direction of a mutually beneficial relationship.

The other clans may have a harder time of it, particularly with the more highly placed contacts. One doesn't just walk up to a *capo* in the local Mafia and ask to borrow him for a while. Obviously, lower level influence can lead to higher level influence ("Dr. Primovarios, I'd like to introduce you to my boss, the mayor . . ."), or one type of influence can be used to obtain another (the aforementioned Mob boss being arrested and held for an evening in the city jail, for instance, or the administrator of the hospital being briefly "detained" by a pack of street punks).

#### GROOMING PAWNS

A vampire who doesn't help his mortal pawns develop their talents beyond what they were when he took them on is missing out on an extraordinary

opportunity. While it may appeal to the primogen's sense of power to have a well connected beat cop in her pocket, wouldn't it be better to have a police captain? If the Kindred can nudge circumstances in that direction with some strategic influence brokering, why should she hesitate?

Land developers buy "fixer-uppers" cheap, refurbish them and sell them for two to three times what they paid for them. Kindred wanting highly placed contacts use similar tactics on mortals: find an ambitious and reasonably talented mid-level agent in the sector one wants to work his way into, offer some career assistance in exchange for future loyalty and, if he accepts, make some phone calls to some powerful friends and start the ball rolling on the lucky guy's expedited career.

This technique works extraordinarily well for those Kindred with enough patience. If you don't have the current mayor in your pocket, support the city's attorney in her run for the office. Can't quite get the local Episcopal bishop in your clutches? Enhance the standing of his next in command by covertly supporting his pet projects and then see to it that the bishop's brakes fail at an inconvenient moment.

Obviously, it's easier to work your way up the ladder for street influence, since the street takes such a toll in those who spend too much time there anyway, but wily primogen have been known to groom their protégés so effectively that they wind up at the top of the heap. Then they let the new top dog know to whom he owes his newfound success.

Such tactics can take years, decades even, but if there's one thing any vampire elder can spare, it's time — especially if the gambit pays off handsomely in the end.

The advantages of making ghouls of contacts can never be overstated. While it has suddenly become more of a problem than it used to be thanks to mortals who appear to be able to discern ghouls, the time-honored practice of making ghouls of key mortals still results in hardier and more devoted contacts.

#### REWARDING PAWNS

Understanding motivations is everything when dealing with mortals. A mortal pawn who has completed an important task for his master should always be rewarded. Some pawns are easier to reward than others. A blood bound thrall, or one under the spell of the more powerful Presence techniques, will need only some token of his master's appreciation: a pat on the head, a knowing nod or a brief smile will normally suffice. Ghouls on the other hand are always eager for vitae. A well fed ghoul is a loyal ghoul, but a hungry ghoul is a walking betrayal waiting to happen.

Increased prestige or power is also a time-honored way of showing a pawn that you value his services. If he has done well, give him more clout: another thug to order around, better weapons, a greater stipend, VIP status at the hottest nightclub in town, etc. Appealing to a mortal's ego or sense of self-importance is a very effective, and relatively simple, technique for maintaining her loyalty.

Complexity enters the picture when the vampire decides, for whatever reason, to use the blood bond or Disciplines to elicit the degree of loyalty he wants. It's far better to have a pawn willingly work for you than rely on the crutch of blood bonds and other supernatural witchery, but sometimes certain key elements in an elder's plan have to be nudged a little more aggressively into playing their roles properly. Relying on those tools is lazy and, these days, dangerous. Those mortals who fancy themselves "hunters" have shown a knack for spotting (and murdering) ghouls, and, on occasion, tracking down the Kindred who created them.

#### PUNISHING PAWNS

Sometimes contacts come through, and, alas, sometimes they don't. When a pawn does well, he should be rewarded. When a pawn screws up, he needs to know it and know the depth of his master's displeasure. Some pawns are harder to punish than others. One doesn't just put 20 lashes on the Mob boss's back, for instance, or kill the mayor's personal assistant.

Again, the primogen needs to think back and remember human nature — higher Humanity ratings might help with this, at the Storyteller's discretion — and what motivates (or counteracts motivation) in mortals.

The tender feelings mortals often have for others are an excellent source of motivation. Low-level loner types may not have anyone who meets that description, but they can be dealt with in the traditional fashion. More highly functioning types tend to have, if not families, then at least a significant other of some sort. Therein lies their weakness.

Having a late night dinner with the fractious police chief is a fine time to hand over his wife's little toe, perhaps in a ring box or possibly just wrapped discretely in a napkin. If this is a first meeting of its kind, the chief should return home to find his wife in reasonably good condition. If it's not the first, his wife should be in bad shape. If John Law has *really* dropped the ball, skillful use of Dominate will have his wife believing that he's the one who left her that way.

This is not a technique to drag out just for one slightly messed-up assignment. The Kindred should resort to such tactics only when his cat's-paw has so

frequently or traumatically fouled his tasks that his long-term standing as a source of influence is called into question.

#### A SAMPLER OF ELDERS' TACTICS

The power plays, stratagems, gambles and ploys of the Kindred have taken shape over centuries. Any primogen worth her seat on the council will have a metaphorical playbook the size of an unabridged dictionary just brimming with her favorite political maneuvers and techniques for getting what she wants. Many of these may have been taught to her by elders upon her taking the primogen position, while others were certainly developed empirically.

Following are some of the more popular (and less Byzantine or specialized) tactics that primogen use to rally their clans, deal with crises and make last-ditch lunges for power in these Final Nights.

##### **The Enemy of Your Enemy Is Your Ally**

Alliances can be powerful things. Oftentimes, a Kindred will want nothing more than an ally, and one way to obtain an ally in a hurry is to find another Kindred in a similar predicament and point out that he shares an enemy. This approach works even better if the would-be ally is also threatened by the enemy at the same time.

For example, if Jamal ibn-Alamut, the newly ascended Assamite primogen, were being harried at every turn by Albert Senecus, the Tremere primogen, anyone who has a problem with Senecus would be wise to propose an alliance with ibn-Alamut. Not only does it weaken the position of the enemy, but one never knows when having a well trained assassin as an ally might come in handy.

##### **"We Have to Show a United Front."**

Throughout Kindred society, "us versus them" is one of the primary models used to motivate those lower in the Kindred hierarchy. Both the "us" and the "them" are fluid. Us could be defined as the society of Kindred, the Camarilla, Clan Toreador, the primogen council or any other faction that suits the moment. "Them," therefore, could be mortals, the Sabbat, Clan Nosferatu or "the thin-blooded rabble." In a culture so completely based on conflict, it becomes habitual to define oneself by one's enemies. Let the enemy be caricatured, mocked, made into a symbol of everything "we" consider improper. Such dehumanization, after all, is the entire point of any long-term enemy. The Tremere did it to the Salubri, the Republicans do it to the Democrats, et cetera, ad nauseam — and vice versa.

It has a point. The greater the hatred of "them," the greater the cohesion in "us." The more monstrous we can make "them" out to be, the more heroic "we" seem by comparison. If "they" are capable of highly unethical behavior, then so must "we" be, otherwise the monsters will have the upper hand.

These kinds of strategies serve to quash (or at least postpone) internecine conflicts. Such tactics muzzle dissidents, increase morale and render even well meant criticism the equivalent of sedition.

This ranks among the favorite techniques used by primogen to rally their clans. While it does an excellent job of bringing the majority of the clan into alignment, it sometimes alienates Kindred the primogen would rather have as allies. Free-thinking members of any clan balk at such tactics in general, but it works better with some clans than others. Ventrue, Tremere and Nosferatu, for example, have a greater sense of group identity and are more easily swayed by such tactics. Clans Malkavian, Toreador and (especially) Brujah are not good candidates for use of this technique. The Brujah, in fact, have been known to riot against primogen using this tactic artlessly.

#### **Punish the Disrespectful but Reward Allies**

Casual arrogance and thoughtless cruelty are the signs of a short-term primogen. Those who think their position grants them the right to treat their fellows poorly are likely to learn some hard lessons (assuming they remain in the primogen seat at all).

That is not to say that cruelty and poor treatment of inferiors don't have their uses, just that discretion must be shown when choosing the targets of such treatment. Haphazard disrespect is sheer idiocy. Strategic disrespect, on the other hand, functions as a reminder to those who have fallen from the primogen's good graces.

The primogen may freely show disdain for those who have offended, spoken out against, slandered or otherwise landed themselves on the primogen's list of irritants, provided they are lower in the hierarchy than the primogen. The primogen's best weapons against these individuals are mockery and derision. Let the fool know she has offended. Make it clear that you think ill of her, and others, sycophants in particular, will feel free to do likewise, eroding her standing in circles where the primogen holds sway. This is not an unusual tactic for Camarilla Kindred — it is the very essence of the harpies' power, after all — but for the primogen it is but one tactic out of many, whereas for the harpy it's the primary method of interacting with the rest of Kindred society.

On the other hand, those who have shown proper deference to the primogen, those who have been helpful or who make it clear that they value the primogen's position or assistance, should be treated most kindly. Warm words in public, rewards in private and an unmistakable attitude of respect toward these individuals will serve to keep them favorably disposed toward the primogen.

These two phenomena should leave little room for ambiguity. When it becomes clear how the primogen works, there will be no question which is the better camp to be in, and those around the primogen will seek ways in which to become increasingly useful and endearing — a state of affairs that all those on the primogen council would like to replicate.

#### **Divide and Conquer**

This is the flip side to showing a united front. In times of crisis, the primogen wants to keep his own clan in lockstep agreement while the enemy's force is sundered from within. Under ideal circumstances, the enemy fragments beneath the weight of its own accrued discontents, but more often than not, it behooves a Kindred to nudge his enemy's forces in the direction of fragmentation.

While the advantages of this strategy are obvious, it takes a great deal of intelligence on the enemy's operations to know which factions to pit against each other. Information is always available if you know where to look and whom to pay off. It could be time to call in that debt the Nosferatu owe you ....

The most common approach to dividing and conquering is to survey the enemy's forces, discern who has the largest ego (but who isn't in power) and then, casually, drop the bug in his ear (indirectly, of course) that his clan doesn't value him, that he could do a better job of leading the clan than their stupid primogen any night of the week or that some other organization would give him much better opportunities for advancement. Usually the Lick with the biggest ego is one of the heavy hitters, and convincing him that he's underappreciated will, at the very least, keep him from getting too gung-ho on behalf of whoever holds his leash and could make him so irate that he takes his ball and goes home.

Corollary to "divide and conquer" is sowing dissent. The greatest strength of strategies that sow dissent is that once the initial seed is planted, the recipient's mind does the rest of the work. Past slights, sheer ego, barely formulated (and largely unobtainable) ambitions and the like all blend together and fester. At the very least, the enemy's morale suffers,



but ideally the dissent will spread, causing the opposition's leaders to notch up the discipline just to counteract the fraying order.

#### **Annihilate Your Enemies**

In the world of the Kindred, even more than in the mortal world, it is imperative that a defeated enemy (a real enemy, not one of these tedious adversaries or rivals for the prince's attention) be utterly crushed and, if possible, sent to Final Death. Deathless years give even soundly defeated vampires time to regroup, take the lessons of their defeat to heart and, too often, return with greater knowledge, greater experience and greater power. Consequently, any partial victory must also be seen as a partial defeat that could, given time, grow to an utter defeat if the primogen does not act expeditiously.

If the enemy is a single vampire — someone from his past with dangerous info on him — a wise primogen will see that the Lick is extinguished completely, preferably by a seemingly unconnected third party (this is where that boon that the sheriff owes you comes in very handy). If the enemy is an aggregate of Kindred, the primogen would do well to infiltrate the organization, learn all he can about its goals and techniques and then wipe it out entirely, lest cells remain to start the cancer anew.

#### **Follow Failure, Not Success**

Primogen frequently have the power to replace a prince who has, through whatever means, taken his leave of the position. While a prince's position is to be coveted, at times such offers must be turned down. Experienced Kindred quickly learn that a great leader's shoes are impossible to fill. Any vampire attempting to do so will be relentlessly compared to the great leader — and not kindly. The same dynamic, however, works in a primogen's favor when replacing a failure. Compared to an utter incompetent, the primogen will look like a natural leader.

When a great prince leaves office, then, the wise primogen will allow the position to go to the first idiot who wants to dive into the office and then take over and fix things once the idiot has been ousted for incompetence. The danger in this approach lies in the slim possibility that the new prince might do well in the position, but that happens rarely enough that it's not worth the concern.

#### **Know When to Stop**

Few experiences are as heady to Kindred as attaining a long-term goal. It feeds the ego, hones the appetite and stokes ambition. Consequently, it is at the moment of fruition and conquest that many Kindred fall, either

by their own acts or by those of others. Their carefully laid plans have pushed them to success, and what, they think, can be the danger of overshooting a tad, of taking a little extra?

Not only does such behavior make one's allies nervous, it's rash. A Kindred who has achieved a long long-term goal did so because of long-term planning. In making the additional lunge for lagniappe, the vampire acts without the benefit of that planning, making it highly probable that he will overreach himself and open himself up to attack by unsettled allies, bitter rivals or opportunistic predators who revel in taking down a Kindred at his peak moment.

Reaching a goal is a glorious feeling and one to be savored accordingly, but the wise primogen will not pursue conquest beyond his original plans — at least not immediately. Most wise Kindred settle on a simple pattern: plan, lunge and regroup. Planning makes the lunge possible, regrouping lets the vampire consolidate his gains and take stock of his next target before he begins working on a whole new plan. Any imbalance in the three elements — plan, lunge, regroup — will slow the Kindred's progress toward power and could prove dangerous.

#### **Avoid Losers**

The theory of contagion stipulates that the more one associates with the unclean, the more likely it is that their uncleanness will rub off. That same approach applies to disfavor, dishonor, suspicion and scores of other unsought conditions. The relatively slow pace at which the tapestry of Kindred political power is woven, ploy by ploy and feint by feint, makes this particularly important, because literal decades of meticulous politicking and power plays can be undone by one brief fit of misguided compassion or one imprudent alliance.

A primogen who has allies who have been dropped from the ranks of favor would be wise to cease associating with those particular allies — at least for the time being and in the public eye. The elder may feel as if he is helping, but he is likely deluding himself as well as setting himself up for a fall of his own. As the unfortunate have drawn catastrophe to themselves, so do they seem to draw it to those who try to help them. Even a powerful Kindred in good standing can be affected by such things, and by the time he sees what has happened, he finds that he, too, is in the water and is being pulled down.

Nor is political disfavor the only situation that can be taken on through the principle of contagion. The mad spread madness, the miserable spread mis-

ery, and the disreputable spread disrepute; anyone who spends any significant amount of time with these individuals will be marred by their reputations. There is, after all, a reason why the Toreador don't take time out of their busy schedules to teach the Nosferatu better social graces ....

#### **Make Others Come to You**

Activity expends energy. Committing to a plan of action, commencing aggression and leaving one's base of strength are all risky activities. A Kindred who can rouse, tempt or incite others to come to him saves his own energies and allows others to waste theirs. Furthermore, the Kindred who sits still is more capable of defending himself from whatever attacks may be coming his way. Any Lick who confuses aggressive action with effective action (or effective inaction) has painful lessons to learn, because, more often than not, especially among Kindred, the most effective course of action is to stay back, keep calm and let others walk into the traps you have set for them. More than any other creature in the World of Darkness, the Kindred have the ability to sit back and wait for the eventual, long-term power instead of rushing for the quick victory. As elders of their clans, the primogen know this better than most.

#### **Avoid Overexposure as You Would Sunlight**

One's presence, as with anything, increases in value in proportion to its scarcity. The initial urge of many a naïve primogen is to be easily accessible, available for his clan to contact. The wise ones rapidly learn the folly of this approach. The only effect such availability has is to lessen the primogen's value and worth. Being easily accessible makes one seem common. Upon being made primogen of his clan, a Kindred's wisest move is to withdraw from Elysium for a while. Let rumors spread about what it is you might be up to — the more speculation, the better. Then, when the time comes to return, be more withdrawn and your value will have risen tenfold. It is absence, not presence, that creates an aura of mystique and power.

One corollary to this rule is that the primogen must also know when to take his leave. Any wise actor knows to be off the stage before the applause comes to an end. Primogen maximize their impact on their clans when they remain aloof. This must be done judiciously. Woe unto the primogen whose clan feels betrayed or manipulated. Primogen utilizing this approach should take care that their absence is never suspicious or random, but, rather, a regrettable consequence of the demands of office.

#### **Commitment Is a Trap**

One after another, masses of fools rush to commit to one cause or another. By so doing, they forgo their freedom, lessen their own worth and make themselves a known quantity. By maintaining one's independence, one stays in a position to master others by playing them against one another, or making them show their own hand by coming to you. Even if one is inclined to join one faction over another, it is always best to make them court you first, otherwise your alliance is more likely to be devalued and taken for granted.

By way of example, Squealard, the Nosferatu primogen, was typically ignored by the other primogen; likewise, the other Nosferatu of the city were treated poorly if they were acknowledged at all. This state of affairs lasted until Elysium politics took a turn that appeared likely to place Squealard in the role of tiebreaker in a major policy vote. He did not volunteer which faction he was inclined to side with. Both sides kept putting off the vote, hoping to use the time to lure the Sewer Rat to their side (assuming he wasn't already). Kindred who hadn't spoken to him in years began doing him favors and, incidentally, asking him which way he intended to vote. He would very cordially inform his questioner that he hadn't yet decided and then ask what the questioner thought. Both the Nosferatu and their primogen benefited from his refusal to take sides. They were invited to participate more fully in Elysium, favors were offered in exchange for information, and certain privileges were extended to the Nosferatu that they had been trying to acquire for some time. Had the Nosferatu primogen announced which way he would vote, the side he was going to be voting for would be able to take him for granted and the side he was voting against would resent him. Wisely, Squealard avoided taking a smug or obnoxious tone during his indecision phase, nor did he visibly show his enjoyment at having both factions over a barrel. In time, neither side having the slightest idea how the Nosferatu would weigh in, the vote took place and the matter, now forgotten, was decided. While the situation largely returned to business as usual after the vote, the positions of Squealard and the Nosferatu remained notably better than it had been previously, because subsequent to that event no one was comfortable taking the Sewer Rats for granted.

#### **Practice Being Inscrutable**

It behooves a wise primogen to assume formlessness. By having a "shape," an obvious plan, a habitual way of doing things, a primogen gives his enemies a means of discerning his weaknesses. Habits kill. Remain

adaptable and ready to roll with whatever punches may come your way and you'll succeed even among the Kindred's backstabbing elite. Fail to do so and your nights of power (and unlife) are numbered.

This is one of the hardest rules for Kindred to master. It goes against their static nature. Those among them who have learned it have a significant advantage over their enemies. If one single strategy helps ancillae hold their own against elders, this is it. Kindred Elders become so ossified in their habits that even perceiving something so radically removed from their way of seeing the world becomes challenging. That is a weakness that can be turned to the advantage of a clever and enterprising Kindred.

The Gangrel are adept at this. Not only does it help them survive in the wilds beyond city limits, it also kept them difficult to read in political situations. Until Xaviar made his announcement to the Inner Circle that the Gangrel were seceding from the Camarilla, no one had the least idea that anything unusual was in the works. That still haunts certain Malkavians and Nosferatu, who feel they should have had some kind of advance warning.

#### **Make Your Results Impossible to Miss, but Keep Your Efforts Transparent**

When working toward a goal of any sort that others will be able to see upon its completion, keep your efforts invisible. All planning and preparation that can be completed ahead of time should be. When the urge strikes you to tell others how much work you are putting in toward some goal, stifle it; it will only lessen your standing. Subsequently, when your actions seem effortless, natural and seamless, your deeds will have an almost legendary quality to them. Pretend that even these great acts were just one more manifestation of your excellent luck. Pass off as much of your hard work as possible as good fortune, and once you have a reputation for being handed great things by fate, others will take notice. Through the use of such tactics, you will attract allies and dissuade potential enemies.

#### **Do Not Let Others Become Envious**

Whom Kindred envy, they want to destroy. If you have a wealth of influence (for instance) that you want to keep, downplay it. Do not brag at every meeting of the council that you have the president of every bank in town in your debt. Do not fall prey to ostentation or you will also fall prey to others who want what you have.

#### **Master the Spectacle**

The Romans called it *paneum et circenses*, which, in English, means "bread and circuses." It refers to the mortal (and Kindred) need for two things: sustenance

and entertainment. If the masses have those two things, they will be docile and easily swayed. They will watch the hand that has the small shiny object and not the empty one that's going for their purse. While this comes more naturally to some clans than to others, its utility cannot be denied. The power to make statements on a large scale must not be underestimated. Such a predilection creates mystique and lends an aura of strength and competence to whatever persona you project in your dealings with your peers.

Best of all, when a truly phenomenal spectacle is unfolding, others won't be paying a whit of attention to what you're doing.

The Toreador are grandmasters of this technique. A tale emerges from the Domain of Houston of the Toreador primogen who brought an entire jazz band into Elysium to perform a slow jazz funeral. The costumes were beautiful, the music was flawless, and all of Elysium was enthralled by the spectacle. When the band at last made its slow exit, the prince was nowhere to be found. And never was. The Toreador primogen subsequently claimed the title and became the new Toreador prince.

## **STRATEGIES: CLAN BY CLAN**

Like the clans they lead, primogen vary with regard to their strengths and weaknesses. Those strengths and weaknesses guide the night-to-night decisions of these clans. How authority plays out in a clan can vary a great deal; some primogen are petty tyrants, pushing their agendas on those they supposedly represent. Others think of themselves almost solely as advisors to the prince, and their status as clan authority goes largely unfulfilled (this approach doesn't work well with Clan Brujah, as a general rule, but otherwise the clans can run themselves reasonably well). The problem with this approach comes when the primogen is summoned into the prince's chambers and is forced to take responsibility for a Kindred whose behavior has gotten out of line.

As nominal heads of their clans, the primogen effectively have access not only to their own sources of influence and resources but, if they need it, to those of most of their clan members' as well. The younger members of the clan are not obligated in any way to call upon their influence on behalf of their primogen, but it is, without a doubt, in their best interest. As discussed elsewhere in this book, it is never a bad thing to be in the good graces of one's primogen. Ironically, it is a clan's "problem children" who are most likely to offer their influence to the primogen as a means of convincing the primogen to overlook their various failings. The primogen is more likely to go to bat (with the prince, for example) for a clan member who has proven his utility

than for one who has been petty and parsimonious with regard to lending his influence. The exact nature of this influence on the mortal sphere varies from clan to clan, but any primogen in good standing with his clan can wield formidable power in a city of any significance. If a primogen does this too often, the harpies will begin to gossip, of course, about his notable lack of ability to handle the mortal world.

#### ASSAMITE

Those few Assamites who have been given seats on primogen councils guide their clans with the stoic demeanor of a military commander. They place a great deal of value on order and efficiency. Of the Camarilla clans, only the Tremere compete with the Assamites for the role of most hierarchical. No other clan approaches Clan Assamite in the arena of discipline and self-control. Assamite primogen expect an extraordinarily high degree of decorum and civility from their clan members; those individuals who step out of line are, initially, corrected (sternly). If the problem recurs, the Kindred is punished severely. No Camarilla Assamite yet appears to have required action from the primogen a third time. For a clan so reviled throughout most of the Camarilla, the Assamite primogen appear to eschew the more gratuitously underhanded manipulation techniques of the

elders, preferring instead a more direct (and some say more confrontational) style of leadership and diplomacy. That method appears to be winning them accolades in the Camarilla, though the Tremere insist it's a foul ruse.

What few Assamite primogen there are appear to have the bulk of their influence among churches (and mosques), industry and transportation.

#### BRUJAH

Brujah primogen must deal with a schism of sorts in their clan that their peers don't typically have. While some elders of the clan tend toward a philosophical bent (which many find helps them stay calm and avoid their clan's curse), many younger Licks have yet to develop the required patience to pursue rarified matters and evince a violent streak wide enough to drive a tank through. The primogen may have trouble pulling his clan together if the younger ones see him (and the prince, and the sheriff) as "The Man," a sellout who has exchanged his ideals for respectability and power.

Woe unto the fledgling who pushes the primogen's patience to the breaking point, however. Elders may have had more time to come to terms with their hair-trigger tempers, but a rude, disrespectful and directly antagonistic neonate is going to learn a hard lesson about respect. Unfortunately, the young Lick almost



never takes the lesson as intended. On the contrary, it almost invariably results in the younger Brujah trying to rally his peers against the “unfair” treatment received at the hands (or fists) of the elder.

Many Brujah primogen circumvent this problem, with some limited success, by taking a whip younger than he would prefer to act as a sort of liaison (or a buffer, as some elders think of it). In such cases it behooves the elder and his whip to feign some manner of dislike for one another, lest the troublemakers take to thinking of the whip as the primogen’s lackey instead of a sympathetic peer.

When Clan Brujah is not behaving dysfunctionally, however, it’s in a great position to pick up boons. Especially now that the Gangrel have seceded, the Brujah are the biggest bad boys in the vast majority of Camarilla cities. If anyone needs thugs (for whatever purpose), Clan Brujah often steps into the role with relish. While this is rarely a clanwide affair, the fact remains that the Brujah propensity for teamwork (not to mention ganging up on their opponents) gives them a valuable edge that they can capitalize on.

The curious disparity between the Brujah elders and their younger clan members grants the clan a broad range of influences upon which to draw (assuming the primogen can convince his young clan members to help without placing undue strain on the already troubled relationship between the younger and older Brujah). Elders (including the primogen) typically focus on bureaucracy, health, politics and university influences, while the younger members focus on street, transportation (Teamsters) and underworld influences.

#### GANGREL

The number of Camarilla Gangrel is small and dropping, but in those domains where the Outlanders still have a presence and a primogen, they conduct business as usual. Many of the remaining Gangrel feel they need to convince their Camarilla fellows they’re still a faithful part of the sect and behave accordingly.

Here and there throughout the Camarilla are also the bestial monsters who remain affiliated with the sect solely for the boons they receive in exchange for their martial abilities. Some say that the warlord Karsh is the ultimate example of this approach (though they don’t say it too loudly).

Gangrel primogen are as *laissez-faire* as they come, being as antihierarchical as they can get away with. Any coherence the Gangrel of a given domain may show stems directly from the liking or respect they have for each other. The Gangrel primogen is as likely to hold his seat for telling enthralling tales as for his combat prowess.

On those rare occasions when a Gangrel primogen is placed in a position where he needs to act as an authority figure for a member of his clan, it’s likely to take the form of a blunt, no-nonsense statement of fact. “Stop hunting in the Malkavians’ feeding grounds or the prince is going to stake your ass. Don’t say you weren’t warned.” Once the message is delivered, the primogen shrugs off the mantle of authority and reverts to the role of a solitary predator.

Influence in the mortal world does not play a big role in Gangrel unlife. Those Outlanders who have any notable influence generally have it on the street, with police or with biker gangs.

#### MALKAVIAN

The Lunatics’ primogen has her work cut out for her. While there are many benefits to guiding a clan as ... gifted as the childer of Malkav, the night-to-night accounting for the various outbursts of derangements can wear on even the most nurturing soul. That madness is also the strength of the clan. The Malkavians trade on madness and the insights it grants them. The Malkavian primogen, then, is occasionally in the position of hearing things that his clan members have picked up off the madness network and subsequently offering boons of information to her peers.

If a Malkavian primogen conducts his relationship with his clan in any standard way, only the Lunatics themselves can see it. Some are paranoid tyrants who spend the better part of their nights scrutinizing their own clan in a never-ending hunt for traitors (though traitors to *what*, no one seems to know). Others are relatively jovial unless set off, but what sets them off and how they’ll respond is anyone’s guess. Some set themselves up as royalty among their clan, and the clan either plays along to some degree or ignores them.

While they may be haunted by their assorted madnesses — and behave oddly because of them — the childer of Malkav are not a particularly difficult clan otherwise. Leading madmen is like herding cats: it doesn’t happen. That said, the madmen are typically good about staying in contact with their primogen and offering him the benefit of their insights. On the whole, Malkavian primogen tend to fall much further toward the “representative” end of the primogen spectrum than on the “governor” side.

Just as most things vary widely with the Lunatics, so do their influences. Church, health, and street form the core of their influence. Frighteningly enough, many Malkavian elders also have a remarkable amount of occult influence, but this they downplay so as to keep peace with the Tremere.

## NOSFERATU

Of all the Kindred, the Sewer Rats show the least concern with titles and formality. While he is shown deference, the primogen is often seen as more of an experience or knowledge resource than a political authority or leader. Interactions between the Nosferatu and their primogen are by far the least formal, due largely to the heightened and somewhat forced sense of camaraderie that comes from their sense of alienation. The Sewer Rats, consequently, are likely to think of their elder as something of an average Joe until something goes wrong.

There is a down side, however. Nosferatu elders tend to be keenly aware of their socially disenfranchised state, and while they don't wear it on their sleeve, anything that heightens tension between the Sewer Rats and the rest of the city often pops them back into politically sensitive mode. On the whole, Nosferatu primogen tend to overreact to pressure from the other Kindred of a city, whether it be the prince, the primogen council or, especially, the sheriff and scourge.

The Nosferatu primogen has to deal with some problems that other clans do not. For example, some Nosferatu never enter Elysium, never talk to other Kindred and never leave the sewers except to feed (if then). Should the time ever come when the primogen has to represent one of these hermitlike near-autarkis to Elysium, he will undoubtedly be at a bit of a disadvantage, because few others (and none outside Clan Nosferatu) are likely to know or sympathize with the hermit's plight, whatever it may be. At such times, it may only be the boons gathered through spying that save the hapless Kindred.

Information is the currency of Clan Nosferatu. The pursuit of it gives the clan its *raison d'être* in many ways, and it's the only reason the clan receives what respect it does. The primogen of the clan, then, guides the clan such that the information-gathering tendencies of the Sewer Rats are directed in ways that maximize the influence of the clan and, often, the boons owed to its primogen.

## TOREADOR

Without a doubt, the real power of Clan Toreador lies in their social finesse. The Toreador primogen leads, more often than not, with such assiduous attention to subtlety, protocol and etiquette that Kindred from other clans may not even pick up on what he's saying unless it is, tediously enough, stated as blatantly as possible. The unofficial hierarchy of the clan is determined largely by social status.

As the social core of the Camarilla, Clan Toreador does a great deal to hold the sect together. The Toreador primogen, then, often takes on a shepherding role in the city, mingling with all (or at least most) of the Kindred in Elysium, if only to draw out their business. It's not uncommon for a new arrival in Elysium to be swarmed by pleasant, chatty Toreador and forgotten the moment his business is known.

Only the Ventrué rival the Toreador in the influence game, and the primogen is typically of an age to be very well connected indeed. Their social nature inevitably results in contacts throughout the city, but they focus on high society and media, with a comfortable backup portfolio of bureaucracy and finance.

## TREMERE

The leadership tactics of the Tremere are not codified and held in triplicate in a secret bunker somewhere in Vienna, but then again, they don't need to be. One does not become an elder in Clan Tremere without learning the clan's tactics, directly or otherwise. With the exception of highly unusual or specific situations, a Tremere primogen has, at the very least, a clear and concise set of guidelines to follow.

The role of the primogen is abundantly clear: the primogen speaks, his clan members obey. The hierarchy of Clan Tremere is not a subtle thing. Things don't always work that way in the real world, however. Individual Kindred interpret and embody the ideals of Clan Tremere differently. While truly unorthodox Tremere will never reach the position of primogen (at least not if the clan leadership has anything to say about it), some of those who do take on the position may not be as keen on the clan's hierarchy as their superiors think. Some may value their Humanity more than the clan elders would like. Others may be too lenient or too strict. Still others have their own agendas that supersede the will of the grayfaces' pyramid.

As with many other things in Clan Tremere, the clan members' choice of influences in the mortal world are strongly influenced by their clan hierarchy. While the clan doesn't exactly dictate which kind of influence is acceptable and which is not, unlike without contacts in certain sectors can make things much more difficult for neonates and possibly even ancillae. Most Tremere primogen will have ample occult, university, bureaucracy and church influence to call on. The primogen of Clan Tremere will likely have the most occult influence of any Kindred in the city unless a higher-ranking Tremere, like a regent, resides in the city, in which case it's almost impossible to avoid rivalries developing between the two. On one hand, the regent carries more

weight with the clan, but the primogen technically outranks him in local politics, potentially setting the stage for an intense, if subtle, conflict.

Occasionally it happens that a representative of another clan has more occult influence in the mortal world — this has happened most often with the Giovanni, but it could also be the case with Malkavians, particularly creepy Nosferatu or even a Toreador with a blood cult. Such situations are, fortunately, rare, because such a state of affairs usually sets off an influence cold war that takes a hefty toll on both sides of the conflict.

#### VENTRUE

The Blue Bloods govern. It's what they do best. Sometimes the Ventrue were the only thing keeping the Camarilla from breaking apart under its own vast weight. The Ventrue primogen is typically one part field marshal, two parts corporate management and one part charming master of the fine art of schmoozing. They're cordial, witty and warm and there is no tactic a Ventrue primogen will not adopt to get her way, support her clan and further the standing of the Camarilla in the nighttime world. If she has to catch your eye and flirt, or show you a map of the city's defenses while her Gangrel hit man comes up behind you with his claws out, she's fine with that, too. Power comes with heavy responsibility.

Within Clan Ventrue the emphasis is on efficiency and success. The ends do justify the means for these Kindred. The ideal role of the primogen in all this is simply to oversee the accumulation of excellence, wealth and results. The Ventrue think of themselves as the most pro-social of all the Kindred clans (though the Toreador would argue the point), and corollary to this point is their focus on Humanity. Perhaps more than any other clan, the Blue Bloods stress the importance of siding with the Man against the Beast. While it can be a burden, it also pays off nightly when dealing with mortals.

Clan Ventrue is by far the most savvy when it comes to mortal influence, and they play it like the strength it is. While the primogen will have immense abilities to control profit from the financial sector in his city, he will also be able to draw on significant amounts of pull (from his own influence as well as from his clan) in bureaucracy, church, health, high society, industry, legal, media, police, political, university and sometimes even military spheres of influence. The Blue Bloods have an uncanny knack for choosing good connections, and those connections serve them well. The Ventrue often hold the greatest sway in any influence sector they have their hand in. The best way to avoid losing in the Kindred's nightly influence game is to avoid playing against the Ventrue.

#### THE FILIBUSTER

In theory (Gehenna notwithstanding), the Kindred have literally forever to deal with any given issue that comes up for a vote in the council, and issues can be pored over seemingly interminably. In practice, many of these issues are time-sensitive, revolving of necessity around mortal calendars, impending Sabbat incursions or the like.

In general, the council of primogen prefers to attend to the business of Elysium in short order. Sometimes, however, obstructionism is a Kindred's best tool. It may be in a particular primogen's best interest to prevent an item from coming up for a vote for as long as necessary either to have the issue dropped, change the minds of one or more members of the council or bring about some other change in the status quo.

One Kindred can, if she so chooses, prevent an issue from being voted on by ranting, raving and declaiming against the proposal until the council adjourns in preparation for dawn. This is called a filibuster. Those who follow Kindred political history recount tales of primogen who have spoken, literally, for nights on end to avoid a council vote.

A three-quarters majority of the council can vote to have the filibustering primogen sit down and shut up, but majorities are tricky things (especially these nights when there are only six official Camarilla clans and not seven as there were for centuries). Technically, the prince can also stop a filibuster and demand an immediate vote just by saying so, but doing so without strong cause is a fairly significant and heavy-handed political maneuver that will invariably come back to haunt him later.

Filibustering is not done lightly. It brings the political process in a city to a complete halt. The Kindred so doing is seen at the very least as a child having a tantrum and at the worst as a sneak who is up to something shady.

#### IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER

The flow of power varies from city to city, but in all but a handful of cities the standard model (introduced and championed by the Ventrue) is this: the primogen, drawing on their great age and experience, bring up issues of importance to the Kindred of a city, engage in reasoned debates regarding how to proceed and then

formally suggest a course of action to the prince. This is the introduction of the proposal. The primogen are free to advise or lobby the prince on the issue while he thinks about it.

At this point, the process can go in two different directions. In those cities with a strong prince, the prince decides the issue outright and his word becomes custom in his city. In cities where the primogen council is strong, however, the prince comes back to the primogen with a clearly worded yes-or-no proposal, which he turns over to the primogen to vote on one final time. The prince may contribute his own vote (or two

...) at this stage as well (while it doesn't jibe with many modern notions of "fair" politics, it's a far cry from the kind of despotism that princes once got away with). With the vote of the council, the matter is decided and, again, the outcome of the vote determines the policy in that city.

Some proposals originate with the prince in which case they go directly to the primogen for debate and a final vote. In extreme cases, the prince may overrule the council and tell the primogen how things are going to be. While this is absolutely within the prince's rights, it's also a politically dangerous move. The

### VIOLENCE IN POLITICS

Times may come when a particular primogen really wants to have his way in a meeting of the council. Times when the outcome is of the utmost importance to him and his clan. Times when it does not look good for his cause. Times when there is no alternative but to beat the ever-loving vitae out of key primogen who don't support his position.

It would be wrong to say that this has never happened in the history of the Camarilla, but it would also be wrong to say that it has been anything but extraordinarily rare. There's a reason for this: it doesn't fly at all.

Simply put, no primogen council is going to let one pushy member decide the city's politics unfairly through violence (that's what prestation's for, after all). A primogen trying such a thing would be overwhelmed by the other elders in short order, and if not by them then by the prince and the sheriff. Such a course of action would be seen as inherently anti-Camarilla, akin to the lowest-common-denominator brutality of the Sabbat, and punished accordingly. Historically, those who have tried such tactics have been given the option of leaving the city or having a blood hunt declared upon them. Thus far, all have chosen the former course of action.

Even the suggestion that one elder has tried direct intimidation tactics on another will work the harpies into a dark red lather, and the accused will be a target of scorn for years to come, making unlife hard for him, his clan and anyone he was associated with. Consequently, any intimidation tactics that are used have to be understated and somewhat ambiguous if the elder making them is going to have the advantage of plausible deniability.

This, as it turns out, happens all the time, with varying degrees of success. Any primogen who feels she's being subtly threatened can interpret the assailant's ambiguous words in their nonviolent meaning, forcing the thug to be less subtle, until the threat is clear, at which point the target can bring the matter up with the prince or the harpies — or take matters into her own hands.

Ironically, the clan everybody would expect violent tactics from is Clan Brujah, but in their roles as primogen, the Brujah are exceptionally good speakers and masters of persuasion; consequently, they don't need to resort to violence to get their point across (in the primogen council, anyway).

Where violence might become an issue is in conflicts between the prince and the primogen. While the primogen council is, at root, an advisory body, any prince who repeatedly asks for the council's input and then ignores it is fostering a situation where the city's elders may begin to feel a bit frustrated. Likewise, unless the primogen council is extremely weak it will not suffer a prince who exhibits a tendency toward outright tyranny. It has happened that the primogen and the prince have entered the council chambers, locked the door and before there's even time for discussion, the elders have beaten the prince into torpor. Given that princes tend to be of relatively low generation, bringing the prince back out of torpor can be a bit of a sticky wicket. The princes this has happened to become objects of scorn and derision throughout the Camarilla, and tend to leave for new cities shortly after coming out of torpor (and before any potential new prince shows up to deliver the walking papers).



## FUNCTIONAL VERSUS DYSFUNCTIONAL

Elder vampires are a difficult group to work with. This is not a “plays well with others” kind of organization. Centuries-old egos, pretend ethics and uncompromising agendas can make primogen council meetings excruciating affairs with Kindred knocking heads at every step of the political process. These negative elements, however, can be mitigated by the presence of Cainites with hundreds of years of political experience, a time-honed understanding of the strategic compromise and superhuman charisma (not to mention several dots in Presence).

The dynamics of any given primogen council are unique to that council. How enlightened (or benighted) a council is has enormous repercussions on the Kindred population of the city they preside over. A council of jaded, vicious, self-interested Kindred with a combined Humanity rating of 20 will likely fight, pout and deal with each other with as little honesty and integrity as possible. The primogen will have no higher interest than furthering their own goals, leaving the Kindred of the city at the mercy of the council’s plots and greed. The city’s Kindred would probably never know *why* that city was such a horrible place, they would simply know that it was.

Such diseased or dysfunctional councils are, fortunately, the exception. Most primogen take their places on the council seriously and give at least perfunctory consideration to how their votes will affect the Kindred of their city as well as their clans.

The key thing for the Storyteller to remember is that not all primogen councils conduct business with the same degree of ethics. Some are highly functional, making decisions that benefit the Kindred, while others are so corrupt and entrenched that nothing short of a rebellion by the city’s Kindred or an archon’s visit will result in any positive change. A storyteller whose chronicle occasionally takes characters to new cities should bear this in mind. It can be an eye-opening experience for a character to visit a city governed by a primogen council that is markedly different from the one in her home city.

primogen are the strongest force in the city backing the prince. For him to show them that degree of blatant disrespect is verging on political suicide for all but the strongest princes.

The Camarilla clans all seem to appreciate this method of doing business. The Ventrue like this model for its elegance. The Brujah tend to like any system that allows them to practice their skills at oration. The Toreador like to grandstand. The Nosferatu like it because they have an equal vote ... and on it goes.

Ideally, a primogen council is an inherent system of checks and balances. All six (or seven, or eight, or nine ...) clans have an equal vote, so no clan has any particular advantage or disadvantage over another. All clans must deal with the same limitations and advantages, and anything that disrupts this system is likely to be undermined in short order. This system either results in balance (whereby the primogen agree to share or alternate power to accomplish things) or stasis (when the elders are deadlocked and cancel out each other’s influence on an ongoing basis). One of the many reasons that the plan to incorporate the Assamites into the Camarilla is meeting with such favor is that voting is simpler with seven clans than with six. Many primogen

are not pleased with the departure of the Gangrel if only because of the political ramifications of having an even number of clans voting on issues.

The departure of the Gangrel had an interesting effect on the dynamic of many councils that has ultimately left the prince in a position of even greater political power than before. In case a primogen council is deadlocked three to three, the prince must be the tie-breaker (in addition to any other vote he may have had earlier in the process). In those cities where the prince is the primogen of his clan, this obviously is not the case. Under those circumstances, the tie-breaking vote falls to one of the other officers of the city (typically the seneschal in cities that have them, or harpies or sheriffs in cities that don’t). Kindred political arrangements vary a great deal from city to city. What matters is the overall balance of power, not the details of protocol.

## TYPES OF PRIMOGEN COUNCILS

Following are some of the models followed by various major cities in the Camarilla. Each of them has a slightly different balance of power, but most of the ones listed here are reasonably stable and fair.

### STRONG, BALANCED DEMOCRATIC COUNCIL UNDER A WEAK PRINCE

This is one of the best arrangements for the primogen. The council is democratic and holds ultimate authority over the weak prince. Typically the council will suggest proposals to the prince, the prince will rubber-stamp them, and the primogen will decide the matter through a vote.

One disadvantage to this arrangement is that if the group grows dysfunctional, the prince doesn't have the influence necessary to bring the council back in line.

Primogen on a council as strong as this are likely to keep their own clans in check, keeping friction with the prince down to a minimum.

### STRONG COUNCIL, BALANCED IN FAVOR OF A BLOC

This model is not unlike the last model, only a bloc of four primogen have allied themselves in order to push through their agenda. Any time a long-term voting bloc enters the political arena, those elders who aren't in the bloc are going to experience some frustration. While the bloc may not vote as such on all proposals that come before the council, a so-called "hawk bloc" (see the "Blocs" sidebar below) will have its way on any proposals having to do with security or official acts of aggression carried out by the Kindred of the city, and the Kindred who dissent will face loss after loss. Little can be done about a voting bloc except wait for it to crumble from internal pressure, or hope the prince intercedes if the bloc's agenda is questionable.

A powerful bloc can impact a city's Kindred population for decades with the subtle pressure it brings to bear on its favored issue. A powerful hawk bloc can give a city a reputation for aggressive anti-Sabbat tactics or it can give the same city a reputation for being dangerously bellicose toward area Lupines.

Blocs most commonly dissolve in one of two ways: either the council roster changes, breaking the bloc, or the bloc is the victim of its own success.

The former situation is self-explanatory. A member of the bloc is replaced by a primogen who does not share her predecessor's views on the issue that unites the bloc. In such cases, the remaining primogen of the now-defunct bloc can hold the new primogen accountable for their loss of voting power. If she does not agree to join their bloc as her predecessor did, she is likely to be the target of a great deal of their ire and bitterness.

In the latter situation, the bloc is so rampantly successful that it is free to adopt extremist policies that, in time, result in the city becoming unstable and requiring attention by either the prince or higher Camarilla



powers. In cases such as these, the prince either becomes the target of the bloc (unused to having its will thwarted) or the Camarilla sends a justicar to forcibly remove one (or all) of the primogen in the bloc.

A third possibility, which happens occasionally, is that a member of the bloc has a change of heart and stops voting with the bloc, but it's rare. Once a primogen has a taste of being part of a successful bloc, it's difficult to give up that degree of political success.

#### **STRONG, BALANCED DEMOCRATIC COUNCIL UNDER A STRONG PRINCE**

In some ways, this is an almost ideal state of affairs, if the parties involved can refrain from killing each other.

Under this arrangement, a strong and united primogen council represents the clans and generates proposals for the prince's consideration. The prince maintains order through strength, but he cannot push through his private agenda or behave like an autocrat. Neither party is able to push, intimidate or outmaneuver the other. This arrangement cannot work unless the council and the prince are on relatively good (or rational) terms. If the basic good will between the prince and the primogen comes to an end, the conflict between the two will be incessant. Unavoidably, the prince and the primogen will be at each others' throats on a regular basis. If this state of hostile coexistence runs for too long, it's likely to result in the death or expulsion of the prince from the city, because while the prince is stronger than any two or three primogen, the antipathy of a united primogen council is a terrible thing.

In the more common agreeable state of affairs, however, the biggest beneficiaries of this arrangement are the Kindred of the city. With their clans well represented and the prince and the council both taking strong stances on, essentially, everything, Elysium is safer, nobody wants to antagonize the prince or primogen, Sabbat invasion becomes highly unlikely, and the concerns of the city's Kindred are attended to with relative alacrity. The Kindred are free to worry less about their night-to-night existence and focus more on their personal agendas (often cultivating influence, a step that makes the primogen even stronger).

#### **WEAK COUNCIL UNDER A STRONG PRINCE**

In this situation, the primogen are little more than advisors or a rubber stamp brigade. The prince introduces proposals, the council okays them, and that's that. If the prince is relatively ethical, such arrangements aren't necessarily bad. It's certainly a very efficient approach to things. The problem is that many times a primogen council this weak has entered into power because the prince wanted it that way. Trouble can

result if a powerful primogen is suddenly elected to this board, because the prince may not be used to dealing with challenges to his power. The other primogen are likely to try telling the headstrong elder not to push his luck. If he insists on doing so, one of two things will happen: either the prince will take action to have that primogen lose his position or the rebel's aggressive approach will grow on the other primogen.

#### **WEAK COUNCIL UNDER A WEAK PRINCE**

Among the worst arrangements in the Camarilla is the situation where a weak prince oversees a weak primogen council. Under such conditions, order barely holds sway. Elysium in such cases is typically controlled by unofficial "warlords" (i.e., any Kindred with enough charisma or raw power to convince others to side with her instead of any of three other elders) who can, if they so choose, run roughshod over the traditions of the Camarilla.

In the best-case scenario, the city's other officers assume additional powers to keep the peace. Everyone from the sheriff to the scourge to the harpies will perform their functions with a little extra authority. While such actions help keep Elysium safe from night to night and free of the worst forms of excess, it has no effect on the decisions of the council, which can result in even more chaos.

As order breaks down, so do the distinctions between Camarilla and Sabbat. Cities following this model are often refuges for the unaligned if not for actual members of the Sabbat itself.

This is the kind of city the Camarilla is most likely to visit archons upon with a notable frequency. It's not uncommon for archons to be instructed to be looking for Kindred in the city who would make better primogen than those currently in office.

The interesting thing about cities with such weak leadership is where the power *does* lie. Power is always *somewhere* (unclaimed power never stays unclaimed for long), and if it's hidden, there's generally a reason.

A particular clan, Camarilla-affiliated or otherwise, may wield power in a city instead. There are, obviously, cities where one of the six (or seven or eight) clans of the Camarilla is mostly in control: the Toreador in Amsterdam, for example, or the Gangrel in Tucson. In and around Italy, cities with such weak Camarilla government are largely in the hands of Clan Giovanni. Likewise, in the Middle East, parts of Africa and the Caribbean, Followers of Set hold the real power in cities that are, nominally, Camarilla holdings.

In other places, the situation is stranger still. There are small cities in northern Germany, Russia and the American Pacific Northwest where Lupines

hold more sway than the Damned, and in those places they wield enough power to keep it that way. Likewise, a handful of cities exist where mortal wizards hold the Kindred in check. Worse, in the city of San Francisco, the weird Cathayans have so capitalized on the weak and slow-acting Kindred power structure there that they have effectively assumed control of the city. With the exception of San Francisco, however, these bizarre situations are not allowed to happen in major cities. The Camarilla will only look the other way in selected cases and for a limited time. If the prince and the council can't get their collective act together before their city draws the sect's full attention (time best thought of as a grace period), then the sect will send in heavy hitters to clear up the situation (as it is beginning to do in San Francisco even now).

Oddly, inevitably some Kindred have grown comfortable with even these unorthodox power arrangements and would rather not have them changed. Once the Camarilla determines that action is necessary, however, those individuals often find themselves on the wrong end of a stake.

#### THE "ADVISORY COUNCIL"

In this case, the prince is the ultimate authority with regard to Kindred matters in the city. There is no democratic vote of the primogen council to determine anything (of significance, anyway), only the decree of the prince after she has heard the opinions of the clan elders, assuming she even bothers with that. This arrangement differs from the arrangement of a strong prince over a weak council in that the advisory council doesn't even pretend to follow a democratic model. The primogen give their opinions and lobby the prince to decide as they would want, and after that it's all up to her. If the prince is dedicated to hearing what the elders have to say and taking their advice into consideration, this system works fine. The problem is, it relies on the ethics of the prince, and even if the current prince has fine ethics, the next one isn't guaranteed to.

On the other hand, if the prince is doing nothing more than smiling and nodding as the "advisory council" recommends a course of action, then it's highly likely that the city will suffer for her decisions in due time.

#### THE IMBALANCED CITY

There are cities in which one clan holds enough sway that it has special representation on the primogen council. This might happen in a number of ways. One city may have one primogen from each clan but the key clan, which has one primogen for each quadrant of the city. Or the city may have only one primogen from each clan, but "primogen at large" seats representing whatever clan has enough power to push such a policy through the council.

#### OTHER SYSTEMS

Democracy is not necessarily seen as an inherent good by all (or even most) elder Kindred. Too much democracy can lead to a lowest-common-denominator rule that serves no one well. Left to their own devices (as they largely are), Kindred power structures can wax Byzantine. Ghent has three Ventrue primogen, two Toreador primogen, a Tremere whip with a vote on council matters and a Tremere prince whose vote counts twice. While they continue to have a Gangrel primogen, they do not have an Assamite representative on the council, and probably won't until a new prince comes into office. The city of Venice, on the other hand, has no Gangrel or Assamite primogen but does have seven voices weighing in on policy issues — the seventh is provided by a "family representative" from Clan Giovanni.

While the Camarilla is growing increasingly democratic, certain modern notions of "fairness" have yet to catch on in certain segments of the Kindred populace. For a Kindred traveling from the U.S., this can be eye-opening.

#### BLOCS

A bloc is defined as "a usually temporary grouping within a legislature, made up of diverse members acting together for a common interest or purpose." In Camarilla cities, a bloc is usually defined as a political alliance of four or more primogen to further their shared goals. The goals, strategies and clan make-up of a bloc can vary widely depending on the circumstances that bring the bloc into existence. The primogen of certain clans seem to have affinities for forming certain kinds of blocs. Likewise, the life span of a bloc can range from a few months to several decades, depending on the stability of the council, the success of the bloc and how much interpersonal stress the alliance can tolerate.

Barring unusual circumstances, a bloc of four or more primogen will decide a matter in a democratic vote. Blocs form in primogen councils regardless of the council's power relative to the prince. The primogen may serve only in an advisory capacity, but even a strong prince knows that disregarding a majority of his primogen places him squarely in the middle of a political mine field.

Following is a short catalogue of common (and a few uncommon) blocs that, over time, can have powerful and lasting impact on the Kindred of a city.

#### Hawks

More inclined toward violent solutions, a bloc of hawks has traditionally been made up of the primogen of Clans Brujah, Gangrel, Nosferatu and Ventrue. The

first two clans can almost always be counted on to support violent measures (initially, at least), while both the Nosferatu and Ventrue tend to be swing votes. That used to be the composition of a traditional hawk bloc. Some Kindred fear that the departure of the Gangrel will result in fewer hawk blocs, resulting in weaker and less effective dominance of cities by the Camarilla. Thus far, however, no obvious pattern has taken shape.

**When it's good:** When a hawk bloc holds sway in the primogen council, it can be an immensely powerful arrangement for the city, and one that the Camarilla as a whole tends to nurture (albeit while keeping an eye out for abuses). Combining the fighting prowess of the Brujah and Gangrel, the intelligence-gathering capabilities of the Nosferatu and the strategy and leadership of the Ventrue, hawk blocs have been responsible for (in no particular order) the successful defense of many Camarilla territories against the Sabbat, the expulsion of unaligned vampires from certain Camarilla cities and the eradication of poorly behaved Lupines from a handful of others.

Unsurprisingly, the morale of the Kindred in a city with a hawk bloc dominating the Primogen council is unusually high, one of many results that the Camarilla quietly smiles upon them.

**When it's bad:** When a hawk bloc goes out of control and nudges the prince into a rash course of action, the consequences can shake the entire Kindred population of a city. The results of such martial excess range from simple (but unacceptably frequent) breaches of the Masquerade to all-out war with the Lupines or Sabbat vampires of an area. Such situations generally sort themselves out, however, when Clans Brujah and Gangrel lose enough members that the primogen of those clans begin worrying about their standing in the city and stop voting with the bloc.

With the defection of the Gangrel, it remains to be seen how primogen councils stand on acts of war. With the increasing integration of the Assamites into Camarilla politics, many hope that the Sons of Haqim will simply replace the Gangrel in hawk blocs, but thus far the Assamites have shown no interest in that approach. The patient stalking of the judges, after all, has little in common with the brawling of beasts, and the differences in these two approaches are significant.

#### Doves

In opposition to the hawks are the doves. The term can be confusing because it doesn't mean that the primogen council advocates peace, as much as it prefers to wage war through more subtle means. A dove bloc

prefers to use diplomacy, subterfuge and mortal influence to deal with conflict. Depending on whom you talk with, others might accuse doves of preferring treachery, spying and deceit over simple violence. While this approach sees results more slowly, those results normally result in fewer Kindred deaths. A traditional dove bloc is made up of Toreador, Tremere, Malkavians and Ventrue, with the Ventrue commonly providing the swing vote.

**When it's good:** The Machiavellian approach of the doves is ideal for maintaining order in a city that is not facing any pressing or unusual threats. Its subtle approach to conflict effectively upholds the Masquerade as well as the peace. While external enemies might bring trouble to a city, a bloc of doves usually has enough intelligence on a city's native troublemakers to prevent real problems before they have a chance to break out.

**When it's bad:** The glacial approach doves take to conflict resolution can be detrimental to the Kindred of a city when threats are immediate. A dove council may be so hesitant to use actual violence that a violent enemy achieves a foothold in of the city before the council's overly subtle methods have time to kick in.

To take a page out of recent Kindred history, we need only look at San Francisco. The primogen council under Jochen Van Nuys was a textbook dove council. The Ventrue, Toreador and Tremere were by far the most numerous Kindred in the city, and they were dedicated to maintaining their hold over the city through the subtlest means possible. The loyalty of the Malkavians was bought by allowing the homeless population of the city to remain large (providing the Lunatics with both cover and feeding opportunities). San Francisco's primogen council had experienced extraordinarily low turnover and had been essentially the same since the end of World War II. It saw no reason to change its tactics, even in the face of a growing number of strange Asian vampires.

When the Cathayans made their move, the primogen of Clans Malkavian and Tremere were, ironically enough, the first major casualties of what has since become a long-running occupation of a Camarilla city by a foreign power.

The other key problem in cities ruled by a bloc of doves is the absence of privacy. In order to maintain their hold on a city, dove blocs tend toward minding everyone else's business to an invasive degree, and Kindred of all creatures dislike the feeling of being monitored. In dove cities, they seem to mind it less than being drafted for battle.

## Shepherds

Kindred vary drastically in their approach to the mortal world in which they operate. Many policy issues addressed by primogen councils impact the interactions between Kindred and kine. Primogen who work together to decrease the barriers to interaction between Kindred and kine are called, innocuously enough, shepherds. A city under the influence of a shepherd bloc will have fewer restrictions against socializing with mortals, creating ghouls, blood bonding mortals and participation in mortal politics. Vampires residing in a shepherd city are more likely to have the "Herd" Background (and the Storyteller may consider providing characters with one free dot of it while they're operating in such a city).

Traditional shepherd blocs are made up of the primogen of Clans Brujah (who love taking part in mortals' social experiments), Toreador (who like to immerse themselves in a city's high society and art scenes), Ventrue (who appreciate easy access to mortal financial institutions) and Malkavian, who make up the swing vote.

**When it's good:** A city that has been "desegregated" by its primogen council offers its Kindred an array of advantages. Advocates of the shepherd philosophy maintain that keeping strong ties to the mortal world seems to slow the degeneration of a vampire's Humanity. More pragmatically, it comes with a slew of advantages: fewer restrictions on the creation of ghouls, more opportunities to gain influence and the myriad social benefits of close interaction with mortals. Shepherd councils generally fare better in cities with relatively young (high-generation) vampires who still have enough in common with mortals that their interactions retain a natural feel to them.

**When it's bad:** Excessively close ties between Kindred and kine result in a sort of desensitization on the part of the vampires. They become so accustomed to interacting with humans that they forget that if the mortals around them knew what they fed on, they would perceive the bloodsuckers as monstrous and evil and probably go to whatever lengths were necessary to send them to Final Death. "Blood cults" may pop up as increasing numbers of Kindred seek to maintain herds on which to feed. Kindred in a shepherd city are more likely to forget that they are no longer mortal like those with whom they interact. The entanglements can become ... awkward. The relationships between mortals and vampires in such cities can often become quite sticky and may require the strategic use of "Forgetful Mind" Disciplines or the blood bond to rectify.

Worst of all, when things go bad in a shepherd city, they tend to go *very* bad. As if prompted by a silent signal, breaches of the Masquerade may suddenly pop up everywhere as the Kindred of a city, almost as a body, forget that mortals surround them.

When things reach that point (and preferably before), the prince is forced to intervene aggressively and the bloc dissolves, generally under the heavy scrutiny of the Camarilla leadership (as embodied in an archon or two).

## Isolationists

Predictably, isolationists are the antithesis of shepherds. They observe strict rules limiting contact between Kindred and kine (outside of feeding, obviously). Ghouls are strictly limited to Kindred with requisite status. How much status is required to have a ghoul depends on how strict the council is; in the strictest cities (the vast majority of which are in Europe) only the prince, primogen and other officeholders are allowed ghouls. Likewise, cities occupied by an isolationist primogen council often require an accounting of a vampire's ghouls, blood bound mortals and political contacts as a requirement for acknowledgement, and if these records are not kept current, acknowledgement may be revoked.

The greatest determining factor of a city's isolationist slant is the average length of unlife of its primogen. Those councils made up of Kindred who are all over two hundred years old (again, almost all European) are almost certainly isolationists. Certain clans tend to prefer keeping a clear distance between mortals and vampires. As a general tendency, the primogen of Clans Ventrue (the clan's old guard), Tremere, Nosferatu and Malkavian are more likely to feel "alienated" from mortal society and therefore vote in favor of isolationist policies.

**When it's good:** When a city is inhabited mostly by older Kindred, isolationist councils tend to make things run smoothly, despite the elders' somewhat lower Humanity. The strict boundaries erected by the council serve to prevent awkward situations from arising. In such cities, feeding takes on a relatively impersonal and "businesslike" feel, and the Masquerade, overall, is much easier to maintain when the kine and Kindred populations are kept segregated.

Should anything go awry with a ghoul or if a Kindred hand is obviously tampering with politics inappropriately, the council knows whom to call onto the carpet. This tends to prevent the escalating wars of influence that pop up so frequently among the American Kindred.

**When it's bad:** Isolationist cities have begun to see more unrest in recent years. The strictures on ghouls can become a rallying point for the younger or disenfranchised Kindred of the city, who feel that they're being unfairly denied a convenient and powerful ghoul. While the council enacts isolationist policies to maintain a strict separation of the mortal and vampire spheres, these policies can easily be misinterpreted to seem like tactical moves to keep the younger Kindred in their place. Even Licks who don't care have begun to rebel. "We don't want it, but when they tell us we *can't* have it, they're oppressing us!" seems to be their attitude. An isolationist city may feel like an oligarchy or gerontocracy wherein the older (and therefore more status-bearing) members can have certain privileges but the younger (and status-starved) members cannot.

The other issue that comes into play with regard to isolationist cities is Humanity. The more distant one is from mortals, the more alien Humanity seems. While there is some question which came first, the isolationist policies or the atrophy of Humanity, there is no doubting that those with a distant relationship with humanity have a harder time maintaining their Humanity. Killing or torturing mortals is easier when one thinks of them as nothing but prey; it's harder when one thinks of them as peers, pets or objects of affection, from whom one just happens to feed.

#### **Mystics**

Only a handful of Camarilla cities have a mystically inclined primogen council, but they're increasing in number now that the Final Nights appear to have arrived, triggering a resurgence of interest in arcane and eschatological subjects. While they remain rare, their dynamics are interesting and their increasing frequency makes them worth mentioning.

A mystic council, obviously, is one wherein the council majority has a particular interest in the occult and mystical goings-on in their city. Standard Kindred and Camarilla business is also addressed, but a majority of the council has a pronounced involvement with anything connected to magic or the supernatural and makes decisions and determines policy based on that fascination.

The interest may be in mysticism in general or with some particular subfield. Most of these blocs are concerned with thaumaturgical or necromantic knowledge, with the *Book of Nod* and its associated lore, with the whereabouts of particular items of great mystical power or with other similarly esoteric knowledge.

The Camarilla doesn't necessarily approve of the council following such unorthodox interests very far,

but fascination with such things has a certain infectious nature, and when one or two members of the council have it, it can spread from primogen to primogen. Once four or more members of a council catch "the bug," there's no telling what it might do in the pursuit of its goals. It often falls to the prince to impart some discipline over the proceedings, but even princes are subject to the allure of the mystical and mysterious, particularly those from Clan Tremere.

In the past, it was Clan Tremere that began mystical blocs. Given time, inclination, blood bonds, Dominate, prestatation and whatever other tactics they found necessary, they most commonly recruited to their cause the primogen of Clans Malkavian, Nosferatu and perhaps one other clan (generally the Toreador, though their interest in such things is usually fleeting). With the increasingly common inclusion of Clan Assamite in many primogen councils, the allure of things mystical seems to be on the rise. While the Tremere and Assamite clans despise one another, they have shown a willingness to "cooperate in order to compete," by which they mean they will vote together in favor of pursuing mystical goals as long as it means they can compete with each other to claim the plums of the research first. By far the most common composition of mystic blocs includes the primogen of Clans Tremere, Assamite, Malkavian and Nosferatu. When such blocs fracture, it's usually due to the defection of the Malkavians.

**When it's good:** A mystic bloc can make matters comfortable for Clan Tremere. Their mystical researches can bring them status in the city (and by extension in the Camarilla) just as it gets earns them status in their clan.

The Kindred of such cities have a clear sense that their primogen are working together toward some goal (although the rank and file aren't likely to know what that goal is), resulting in the same kind of enhanced morale that cities with hawk councils enjoy.

As an additional perk, if and when the investigations begun by the council come to fruition and some new book/item/source of mystical lore comes to light, the whole of the Kindred population is generally given some reward, even as the primogen of Clans Assamite and Tremere vie for control of said item.

**When it's bad:** Excessive interest in occult lore typically leads in one of two directions: either the Kindred as a whole become so wrapped up in mysticism that the night-to-night events of the city go untended — making the city easy pickings for the Sabbat — or they become too good at tracking down the lore they seek, thereby bringing notice upon themselves by the wrong parties.

Gaining the notice of powerful enemies can have disastrous effects on the Kindred of an entire city. While it hasn't happened in recent memory (that anyone has heard about, anyway), Camarilla cities in the hands of a mystic bloc have run afoul of powerful magi, demons, spirits and other, worse, things and subsequently suffered for their efforts.

The pursuit and study of certain books or other objects has likewise been known to do great damage to the Kindred of a city bent on knowing things which, perhaps, ought not to be known.

Alternatively, the competition between Clans Tremere and Assamite can blow up violently if one or both parties feel they have been slighted or toyed with. Ironically, even that won't split the bloc because both clans are more likely to see setbacks as challenges and, consequently, redouble their resolve. When this happens, it can quickly degenerate as both clans grow

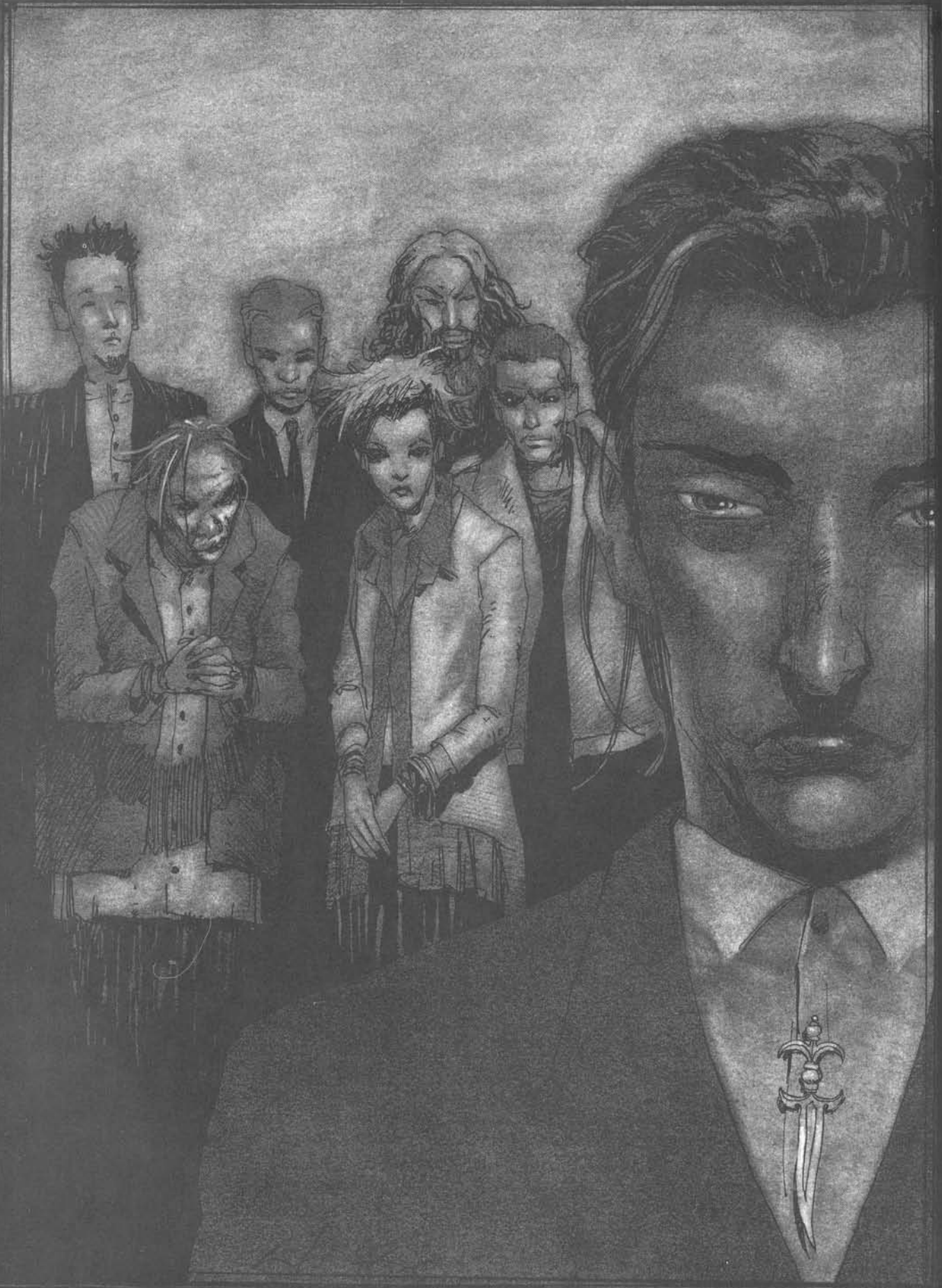
increasingly obsessed until the resources of both of those (very hierarchical and advancement-driven) clans are completely deployed to that single goal. Both clans are inclined to pursue their notion of victory by any means necessary at that point, including diablerie and other disturbing methods.

When the council reaches that state, the only option is for one or, ideally, both of the swing vote primogen to leave the bloc. The problem is that by that point, both the Tremere and Assamite primogen are so invested in the perpetual cycle of competition that they are likely to bring enormous amounts of pressure to bear on the dissenting primogen.

Exactly that situation unfolded in Cologne, Germany in 2000, ultimately resulting in the Final Death of the Malkavian primogen, a visit by the Brujah Justicar and several archons and the summary execution of the primogen of Clans Tremere and an Assamite lobbyist.









# CHAPTER THREE: SHAKING THE FOUNDATION

The concept of a primogen council is more of an outline than a steady and reliable blueprint. Like any social construct, as many compositions of the entity exist as do concepts to be implemented. The previous chapters have drawn a broad diagram of how a primogen council should work, and it should come as no surprise that there are as many variations on that theme as there are councils that rigidly adhere to the ideal.

## DIFFERENCES IN SIMILARITIES

Primogen councils are living entities and are suitably complicated. Understanding where one council differs from another not only highlights the vast differences in each council but also the overwhelming similarities. In the end, no two councils look exactly the same.

To continue the living entity metaphor, it may be helpful to think of the primogen councils in terms of convergent evolution. Evolutionary theory argues that creatures placed into similar niches will develop similar adaptations. Even if those creatures come from radically different backgrounds, the end result is remarkably similar.

The same can be said of the primogen. Members of a given primogen council can come from extreme backgrounds where they may never encounter another Kindred from another city, or, on the other hand, can be vastly traveled, counting numerous countries and time periods as their playgrounds, and all backgrounds in between. Interestingly, this is not to say that the primogen council of each Camarilla city isn't similar — on occasion surprisingly so, especially considering the divergent personalities that all pull each council in different directions. Merely add in the influences and machinations of each individual prince, and it is a wonder that any primogen council looks at all similar to the others. As wildly divergent as their makeups are, councils of primogen tend to fulfill the same purpose across the board.

Placed into similar roles with generally similar goals, the primogen of each city grow to look like the others, even in cases with relatively little regular contact with other Camarilla cities. Other factors push each council in similar directions — to converge. The primogen council of each city operates under the burden of hundreds of years of history and custom. The Camarilla, an entity known for its adherence to tradition, is sure to impart a similar respect of an important political institution like

the primogen council. Role coupled with history makes for a powerful influence on the composition and actions of each council, so much so that over the years the forces of convergence have retained a slight edge over the forces of divergence.

However, like other entities at the whim of convergent evolution, each creature maintains its own sense of individuality. Indeed, the overall result is the same, but at the more minute level of investigation some remarkable differences occur. It is these differences that make each council so very interesting and so very individual.

## VARIATIONS ON A THEME

Most primogen councils look superficially similar to the archetypical model but upon closer investigation show some unique variations. Most commonly, the differences in the many councils are found in the balance of power within the council itself. These variations are changes in degree rather than in kind but can create changes within each council as extreme as membership of nonstandard Camarilla Kindred.

Even among these variations are some commonalities, changes that reoccur enough times to only raise an eyebrow of interest. Primogen may constantly fluctuate as new members attain the ranks; new princes may take power. These fluctuations usually take the form of gaining extra positions at the whim of the prince or losing positions that are contrary to the goals of the prince or primogen of a given regime. Likewise, these fluctuations are often temporary or only last long enough for the impetus for the change to fade away, such as a new prince taking the title. Granted, in the static world of the Kindred, such changes are rare on the whole, but terrifyingly frequent in domains known for their turmoil.

### GERRYMANDERING

Gerrymandering involves the prince or a particularly influential primogen council member manipulating the composition of the council in such a way as to influence the decisions of the primogen. This is most common in cities where the primogen council fills more than an advisory role to the prince. The ability to form policy or to effect real change in the city entails a formal way of deciding that policy. When such rules exist, it is all too often a simple matter for the prince to modify those rules and sway a vote or decision one way or another. The end result is a council that looks slightly different than the archetype.

One form of gerrymandering is vote stacking. Vote stacking involves the prince or a particularly influential council member adding extra positions to be filled by those predisposed to the creator of the position. As has been mentioned before, the prince is often much more influential and politically powerful than any given primogen, and often more powerful than the council as a whole. As such,

it is not all that uncommon for the prince to place like-minded Kindred into the primogen council in specially created seats.

Considering the fractious nature of Kindred, it should not come as a surprise that vote stacking backfires as much as it attains its goals. When a seat is added, the Kindred who occupies that new seat is often not as compliant as the creator wishes. For a myriad of reasons the new seat can become more of a headache than a benefit — whether it be because of the Kindred tasting power, manipulation from an outside source, backlash from the clan or a simple attack of morals (which once in a while does happen), the longer an extra seat exists, the more likely it is to engender animosity. Time is not always the balm of Kindred social relations.

Another form of gerrymandering is seat elimination. This tactic involves a prince selectively removing a member from the primogen council in order to eliminate a dissenting voice. Where vote stacking helps fill the council with friendly faces, seat elimination forcibly silences detractors. This tactic is most often used when a prince sees an entire clan as an enemy and has grown tired of the constant harassment.

Normally a prince will simply eliminate a particular individual in the council and then work with the replacement (perhaps by convincing fellow primogen to blackball her as well). Under dire circumstances, however, an entire clan seat is removed. This is common in cities where the prince believes the clan in question is traitorous and possibly working against the Camarilla to destabilize the city. In pettier situations, this tactic is used to punish the entire clan for an act that cannot be traced to one or a coterie of Kindred. As a weapon, seat elimination is a broadsword attack rather than a surgical one.

As a political tool, gerrymandering is a rare occurrence, usually used in extreme cases or to remove seats of non-Camarilla clans. One thing needs to be kept in mind about the use of vote stacking and seat elimination: when gerrymandering occurs, it happens in an effort to disenfranchise someone. Rest assured, the person or group most negatively impacted by gerrymandering is bound to react ... sometimes violently.

Historically, the one clan most often hurt by the actions of gerrymandering was the Gangrel. Never quite adept at the political machinations of the primogen councils, many princes and politicians took it for granted that they could manipulate the councils with relative impunity. The Gangrel may prove dominant in physical contests, but more than a few princes eased their troubled egos by punishing the Gangrel politically. It is no wonder that part of the reason the Gangrel eventually left the Camarilla was due to the blatant abuses of the primogen council. Outvoted, disenfranchised and politically outmaneuvered, the Gangrel simply removed themselves.

### THE GANGREL FACTOR

The mass exodus of the Gangrel created a situation where nearly every Camarilla city was forced into a situation of seat elimination. This unprecedented event still has lingering effects in the Camarilla, with a number of princes and primogen leaving shadow seats for the missing Gangrel. The impact of the change wrought by the Gangrel's leaving cannot be understated. Many primogen councils were greatly affected, redistributing power to the remaining members and leaving most councils with a vastly diluted militaristic voice. More interestingly, the absence of the Gangrel has created a void that is occasionally filled by Kindred that are not normally part of the enfranchised Camarilla. The result is that to this night, most primogen councils are still in mild flux, forcing even more divergence from the basic model as each city quietly copes with the change. The Kindred are not known for decisive action.

In cities where some Gangrel have remained loyal to the Camarilla, some princes and councils do allow the Outlanders a place among the primogen. By nature, these are exceptions rather than rules, and many of the Gangrel in this position face either overeager appeasement or tangible hostility.

With the Gangrel gone, no clan has stepped up to take its place as political whipping boy. The Brujah and Malkavians have been subject to the negative effects of more than their fair share of gerrymandering, though both clans have enough political acumen and pull in mortal society to ensure that eventually they gain equilibrium if not revenge. The result is that the occurrences of gerrymandering are down as compared to only a few years ago.

### CABINETS

A sizeable number of primogen councils lack any formalized decision-making institutions. Instead, they advise the prince directly, in an informal manner that allows the influential personalities and movers and shakers to have the loudest voices. Primogen who adopt a cabinet style do so in cities where the prince is both well received and quite powerful or in cities where the prince has unilaterally revoked the most effective powers of the primogen, leaving them largely neutered.

Because of the lack of formalized power, cabinet primogen councils force their members to be creative at times in the use of their power and influence. Contrary to what initially might be expected, the members of this type of council are often far from powerless. In fact, due to the lack of formalized procedures coupled with the

constant clamoring for the prince's ear, the primogen are quite free in their actions, using them to great effect. Rather than relying on the council itself for political influence, these members are forced to act in a more creative fashion, constantly redefining their power and garnering more. It takes a driven personality to remain effective in such an environment.

The members of cabinet councils often remain more in the background compared to the archetypal council. As advisors, the primogen have no direct method to create or enforce policy and so are left to the vagaries and whims of their prince. In an effort to ensure their usefulness, these primogen usually quickly fill specific roles within the cabinet, becoming experts on one aspect of Kindred society or another. This expertise allows the members to differentiate themselves from one another and to gain a little more influence with the prince when their particular fields are discussed. Realms of expertise include nearly every influence background a vampire may have and also include other aspects of undead existence such as the Sabbat, the Cathayans, Lupines, Elysiums, the Traditions and a whole host of topics that a prince may find important due to geography or political situation.

A prince creates a cabinet council in order to eliminate structured opposition to his goals. Yet the result is often to the contrary, forcing the weak members of the primogen council to step down and be replaced by their clanmates who are more effective in their tasks. Interestingly, a prince directing this type of council often gains some of the best advice for the same reasons.

### UNATTACHED COUNCILS

Even rarer than gerrymandered or cabinet councils is the unattached council. The members of the council have dispensed with representing their particular clans. The membership of this type of council is variable and depends on history as well as the desires of the prince. Usually, however, the numbers do not climb significantly larger than if the members directly represent a clan, numbering from five to eight members.

### WAR CABINETS

While cabinet councils are rare, a particular situation makes these councils more common, even, to some, expected.

During sieges, it is not uncommon for a primogen council to have archons fill the role as councilors. During those trying times, the Camarilla has little need for the backstabbing and shadow politics that characterize the primogen council. Instead, they need quick and effective leadership. The result is an interim council staffed by combat veterans with the sole purpose of defending the city.



Like other primogen councils, the members' personalities drive the unattached council. Since the members are not associated with their clans, usually some other defining characteristic places the member onto the council. Often, the new characteristic focuses on knowledge or influence, creating positions such as security, religion or any of the positions found in the cabinet-style council.

Selection of members differs from city to city and from prince to prince. The Kindred of the city usually have little or no say in the selection of members. Formal voting by the city is absolutely unheard of. Usually the prince has first and final say, with the harpies, sheriff and other positions sometimes only influencing the selection process. Occasionally, there is a competitive process in which the supposedly most qualified secure the position for themselves, but as often as not the selection falls entirely to the prince.

As was mentioned before, unattached councils are quite rare. They generally only appear and survive in small cities where the number of Kindred demands a primogen council but they have difficulty supporting the strict clan structure. Occasionally, in the wake of a successful siege the prince foregoes the strictures of clan for the selection of primogen, but this is often a dangerous tactic as it can undermine tradition and possibly arouse the ire of the archons.

#### GARY, INDIANA

Gary is not a large city, but large enough and proximate enough to Chicago to house a decent number of Kindred within its borders. Because of its size and the continuing population decline, the Kindred of Gary have adopted a very informal tone to their interactions even though they recognize the usefulness of the normal Camarilla institutions.

The prince rarely makes any kind of official ruling, instead just conferring with whichever Kindred is useful or interested in the topic. Similarly, the primogen council is very informal, having dispensed with actually representing any particular clans. Instead, the prince talks with those he thinks would like to sit on the council and gets a verbal agreement that they will attend. For Gary, the council is more a formality than a truly useful body.

As it stands, Gary's primogen council is composed of a Toreador, two Brujah, a Nosferatu and two Ventrue as well as the prince (another Ventrue).

## JUNTAS

Arguably the rarest style of council is the junta. The primogen council holds enough power and influence to do away with the prince entirely. The reason for the rarity of this council type is not only the extreme difficulty of eroding all the power of a prince in her own city, but also the issue of Camarilla representatives stepping in and "correcting" the situation. History and tradition can be powerful forces, doubly so when they are backed up by nearby princes or justicars.

Juntas usually occur due to some catastrophe. If a member of the primogen council is powerful enough to take the principedom then he will do so. Only the most Machiavellian of plots involve the total elimination of the principedom and all the ensuing trouble that such an action can take. Sometimes the power structure of the primogen council is such that no member is, by himself, powerful enough to replace the prince, so a coalition of council members destroys the prince and the position as a way of ensuring that the conspirators remain first among equals. Like the occasional tripartite leadership of the Roman Empire, the triangle is not a particularly stable political structure, and sooner or later one of the conspirators gains power over the others and the principedom is reborn.

More often (though still not often at all) a junta is formed due to the sudden Final Death of a prince and serves as interim leadership until the new prince is selected. In effect, the junta serves as a placeholder for the new prince, trying desperately to hold on to some level of normalcy to maintain order and loyalty. Not surprisingly, when the new prince is selected, her main adversary is often the junta, now invigorated with the taste of power unchallenged by a prince's presence. In this way, the members of the junta become much like the quarreling European monarchs of old, not particularly liking one another but supporting one another in sometimes precarious situations in order to protect the legitimacy of their own power.

## SATELLITES

When a large city cannot assert its own independence from the domain of a nearby prince from another city, a satellite council is not uncommon. Rather than taxing his ability to administer two (or more) different cities a prince will sometimes appoint a separate primogen council to manage the nightly affairs of the smaller city while still maintaining the supremacy and jurisdiction of the prince.

Not unlike the juntas, satellite councils exist without a prince directly over them. In this case, however, the primogen are in place specifically due to the wishes of some other power, such as a nearby prince. A satellite council answers to a prince of another city, often acting in that prince's name.

Not every major city surrounded by smaller suburbs maintains satellite primogen councils. Only in the cases of two sizeable cities (about a million or more residents per city and surrounding territory) located nearby one another do princes ever consider creating a satellite council. Moreover, the prince in question has to be a fairly persuasive and commanding personality to maintain leadership of not one but two primogen councils and their associated members. Plus, said prince has to fend off any challenges to his position from two separate cities — not an easy task. Thus, satellites are a fairly rare occurrence, with only a handful in both North America and Europe.

A satellite allows a prince to maintain a fairly large domain (with the associated power and prestige) and also possibly create a situation where her influence will hold sway with at least one city and one council at all times. Besides extending influence, a satellite council offers other potential benefits. A second primogen council allows a prince to shuffle off her more connected and dangerous foes while not directly manipulating the original primogen council. Additionally, the new council can prove an excellent training ground for possibly protégés or allies of the prince, creating a testing ground of sorts that avoids the high-power politics of the primary council.

### FORT WORTH, TEXAS

It is joked that Fort Worth is the largest suburb of Dallas, which is all too true for the Kindred dwelling in Fort Worth. Fort Worth lost its prince almost a decade ago and has not mustered the impetus to seat a new regent. Instead, because of the influence of the city of Dallas, which is only a half-hour car ride away, the Kindred in the larger city of Dallas overshadow the Kindred of Fort Worth.

Officially, the Prince of Dallas and its primogen count the city of Dallas proper, the many suburbs, and Fort Worth and its own suburbs as their domain. However, in reality the territory is too large for the prince and the Dallas primogen to readily handle, so they have turned over domain of Fort Worth and the surrounding region to a second, loosely associated primogen council. This suits the Fort Worth primogen fine, as they report their formal decisions to Dallas only for final approval (and the prince retains the right to veto any decision made by the Fort Worth primogen).

In this way, the Kindred of Fort Worth are left to their own devices and the Prince of Dallas claims a significantly larger territory.

On the other hand, a satellite council also allows the enemies of the prince a place to rally and maneuver their own support while outside of the direct sight of the prince and sheriff. Intermittent contact with such a council can prove the ultimate downfall of a prince, giving her enemies and potential enemies a staging ground to attack her socially. Like almost all of Kindred society, the satellite council is a double-edged sword.

#### OBSERVER SEATS

As unconventional primogen councils go, this type is actually fairly common. An observer seat is established to allow a Kindred to sit in on the formal meetings of the primogen, but he lacks any power besides occasionally being able to voice his opinions. Usually, an observer seat is created to allow a particular expert or respected Cainite to participate in the proceedings without having to really bend the rules of the primogen council (such as happens with just about every other modification mentioned in this section).

Observers watch and listen. They are also usually allowed to speak up and add their voices to the proceedings. Yet it is expected that an observer maintain silence except when she is invited to speak. Observers are considered guests of the primogen and are expected to act with the appropriate respect and decorum. A Kindred granted an observer seat had best choose wisely what he says, for he is granted precious few opportunities to command the complete attention of the council.

Observer seats are always temporary posts, as is appropriate for a guest. However, it is rare to attach a specific period of time period to the seat. Instead he observer sits in on the council as long as his presence makes sense. If he is an expert on a topic, then when the importance of that specific topic wanes, the prince politely asks the observer not to attend the next meeting. Attending further meetings becomes a nonoption, and any attempt to remain will be seen as a breach of decorum and also ensures that the Kindred is never asked to fill an observer seat again.

It is relatively common for a prince who wishes to have her clan more formally represented on the council to use an observer seat to gain that representation. This is common enough to elicit very little reaction on the part of most Kindred, because for many it is the natural state of affairs to have a single member of each clan regardless of the prince's background. Usually, this state of affairs works to the advantage of the prince, adding an extra voice that shares a similar outlook.

If a prince or council itself wishes to have a vampire from outside the Camarilla be part of the proceedings for a time, it is through the use of observer seats more often than not. They are, in fact, the best method available to bend the rules of the council without actually breaking those rules.

## UNHOLY COMBINATIONS

Many of the changes that bring about one variation on the basic council model also bring about others, leaving the council radically changed. Death or disappearance of a member can create an opportunity for the prince or other members to modify the structure, leading to both types of gerrymandering and some of the rarer shifts simultaneously. Crises are particularly interesting times of change, where the normal rules are thrown out in favor of innovation or of change for its own sake. The same is true for the primogen.

Particularly taxing situations lead to primogen councils with unconventional numbers of seats, and possibly acting without the direction of the prince — combining both the gerrymandering and junta styles into one, very temporary primogen council. These mish-mash primogen councils are exceedingly rare for the same reasons that juntas are so rare: the powers that be do not appreciate them.

#### VOCAL MINORITIES

It is not unheard of to discover a city here and there that allows anomalous clans membership on its primogen council. These anomalies are exceedingly rare, with perhaps fewer than a score of cities in both North America and Europe with such odd memberships. Still, the fact that these oddities do exist is worthy of note, especially within the solid and traditional halls of the Camarilla.

The inclusion of non-Camarilla Kindred on a primogen council happens because of very specific, very infrequent circumstances. Since an "independent" Kindred sits on the primogen council only when the prince and primogen see the situation as a necessary risk, a considerable amount of circumstantial information about the power of both the prince and primogen can be gathered simply by noting the anomaly and the circumstances that gave it rise.

Treatment by Camarilla Kindred is usually very chilly for outsider primogen. Although the primogen is a position of respect, "lesser" primogen members are held as little better than their wayward counterparts. Not unlike the occasional barbarians still attached to their customs living within Rome, the bloodline or independent primogen members are usually in very hostile environments. Considering the nature of the Camarilla, disrespect veiled by traditional nicety is par for the course.

These oddities subject themselves to outright hostility and discomfort for some reason. Although no one reason explains their enduring such situations, these primogen members do indeed remain in their positions and often gain a good deal of grudging respect (over time). They know what they are getting into and, inevitably, are ready to make the best of a bad situation.

## GANGREL

Politically, the Gangrel are not dead, at least not entirely. Certainly, the greatest portion of the clan has left the hallowed halls of the Camarilla, but that does not mean that each and every member of the clan has left for parts unknown. The Gangrel clan has always been one of individuals, and it stands to reason that some of those individuals would stay with the organization they have been part of for so long.

Those Gangrel who remain with the Camarilla do so of their own free will. Each one has a very specific reason for staying and often leads a dedicated core of loyalists. Reasons for staying are numerous and as individual as the Gangrel themselves. Many stay because the Camarilla has been their home for so long. Some stay because they honestly believe in the ideals of the sect. A rare few stay because they enjoy the safety of the cities. Some stay because they are spies for their own elders, reporting the goings-on of the Camarilla.

Despite the disparate reasons for staying, the remaining Gangrel usually fill the roles that they did while their clan was part of the Camarilla. Interestingly, those Gangrel who remain are more socially adept than the “average” Gangrel, a notable difference between those who left the Camarilla and those who stayed. The Camarilla is a social organization, and those who decided to stay also recognized the necessity of skill in that arena. Thus, of those who stayed, a notable number are primogen.

The rare Gangrel who are also primogen walk a razor’s edge. Not only are they viewed by their colleagues as one step removed from the Beast, but also as traitors. The prince, archons and others on the watch for signs of sedition critically evaluate their every move, every vote and every machination. The Gangrel primogen remain because they are good at what they do, physically and socially.

Many Gangrel primogen are holdovers from before their clan left the Camarilla. Very few (of an already small number) were elevated to their position in the wake of the exodus, for a number of reasons, not the least being that the Gangrel do not represent a member clan any longer.

A Gangrel who holds a seat does not automatically command the respect that usually is associated with the primogen council. These Gangrel hold their positions due to a combination of respect from the Kindred community around them as well as a refusal to step down. The Gangrel’s age and the exploits associated with him is what often garner respect — the position is usually incidental in the eyes of Camarilla Kindred.

However, those Gangrel primogen who remain do not do so in unaltered positions. Although a member of the primogen council, these Gangrel now serve in positions of reduced respect and responsibility. More so than





even before, their opinions and abilities are called on only when no alternatives can be found. In many ways they fill observer seats, with little real impact on the decisions of the council as a whole. Still, their mere existence as primogen is at least a nod on the part of the prince and other primogen to the Gangrel and the position their clan once held.

In the end, despite their continued loyalty to a sect that has all but ignored them over the years, the Gangrel primogen are often seen at best as a figurehead and at worst as a loyal enforcer with access to a clan of wayward thugs.

### ASSAMITE

A surprising number of Assamites sit on primogen councils throughout the Camarilla (which is to say, more than one). Second only to the Gangrel in the number of seats held by an outsider clan, the Assamites are a subtle but steadily increasing voice in the Camarilla.

The Camarilla Assamites typically come from the faction known as the Schismatics and thus are not as tied to Alamut as their more tradition-bound clanmates. As the numbers of Assamites increase within the Camarilla, the numbers of their Primogen also rise. As it stands, the handful of Assamite primogen primarily reside in very large cities that maintain a strong Middle Eastern community (or occasionally where there is a large Tremere presence).

Those cities that consider the inclusion of the Assamites on the primogen council often do so with an agenda of their own, most notably to fill the glaring hole created by the Gangrel's leaving. The desire to have a voice well versed in combat and with access to a clan that can "mix things up" is a strong one indeed, even with the passive Camarilla. Thus, a couple of cities have "hot-seated" the ranking Assamite into the empty Gangrel position and have tried to do so with as little disruption as possible. With the enforcers of the sect gone, many princes turn to the Assamites.

Assamite primogen usually represent their clan as the other primogen do. Since their clan is usually the least populous of all the represented clans, they, like the remaining Gangrel primogen, make do with reduced and often ignored voices within the council. The prince and primogen are more than happy to have the aid of the Assamites when the Sabbat begin a siege, but, much to the chagrin of the more learned and cultured Assamites, their voice is rarely heeded otherwise.

Assamite primogen are trying to create positions where not only is their clan's physical prowess respected, but their knowledge of history and the mystical arts is also noted. Assamite primogen know they have much to offer the Camarilla, and patience is going to be their best ally. So they wait. They offer advice when it

is appropriate, make backroom deals like the other primogen and generally do their best to play the game, knowing full well that with time their detractors will have less and less of a voice.

This waiting game does have a few negatives associated with it, not the least of which is the associated reduced respect for passive leadership. Moreover, the quiet Assamite primogen seem to many other council members to be holding a secret, spying, or both. The other primogen members tread lightly around an Assamite council member, and many would appreciate seeing the seat taken away altogether.

The representation of the Assamites has caused a number of disruptions both within the clan and within the Camarilla as a whole. Because the Assamite primogen usually fills an unofficial "junior" role to the other primogen, many of the Schismatics are calling for an end to the social experiment and to leave the halls of the sect which they just joined. These Assamites are reconsidering the value of joining the Camarilla and questioning whether the disrespect is worth the inclusion in the vampiric community.

Similarly, a number of Camarilla Kindred are disturbed by the inclusion of the Assamites, especially due to their insular clan nature and the fact that only small portions of the clan seem willing to join and obey the laws of the Camarilla. Too many Camarilla Kindred still stereotype the Assamites as mere assassins and refuse to look at the potential benefits the clan as a whole has to offer. Moreover, these same bigoted Kindred are loath to allow the Assamites any positions of leadership within the sect and especially despise seeing the institution of the primogen council sullied by the inclusion of the Assamites. This viewpoint is remarkably popular with the staid traditionalists of the Camarilla as well as with many younger Kindred who are intimidated by their image of the Assamites.

A number of cities and justicars watch the few primogen councils that include Assamites closely. They watch to see if those opposed to such a primogen council are willing to act on their beliefs, possibly disrupting the Masquerade. They also watch to see if the Assamites truly are as dedicated to the ideals of the Camarilla as they profess. A couple of the cities watch the performance of the Assamite primogen especially closely, for they may be tempted to open their own council up to an Assamite primogen member and want to see the potential benefits and penalties of such a bold move.

Regardless of the opposition from within and without, the Assamite presence is growing within the Camarilla, to the chagrin of many and to the delight of a select few. Consequently, the Assamite primogen steadily gain political clout and respect. Time will tell if both sides can win from the influx of new blood and new leadership.

### A HATE-HATE RELATIONSHIP

The most vocal and staunch opponents of the inclusion of the Assamites into the Camarilla come from Tremere. The Tremere as a clan both hate and fear the Assamites, and both feelings stem from a long history of conflict and enmity between the two clans. Until recently, the entirety of the Assamite clan suffered under the strictures of a Tremere curse. Mysteriously, that curse has been lifted and almost simultaneously a number of Assamites have “infested” the Camarilla.

The Tremere are afraid that the Assamites are merely trying to exact their revenge, both on the clan that conjured the curse and the sect that has harbored the Usurpers. Not surprisingly, a large number of Tremere all but froth at the mouth at the idea of an Assamite primogen and will vehemently do all that they can to undermine and marginalize such a Kindred.

The Tremere also resent the implications that the Assamites may be able to lend mystical knowledge to the Camarilla. Since its inception, the Camarilla has relied on the Tremere for mystical power and knowledge, part of the pact for accepting the pariah clan into its ranks. Quietly, their role in their own sect is being challenged, and from a credible source no less. While only a small number of Assamites within the Camarilla belong to the sorcerer caste, the Tremere are not about to split hairs over the possible erosion of their power and influence in the Ivory Tower.

To their credit, the Assamites have made no indication of looking for revenge, constantly referring to the benefits of upholding the Masquerade as their reason for joining. The Assamites do their best to steer clear of the Tremere in most social situations and quietly endure the occasional Warlock tirade. To many outside observers in other clans, the Assamite attitude is not unlike that of a tiger, biding its time until it can strike.

The Tremere do not believe the Assamites' apparent disposition for one second and will continue to oppose Assamite inclusion in the Camarilla for the foreseeable future.

### LASOMBRA ANTITRIBU

The very rare occurrence of a Lasombra *antitribu* as a primogen council member is cause for a number of raised eyebrows. All but a rumor in most cases, there have been a few instances in the past where a prince has been comfortable enough to elevate one of the rogue Keepers to a position of primogenship.

Socially, the Lasombra *antitribu* differ from the Assamites and Gangrel in a number of aspects. Most importantly, the Lasombra *antitribu* are connected to social networks, unlike most other outcaste clans. Often the foils to the Ventrue, the Lasombra *antitribu* have extensive contacts and allies in whichever city they call home. Thus, they can move about the higher echelons of the Camarilla with relative ease, slipping into the high-stakes and competitive political atmosphere of the Camarilla with nary a bump.

It is not entirely unknown for Lasombra *antitribu* to enter into the Camarilla in temporary roles, usually occupying primogen council seats in deference to their social power. When (and if) they agree to become part of the Camarilla, they often also demand positions on the primogen council to ensure they have some say in the affairs of the Cainit—er, Kindred in the city, and to ensure their membership is not entirely marginalized and their wishes run roughshod over by ambitious princes. Since they are often only temporary members, their provisional membership and elevation to primogenship usually only involve discussing the topic that brought them into the sect, such as a Setite incursion into the religious society of the city. This is a classic case of the enemy of my enemy becoming my friend, or in this case, a member of my sect.

More permanent Lasombra *antitribu* primogen council members may fill the empty seats left by the Gangrel. To make up for their lack of representing any other clan members (besides the occasional childe), the Lasombra *antitribu* is often expected also to speak for the non-Camarilla Kindred within the city, a sort of catch-all seat to account for the many disparate voices not represented in the primogen council. More often than not, this representation is entirely ceremonial, with the influence and actions of the Lasombra *antitribu* concerning herself only.

Lasombra *antitribu* primogen council members are often quite reserved in their dealings with other members. They recognize they are outsiders, even if formally members, and do their best to make their influence felt outside of the council. The council provides an excellent forum for gauging the success of those actions, as well as a safety net should the Lasombra *antitribu*'s social maneuverings fail miserably. The occasional time one of these Kindred is vocal in the council is when one or more of his personal enemies also sits on the council. Then, despite his tenuous position, he will check the actions of his enemies at all costs, including using his seat as a blatant weapon in the game of one-upmanship so common in the Camarilla.

As for motivation, a Lasombra *antitribu* enters the Camarilla often for reasons of revenge. Childer of turbulent times, they despise their brethren in the Sabbat and

still look for opportunities to reap age-old vengeance upon their younger fellows. An enemy of the Sabbat can easily become an ally of the Lasombra *antitribu*, encouraging the Kindred to take a seat on the primogen in order to better unify the assets arrayed against the Sabbat. Yet, even with these seemingly similar goals, conflict can arise. The Lasombra *antitribu* look to destroy their cousins first and then the Sabbat, while the Camarilla usually does not make any meaningful distinctions among the clans of the Sabbat, instead focusing their hatred on the enemy as a whole.

These Lasombra are elders, and when they join the Camarilla (even for a temporary position) they expect the treatment any self-respecting elder would demand. For their part, the leaders of the Camarilla recognize the Lasombra *antitribu* with the attention their age deserves. Thus, if a Lasombra *antitribu* does aid the Camarilla, he may be offered a seat on a primogen council as a show of respect and deference. Unlike the other outsider bloodlines and clans that occasionally gain a primogen position, when the Lasombra *antitribu* are added to the ranks of the Camarilla, it is most frequently with a token position on a council.

Still, old habits die hard, and like other non-Camarilla Kindred, the Lasombra inclusion among members of the primogen council brings with it a number of vocal objections from within the sect. Their connections (if tenuous) to the leaders of the Sabbat leaves a bad taste in many Camarilla Kindred's dry mouths. As outsiders, they have to go out of their way to prove the acquisitions of spying and espionage are false.

More often than not, for the Lasombra *antitribu*'s own good, they avoid prominent positions like the primogen council. The Sabbat have many eyes and ears, and their antipathy for the Lasombra *antitribu* is well known. The benefits of the Camarilla are often not enough to encourage one of these rare Kindred to endure the threat to their unlife as well as the enmity of a number of the Camarilla Kindred.

#### CATHAYANS

The Eastern Vampires are probably the most unlikely members of the Camarilla, and indeed nowhere in the Camarilla are they acknowledged members. However, in both the Pacific Rim and the West Coast of the United States, interaction with the Eastern Vampires is inevitable and has forced some primogen councils to take some very unconventional methods to broker cease-fires. In these nights of strife, the possibility that the Kuei-jin take a position on a primogen council is not entirely unreasonable.

It is rumored that in at least one city the prince has allowed the Cathayan a position on the primogen council, where whoever it is can represent the interests of the

Eastern Vampires. Yet the Kuei-jin seat is certainly an unofficial one, with absolutely no formal powers of its own, save the ability to suggest the impact of certain policies on the local population of the Kuei-jin. For their part, the Cathayans respect the Camarilla as a sect, providing order and hierarchy to obviously inferior and chaotic creatures. Thus, while the Kuei-jin as a whole do not recognize the legitimacy of the Camarilla, they do see it is a useful tool occasionally, especially when the Kindred are able to muster enough of a defense to slow Kuei-jin colonization.

For all their best efforts, time and population are not on the side of the Camarilla and the leadership of those cities involved in the fighting. The Cathayans, consummate social creatures, use whatever opportunities present themselves. To that end, a number of princes (with or without the blessings of their primogen councils) have tentatively offered primogen positions to influential (and relatively peaceful) Kuei-jin.

These desperate offerings of peace are hindered in a number of ways and have yet to officially bear fruit despite the occasional rumor to the contrary. The overwhelming lack of reliable intelligence is a fact of life in Kindred society, and triply so when dealing across Camarilla-Cathayan lines. The Camarilla still know precious little about their enemies, and if the offer of primogenship has been indeed taken up, their knowledge of the Eastern Vampires should increase accordingly.

A Kuei-jin primogen council member is a wholly unknown factor in an already unstable political structure. Stereotyping them is all but self-defeating, especially given the limited knowledge the Kindred world has of its eastern cousins. One thing is certain, though: first, if a primogen council exists with a Kuei-jin member, the Cathayan joined in order to further her own agenda and the goals of her sect, not because she believes the Camarilla is an inherently good or useful organization.

Even if the prince of a given city maintains considerable formal power, she still needs influential Kindred to fill positions on a primogen council. Considering the mystery and fear that surround the Cathayans, the council members would need to be in desperate straits even to consider allowing an Eastern Vampire onto the council. Of course, the ongoing tensions with the Kuei-jin and the opportunity for intelligence gathering may prove enough incentive to calm the fears of the primogen enough to work around the situation. If anything, Kindred members of the primogen council would surely try to milk such a volatile situation for all its worth.

The offering of a primogenship to a Kuei-jin is an unprecedented event, one precipitated under dire circumstances and still under review by the Camarilla inner council. In an effort to stem the Cathayans' incursion a

### SO DOES IT EXIST OR NOT?

Considering all the potential problems of a Cathayan sitting as a primogen council member, it is all but impossible for such a situation to survive more than a few nights before erupting into chaos or dissolving into paranoid fractionalization. Still, the possible benefits for the Camarilla are quite good, not the least of which is the ability to slow or halt the conflict in the given city, and thus the impetus to make the situation work is appropriately important and worthy (in some cases) of the effort.

With such benefits a possibility, it should be no wonder that a couple of beleaguered cities have considered opening their primogen council. In fact, a few princes have formally made the offer. To date, though, no response, unofficial or official, has been received. The Kuei-jin are either amused or ignoring the offer, confident in their own abilities to bring the Great Leap Outward to success.

In your chronicle, if you as a Storyteller think the inclusion of a Cathayan as a primogen council member would be a useful plot device, you are more than welcome to do so. Keep in mind, however, that such a plot device needs to be treated with the appropriate respect and gravity. This is an event worthy of the direct attention of the justicars and needs to be handled with care.

few princes of besieged cities have sought desperately to diffuse the situation. These overtures are a result of a number of circumstances, many of which can be traced to the losses of Los Angeles and San Francisco.

In particular, the inner council's haphazard treatment of the cities on the West Coast embittered a number of princes and primogen, so much so that in some isolated circumstances it is whispered that the Camarilla Kindred met with the local Cathayans and offered the primogen position to buy time.

The inner council, while not normally keen on the idea of peace efforts by Camarilla Kindred not under their direction, is rumored to be interested in the results. If these peace offerings have taken place and been accepted, the inner council seems willing to give the local princes and primogen just enough rope to hang themselves with. If nothing else, if the effort pays off for one city or another, the inner council may have another plan for dealing with the Cathayans.

A unique primogen position such as this is all but lightning-in-a-bottle, with both sides, the Camarilla and the Cathayans, seeing a unique opportunity and each trying to exploit the situation to maximize their own



benefit. Conflict is inevitable. The second assurance is that the powers-that-be of the Camarilla are watching the situation extremely closely, most likely calling the shots through the prince. Should the situation prove even slightly nonadvantageous the justicars and archons will have no compunctions about pulling the plug on the radical social experiment (and the same probably goes for the leaders of the Kuei-jin).

#### CAITIFF

The Caitiff are at once a clan and not. Rarely does one of these most reviled Kindred rise to a position of both power and respect and also maintain good relations with the Camarilla. Usually, after a good deal of time, a Caitiff does his best to steer clear of the Camarilla in an effort to avoid garnering any inappropriate or unwanted attention. The Caitiff are adept at surviving, and survival is often synonymous with avoiding the Camarilla, which considers them little better than cannon fodder.

As always, though, exceptions exist. The chaos left in the wake of the Gangrel departure has proven a boon for some Caitiff, allowing those who have endured the rigors of unlife within the Camarilla to occasionally make moves to secure primogenship. Even before the Gangrel left, there were occasional Caitiff primogen, but they were certainly very rare. To many within the Camarilla, a Caitiff primogen sounds a bit too much like the organization of the Panders within the Sabbat.

Caitiff are nothing if not adaptable. Similar to the Gangrel, they are often both physically adept and mentally sharp; unlike the bestial Gangrel, not a few of them are socially adept. With the Gangrel gone now, however, a handful of Caitiff have been able to press their cases and fill the role of Camarilla muscle. Some cities have come to rely increasingly on their loyal Caitiff to do the dirty work that was often sloughed onto the Gangrel. With extra responsibility, a few Caitiff have also been able to demand increased power, sometimes in the form of a primogen council seat.

Usually, if a Caitiff is granted a primogen council seat, it is in the form of an observer seat. These seats sometimes have existed for some time, upward of a few decades. With no set time limit, these Caitiff observer primogen retain their seats for as long as they are on good behavior, which accounts for some of the long-standing seats. Occasionally, if the Caitiff is able to exhibit special loyalty to a prince, a seat is gerrymandered into creation with the belief that the Caitiff will quietly support the initiatives of the prince. This is also how it happened before the departure of the Gangrel.

Caitiff primogen are usually not treated any better than when they were not involved directly with Camarilla politics. The rare Caitiff that is able to gain the respect necessary even to have the position offered

is not going to see his lot in life significantly improved simply by becoming a primogen. On the flip side, the acceptance of a primogenship, even one restricted to observer status, often means that any support they had before may well be shaken. Caitiff are not known for appreciating authority, and many Caitiff especially resent "traitors."

To stereotype a Caitiff primogen member would be folly. With so many backgrounds and experiences, each one takes different skills and knowledge to the council table. More than the other primogen rarities (like Assamites of Lasombra *antitribu*), the Caitiff primogen are more likely to accept the position with very selfish intentions — a blatant attempt to improve their own security or self worth.

#### THE REST OF THE RABBLE

Besides those mentioned above, it is unlikely if not impossible for other clans or bloodlines of Kindred to occupy positions on a primogen council. The rarity of these other Kindred, coupled with the uniform disdain the Camarilla feels for them, means that they would not be accepted even under the most trying of circumstances. As it stands, the aforementioned non-Sect Kindred are allowed on primogen councils under only the most unique and chaotic situations.

#### THE GIOVANNI

Foremost of these anomalies within anomalies are the Giovanni. As social creatures who spend their unives in a strict traditional structure not too unlike the Camarilla, they can easily slip into roles as primogen. Yet their dedication to their own family lines and the unwillingness of the clan to tolerate even the hint of sedition has ensured that a Giovanni has not sat formally on a primogen council for some time. It is much easier to offer the occasional Giovanni a position as an observer, especially in times when the Camarilla and Giovanni have similar interests and goals. These observer seats are very short-lived, usually lasting no more than a few weeks.

When Giovanni do sit on primogen councils they blend in fairly well (excepting, of course, the animosity and constant glares from the Camarilla Kindred). Giovanni are used to high-stakes politicking, with political battles within the bloodline being just as fierce as on the most cutthroat primogen council. In fact, the general atmosphere of the Giovanni bloodline is superficially similar to the atmosphere of the Camarilla (just less cosmopolitan); given a bit of preparation, a Giovanni is quite capable of working the ins and outs of prestatation or any other aspect of Camarilla existence.

When a Giovanni sits as an observer tensions always run high on both sides. Despite the Giovanni invariably acting with the utmost respect to the council, the cold

and calculating atmosphere that they engender makes a council meeting an even more stressful affair, accounting for the short-lived nature of the observer seats. When the Giovanni finally leaves, both the Camarilla and the Giovanni "guest" breathe a sigh of relief. A Giovanni in a primogen council acts like nothing more than a viper waiting to strike.

### RAVNOS

Once upon a time, the Ravnos could hold positions on a council with an on-again-off-again regularity that befitted their nomadic ways. Once in a while, one would be asked by the powers-that-be to offer information that he had gathered over his travels, but Ravnos interaction with the Camarilla rarely extended beyond this role. However rare, up until recently, a handful existed that maintained the social connections to make them useful to a primogen council.

Though they were not formal members of the Camarilla, the sect was quite comfortable with the existence of the Ravnos, treating them with the same respect as Anarchs — that is, as Kindred who benefited from the strictures of the Camarilla but who did not normally act within its rules, not unlike wayward children. When situations arose that a prince wanted an extra, "outside" voice on the primogen council, it was often the Ravnos that were drafted.

Times have changed, however, and the Ravnos are unlikely to be asked to sit or even be interested in such a position. Since the Ravnos blood-frenzy and the subsequent destruction of the bloodline, the Ravnos are too few and too preoccupied with the incursions of the Cathayans to be interested in the social niceties of the primogen. In time, maybe things will calm down and the situation will lend itself to more interaction between the Ravnos and the Camarilla, but for the time being that relationship is all but ended.

### SAMEDI

It is rumored that the Samedi at one point or another had a formal seat in the Southeastern United States. If such a seat existed, the Samedi occupied a similar position within the primogen council as the Nosferatu. The persistent rumors invariably say that the prince, a Nosferatu, added the extra formal seat in an effort to

bolster his popularity within the primogen council, hoping that between himself, the Nosferatu member and the new Samedi member he could counter any political opposition. However, since the story remains a rumor, it seems unlikely the situation was as beneficial as the prince had hoped.

In the end, the Camarilla still knows little about the Samedi and is uncomfortable with the idea of a Samedi primogen. The bloodline's goals, history and future are still very much unknown, and the Camarilla already deals with more than its fair share of the unknown. At least with the Assamites or the Eastern Vampires the Camarilla has reasonable expectations, anticipations of goals and what not. The Samedi present an entirely different situation.

### SETITES

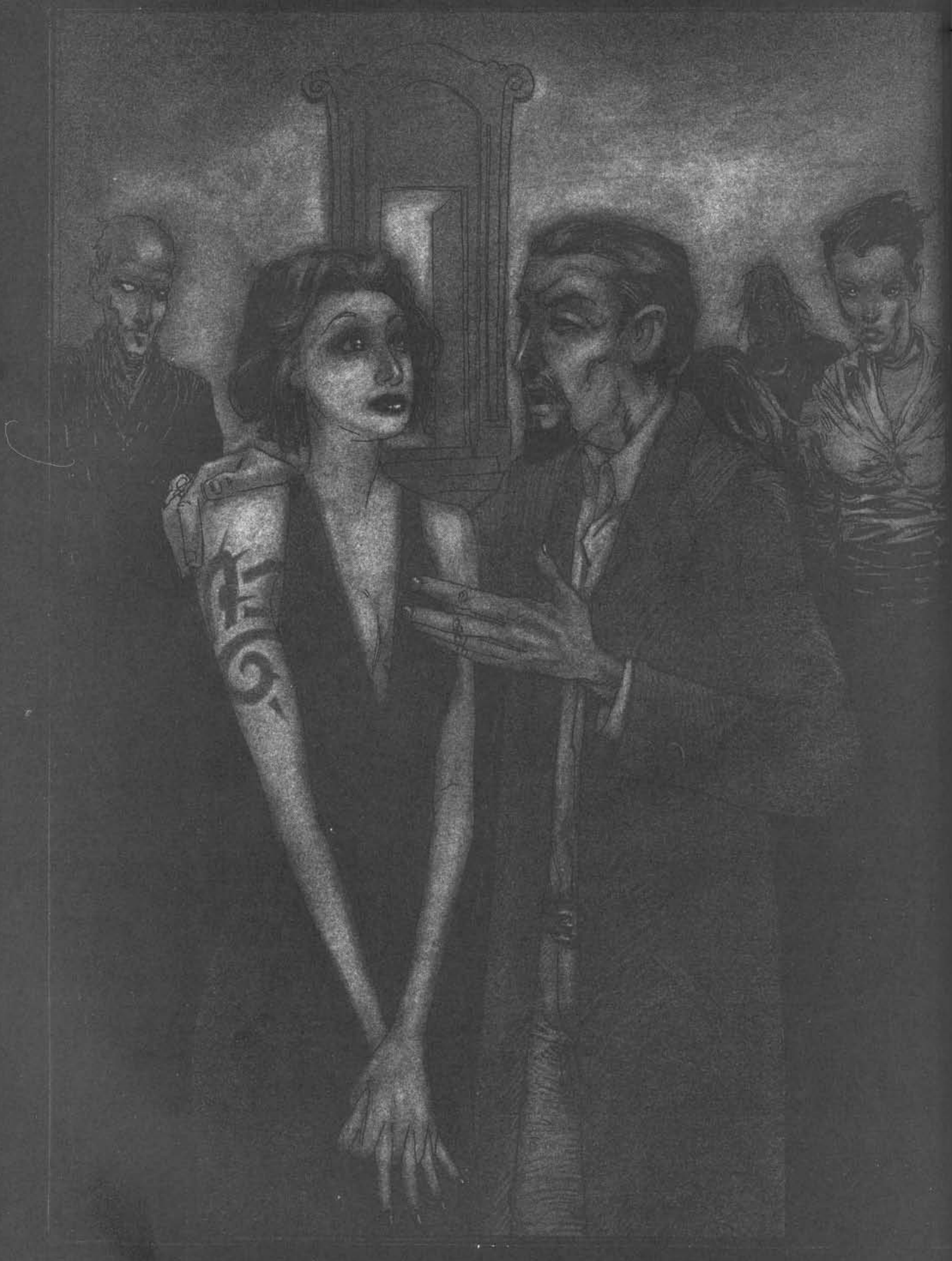
During the foundation of the Camarilla, the Setites were originally asked to become one of the founding members along with the Ventrue, Tremere, Nosferatu, Toreador, Brujah, Gangrel and Malkavian. They turned down the offer but have remained interested in the goings-on of the Camarilla. In these modern nights, the Setites are once in a while found on primogen councils. However, like the Giovanni, the leaders of the bloodline are wary of allowing the rank and file power outside of their control. When a Setite does gain a primogenship, it is with the express approval of the Setite powers-that-be and with a specific goal in mind (often the gradual corruption of a member of the primogen council).

Camarilla and Setite goals often run at cross-purposes, so interaction between the two is usually with a good deal of antipathy. The modicum of cooperation required to act on a primogen council is often absent when the two groups interact. Quiet manipulation, so much a part of Setite livelihood, is not likely in intense scrutiny of the primogenship.

### THE REALLY WEIRD STUFF

As for the extremely rare bloodlines, Salubri, Nagarajah, Kiasyd, Gargoyles, and what have you, forget about it. The Camarilla will only go so far. That is, if a Storyteller wants to introduce it into her own chronicle, that's fine, but the stodginess of the Camarilla prevents it from considering these scattered dregs of any true import.







# CHAPTER FOUR: WHO HOLDS THE REINS

*“Uneasy rests the head that wears the crown.”*

Not as accurate for primogen as for the prince, but true in its limited fashion nonetheless. A character who has gained a seat among the primogen is burdened by responsibilities that the majority of Kindred need not worry about: aggressively furthering the interests of his clan in the city; keeping the clan’s rebels sufficiently in line that they don’t reflect badly on the clan as a whole, but lightly enough that they can be spurred into strategic outbursts when necessary; currying favor with the prince; dealing with disputes over feeding territory; courting the support and votes of the other primogen; counteracting the moves of the other primogen when they interfere with his own agenda; giving the prince good advice that simultaneously renders him more reliant on the primogen’s clan; etc.

When members of a clan are in conflict, they typically turn to the primogen. When members of the clan are in trouble with the prince, they turn to the primogen. Should the members of a clan seriously act out, it is not just they who will suffer the consequences, but their primogen as well. Likewise, when the clan elders have an agenda that they want pro-

mulgated through the clan ranks, it is the primogen who informs his clan and coaxes, bribes or threatens them into compliance.

All these things need to be taken into consideration by both player and Storyteller before the decision is made to play a primogen character. In the vast majority of stories, being on the primogen council will make a player’s experience more political and less violent or “street-level.” Intrigue may replace action, but, if well handled, that should make the game more interesting.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

When designing a character who either is or wants to be primogen for his clan, the player has to think about what’s likely to get the character into that position. Neither the clan elders nor the prince nor, in all likelihood, the other members of the clan are going to want a flaky, violent, outrageous or otherwise “difficult” primogen. Respectability is the price of public office. For this reason social Attributes are generally key. With a character who’s already in a socially oriented clan — Ventrué, Toreador or Tremere, for example — that’s



not difficult. For other clans it is a circumstance requiring some consideration. A Brujah brawler or Assamite killer with tertiary Social Attributes is going to be ill at ease in the primogen chambers and may do his clan more harm than good through his ham-handed efforts there.

If you've wanted to play a socially oriented Brujah charmer or an Assamite with an eye toward protocol and diplomacy, however, the primogen position is ideal.

#### RESPONSIBILITIES

Once installed, the primogen is the point man for communications traveling both up and down the Camarilla hierarchy. He is the nexus between the rank and file and the powers that be. Consequently, he has to be honest (or perceived as such) and an effective communicator. He must cultivate the perception that he is loyal to his clan in general and specifically to the Kindred he ostensibly represents. Furthermore, he must be capable of striking a balance between the wants of the elders and the desires of the younger members of the clan. If either camp perceives him to be biased in either direction, his standing and influence will suffer. Primogen work closely with their clanmates within the city, but much of their power and authority comes from those Camarilla elders above them. Siding too blatantly with either camp is a recipe for trouble.

#### TEMPLATES

Following are some general models to which a primogen character might bear some similarities. Your character will obviously be more detailed, but these models may give some idea of what the road might look like for the character and, possibly, save him from some of the bumps along the way. At the very least, you may see some ideas that inspire you to take some creative steps with regard to your own primogen character.

##### Important Child

Your sire is an influential figure in your clan. Perhaps he's an elder. Perhaps he held your clan's seat on the primogen council for many years and wanted you to do so in his stead. Perhaps he simply has good rapport with the clan and the prince and made his wishes known at the right time. Regardless of his exact station, he is important and has power to wield freely. That makes you important, whether you want to be or not. When your sire makes it known that he wants you to become the clan's voice on the primogen council, there's really no fighting it. In the best of all possible worlds, you're taking the place he vacated. If that's the case, you're lucky; he will tell you everything you need to know: who your real enemies are, who's corrupt, who's beholden to whom ... and he'll be eager to pass

along his political insights onto you. Alternatively, you may find yourself getting hustled into your title because your sire screwed some other Cainite out of it. If that's the case, you come into office with a load of baggage: a predecessor who resents you, a clan uncertain of your credentials and a prince who sees you as a favor more than as a clan representative. You'll have your work cut out for you.

##### The Reluctant Primogen

You never wanted to be primogen. In fact, you may have carefully avoided the office for years or even decades, but your days of shirking your responsibility to the clan are over. Maybe you put your hat in the ring (despite your hatred of politics) because you thought you could do a better job than the smarmy, corrupt, scheming idiot who was sitting at the council table before you — and much to your chagrin, others concurred. Or maybe you've been drafted to fill the seat left vacant by a predecessor slain in office. For better or worse, others older, wiser and more powerful than you feel you have the political wherewithal to represent your clan. Maybe you're too charismatic for your own good. Maybe you've had vocal admirers somewhere in Kindred society and they want to see you do great things with your talents. Maybe an enemy has flexed a little political might to have you put where you make an easier target.

##### The Driven Politician

Politics may have been something you followed in your breathing days, might even have been something you had dabbled in and showed some talent for. The possibility of a career in politics was wiped out with your Embrace. Or so you thought. You saw where the power lay in the city shortly after your first visit to Elysium, and you updated your goals to fit your new existence. You set your eyes on a similar goal in your new life: a seat on the primogen council.

You busted your butt for your position. You met with Cainites you dislike and maybe even a few whose company you enjoy. You built up a reservoir of boons to draw upon in difficult circumstances and asked a few of your own. You flattered, charmed, schmoozed and kissed ass as necessary to make the allies and gain the resources to attain your goal.

Now you're there. You did most of the work yourself, so you're beholden to relatively few others. The responsibility (and, yes, the power) is in your hands. If your performance in office is as stellar as it was on the campaign you waged to get there, your clan and your city will be in good hands. Then again, you wouldn't be the first primogen to slack off the moment you made it into the position you so aggressively sought. But that approach to office has its own consequences ....

### The Accident

Nobody actually intended for you to be the clan's representative. Something went wrong. Someone was given the wrong name to vote for. Someone voted for you to oppose the other, more serious, candidate. Maybe the others couldn't read the complex butterfly ballots. Whatever the case, the results came in and you were named primogen, a development that surprises you as much as much as anyone. Now you're in a position where you're struggling to bring yourself up to speed. The unlife you had prior to the election has been left hanging in the wind as your new and unexpected responsibilities pull you away. Suddenly you're dealing with responsibilities, expectations, ethical dilemmas, pressure from new directions. It's hectic. It's driving you crazy. The perks of the position are enough to keep you from struggling with your new position. Now that you've come to terms with winning an election you didn't expect to have a chance in, the hard part is upon you: you have to fill your role without making a fool of yourself. Hope you're a fast learner.

### Rank and File

Maybe your whole life passed by without you ever becoming involved in politics despite the occasional longing to do so. It was something that appealed to you on some level, so now that you had a second chance, you went for it. The moment you saw how Kindred society worked, you engineered plans to become the voice of your clan. Your reasons were your own: power, status, possibly even a wish to improve the lot of your fellows. You made yourself useful, indispensable even, in order to amass boons; you campaigned, made allies, learned important secrets and kept them — or let them slip — strategically and, in other words, did anything you could to see that when the primogen position came open you were chosen. If you're a relatively low-generation vampire, it probably wasn't that difficult; Kindred respect (and fear) age more than mortals do. On the other hand, if you're eleventh, twelfth or, Caine forbid, thirteenth generation, you'll have to be mightily impressive with your other abilities before the vote is likely to go in your favor. For you the real joy of being the primogen is showing that a vampire given the Embrace in 1998 is just as capable of leading and representing his clan as one Embraced in 1898.

### The Backstabber

Patience is not among your strengths. The intensity of your need for power would not allow power to come to you in its own time. You hastened the process by doing a few favors for the sitting primogen and then, one way or another, you disposed of the whip. The primogen named you whip with relatively little effort

on your part. From the position of whip, it only took a few choice schemes, a few lies, a little dirty dealing and maybe a few boons to some unsavory types to move the primogen out of the way. Congratulations, you're a bastard among bastards.

Now you're in power and it's great. You talk with the prince every night. Cainites are offering you boons on a regular basis. You are one of the most powerful Kindred in the city.

You have one little problem. Secrets, in the world of the Kindred, are never as secret as one would really like, and somehow word of your perfidy has started making its way around Elysium. The other primogen have been looking at you a bit strangely lately, and perhaps the prince, too, although no action has been taken against you, and word doesn't seem to have spread to the rank and file. Yet. You may still be able to keep your position, but don't expect it to be easy: just fulfilling the boons to keep this hushed up will keep you busy for years to come.

You have still *another* problem. You remember how you attained your position, and you know that if you could sink to such depths, surely others could too. So your guilt shows up as a lingering paranoia. You scrutinize your clanmates, especially your whip, nightly for signs of treachery, and because you see nothing, you're all the more certain that something must be going on that you just can't see.

Welcome to the halls of power.

### The Promising Liar

You would promise to put the sun out tomorrow if you thought it would improve your position (and if anyone believed you). You're good at telling people what they want to hear. You know what they want and, therefore, exactly what to promise them in exchange for their support. Better yet, you're quite convincing. By weaving a web of promises, you were able to garner all the support you needed (and more) to land you the position of primogen.

Unfortunately, you have a problem.

You promised to back the Toreador in their squabble with the Nosferatu, the Nosferatu against the Toreador, the Tremere against the Assamites, the Assamites against the Tremere, and so on.

Now everyone is expecting you to fulfill your promises. And you can't. Maybe some of the promises you made are (and you only know this *now*) things that are outside the primogen's sphere of influence. Maybe some of the promises you made are just impossible to fulfill given the current political status quo. Maybe you had no clue exactly what it was you were promising in the first place, but you knew that it gave you the support you needed.

As your promises, one by one, go unfulfilled, you watch your standing in Kindred society spiral further and further down. Your list of allies grows shorter with each passing night, your list of enemies, longer. If you're lucky, you've been able to deliver on at least one or two of those promises, enough to keep an ally or two. Otherwise, your time on the primogen council is going to be brief and bitter.

Worst of all, your primary tools, your word, your honor, your promises, mean nothing anymore, because every Cainite in the city sees how little they're worth, leaving you with no credibility, no honor and not much hope for moving forward.

Given those circumstances, being on the primogen council doesn't provide much solace. It still sucks to be you.

## DISADVANTAGES

The role of primogen has perks, which will be covered in detail later, but the hopeful candidate for a seat on the council should also take into consideration some of the difficulties of taking on such responsibilities.

### YOUR TIME IS NO LONGER YOUR OWN

As primogen, your personal goals are expected to take a back seat to your clan's goals and your time ceases to be your own. Did you want to travel? Conduct some thaumaturgical research? Work on your art? Attain Golconda? It'll have to wait now.

Now you have meetings. Meetings with clan elders, meetings with the prince, meetings with members of your clan you've never liked and would rather not deal with, but whom you now represent. Congratulations.

## DANGER

In some ways, being a primogen makes a Kindred a bigger target for enemies of her clan as well as personal enemies. As primogen, you're a figurehead symbolizing your clan, and to be blunt, a figurehead is a larger-than-life target for all those who don't like what you stand for. If someone dislikes your clan, the easiest way to get that message across is to strike at you. When the Sabbat strikes at a Camarilla city, the primogen council is very frequently its first target. On the whole, primogen are easier targets than the prince, but without them the prince is vulnerable. When the Cathayans invaded San Francisco, the Tremere and Malkavian primogen were the first to be assassinated. It's basic tactics to take out the generals first, because it leaves the rank-and-file leaderless and demoralized.

## PROTECTION

Do you have a bodyguard? You'd better. However formidable your own abilities, you still can't be expected to be vigilant 24 hours a day. That's what bodyguards are all about, after all. Can you afford one (or more)? If you can't, you're in trouble. Maybe you can find one who works for cheap. Then again, do you really want your unlife protected by the cheapest bodyguard around? The best possible scenario, obviously, is to run across someone so dedicated to either the causes you personally espouse or the clan you represent that he will guard you for a token fee. Ghouls work for cheap, as do blood bound thralls. Those are not without their own drawbacks, however: zealots can be irrational, while mortals, even ghouls, are too fragile to be much more than a brief distraction to a real enemy.

How about your coterie? They're your allies, right? Do you trust them? More to the point, do you trust them *that* much? Why? Are you so certain of their ethics and their loyalty that you know they won't sell you out? Are you *really* that certain? This paranoia is especially appropriate for those Kindred in a cosmopolitan coterie comprising Cainites from an array of clans. Just because a Tremere is willing to pursue a shared goal with an Assamite doesn't mean he'll let the Assassin function as his *de facto* bodyguard once becoming the Tremere primogen. It's equally unlikely that the Assamite would accept such a position without the time-honored contract, and those higher up the Tremere hierarchy might have a thing or two to say about those kinds of arrangements.

Okay, so let's say you have the bodyguard well in hand. You're not out of the woods yet.

How secure is your haven? Since you're at higher risk of trouble than most Kindred, your haven had better be more secure as well. Really, can you ever be *too* secure? Deadbolt locks just aren't what they used to be, my friend. Ideally, you'll want to make your haven completely fire-proof, and your security system had best be impressive. Those doors? Big, thick iron puppies. You'll want your walls to be equally thick and, ideally, impervious to even relatively large projectiles. Overkill? Maybe. But what's your unlife worth to you?

It's true that all this security will probably require some hefty resources, but nobody ever said power came cheaply.

Lucky for you, being your clan's voice among the primogen comes with a few handy advantages as well.

## ADVANTAGES

When a vampire is named primogen, no sudden illumination occurs, no great power of the blood kicks in. Kindred thirteen generations from Caine have been brought into the primogen council, and the power they wield is clearly not brute force or sheer mystical might, it is charisma and the respect of their clan and, optimally, the prince. Beyond their own organizational and leadership skills, primogen have only one advantage over the majority of other Kindred, and that is their access to contacts.

In all but the smallest of cities (where the title is nearly meaningless due to the negligible vampire population), when a Kindred is installed as the primogen of his clan, he gains access to clan elders outside of the city that the rank-and-file Kindred of the city generally do not have.

### ACCESS TO POWER

The primogen is the chosen representative of the clan as a body, therefore the clan takes an interest in seeing that its representative has certain advantages he can call upon should circumstances dictate. For this reason, the Storyteller may want to grant the character a few points (up to 4) in the Mentor (or possibly Allies) Background to reflect this. Be aware that these contacts

are not, and should not be expected to be, friends or easy combat support; they are advisors whose primary aim is to further the interests of the Camarilla in general and their clan specifically. Except under unusual circumstances, they provide guidance and little else. A primogen who relies overly much on these contacts will find his clan questioning his competence and inclined to see him replaced with someone who can handle the night-to-night challenges of being primogen with greater proficiency and independence.

The nature of these contacts may vary from clan to clan. In all cases, the older vampire will be capable of advising the primogen in some capacity, although no guarantee exists that the elder will not have her own agenda (in fact, it's generally wisest to assume that she *does*). Certain primogen may also benefit from other proficiencies possessed by her advisor(s). Alternatively, she may benefit from having certain important items or emergency phone numbers that are reserved for her clan's representatives. Clan Brujah may provide the phone number for a highly competent "cleaner" who may be either a ghoul or himself a member of the clan. Such a contact would be available to clean up the mess after an outbreak of Brujah violence, "take care of" a Masquerade breach or hide evidence that might show the clan in an unflattering light. Likewise the Tremere



might offer up either a Bone of Lies or similar magical device or, if necessary, an "interrogator" to extract secrets from enemies of the clan, while the Nosferatu might provide contact information for an "investigator," and so forth. The types of assistance vary from clan to clan.

These resources are best not called upon except in urgent situations where clan prestige or interests are on the line. Such favors cannot be brought into play simply on a whim or for the primogen's personal use (although clever primogen have found ways to turn private crusades into important clan business in order to do so). Even when the character does call on this backup, he has no guarantee that they won't already be knee-deep in taking care of business elsewhere. It should be assumed that the clan has one or possibly two such behind-the-scenes agents at work on the North American continent, and the primogen, regardless of how pressing their situation seems to them, must accept that those resources may be otherwise engaged. Some of these powerful figures to whom the primogen have access may also be archons or even justicars, clarifying all the more how rarely their services may be called on.

In some clans the "keys to the office" are more ceremonial, while other clans offer specific and clearly spelled-out privileges and powers to those Kindred occupying seats on the primogen council. Gaining access to these privileges is a matter of great diplomacy. A pushy primogen might be denied the request by her elders, a diplomatic primogen may earn the privilege in due time, but a diplomatic, favored and *useful* primogen will receive the favor and it will come through in record time.

In addition to myriad random social benefits, being primogen gives the Kindred access to high-ranking allies and sect Elders that he would not otherwise have, but the expectations of him are also greater. The learning curve for a recently chosen primogen can be a bit steep as he is expected to master the philosophies, protocols and culture of the clan early in his tenure.

Obviously, the more organized clans have better systems for backing up their respective primogen. By far the most supported primogen are those of Clans Ventrue and Tremere. The Ventrue emphasis on developing social contacts grants the clan in general and their vested representatives in particular unusually potent sway in the daylight world that they do not hesitate to bring to bear on those who interfere with the clan's interests. Across America and Europe, the Blue Bloods oversee a small army of financiers, bureaucrats and old-money families, and, if the situation is sufficiently

precarious, a primogen can call upon these resources. As long as the primogen remembers that there is no such thing as a free lunch and returns the favors he asks for, all is well.

Likewise, the Tremere emphasis on hierarchy gives the primogen of that clan a clear chain of command to follow when seeking particular favors. While the Warlocks' hierarchy may not always work in the interests of the average Lick, it grants its favorites a treasure trove of organizational knowledge and access to both talented Kindred and items of great mystical potency. The down side is that the possibility exists of being refused at every step of the petitioning process. If the primogen successfully works his way through three levels of the hierarchy, the Cainite at the final level could, on a whim, deny his request. Worse (and this becomes more likely the more frivolous or personal the request is deemed), the primogen may have to promise boons to those at every step along the way. If the Tremere primogen has to go through five steps to gain access to the individual (or entity) who can solve his problem, that represents a great deal of trouble and obligation that he will have to go through at some unspecified future date. Such arrangements have been known to come into play at exceedingly inconvenient moments, and any primogen seeking to trade in boons to this extent would do well to remember this.

Clan Toreador, too, as one of the pillar clans of the Camarilla, has resources for its primogen to call upon. The Degenerates are flightier and less prone to conflict than most other clans, but their obsession with image and keeping up appearances makes keeping scandals quiet a priority. Though they need them less frequently, the Toreador have nearly as many "cleaners" as the Brujah, and their skills are legendary. They are adept at covering up even the most horrific breaches of the Masquerade with broad smiles and a hefty application of artifice and charm. More than one Camarilla/Sabbat conflict has been made to look like a movie shoot after the fact through strategically altered memories and public records. ("Oh, why, yes, I guess you *did* get a license for that film shoot. It must have just slipped my mind. I am *so* sorry for the inconvenience. If there's anything I can do to make the rest of your time here go smoothly, please just let me know, and I'll see to it that things are taken care of for you.")

Moderately less well organized are the Nosferatu, Assamites and Brujah. While these clans have their own hierarchies and means of assisting their primogen, various circumstances conspire to make requesting aid

from these clans more of a hit-or-miss proposition. When a primogen of one of these clans requests assistance, it may come eventually, not at all or even immediately, depending on the clan's policies and politics, the primogen making the request and a hundred random elements that could impede or expedite the process.

Clan Assamite, for example, has a very clear hierarchy, but issues of honor, self-sufficiency, the recent nature of the clan's participation in the Camarilla and growing intraclan conflicts make requesting assistance a more complex proposition than the clan's hierarchy might suggest.

The other clans may or may not provide much in the way of assistance to their primogen. Obviously Kindred are quite keen on "keeping up with the Joneses." The organized clans have an advantage over the less well organized clans that may be perceived as a power disparity. The Kindred of Clan Malkavian are at a pronounced disadvantage in this regard, and the rapidly dwindling number of Camarilla Gangrel has been left essentially with no recourse to backup whatsoever (outside of personal contacts and allies). Elders will do what they can to help struggling primogen, but these clans observe no official protocol for doing so and results are not guaranteed.

While Malkavians have their "Madness Network" for all members of the clan, they do not have any special resources for primogen to call upon. The Gangrel's already loose organization combined with their all-but-forgotten status in the Camarilla prevents the rare Gangrel primogen from calling on any but his personal allies in situations that endanger the interest of his clan, a situation that is pushing even Gangrel with previously strong Camarilla ties to break away from the sect.

#### TERM OF OFFICE

Once they ascend to the office, primogen typically keep the position as long as possible; the rewards are too great to do otherwise, unless they ascend to the prince's position. That means that the transmission of power from an outgoing primogen to an incoming primogen is often not good: death is the primary cause of primogen leaving office. Those primogen who are "deposed" rarely feel charitable toward their successors and may even interfere with the transition of power out of sheer bitterness. The new primogen will discover quickly enough that his position sets him up as the embodiment of his clan, and therefore a target, but he may not anticipate that the enemies he faces might be from his own clan.

## DISCIPLINES

As a perk to offset some of the drawbacks of the position, clan elders may offer to teach the new primogen certain new combination Disciplines both as a reward and as a means of attending to the responsibilities of the office. Although the Storyteller is the final arbiter of which Disciplines a character may possess, the following are offered as examples of the kinds of socially oriented combination Disciplines that primogen are trained in to support their work on the council.

Clans have worked for decades, sometimes centuries, to arrive at these complex interweavings of their standard Disciplines, and they aren't taught lightly. A primogen who teaches these proprietary disciplines to a member of another clan is considered a traitor. Furthermore, they require an understanding of the core Disciplines that most Kindred don't possess. Lastly, since these combination Disciplines are rare, tracing who inappropriately taught a technique to whom is rarely difficult.

Many of these primogen Disciplines are social or political in nature, but actually using them during the course of a primogen council meeting in an attempt to sway the outcome of a vote is rude, presumptuous and possibly dangerous. Forcing something through the council by dint of supernatural powers is "cheating," and anybody found to be the perpetrator of such scurrilous acts is, in all likelihood, going to rouse the ire of his mark.

### BRUJAH

#### THE IRON GLARE (POTENCE ●●●, PRESENCE ●●●)

A look sometimes comes over the face of a ticked-off Brujah who is used to being obeyed but who is *not* being obeyed at the moment. The look is part hauteur, part rage and part malevolent glee at the chaos that will be unleashed unless the vampire gets his way. Brujah elders teach this Discipline to new primogen as a gift to use in primogen meetings on behalf of the clan's interests.

**System:** The Brujah primogen makes a powerful display of strength (crushing a brick in her hand, bending a piece of rebar, breaking a solid oak table with one slam of her fist, etc.) and rolls Charisma + Intimidation against a standard difficulty. For the rest of the scene, add these successes to successes gained on any Intimidation roll against anyone seeing this display of power.

It should be noted that this Discipline loses its efficacy when overused. If the Brujah uses it again within a month, it will give her half the successes she rolled; if she uses it again, it will give her a quarter (rounded down). After that, this power ceases to have any effect. A wise primogen, therefore, saves this power for use at strategic moments.

It costs 18 experience points to learn this power.

## MALKAVIAN

### CATCH A WHIFF OF MADNESS (DEMENTATION ●●, AUSPEX ●●●)

Insanity is the sea through which Malkavians swim like sharks every night of their unlife. As such, they know the aroma of madness and can sense it in others the way sharks smell blood. With this refinement, the Malkavian can parse that scent into its component notes, revealing exactly which flavor of insanity he senses. The uses to which the primogen can put such knowledge about his comrades are legion. This is one of the carefully guarded talents that give the clan its reputation for knowing things that ought not to be known.

**System:** The Malkavian gets close enough to his quarry that he can smell him; the Malkavian can be as discrete or obvious about this as he wishes. The player rolls Perception + Empathy at standard (difficulty 6). Catching the target's scent alerts the Malkavian to the target's mental state: it specifically reveals mental weakness or instability, including derangements and unusually strong emotional responses (with three or more successes the Malkavian can detect a blood bond, although it will not reveal whom the bond is to, although that can often be determined through more common means).

It's best to avoid using this Discipline on the Nosferatu.

This power costs 15 experience points.

### PHOBIC AFFLICTION (DEMENTATION ●●●, DOMINATE ●●)

Madness is terrifying and fear paralyzes. By drawing on the madness-inducing powers of Dementation and the mind-control abilities of Dominate, the Malkavian primogen can instill a sense of terror in his victim with but a phrase and a meeting of eyes. Others will hear the words that the Malkavian speaks, but only the intended target will hear them as the Lunatic intended them and feel the oceanic waves of terror washing over him. Although the effect is fleeting, this Discipline is often enough to avoid (or end) combat or decide a vote of the primogen council.

The advantage of this Discipline over simple Dominate techniques is that it can be used with a certain degree of subtlety. Since the target infers the threat from the Malkavian's seemingly innocuous words, the Malkavian never has to actually utter a command or a threat.

**System:** The Malkavian must make eye contact with his target and speak a threat (however veiled) to her. Roll Charisma + Intimidation against a difficulty of the target's current Willpower pool. If the player gets even one success, the target is overwhelmed by unremitting waves of terror and anxiety — stemming from

the threat and its repercussions — for one minute per success. A target thus affected is unable to do anything but cower or flee. While others may hear the threat, they won't be able to understand the degree of its impact on the target.

If the Malkavian gets six or more successes, the target immediately enters fear frenzy.

This power costs 15 experience points.

## NOSFERATU

### ANIMAL MAGNETISM (ANIMALISM ●●●●, OBFUSCATE ●●●)

Foul as they are to look upon and boorish as they tend to be in social situations, the wise among the Nosferatu can, if they so choose, wax alluring. This temporary appeal is rough, fleeting and slightly feral, but it gives them a fascinating charm nonetheless. Sometimes that's all that's necessary.

In theory this power is to be saved for use in only the most important social arenas, but those Nosferatu who know it find the social effects of this power ... pleasant.

**System:** By enhancing the powers of Mask of 1000 Faces with the dangerous allure of the Beast (channeled carefully with Animalism), some Nosferatu can briefly approximate a type of Presence. The effects of this power don't change; it always adds dice equal to the primogen's Animalism rating (so at least 4) to her social rolls. The duration of the effect varies. Roll Charisma + Subterfuge against a difficulty of 6. This power lasts one turn per success. This is especially effective for seduction but when properly channeled can aid with Intimidation and Subterfuge rolls as well. While this Discipline isn't particularly powerful, it's surprisingly effective because nobody expects the Nosferatu ever to possess such allure.

This inversion of nature is not without significant risk: a botch on the roll sends the Nosferatu into immediate frenzy as the Beast rips free of its controller's will and targets whomever the primogen was trying to charm — a social faux pas at the very least.

It costs 23 experience points to learn this power.

## TOREADOR

### SCALPEL TONGUE (PRESENCE ●, CELERITY ●)

Catty repartee is both an art and a vice among the Kindred of Clan Toreador. Those who cannot compete effectively in the arena of cruel wit are unlikely to earn the respect of their clan members. Toreador primogen, then, must have the ability to scathe others with words if they are to maintain their positions. Scalpel Tongue mixes the same quick thinking that guides the body as it moves at accelerated speeds with the Toreador's prodigious social

aptitudes, allowing the primogen to immediately generate a barbed quip so stinging (due to the emotion-enhancing effects of Presence) that it shames the target into silence.

This power has a subtle downside: if another Toreador detects that she had to use a Discipline to come up with such a stinging retort, it could have a negative impact on her social status.

**System:** Roll Wits + Empathy against a difficulty of 7. If the user of this power does not know his target well, difficulty is increased by 1, due to the difficulty of knowing with any precision what buttons to push to achieve the greatest verbal impact. The barbed comment stings the target into silence for one turn per success, or double that if the target is not a member of Clan Toreador. Spending one Willpower negates this effect.

It costs 6 experience points to learn this power.

**UNDER THE SKIN**  
(AUSPEX ●●●, PRESENCE ●●●)

The Kindred of Clan Toreador are natural critics. With insight and zeal they analyze and deconstruct art, Kindred culture and politics. Some studied Toreador possess the ability to do the same with their peers, reading them like texts and making obvious their failings of personality. The primogen using this power analyzes the personality of another, finds its weaknesses and then uses the force of his presence to make light of those weaknesses and hammer on them like a battering ram. The results can be quite dramatic.

While this power is similar to Scalpel Tongue, it's much more devastating. That one stings; this one draws blood (and possibly a lot of it).

**System:** The Toreador primogen must interact socially with his target for a number of consecutive turns (determined by the Storyteller) before this power can be activated. After that warm-up, roll Wits + Perception against a difficulty of 6 as the character begins his systematic analysis and dismantling of the target's psyche and self-esteem. The results of this assault are listed below.

Successes	Result
1-2	Target is rendered utterly speechless with embarrassment and rage and broods for the remainder of scene.
3-4	Target storms out in a rage.
5	Target becomes violent, either toward the Toreador using this power (jumping over the table to attack, for example) or, in a fit of self-loathing, toward herself (wherein she may try to immolate herself, disembowel herself, toss herself out a window, get a suntan or worse).
6+	Target enters frenzy.

Spending a Willpower point will lessen the effect by one category (e.g., from 6+ to 5 or from 3-4 to 1-2). It costs 20 experience points to learn this power.

**TREMERE**

**MOOD SHIFT**  
(AUSPEX ●●, DOMINATE ●●●●)

Once the Tremere became accustomed to seeing auras, it was only a slight stretch to see if those moods could be manipulated. As it turns out, they can. Auspex granted them the insight and Dominate provided them with the means.

A Warlock using Mood Shift views the aura of his target to determine the target's initial mood and then, through a series of subtle cues (a smile and laughter to invoke levity, a sneer and a caustic word to bring about a feeling of hostility or defensiveness), can nudge her target's mood in a particular direction.

**System:** This technique requires eye contact and the target must be watching the Tremere to pick up on the visual cues (smile, frown, associated gestures) that he's modeling. Once the Tremere has been interacting with his target for a few minutes (long enough to provide the target with a few emotional cues), roll Manipulation + Empathy in a contested roll against the target's Willpower, difficulty 7. The number of successes determines both the degree and the duration of the effect.

Successes	Degree/ Duration
1	Superficial/ Five minutes
2	Moderate/ Ten Minutes
3	Moderate/ Half an hour
4	Completely/ The rest of the scene
5	Completely/ The rest of the night
6+	Completely/ The rest of the week

A superficial degree of mood change means that the target responds to the Tremere's mood cues only on a surface level. He's willing to go along with the mood generated by the Tremere to avoid being confrontational but nothing more. Other emotional cues will likely change the target's mood back in short order.

A moderate degree of mood change means that the target has let his actual mood change a bit in accordance with the cues given by the Warlock. The effect isn't total, but it goes beyond a mere superficial reflection of the Tremere's modeled emotion.

Complete mood change means that the target adopts the mood modeled by the Tremere completely. If the Warlock modeled laughter, the target will sincerely be happy and in a good mood. If he modeled sadness, the target will feel depressed for the duration of the power.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.



## VENTRUE

### DISTANT FRIEND (DOMINATE ●●, PRESENCE ●●●●)

This ability plants a delayed Presence effect in the mind of its target. While the powerful feelings of loyalty and love brought about by Presence are typically elicited by the physical presence of the vampire possessing that Discipline, this particular application buries those feelings in forgotten recesses of the target's mind (and heart), where they remain until she talks about the vampire who initiated those feelings; at that time they rush to the fore, causing her to speak about the Cainite who so affected her in glowing terms.

Enemies of the Cainite with Distant Friend may be surprised to find that an expected diatribe against the Ventrue elder comes out as a glowing declaration of support for him, but when she examines her feelings, she'll find that she agrees wholeheartedly with the positive account she's giving.

**System:** Once the Cainite with Distant Friend has successfully affected his target with any other Presence Discipline, his player and the target's player make an additional contested Willpower roll against a difficulty of 8. If the Ventrue elder's player wins, Distant Friend is planted in the target's mind and, for the duration of the effect, any time the Ventrue comes up in conversation, the warm memories evoked by the Presence discipline surge to the fore, coloring anything the target has to say on the matter.

Duration depends on the degrees of success in the Willpower roll. Distant Friend remains in the mind of the target for one month per net success (after subtracting the target's successes from the Ventrue player's).

This power costs 20 experience points to learn.

### APPROXIMATION OF LOYALTY ABSOLUTE (DOMINATE ●●●●●, PRESENCE ●●●●●)

The Ventrue penchant for toying with the hearts and minds of others is well known, but this particular combination Discipline is one of the more devastating manifestations of those skills. The primogen catches the eye of a target and the target succumbs to a mind-numbing sycophantic adoration of his newly recognized master for the rest of the evening. In effect, the results are like the blood bond, though more intense and lasting only one night. This last point is considered by many users of this Discipline to be an advantage, as there are few things more inconvenient than a tool that has served its purpose yet refuses to go away. While the thrall can leave the presence of his master with no impact on his thralldom, doing so causes him great anxiety and emotional pain.

Once the effect wears off, the erstwhile thrall will have only hazy poignant memories of a lost intimate connection with his master and, perhaps, a vague longing for more. If the Ventrue had his thrall act in a truly abhorrent manner — kill a dear friend, humiliate himself in front of a crowd or similar excesses — the memory, while vague, will remain and the victim will be filled with loathing for the individual who did such a thing to him. The excessive nature of the act must be extreme for that, however, as this power incorporates a lingering emotional anesthetic in the mind of the target to soothe such stings. Only the most extreme deeds will be too much for this anodyne effect to soothe.

**System:** The player rolls Charisma + Manipulation against a difficulty of the target's Willpower rating. One success will simply render the target somewhat more pliable to the user's requests, while two or more successes will result in an intense infatuation or enthrallment for the rest of the evening. Until the next sunrise, the thrall will treat the user of this Discipline as if he were the most important person in his life.

From the outside, it appears that the Ventrue primogen simply makes friendly eye contact with his target and smiles, and for the rest of the night the target is his willing thrall.

This power costs 30 experience points to learn.

## GANGREL

### ALPHA GLINT (ANIMALISM ●●●●, FORTITUDE ●●●)

Gangrel resilience is legendary in Kindred circles, as is their lethality in combat. This Discipline makes the Kindred's toughness shine through her skin in a way that cows her enemies and makes them despair of defeating her — in battle or otherwise. The primary use of this Discipline is to ward off unsought combat, but it has also been used effectively by Gangrel to hold off political opponents in meetings of the primogen.

**System:** The Gangrel calls upon her Beast and pushes it into "broadcasting" her invulnerability to the Beasts of those in her vicinity. This power works on animals and Kindred and to a lesser degree on Lupines, but not at all on creatures without a Beast to communicate with (such as mortals).

Add the character's Charisma + Animal Ken to her Willpower rating (the added Willpower is only for the purpose of Alpha Glint). The player then makes a contested Willpower roll against all those acting aggressively toward her (in the case of Lupines, halve the number of successes, rounding down, before adding them to the Gangrel's Willpower — werewolves just

aren't that intimidated by a Gangrel vampire's "invulnerability"). If the Gangrel wins, her opponent is cowed and behaves respectfully toward her for the rest of the scene.

It costs 20 experience points to learn this power.

#### MERITS AND FLAWS

**Natural Leader** (4-point Social Merit) From early on in your breathing days you have had a deep intuitive understanding of what motivates others, how to inspire them and how to get them excited about following you. The difficulty of all Charisma rolls aimed at rallying others (individuals or groups) to your side is decreased by 2.

**Slowed Degeneration** (5-point Mental Merit) Your Humanity is strong and can more easily withstand the Beast's assaults. The difficulty of all Conscience rolls is only 6 (instead of the customary 8). This degree of moral resilience allows a well behaved vampire to lose Humanity at a much slower rate than would otherwise be possible. For those who don't value Humanity, however, it simply means that the Cainite can wreak a bit more havoc before falling to the Beast.

**Bad Liar** (4-point Social Flaw) Regardless of how well you know the arts of subterfuge or how clever you think you are, some unconscious tell-tale sign gives you away when you are lying: a subtle quaver in your voice, a subtle facial

tic, a darkly gleeful look in your eyes or something similar. All attempts to lie, regardless of the circumstances, audience or goal, are made at +2 to the difficulty.

#### THE TOLL POWER TAKES

A vampire may take on an office like the primogen seat looking only at the short-term consequences and advantages, never giving consideration to the long-term effects such an ethically challenging position might have.

Those consequences, unfortunately, cannot be ignored.

Decades, if not centuries, of power plays and treachery cannot help but take their toll on a character's ethical well-being. The stresses of Kindred politics — the inescapable webs of lies, the interminable intrigues, the cycles of alliance and betrayal — amplify and accelerate the loss of Humanity already inherent in being a vampire. In such a position, honesty and compassion become weaknesses. The redeeming traits associated with Humanity become pathogens that the vampire must eradicate in herself lest they undermine her ability to perform her duties effectively.

This trap can ensnare even Kindred who fancy themselves relatively compassionate, who feel that they retain enough warmth and decency that they could *never* become like the cold and inhuman elders they see around them.



Yet, with a daunting frequency, they do.

That's not to say that any Cainite who takes a seat on the primogen council is destined to become a ravening monster. Though that is clearly the path of least resistance, a primogen can retain her Humanity; it just requires constant attention and an acute awareness of self as well as attention to her conscience (both as an abstract concept and as the game mechanic called Virtue).

#### THE DYNAMICS OF CORRUPTION

Ironically, it tends to be the idealists who fall fastest — the ones who say they'll *never* willingly kill another, *never* take what is not freely given and *never* lie for power. Almost invariably it is the bleeding hearts who, in time, grow to feel that they're being weak, stupid, taken advantage of. When they finally come to that conclusion — as they almost invariably do — the tactics they adopt to slake their bitterness send them plummeting down the scale of Humanity and into the jaws of the awaiting Beast in record time. The dynamics of "why?" aren't even that complex.

Example: Terhan Karabey, the Brujah primogen of Istanbul (with an almost unheard of Humanity rating of 8), won his seat on the council through entirely honorable means, a tactic he hoped to make emblematic of his entire tenure on the council.

His unflinching idealism, however, began making him enemies almost immediately. He refused absolutely to participate in "horse-trading," subtly alienating the other primogen (who saw his stance as simultaneously arrogant and naïve). Likewise, his refusal to tell the prince the comforting lies that she wanted to hear further weakened his position in Elysium. Even Clan Brujah, renowned for sticking together, began to question the wisdom of letting Karabey represent them on the council.

With vote after vote going against him, Karabey grew bitter. Despite his years of undead existence, he maintained the (inaccurate) opinion that being forthright and aboveboard should result in the respect of others. Perhaps it should have, but, nevertheless, among the Kindred of Istanbul in 1998, it didn't. In light of his losses, he reexamined his ideals.

He began by making a handful of small concessions to "the way things work" — he looked the other way when members of his clan began pushing into feeding territory that wasn't theirs; he broke a tie in the primogen chambers, *contrary* to his ideals and breaking an unspoken alliance in doing so, in exchange for "future considerations" from three other primogen. While he found it distasteful, he found that as his ethical standards dropped, his success rate on the council went up commensurately. In time, Karabey became *very* successful.

In the space of five years, Karabey's standing among the Kindred of Istanbul skyrocketed. His understanding of the political games of the Kindred seemed almost intuitive. He is currently the likely successor to the current prince although she shows no interest in leaving her position. All it took was favoring the practical over the idealistic a time or two, keeping a few secrets, strategically revealing a few others and applying pressure where it most needed to be felt (or, in game terms, the loss of 3 points from his Humanity rating).

He (and Clan Brujah) now dominate the opium trade through and around Istanbul; he has mortals at every level of government beholden to him; and he owns five thriving nightclubs where club-goers are only too happy to let him (and his allies) feed from them in exchange for a VIP pass or a small baggy of smack. The Malkavian primogen, once his only enemy on the council, was recently taken into custody by the police. It was an accident, of course, and the authorities realized their mistake in relatively short order, but it was two in the afternoon on a bright summer day when they tossed his torpid body out the small station's south-facing side entrance to make room for real criminals . . .

While Karabey might make a fine prince, he sacrificed a good deal of what would have made him a truly *good* prince simply to make it as a primogen. Karabey's experience, while more extreme than most, illustrates the circumstances most primogen find themselves in: learning the extent to which ethics and power are mutually exclusive.

Power and prestige are motivators unlike any others. In the space of a few years they have turned enlightened college idealists into pitiless and calculating corporate lawyers, activists into reactionaries and young hopefuls into paranoid despots.

And that's among mortals.

Increase the time ten- or a hundredfold, then do the same to the rate of ethical decay, and the predicament of the Kindred becomes clear. Time slowly erodes the idealism of the young and the living under even the best of circumstances, among the Kindred it chips away at it relentlessly, and among those in positions of power among the Kindred it uses jackhammers and pile drivers.

Given time, leaders inevitably feel that their sacrifices entitle them to the privilege of ignoring rules meant for "commoners." If nothing else, the responsibilities and stressors of their role push them into circumstances that challenge their ethics. Regrettably, once these ethical prohibitions or barriers fall, they are almost impossible to rebuild.

The occasional white lie gives way to lies of convenience, which in turn give way to skillful lies woven to consolidate power. An individual who lies as a matter of course can't help but assume that others are doing the same. A liar knows he cannot be trusted and is therefore incapable of trusting others. Consequently the liar can never take another at his word, he has to second-guess everyone's motives, making him paranoid, which makes him adopt more extreme methods to protect himself, which makes him all the more concerned about the ethical lapses of those around him (who, he fears, might be doing the same thing he is).

In the long run, there is no winning. A victory by the Kindred results in more control, more power and more temptation, while a loss sends the vampire into a fit of bitterness, scheming and plotting, whereupon he permits himself to use even less ethical means (i.e., more ghouls, less savory methods, slicker lies, etc.), risking more Humanity, to win the next round.

#### FALLING FROM THE PATH

Under such circumstances, it's not unheard of for primogen to fall off the Path of Humanity. Those who do, however, had best hide their new outlook on unlife. The powers that be are more than happy to rid themselves of a young or incompetent primogen (or prince, for that matter) whose ethics are too questionable. A powerful or necessary primogen will always be given the benefit of the doubt however dubious his morality.

Degeneration is like the erosion of a building's façade — subtle, relentless and slow. For gaming purposes, characters are considered to be in a state of moral equilibrium that is occasionally punctuated by moments of willful abandonment of conscience. In truth, Humanity slips away grain by grain as the Beast taunts, tempts and torments the Cainite away from the ethics of his breathing years and into thoughts and deeds that are — initially, at least — just the slightest bit horrifying. Through the endless procession of conflict-laden nights, thoughts and deeds that were once unthinkable become thinkable (if repellent) and then slowly lose their repellency as they become familiar and perhaps even comfortable.

#### FIGHTING FOR HUMANITY

Degeneration is by no means a *fait accompli* for Cainites in positions of power, but it is the easiest road to take and the one uniformly chosen by lowest-common-denominator Kindred. Giving in to entropy is always easier than struggling against it.

Any Cainite wishing to hold on to her Humanity can do so provided she makes doing so her priority. Going with the flow, surrendering to entropy and let-

ting the Beast call the shots will result in a surprisingly brief unlife. The alternative to falling to the Beast is to think before acting at every juncture and choose the conscientious path over the expeditious or immediately gratifying one. A Cainite wishing to eke out her Humanity must be on close terms with her conscience.

To make things just a bit more complex, she must do all this without making it obvious that she is doing so. Kindred who cleave to their Humanity too obviously are a little suspect, like the geeky Christian kid who brings his Bible to class everyday. As fashionable and necessary as it is for Kindred to hold on to their Humanity, it is most *unfashionable* to be obvious about it, and any Cainite who too clearly displays the degree to which she cherishes her Humanity risks being shunned as a "goody two-shoes" geek.

On the other hand, those who are visibly struggling with their Humanity or who seem to enter frenzy a little too often are watched with a suspicion that almost seems like hunger. Ostensibly, seeing a fellow fall to his Beast is horrible, but the Beasts of every Kindred present derive a heady satisfaction from seeing such a fall, and the more highly placed the Cainite the more gratifying the Beast finds it. The morbid curiosity of mortals is *nothing* compared to the fascination with decay to which Cainites are prone.

The simplest way to maintain the Path of Humanity is to practice it: kindness, mercy and common etiquette are crucial habits for the Cainite who wishes to see his Humanity withstand the years. Those things are harder to preserve than they may at first glance seem. The Beast amplifies anger into rage, anxiety into paranoia and annoyance into hatred. Likewise, under its ministrations, the search for safety and comfort becomes an ongoing quest for power; the stronger the Beast, the more aggressive the desire for power.

The crucial question here is why would the vampire even *want* to hold on to her Humanity in the first place? Isn't it easier to go with the flow, seek out a more natural approach to unlife? The answer is not necessarily. While it is notoriously difficult to maintain, the Path of Humanity is, even in the face of the Beast's onslaught, the easiest path to maintain through the years. The artificial nature of the other Paths of Enlightenment make them less intuitive and therefore harder to maintain in the long term. Between the Path of Humanity and the other Paths of Enlightenment is a void that must be leapt, and over the centuries many, many, many Cainites have made the leap and never reached the other side. These pathetic failures are claimed first by the Beast, then, in short order, by Final Death.



Despite the tedium of holding on to it, Humanity has an unmistakable value. Cainites with more Humanity can empathize with mortals more easily, making it easier for them to move among them and interact with them constructively. Higher Humanity allows one to rise earlier to begin one's night, and, allegedly, for those interested in such things, it makes the quest for Golconda easier.

It is easier for a Cainite to view mortals as sustenance, but those who resist that temptation have a better chance of keeping their Humanity intact. Every Cainite experiences, at some point in her unlife, the urge to distance herself from mortals, to dehumanize them, in order to make feeding upon them less traumatic. Those who give in to this urge have a poor prognosis for making it through the long night with their Humanity intact. While denying the value of the life of one's prey makes it easier to feed in the short term, the long-term consequences of that approach — the hastened fall to the Beast — are in no way preferable.

Humanity, obviously, is not the only game in town. There are other alternatives to falling to the Beast, but adopting an alternative Path of Enlightenment is neither lightly nor easily done. A vampire does not consciously think, "My Humanity is almost gone. Perhaps I'd be better off to adopt this 'Path of Death and the Soul' that I've heard so much about."

First, abandoning the Path of Humanity without falling prey to the Cainite's Beast is extraordinarily difficult. One does not simply turn off the conscience that one has lived with and possibly even cultivated over decades (if not centuries). Ignoring one's conscience and choosing to do evil is a different thing entirely from having no conscience to begin with. Giving up the Path of Humanity is *far* more difficult than simply willing one's conscience to shut up when it kicks in. The conscience must be systematically and entirely shrugged off. There are some mortals without consciences. They are called sociopaths.

Sociopathy, the state of having no conscience, is the starting point for all those who aspire to another Path of Enlightenment. That, in part, is what makes the other paths so wholly alien.

Paths of Enlightenment are unnatural. Mortals may be able to loosely conceive of a life based entirely on the philosophy of the undead, but the Paths of Enlightenment are always seen through the lens of Humanity, granting them a weird or freakish appeal. To those actually following, say, the Path of Power and the Inner Voice, it is not freakish, it is simply the way things are, a framework of some kind of internally consistent rationality strong enough to keep the Beast in check.

While the Path of Humanity comes easily as a vampire's "native mode," a Cainite needs an instructor and a great deal of guidance to adopt any other Path of Enlightenment. They are not obvious or instinctual. They are complex codes of behavior that need to be studied and learned by heart before Cainites have a chance in hell of successfully following them.

By way of comparison, the Path of Humanity was not mastered in a day. It was, most likely, inculcated into the Cainite in her breathing days by all the institutions that shape mortals — family, church, school, etc. — and unless she was a sociopath, the Path of Humanity had likely taken root by the beginning of adolescence at the very latest. The key here is that it took years to learn, and the other Paths take *at least* as long to learn.

To get around this, some vampires (of those few who realize that a Path is even *necessary*) try to cobble together some mixture of two or more Paths of Enlightenment that they believe will be easier for them to learn and follow.

Unfortunately for them, pursuing a Path of Enlightenment half-heartedly, or following a half-assed hybrid of two or more paths, is a recipe for disaster. While no Path of Enlightenment is as convenient or as natural as Humanity, the other paths do at least have the advantage of being time-tested. It's a chill wind that blows through the unlife of vampires, and even a thin wall between oneself and it is better than no wall at all. Those Kindred who have adopted homespun Paths of Enlightenment usually do so as a last-ditch measure when they realize that their time on the Path of Humanity is running out fast and they need straws to grasp at.

All that said, some Cainite elders *do* manage to make the transition. Surprisingly (to some, anyway) it doesn't necessarily make things easier. On the contrary, a Camarilla Cainite adopting another Path of Enlight-

enment is going to begin having trouble relating to her Kindred peers. She will possess a coldness that makes others uneasy. Since any vampire on another Path remains a sociopath, she may begin assuming that others are as free of conscience as she. A primogen on the Path of Death and the Soul is going to have an extraordinarily difficult time relating to clan members whose Humanity is intact. They will seem weak and fearful to her while she, in turn, will seem cold and bloodthirsty to them.

It is not easy to disguise other Paths of Enlightenment. Once the warm spark of Humanity is extinguished, it is difficult to fake convincingly for any length of time. As long as suspicions remain suspicions, the Cainite need not fear, but if the Cainite's change of viewpoint comes to the attention of stalwart Camarilla backers, it will be a problem.

The Camarilla does not soft-peddle its support for Humanity as the proper approach to unlife. It is Humanity that has allowed Kindred to blend into the cityscape and live among mortals in relative peace. It is Humanity that has allowed the Camarilla to establish its extraordinary degree of influence in the mortal world. Those who turn to some other Path of Enlightenment are dangerous heretics at the very least or, more likely, Sabbat sympathizers.

The clans most dedicated to the Camarilla cause all have their own reasons for looking askance at the other Paths of Enlightenment. To the Tremere, the other Paths are a reminder of the darker, infernal roads that have claimed certain of their number. To the Toreador, the Path of Humanity is what grants them the leisure to pursue their decadent unlives of art and glamour. To the Ventrué, the Path of Humanity is one of the key elements separating the Camarilla from the monsters of the Sabbat.

Many elders of the Camarilla hold on to their Humanity not out of any great love for that system, but because of the potentially enormous consequences involved in switching Paths.





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# CHAPTER FIVE: STORYTELLING

Let us start by saying that this section is primarily for the Storyteller, but some of the information herein may also be useful for players. Since storytelling can be a daunting task, the addition of managing a believable and interesting primogen council can be especially intimidating. The purpose of this section then, is to help lay the foundations for storytelling a complex organization like a group of primogen and slip that council into a story (pre-existing or no) in an effort to present a meaningful and rewarding challenge for the players.

Storytelling a primogen chronicle requires a good deal of preparation. As opposed to other types of chronicles, especially those that focus on combat, a political chronicle often has very little closure. Kindred politics are just like the real world. Wars are declared, waged and brought to conclusion. Fights begin and end. Projects are begun and then concluded. The game of politics, however, is never finished. A real-world example is World War II, which was waged (at least by the United States) in the early part of the 1940s. By 1946 the war was over. The politics of the war preceded,

continued through and then moved well beyond the war. For example, despite the strains of war on the diplomatic community, the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union constantly evolved. Indeed, the events during the war set the stage for the complex relations thereafter, not the least of which was fifty years of Cold War. In a similar vein mortals neatly divide history into concise little eras, but there was never an end to the political maneuvering and scheming associated with the war. The happenings of the primogen continue in a similar manner.

A major problem with some chronicles is that Storytellers expect clear beginnings and endings to develop naturally through the course of their stories. This assumption is especially dangerous in a primogen chronicle. Often, the result is little or no resolution to plotline or, worse yet, plotlines arbitrarily ending in an abrupt effort to bring closure. Your challenge as a Storyteller creating a plot that focuses on the primogen is to present a story which has a definite beginning, middle and end while at the same time providing a sense of history and continuity.



Politics, like the ocean, has eddies, some of which present excellent starting points for a chronicle. The key is creating one of these opportunities to introduce your players into the high-stakes world of the primogen. To continue the ocean metaphor, a Storyteller needs to create a finite stretch of beach that can extend into the depths of the sea.

#### THE PRIMOGEN COUNCIL AS STORYTELLER TOOL

Rather than placing the players' characters at the head of the council, you can use the primogen as a source for developing Storyteller characters.

The primogen are all about ambition. Primogen are not nice people and use that fact to their advantage. The council members hold their positions for years on end because they are cutthroat, constantly working against one another and redefining their roles. The result of all these machinations is that the primogen council of one city at one particular time will be entirely different from the council at another time. You as the Storyteller need to reinforce the idea of an ever-changing political environment to the players, to create a feeling of change and motion that surrounds the primogen council. To create the idea of motion a Storyteller needs to have a vehicle in which to present the changes of the primogen. Luckily, these vehicles are neither hard to make nor terribly time-consuming.

The time between gaming sessions (downtime) is an invaluable resource that you can use in order to make the primogen a dynamic institution. Occasional updates to the players on the happenings of the primogen can provide that sense of motion while also presenting opportunities for starting stories. The first question a Storyteller needs to tackle when highlighting a body of primogen is to decide how they will present appropriate information to the player characters without flashing a neon sign screaming "story hook here!"

One option is to provide session-by-session updates as to what is happening in the city that the player characters frequent. Stay aware of the characters' backgrounds and ambitions, and you should find a number of outlets in which to provide pertinent information and possibly spark the interest of a player. The Contacts and Influence backgrounds provide convenient resources for filtering information about the goings-on of the primogen to the players. Tailoring the information according to the Contacts or Influence type is an excellent way to give players a use for their relevant backgrounds as well as give them a feeling of being connected to the politics of the city.

Beyond Contacts and Influence, other backgrounds like Herd and Status can provide similar information in the right circumstances. Exceptionally large or well connected herds may come across primogen-related information by accident or through connection with Kindred society. Status may create an opportunity for those who respect the character to offer information in hopes of gaining favor or attention. In the end, it all comes down to how creative you want to be.

Alternatively, instead of tailoring information for each character, a Storyteller can simply provide blanket updates to the group as a whole. E-mail and handouts given before the session begins can help bring the players up to speed with the events of the city. If the information is given out to the player group in this fashion, the Storyteller needs to make sure to add information not about the primogen but rather about the city in general. Presentation of other events beyond the workings of the council helps create a more immersive environment and make the world come to life, thus allowing the council also to come to life. Extra information also helps hide the important tidbits, giving characters clues to the story without spoon-feeding them.

#### DEFINING THE COUNCIL

Once you have chosen the vehicle by which you will provide the information about the primogen, you need then to create the council in detail. Let's be honest, the more detail you have on the council, the more in depth and compelling the story potentially can be. Primogen are complicated characters and develop appropriately complicated and interesting relationships. You are not doing your players or Storyteller characters any justice if you make the plans and plots of the primogen simple matters.

The next stage is giving the characters personalities. Because most primogen councils are typically composed of anywhere from five to eight members (give or take a few), defining each member with Traits and a full write-up is often not an option. Such depth, while useful, is not always necessary, especially in a political campaign. Unless you anticipate your players actually getting into a physical confrontation with the primogen, noting their general abilities and where their strengths and weaknesses lie is probably enough. To this end, note cards with a couple paragraphs of reminders and notes are handy for keeping track of the primogen.

From there, describing the history of each member, their personalities, and their goals is necessary. Again, a general outline is usually enough. Knowing

what each member did in detail over the last 60 years or so is a bit more than you probably will ever need. Granted, at some point this information may prove useful, but more often than not a Storyteller's time can be better spent. Keep the background to generalities; you can always fill in the details later, maybe adding players' character aspects into those backgrounds.

Some more should be said in regard to detailing the goals of the primogen. Attitudes and attributes are easy enough to make up during a game. Using the goals of the Storyteller characters within a story usually requires a bit of planning in order to execute it properly. Thus, spending some time with each individual goal — defining why it exists, what the optimal end result for the character is and how he plans on fulfilling that goal — should give you a good idea of just who the primogen is and why he accepted the position.

In a politically driven story, the goals and desires of the primogen council might well become a focal point of the players. Make sure to create different sets of goals. Some goals are private (such as a Toreador's secret blood cult), while some goals are certainly much more public (like a Nosferatu's thinly veiled desire to claim the principedom). Additionally, like the Toreador example above, not all goals need to be politically related. Having a handful of personal goals unassociated with politics will go a long way in giving the primogen more personality and depth of character. Remember, just because a goal is not politically motivated does not mean it is not useful in the negotiations of a council. Knowing the most private and personal desires of an enemy (or ally for that matter) may be the most devastating currency another Kindred can hold.

It is certainly okay, and in fact probably desirable, for your players to know about a few of the goals of the primogen right from the beginning. Moreover, allowing them to uncover others as the story progresses will give them a feeling of accomplishment and potentially a valuable piece of leverage. The goals of the Storyteller characters are there to help the Storyteller advance the plot, and sometimes that advancement can occur through it being uncovered before it ever sees fruition.

With the goals of the major players defined, the next step is to detail the means by which each primogen plans to make those goals come into reality. Even the most far-fetched desire also carries with it a plan to make it work. Any rational character (and Malkavians, as well) knows her strengths and will set goals that play to those strengths. Spending some time going over how the primogen plans to use her existing resources or gather appropriate new ones will pay off in the form



of a more in-depth background for the character. Goals of the primogen intertwine with other council members' goals, as do their means for completion.

As for respect for the primogen and their goals, remember that not all primogen are appreciated by their own clans. Some are even reviled as the lapdogs of the prince or political sell-outs. Do not assume that each primogen commands the respect of his clanmates. A major goal of a number of primogen is simply to stay in the good graces of the individuals whom she supposedly represents. Additionally, it is common for the status of the primogen to rise and fall in the esteem of his clanmates as the primogen is able to advance the goals of her clanmates within the city. Nothing is static in politics, least of all the popularity of a clan representative.

The final step is bringing it all together. Fill in any gaps in history or redefine relationships between members if it better fits your story or the dynamics between the players and their characters. Discuss which other primogen the Kindred genuinely enjoy being around and which they find politically advantageous to ally with. Think about which primogen have histories of animosity between themselves and which ones just can't stand the sight of one another. Just like other Kindred, the primogen can be very petty; don't make every relationship and tidbit a deep piece of treasured information. Sometimes things really are as they appear, and the same goes for the relationships and goals of the primogen.

If it helps, draw a flowchart between members, noting their resources, goals and feelings about one another. The flowchart can serve as a quick primer to the primogen for the players and a handy reminder for the Storyteller.

Finally, be prepared to take notes while storytelling. Inevitably the players will become intrigued by some part of the plot that never really existed but makes sense from their point of view. Be prepared occasionally to go with those revelations on the part of the players, noting the appropriate changes and assumptions. The players are an excellent resource for ideas. Many of those ideas come into being as they brainstorm in character or attempt to solve a particularly vexing puzzle. Occasionally, these in-character sessions can present new and innovative perspectives on the story, and just as often those interpretations are as interesting as what the Storyteller has prepared. With good notes and a willingness to reevaluate the storyline, a Storyteller can modify the plot along the lines of what the players see through their characters.

Stories become interesting as much in the creation stages as they do midway through completion. The ability to work on the fly and analyze (and use) what the players and their characters are doing within the plot can mean the difference between a frustrating story where nothing is accomplished and a story that both the Storyteller and players see through to a satisfying conclusion.

### THE ALPHA PERSONALITY

Not all primogen are created equal. Like any political institution, be it a town hall meeting or the Star Chamber, some personalities rise to the top and others are all but forgotten. Each primogen council has its winners and losers, its dominant personalities and its toadies. Clearly identifying which members lead the council can set the tone of the primogen as a whole.

It would be a rare occurrence to see all the members of the primogen working in relatively equal stations. Yet, in many stories, each primogen is often relatively equal in power to the other members. To spice things up, make it so that one Kindred or maybe a pair of them dominate the council. They are the ones to broach delicate topics. They are the ones with the contacts, resources and allies to have things done with little interference. They are the ones the other clans either respect or loathe, but certainly no one is ambivalent to them. These strong personalities can be beneficent or hateful, but they will inevitably inspire the players to action.

It is not unlikely for a council to have two strong members. Usually, where one influential member will create an atmosphere of tyranny on the council, two major personalities will create conflict. This axiom is certainly not universal, but it can serve as a good rule of thumb. Since primogen are, by nature, ambitious creatures, they are unlikely to rely on the trust necessary to work with other members for anything but short-term goals.

On the other hand, two strong members may work together in opposition to the prince, creating a situation of possible stability on the council but with a good deal of conflict in the greater politics of the city. Similarly, a single personality may normally create a despotic situation, but a prince can easily challenge singular dominance, upsetting the primogen tyrant. Avoid making too many members extremely connected and excessively powerful. It is usually better to err on the side of keeping the power to a few and possibly expanding that power and influence as the story progresses.

Don't fall into the trap of making these leaders one-dimensional. It is often easy to sum these Kindred up in a few words: "a vampiric Thomas Jefferson" or "Machiavellian manipulator." Such things work fine for a simple statement of concept. Yet when these Kindred are boiled down into stereotypes they lose the aspect that makes them interesting. Sure, the players may use these stereotypes to remember these high-rollers, but to keep an engrossing plot going (as any good political campaign needs) the story also needs complex and interesting personalities.

Thomas Jefferson may have written the Declaration of Independence, but he was also a diplomat, a philosopher, a rebel and a bit of a romantic. To become a good mentor or enemy, your vampiric analog needs to have a similar amount of complexity.

## THE PRIMOGEN AS ANTAGONISTS

Using primogen as the antagonists in a story is not like using a prince. The stakes are usually smaller and the adversary (the primogen, in this case) is also normally less visible. Whereas the prince claims domain over the width and breadth of the city, the primogen are masters of their own spheres of influence, and those spheres usually do not cover the entirety of a city. The end result is an enemy that is often more devious (and ruthless) because his position is more in doubt and his resources are limited.

By no means does a primogen antagonist have to be a pushover. The same reason that she is not as powerful as a Prince can also lead a primogen to be that much more devious and wily. Sure, it's easier to gain access to a primogen and make her disappear, but it also means that a primogen enemy is well aware of the situation and willing to do everything in her power to maintain her unlife as well as her seat. A primogen antagonist is ruthless, conniving and much quicker to respond to attacks than a prince.

A primogen who sees the players' characters as possible threats to her position is an enemy who is just as willing to make a preemptive strike as she is to defend herself. It is not unlikely for a primogen to be completely paranoid, seeing enemies in every shadow, and the characters may find themselves on the wrong side of these delusions.

Then again, maybe the players really are gunning for the primogen. They do not necessarily need to seek the seat of the primogen; they may have a long-standing rivalry with the council member and his position is merely an extra wrinkle in that situation. If

the players do indeed see the primogen as an enemy because of his seat, then the players become usurpers and begin a Primogen to Be story (see below).

Primogen antagonists do not need to focus only on Camarilla Kindred. Sabbat and anarch characters may well find themselves at the wrong end of a powerful primogen's ire. Cities that have Camarilla and either Sabbat or anarchs are likely to have primogen who see the other sects as enemies. In this case, the primogen has little to no barriers as to her actions. The few rules that she must abide by when dealing with Camarilla Kindred do not exist across sects. The full brunt of a primogen's ruthlessness can come to bear in full on a Sabbat pack, leading to some particularly uncomfortable situations.

Anarchs or Sabbat who confront a primogen need to be aware of the primogen's power within her home city. Usually, primogen focus only on the affairs of their own city (they are too busy to focus elsewhere), and working against them also means fighting them on their home turf. The primogen gained their positions because they are well connected and smart enough to maintain those positions; thus, though they are not as important as a prince, they are certainly just as dangerous. Arousing the animosity of multiple primogen can mean all sorts of trouble, usually focusing on social institutions.

Primogen fight each other using influence in the institutions of the city, and they will use the same resources to fight Sabbat or anarch characters as well. While Sabbat or anarch characters may be used to fighting street-level battles, they will discover their primogen enemy striking in unexpected and hard-to-combat avenues. A Sabbat pack that is used to fighting Camarilla Brujah enforcers or occasionally facing a rogue Lupine may discover just how treacherous the workings of a city are when the police post an All Points Bulletin on the characters.

## THE PRIMOGEN AS ALLIES

Just as they may be difficult enemies, the primogen can also present a source of mentors or allies for the players. Primogen who favor the players' characters are treated as other amicable Storyteller characters, except for two things. First off, the primogen allies almost invariably have a good deal of political background and influence in different parts of the city to call upon. Other allies may be one-dimensional or specialize in a very specific thing. Primogen, on the other hand, will know a great deal about the inner workings of the city and should have access to other

Kindred who might be able to do or know the things that the primogen does not have readily available. Thus, not only is a primogen ally a useful source of information and favors in his own right, he also has access to a wide variety of contacts and allies of his own that he may call on to aid the players. This help, of course, usually comes with a price.

The second point about primogen allies is that they are usually very busy. While they may be wonderful outlets of information and advice for the characters, they are not always going to be available — probably less so than most Kindred. So, yes, they are extremely useful and versatile as allies, but they are also limited in the amount of attention they are willing to give to any particular group. The way around this, of course, is for the players to make their characters especially useful for the primogen ally, gaining more of his attention but also performing more complicated favors in return.

## CHARACTERS AS PRIMOGEN

All the information on creating and running primogen Storyteller characters found throughout this book is all well and good, but the real question for many Storytellers is if characters can play primogen and how to do such a thing. Right from the start, you need to know that a primogen chronicle is going to rub some players the wrong way. On the other hand, and more in line for what this book is geared to do, some players out there (and Storytellers as well) are chomping at the bit to play a political campaign with a little kick. That kick can come from letting players act as primogen, the power brokers and leaders of their respective city.

Before we go on, you as a Storyteller should evaluate what types of stories your players enjoy. For some players, the greatest enjoyment they can get is to take an elder on in head-to-head combat and come out battered, bruised and otherwise worse for wear, but victorious. For others, the intrigue of backroom dealings and in-depth role-playing is the pinnacle of their enjoyment. Another group bounces between the two styles. Still another group has yet to set its sights on any particular style, primarily because the players have yet to experience the different styles fully. For what it's worth, do not force your players into a primogen chronicle, as their negative reaction to a game style they find unsuited to their tastes could grind a game to a halt.

In the end, a primogen chronicle is going to be played best by Storyteller and players who enjoy solving mysteries. At its heart, politics is all about

solving mysteries. For a good primogen story to be run correctly, the same elements of a good mystery novel need to also be in place. Storytellers need to have at the ready such things as red herrings, in order to divert the attention of the players so that their victory will be all the sweeter because of the difficulty involved. There should also be foils, to help create antagonism and obstructions that are not necessarily hostile to the player characters. Of course, you need a mystery. This mystery does not always have to be couched in layer after layer of misdirection and confusion; sometimes it can be very simple, such as figuring out how to convince the Toreador primogen to vote a certain way.

Just like a mystery, identifying pertinent information, analyzing that information and devising plans are important aspects of a primogen game. Similarly, interaction is a key element. Character development, in this case more than experience points or adding another dot to an Attribute, is going to be an absolute must. If a particular group of players are uncomfortable or awkward while acting out their characters, then a primogen chronicle may not be for them. Storytellers know their players best, and it ultimately falls to their judgment to decide what is best and most interesting for the group.

Not all groups are composed of like-minded individuals. In fact, it's probably a rarity to have an entire group of players who all want to do the same thing. Thus, at some point a primogen-centered chronicle may be appropriate for the group, allowing some players to involve themselves in deep politics while others are able to aid the politicians via other avenues. Some suggestions for groups with different motivations can be found below.

## STYLES OF PLAY

A number of different styles of play are available for a primogen story. The biggest differences revolve around the number of player characters who are involved. The more players a Storyteller has in the group who enjoy a roleplaying challenge, the more players she can involve directly with the primogen.

### SINGLE CHARACTER PRIMOGEN

In this style, a single player involves his character directly on the council. His character sits on the council, able to influence the outcome of decisions directly, hobnob with the Kindred elite (at least, as close as elite comes in the Storyteller's chosen city) and generally fend for his political unlife.

The primogen character is likely to become the focus of the game. He is the one with whom the “important” decisions are made and who risks his political reputation. Often, the other characters will play support positions, using their various abilities and knowledge to aid the primogen.

Gaining a primogen position is sometimes ridiculously easy. However easy it was to gain the position, keeping it is the hard part. Primogen characters will need help, and a coterie that has undergone experiences together forms a wonderful support group. Gathering information on a rival, garnering influence in a particular sector or eliminating a possible threat are all activities that a primogen character will need help with if he wishes to keep his seat. The non-primogen characters can perform the dirty work of their primogen fellow, doing the things that a primogen can never do while he occupies a position of such high visibility.

A single character primogen story needs to have at least one player with a strong personality and good leadership instincts who will play the highlighted character. The other players need to accept the primogen player in this role, preferably with little to no resentment of the attention and power granted to the primogen council member.

In some ways, this can be the easiest style of primogen chronicle. The council member character is able to make decisions, usually with the support of the group. Moreover, decisions by the primogen character do not necessarily jeopardize the political positions of other players’ characters. Infighting between characters (assuming that all the characters in the coterie are generally amicable) is kept to a minimum.

The problems with this style are that the interaction between players can become quite nasty due to the nature of the story. With a single player (or two) as major forces in Kindred politics and the others supporting cast, the Storyteller runs the real risk of alienating some of the players. Players want their characters to be in the spotlight at some time or another, and playing a character who is constantly overshadowed by a primogen character is no fun. This alienation can lead to trouble as players compete among themselves for the attention of the Storyteller.

To avert what can be the potentially disastrous results of a hierarchy developing between the players and their characters, a Storyteller needs to be aware of which characters are highlighted during different stories. Make sure that players have ample opportunity to make their characters stand out. While the primogen may be first among equals, the rest of the cast needs to receive the attention it deserves.



## A GROUP OF PRIMOGEN

The Group of Primogen story allows a number of players to assume the positions of council members. Here, most of the players' characters (if not all) occupy the coveted seats of the primogen and vie among themselves to complete their own agendas. They each potentially have the ear of the prince and a decent amount of influence and ambition under their sway.

The characters maneuver against Storyteller characters as well as against each other, also giving aid when it is beneficial. The key here is that the players' characters are not necessarily all working to support one another, and at times, may be at opposite ends of the political spectrum, vehemently opposing one another on divisive issues.

Characters can work together or against one another. While working together they may create a political bloc, forcing the other primogen to react and try to overcome the bloc. Unified in ideology or goals, a group of player character primogen may even challenge the wishes of the prince. Much like a modern political party, the group shares a unified vision and uses its varied abilities to make that vision come true.

On the other end of the spectrum is a chronicle in which the players are not allied and may see each other as enemies. No coterie or camaraderie is necessary within the player group; instead each can be as mercenary, ambivalent or ambitious as he wishes.

Strong and active players are required to run this type of story, especially if conflict within the group is likely. A single leader is not necessary, and may be one of the key conflicts of the story, as each character tries to assert her dominance. Before starting a story like this, you must keep in mind that this type of game requires mature players, ones who can divorce the animosity of the story with the attitudes of the real world. Players are going to attempt to humiliate and outmaneuver each other's characters, and feelings may well be hurt.

It is a tough thing to see one's character become ineffective or disgraced, doubly so when the act is done by a player and not a Storyteller. Players may naturally become offended or defensive, blurring the lines between character and player. You need to tread lightly in this style of game, maintaining good relationships with all the players and letting them know beforehand that a happy ending is not a guarantee. In any good story, a Storyteller must be both flexible and understanding, but in this type of chronicle the players must be just as flexible.

The other challenge in this type of game for you as the Storyteller is to stay on top of all that can happen. Since the players wield a good deal of political power, and probably have a good deal of ambition, it may be tough for you to keep track of all that is happening within the group, not to mention adding in the goings-on of the city.

The best way to solve this flood of activity is to employ downtime to its fullest. Allow players to act toward their own agendas during the time between games. Personal plotlines can be taken care of through individual sessions done with only the involved players. Leaving the players a good deal of leeway and ability to determine their own results (within reason) can help immensely reduce your workload, or at least spread out that work.

In fact, a group may meet only infrequently as a whole entity — maybe only when a primogen council meeting is called. Otherwise, you and the players meet as they need and as the opportunity within the story arises. It may be some time before the players see one another, and it falls to both those players and the Storyteller to maintain some type of informal contact. Update letters, in-character e-mails and telephone calls can all help retain some group coherency even when the characters do not work together and the players meet infrequently.

## TROUPE PRIMOGEN

Another option available is using a troupe style of play. Troupe play involves players managing a number of characters throughout a story. Each player creates a single, "lead" character, in this case the primogen council member. From there, they also create less powerful or younger associates of the primogen. These other characters can be allies, childer, retainers, or just about any concept that can be reasonably associated with the lead character.

For example, a player may create a Nosferatu primogen as his primary character. The Storyteller allows the player to use extra freebie points to simulate the character's age and power. From there, the player, with Storyteller approval, decides to create three other characters: the childe of the Nosferatu, a Gangrel compatriot and a ghoul cop who acts as a regular informant and occasional enforcer. Using standard character creation rules, the player creates each of these secondary characters and uses the prelude to intertwine the histories of all the secondary characters into the history of the primary character. In the end, the player has four characters available. She plans to use the Nosferatu primogen the most often but also has the option of using her other characters for different types of stories.

With so many characters and different capabilities, both you and players have the ability to tell a story on a number of levels. Instead of simply using a certain number of dots in Contacts to gather a particular piece of information, the actual process of gathering that information may be roleplayed. Thus, the backroom or unseen dealings that are too often assumed simply to occur become stories unto themselves.

The only real rule to creating a troupe is to have one primary character per player. As long as the primary character is maintained and played fairly regularly, any number of secondary characters may be created as long as the player and Storyteller are comfortable with the size and scope of the troupe. It's a good idea to integrate the stories of the secondary characters with the background of the primary character to create a bond between the player's characters. The key then is to create a plausible reason that they would all associate with one another.

Players in a troupe primogen game can each play different council members as well as their loyal lackeys and hangers-on. Since some of the primary characters are bound to disagree on certain issues, it is a good idea for players in this style of game to have at least one neutral character that they can use in games that might center on issues contrary to the goals of their own primary characters, or on issues in which their primary characters do not want to be involved. It's even possible to have some secondary characters who dislike the primary character, just so the player will have the option to be part of just about any story that you can think up.

With a stable of characters, the players then have the option of selecting which characters they think would be most appropriate for the game. The Storyteller has the option of assigning a character to a player after designing the story with particular characters in mind. Because of the many different characters involved in the story, troupe play is extremely versatile and, in the right hands, very rewarding.

A troupe game has downsides. Like a game filled with multiple players playing primogen, the characters may find each other at cross-purposes and possibly violently so. Again, feelings can be hurt or grudges created that spill over into the real world. Troupe-style play has inherently less risk than other styles, however, because the competition is not as fierce since the focus does not rest on a single character per player. Usually, this style of play engenders a decent amount of cooperation between players and Storytellers alike. Still, expecting complete amicability between players all the time when characters are fighting with each other can be a bit straining.

Try to avert any animosity that spills over into the players' lives by focusing equally on the different characters. A good Storyteller usually keeps the lines of communication open with her players, allowing both Storyteller and player to talk frankly with one another. If a certain act is going to alienate a particular character and may have possible repercussions for the player, you need to be able to present the situation to both players involved in such a light so that both can come to an amicable solution that also supports the plotline. More often than not, players are quite reasonable, and when encouraged to discuss a potentially disruptive situation usually smooth over the problem before it does any permanent harm.

This is not always the case, however, and feelings may get hurt despite your best efforts. Then, in your role as leader and Storyteller, you need to step in and look for a way to solve the solution arbitrarily. If the players are not willing to work with one another, you need to make sure the game is disrupted as little as possible and keep the story going.

A problem unique to troupe play is the amount of bookkeeping. Primogen chronicles can already require a good deal of extra work on your part. Compound the situation with four or five characters per player, and you can grow frustrated, feeling as if you are not having an opportunity to enjoy the game. In this case, you usually need to hand over some of the work to players. Allowing players to make up stories on the fly about their respective characters or take control of the story while you are occupied can be a great relief. This takes trust on both sides of the Storyteller's screen, with players and Storyteller working to tell a good story.

#### PRIMOGEN TO BE

A fourth option for a game centered on the primogen of a city is to make the council the goal of the story. Using this book for the players' benefit does not automatically mean that you must allow the players to start as primogen. Instead, if one or all of the players have stated an interest in gaining a primogen seat, you have a wonderful plot device dropped right into your lap.

In a Primogen to Be game, the players start outside of the political power structure of the city and must work their way into positions where gaining a primogen seat is a possibility. They must work to gain influence and powerful allies. They seek knowledgeable and useful contacts, and they seek the resources to put those assets into play. Most of all, though, they seek recognition and power. It falls to you to provide those results through a string of stories that are both challenging and entertaining.



Not all the players have to want to gain a primogen seat. It is possible that only one player wants to see her character be elevated to the position. In this case, it is a good idea to encourage the other players to adopt a similar goal of elevating that one character to the primogen council. Thus, the entire group holds a similar goal in mind, making story creation and development that much easier. For most groups it should be easy to convince the other characters of this goal, as when "one of ours" becomes primogen, they're going to be able to enjoy the benefits.

Eventually, if you believe the players have worked hard and intelligently, they should reap their rewards by gaining a position in the primogen council. The last step should involve a nice climax, possibly having the previous member eliminated so that the seat is vacant just as the players put their different resources into motion to set their companion up for taking the seat. Similarly, they may, in a tense series of meetings, convince the prince that the current member is too out of touch or hostile to be of any worth on the council, and that they have a better alternative. Whatever you and players choose, the primogen seat should be reserved for the culmination of at least several stories of good planning and excellent roleplaying.

Of course, success brings all the new requirements of the position, which can easily lead to one of the three previous types of primogen story styles. A Primogen to Be story takes with it the desire on the parts of the players to better their situation, for good or ill, and will become an entirely new story if they succeed. With success, they are no longer outsiders but insiders, working continually to fend off their fellow primogen as well as avoid losing their seat just as their predecessors lost theirs.

The unknown pitfalls of this type of story are usually not as severe as other types, since it is more in line with standard types of **Vampire** chronicles. One thing to be aware of, like the multiple primogen council member style, is any favoritism that may go along with primogen characters. If any of the player characters do not gain a seat, or do not desire a seat, it does not mean that they can be ignored. In fact, a Storyteller needs to make special considerations toward those players whose characters are not primogen, since they are not the center of attention. As players, though, they deserve similar opportunities to shine.

If all the players' characters are primogen, the Storyteller needs to prepare for the backbiting and maneuvering against and between player characters. Since the Primogen to Be story can evolve into so

many different styles, it is best for the Storyteller to familiarize herself with the other styles and their inherent benefits and dangers so that she can tailor the story to the type that she, as well as the players, will enjoy.

## MANAGING PLAYERS' CHARACTERS AS PRIMOGEN

Okay, now that we have general styles of play for players out of the way, let's discuss how to manage those players. One key aspect to managing players' primogen characters is to make sure that they feel empowered. Every player who creates a primogen character or is able, through roleplaying, to elevate his character to that position is going to want the corresponding rewards. Players do not always anticipate the responsibilities of playing a primogen character, but they inevitably have preconceived notions of what they will be able to do through their position.

As primogen, the characters are leaders. They are the ones making decisions that the other Kindred of the city act upon. They are often the ones who take the initiative. As such, players with primogen characters are going to expect a certain amount of latitude in deciding their own futures and being able to do what non-primogen may not be able to do. These burdens and responsibilities are exactly what make a primogen story different from other **Vampire** stories.

It is perfectly all right to startle characters with a decent amount of responsibilities and to highlight the dirtier side of being a council member (such as constant harassment by clan members wanting their issues to be heard, or constantly being watched by the opposition). In fact, to some degree, a Storyteller is expected to give the players a bit of grief for grief's sake. Neglecting to hand out the rewards, however, can frustrate players very quickly.

In a primogen chronicle, you should focus on listening to your players, implementing their ideas in upcoming stories. You also need to listen to the general opinions of your players and what they would like to do with their characters. More often than not, the goals of the players for their characters are quite reasonable and should help the Storyteller create future stories.

Information is a must. Primogen are some of the most connected of all Kindred. The players' characters should be no exception. Awareness of the different information outlets the characters are connected to should help the Storyteller anticipate what types of information they will disseminate to the players' characters as the story progresses.

The players need at least enough information to make educated guesses about their future. Similarly, on any given political issue within the city, a primogen can reasonably expect to gain pertinent information so that he can make intelligent decisions. Note that "intelligent" does not always mean "correct" or "useful," and it's realistic to include biases and patently incorrect information for the player to sift through. Part of the reward for making a good decision is the knowledge that you were able to sort through all the dross.

You should be ready to reward enterprising players. Creative uses of Backgrounds or picking up on a particularly esoteric clue can lead to more beneficial information or the respect (and accolades) of other Kindred. On a similar note, if you are feeling overburdened, then particularly helpful players should be rewarded with access to useful allies and information (or other appropriate rewards).

There is a fine line, though. Too much information and the story is no longer a challenge. Too little, and the players (and their characters) are impotent.

## CHARACTERS AS ELDERS?

A couple of other considerations should be kept in mind. Players may have a tendency to believe their primogen characters will be quite old. Many will want to play Kindred that are seventh generation or below, thinking that a position such as primogen naturally is filled by the eldest and most venerable Kindred.

If older characters fit the story well, then no problem exists. On the other hand, players who expect older characters when a Storyteller feels it may unbalance the game can be a problem. The best solution is to give the players reasonable explanations as to why elder characters will not fit the story.

Remember, primogen are not by definition the most powerful Kindred in the city. Instead, they are the ones who, for one reason or another, decided to take the position. Sometimes they are cajoled or bullied into the position. It is not rare for the real power brokers to use the primogen as fronts for their machinations, or outright to pull the primogen's strings. Elder Kindred are often very tired of the petty politics that the primogen represent and will usually only reluctantly join. Thus, if you wish to avoid having players portray elder characters, simply point out that the elders of the city are not interested in the types of games the primogen play.

## OTHER CLANS?

Another thing to consider is allowing players access to the nonstandard clans that are highlighted in Chapter Three. The primogen are usually the template by which the higher powers of the Camarilla judge a city. Primogen are expected to toe the line (as it were), and the more eccentric the body of primogen, the more weakness the prince exhibits. Not surprisingly, finding these nonstandard clans is quite rare and will carry with it a lot of emotional and cultural baggage.

Sure, playing one of these exceptional characters can bring with it a change of pace and opportunities for roleplaying that are not normally available. Playing these characters just for the "coolness" factor, however, is normally asking for more trouble than it is worth. On the other hand, the concept of an Assamite primogen in a city with an exceptionally large Arabic population may well be appropriate and provide some interesting aspects to the story. For such a character to work you need a specific reason for allowing these types of characters in, coupled with a player willing to spend some extra time on background and roleplaying. At the very least, some consideration needs to be given for why a prince would allow such an anomaly to have a voice on the council.

The exceptional characters should stay that way: exceptional. Allowing too many deviations from the norm with little to no extra work only cheapens the noteworthiness of the nonstandard characters.

## ENEMIES OF PRIMOGEN CHARACTERS

Primogen characters are powerful and influential and deserve adversaries who are both susceptible to a character's attacks and have the ability to withstand others. On one hand, the enemies of the characters need to have the ability to shrug off the ill-timed, poorly planned or just unlucky assaults (or what passes as an assault by a primogen), but the hope must be there that the player's best laid plan will eventually gain him the upper hand. Sure, the Sabbat and Cathayans present nice and easy adversaries for primogen characters, but they are not the only option for opposition to a coterie of primogen characters.

### THE "OTHER" PRIMOGEN

The most common enemies of a primogen player character will come from the ranks of the Camarilla. Other primogen naturally see the character as both a potential ally and adversary, and most will do everything in their power to humiliate or unseat the player character if he turns out to be an enemy.

Not all primogen adversaries will show their true colors immediately. Primogen are masters of deception and lying (they are politicians after all), and an enemy who reveals himself as such too early loses the element of surprise. Kindred are undead, and the primogen often take the concept of patience to a new level. Like vipers in the grass, they will wait for a character to show weakness and then strike with no mercy. Consider how insidious a Storyteller character primogen can be, offering her help to the player's newly appointed primogen character. She does what she can to ease the character's transition, offering little bits of advice and occasionally vote-swapping to help get the character's feet wet. Rather than prostrating herself to help the player's character, the Storyteller character is quietly helpful, allowing the player's character to come to her for advice or help, which she is all too willing to give, just give her a night or so to finish what she's doing.

Then, at the point when the player's character really needs the help, the Storyteller character is just "too busy." The player is left to fend for himself, with the result being that the Storyteller character severely weakens the player's character's position on the council while not appearing as the enemy she really is. Destruction through subtle manipulation — it's the primogen way.

Other options for enemies can come from within the character's own clan. Just as the character gains the accolades of rising to the primogen's position, surely some are jealous of her ascension. For every character who succeeds, four Storyteller characters wait in the shadows for the inevitable failure.

#### CONSIDER THE PRINCE

For nearly every point made about a primogen adversary of the players, the same can be said for the prince of the city. Just like the primogen, the prince is politically connected and has a good deal of resources at his disposal. Even more than the primogen, though, the prince wields considerable assets and can call on a number of favors from across the city.

Understand that the prince maintains his position because he's capable and just as ruthless as the primogen. A player who makes an enemy of the prince is assured of a tough and difficult fight ahead.

#### ANARCHS

Don't forget the anarchs. Technically part of the Camarilla (at least, by the Camarilla's own definition), the anarchs are Kindred who thrive on symbols. The Anarch Movement needs ideologies and concepts to rally behind. The fall of a prominent politico is just such a concept. Anarchs are often too disorganized to take on a prince. A primogen is just about as high as most anarch groups shoot to make their bold statements (and to avoid the true brunt of a prince's wrath), much to the chagrin of primogen worldwide.

Anarchs are not often subtle. They attack the connections a primogen has with their areas of influence. Say a primogen has a ghoul police officer in the Internal Affairs division, offering unparalleled access to police records and just about anyone with a criminal record. What happens if that officer is killed in a gang-related revenge shooting? The result is the anarchs striking the primogen where it hurts, severing one of his most important assets and making unlife more difficult for the character. If the anarchs are lucky, the loss of influence may be just enough of a weakness for other primogen, harpies or even the prince to outmaneuver the player's character.

Anarchs are experts at striking quickly and in unexpected ways. While a primogen may be used to using proxies, influence and her social graces to best her political enemies, she may be woefully unprepared to defend herself from a determined anarch pack that focuses on physically confronting the character's allies. The anarchs are unlikely to attack the primogen directly, but any contacts, resources or other connections to the character are fair game.

Just like sharks scenting blood in the water, if a few anarchs are successful against a primogen, others will come running. Soon the character may be forced to retaliate constantly against attacks upon all her allies.

Theft, vandalism and kidnapping are not normally part of the repertoire of a primogen (unless one of his lackeys is the one doing the stealing, vandalism or kidnapping) and, from a Storyteller's point of view, may present an interesting change of pace to stories constantly centered on fighting off the machinations of the prince or some such.

#### THE SABBAT

The Cainites of the Sabbat act in a very similar manner as anarchs when they face off against a primogen. They are aggressive and violent, and will use those tendencies to surprise their primogen target and then melt into the shadows. The Sabbat do not

fight fair (at least in a council member's eyes), targeting the allies and contacts of the primogen and terminating them and forcing a primogen member to consider retaliation by methods that are out of the realm of politics. With the Sabbat, the greatest advantages of a council member, such as contacts or influence within the city, are all but nullified. In fact, where an anarch may seek to disrupt, most Sabbat packs have no compunction about killing. If anything, the Sabbat packs can be even more violent than the already dangerous anarchists.

At the other end of the Sabbat spectrum are the templars and higher-ranking members. These leaders are usually significantly subtler than the packs of rank-and-file Cainites and act more like adversarial primogen than roving gangs. The leaders of the Sabbat are often as connected and influential as a primogen, and also have the element of surprise on their side. The luminaries of the Sabbat, while disdaining mortal institutions, can occasionally present remarkably well connected foes and an interesting juxtaposition to the normal Sabbat stereotype.

## STORIES

The following are a couple of story ideas to set you in the right frame of mind for running a primogen chronicle.

### FORCED INTO THE COUNCIL

A player's character is elevated to the council with little regard for his own wishes. The elevation probably comes at the behest of the prince, but that is not the only possible source. Maybe a local archon or justicar sees potential in the character and asks the prince for the "promotion."

Suddenly the character is thrust into an alien position and forced to cope with all the advantages and disadvantages that go along with being a primogen council member. Good luck.

### THE POWER PLAY

The players already play primogen and are ready to take the next step. One player decides that her character is better suited to the principdom and wants to usurp that power. She needs to array her resources — allies, contacts, wealth, boons — and then make plans to make sure the coup is successful. She must gain the support of as many primogen as possible and gauge the reactions of the other influential Kindred of the city. Of course, she has to do all this without the prince getting wind.

A coterie of allied Kindred would be especially useful in this situation.



### SANDBAGGING

The Sabbat are moving on the city. Scouting parties have turned up and a siege looks imminent. The primogen need to prepare the city for the inevitable conflict. Not only do they have to lead their own clans and allay any fears, they must also help prepare the city for any possible violence from edgy Camarilla Kindred.

The council may disband or be replaced by a war council. The prince may neglect his other duties, forcing the primogen to pick up the slack. Any number of things can happen in the hours before the storm, and the primogen are sure to have ringside seats.

Then, of course, the siege starts and the real work begins.

### THE FALL OF A MEMBER

What happens when a council member really screws up? He does something so atrocious that the prince immediately expels him from the council and calls for another to take his place. How does the rest of the council react? What if one or more of these primogen watching as their compatriot leaves in disgrace is a player's character?

The reason for the fall can be seditious or trivial. Either way, the result is the same: a time of flux that forces the rest of the council to cope with a situation they did not have a hand in (or did they?). The fall of a council member may be especially stressful and bring subsequent scrutiny from the sheriff, harpies and supporters of the prince on the rest of the council.



Coming next...



VAMPIRE  
THE MASQUERADE



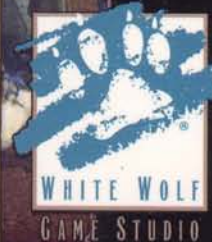
# Counsel of PRIMA GEN

## scions of the great clans

All Kindred from neonates to elders accept the primogen as the voices of their clans in a prince's domain. What truly falls under those auspices, however, varies from city to city. From councils of primogen that pull a puppet prince's strings to the coteries of primogen that exist at a prince's whim, the only constant in a primogen's unlife is that politics align against her.

## counsel of primogen includes:

- Character and storytelling support for key figures in the Camarilla hierarchy
- New powers and political gambits used by the pillars of the Ivory Tower
- History, anecdotes, tactics and schemes employed by the primogen — and ways to confound them



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