

DIABLERIE



Includes:

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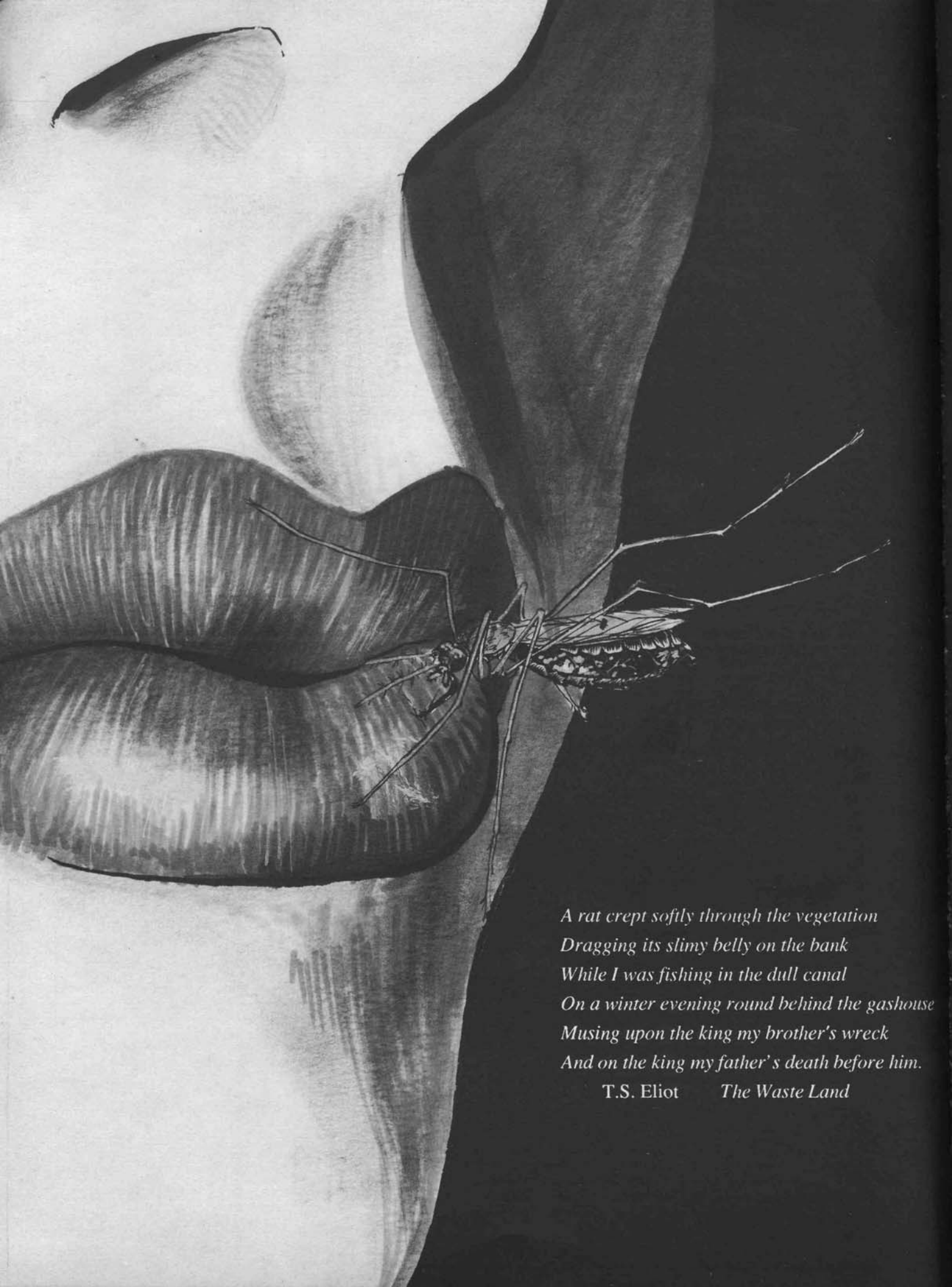
A Betrayal Sourcebook for Vampire: The Masquerade

Awakening

Diablerie: Mexico

BY NIGEL FINDLEY





*A rat crept softly through the vegetation
Dragging its slimy belly on the bank
While I was fishing in the dull canal
On a winter evening round behind the gashouse
Musing upon the king my brother's wreck
And on the king my father's death before him.*

T.S. Eliot *The Waste Land*

Pietr lowered the limp body of his drained Vessel to the pavement of the noisome alley. He licked the last traces of blood from his lips.

Yes. He could feel the thin vitæ of his victim as a churning incorporated into himself. Refreshing strength flowed through his limbs until his very skin began to tingle. He raised his eyes from the crumpled body of the would-be mugger — how foolish the boy had been to choose as his intended victim a far more lethal predator — and smiled at the cloud-streaked moon hanging distended over the high rooftops of Chicago. His eye teeth — his killing teeth — were still extended, and glinted evilly in the cold moonlight.

Something glittered at his feet — the mugger's switchblade, with which he'd threatened to take his killer's life. How foolish the weapon had seemed to Pietr. How easily he had brushed it aside, before reaching in to shatter the youth's jaw with a single, hideously strong blow. He laughed as he kicked the weapon aside.

The exhilaration of the fresh vitæ was a thin siren-song in Pietr's ears. Even though it had tasted thin, only slightly stronger than water, it still carried with it its full curative and restorative powers. That was interesting, Pietr noted, and valuable. Even though his tastes had become somewhat ... jaded by his recent diet, the blood of mere kine could still serve him. Yes, interesting, and good. Although he would continue in his set path, seeking out and draining those Elders foolish enough to leave themselves vulnerable, Diablerie was not Pietr's sole course of action. The kine could support him in time of need, as they always had in the past.

His tongue and lips tingled — burned, almost — with the memory of the last time he had drunk Kindred vitæ. In France, it had been. Through his research, he had unearthed the Haven of an Elder. By cunning and courage, he had overcome the creature's defenses, and drained that Vessel dry. His heart pounded, and his spirit leapt as he recalled the fierce joy of the Inspiration, the piercing death-yet-not-death of the Rebirth. How he longed to taste once more the savage, hot blood of his own Kindred ...

It was that longing that had brought him at last to this city. Here, his research had told him, he would find a prize beyond price — one of the Kindred who knew the ancient blood-magic, the Ritual of the Bitter Rose. And with that Ritual — when Pietr had obtained it, by whatever means it might take — the Diabolist would gain powers that would elevate him to near-godhood. He would become the ultimate threat to the Camarilla, and the ruler of all the Kindred.

With a harsh laugh of exhilaration and anticipation, he vanished into the night.

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Dedication:

This book is dedicated to all the characters who died in the playtesting of this story.

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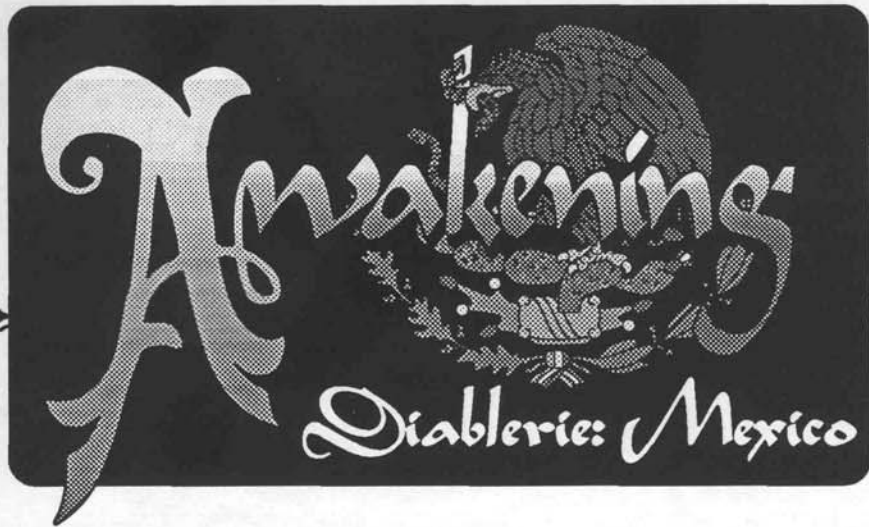
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Introduction

We do not merely feed upon the Mortals; some of us feed upon one another. Some do it out of need; they can no longer survive on the thin mortal vitæ. But others do it out of desire, for they seek the power of their elders. The war between my people is a cannibalistic and horrific conflict indeed. The young hunt the old, not for wisdom, but for power.

— Critias, Clan Brujah

Awakening is a supplement for the **Vampire: The Masquerade** storytelling game. Within it, you will find information on one of the more powerful Methuselahs in the New World — Mictlantecuhtli, known to many as The Wanderer — and details about his resting place. Lying in torpor, he represents a treasure almost beyond price for ambitious Neonates (and what Neonates are not ambitious?). So great are his age and the potency of his blood that by incorporating a powerful ritual with the drinking of his vitæ, not one but several Neonates could advance in Generation!

Of course, nothing of value ever comes easily, and the worth of a prize can be measured by what price those who desire it would risk to obtain it. The price that must be paid for this prize is great indeed. Any Kindred who attempt to attain the goal must face the very real risk of being extinguished, of facing the death that they thought would never come for them.

For the Wanderer does not sleep unprotected. Far from it. His defenses have destroyed uncounted Kindred over the two millennia and more that he has lain in Torpor. What matter a handful more?

CONTENTS

Diablerie consists of six chapters. The first chapter serves as an introduction and explanation of the rest of the book. Chapter 2 offers a discussion of the practice of Diablerie, or the Amaranth. Chapter 3 provides background material on Mictlantecuhtli, the Wanderer, including his history and capabilities. Chapter 4 contains suggestions for how to involve the Neonates in this story and ways in which the Storyteller can drop the hints that will lead them on to their appointment with destiny. Chapter 5 describes the Wanderer's Haven, a Mayan pyramid located in the Quintana Roo province of Mexico's Yucatan peninsula, as well as information on its many defenses — living, inanimate and undead. And finally, Chapter 6 discusses ways of

concluding the story, of tying up loose ends and bringing the dramatic flow of the story to a suitable close.

THE STORY

Diablerie is a one-chapter story for Vampire, intended for a group of 3-6 Kindred. It is a stand-alone story, with no direct links to any other Vampire supplements.





HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This supplement can be used in two ways. First, it can be used merely as background information. The book provides the Storyteller with important background on the practice of Diablerie — the game mechanics, particularly with reference to when Kindred drink the vitæ of exceptionally old and powerful Vampires, and the philosophy and body of beliefs that the Kindred have built up around the practice over the millennia. It also describes one of the greatest of the Methuselahs, Mictlantecuhtli, who has lain in torpor since before the time of Christ. Although the location of his resting place is known to few — if any — so great was his power that Mictlantecuhtli is probably the core of many myths and legends among the Kindred. Storytellers, then, can use this supplement for information on Diablerie, and for “deep background” that they can release in hints and rumors, to enhance and deepen the atmosphere of the Chronicle.

Second, if the nature of the Chronicle is suitable, Mictlantecuhtli the Wanderer can be presented as a target for Neonate characters bent on acquiring power through Diablerie, the drinking of an Elder’s blood. Since the

Wanderer is so old and so powerful, he represents an opportunity for several player characters to advance in Generation. Here, the rules on Diablerie itself take on more immediate significance, as do the details on the Wanderer’s Haven and the precautions he has taken to protect himself. In this case, the Neonates must “run the gauntlet” if they wish to drink of Mictlantecuhtli’s vitæ.

TIE-INS

There are no direct tie-ins between this supplement and any other product for *Vampire* ... apart from the *Vampire* rulebook, of course. While *Awakening* could be used in a Chronicle based on earlier Chronicles, such as *Ashes to Ashes* and *Chicago by Night*, the events in this supplement are so far removed from Chicago and Gary that there will be little connection with matters in Illinois and Indiana (unless the Storyteller decides otherwise, of course; suggestions for such complications can be found in Chapter 6). Of course, Kindred from Chicago may journey with the Neonates to Mexico — to assist them, hinder them or just observe, as the case may be. Otherwise, *Awakening* can be considered a stand-alone product.

Chapter Two:

Diablerie;

A Discussion

The bigger the cap, the bigger the pealin'
— Ice Cube, *Steady Mobbin'*

Diablerie is the name that the Kindred apply to draining the vitæ of another Vampire, driving the victim to the Final Death as his very life force, and the potency associated with it, is transferred to the Diabolist. Regardless of the fact that most Kindred consider it a foul and perverted act — and of the Sixth Tradition's condemnation of any Kindred who would slay another — Diablerie is practiced by, and touches on, Vampires of all generations.

There are many who think that the later Generations of Kindred — those of Fourth and subsequent Generations — were created for one purpose, and one purpose alone: to feed the hunger of their Sires. After all, it is known that as Kindred attain ages in excess of a millennium, the vitæ of mortal Vessels becomes too thin to support them as it once did. Some Kindred extrapolate from this that the true Antediluvians — those of the Third Generation, and Caine himself, should he still exist — would be unable to gain any sustenance from mortal blood. They could survive only by feeding from Vampiric Vessels. The Antediluvians knew that this would occur, and — before they slipped into Torpor — they made sure sufficient Vessels would await them on their Awakening. In essence, then, according to this view the entire population of the Damned, so concerned with its own petty squabbles and rivalries, are nothing but a Herd awaiting the resurrection of the Antediluvians. If this is the case, then Gehenna is something truly to be feared ...

It must be admitted that not many of the Kindred believe this (or admit that they believe it, perhaps). Even if this apocalyptic view is not the truth, there certainly have been — and probably still are — Vampires who sire Get for the sole purpose of later feeding on them. Most Kindred view this kind of situation with a deep personal revulsion, possibly because it would be too easy for them to imagine the horror of being such a Get. How would it be — particularly for a

natural hunter such as a Vampire — to realize that one's inescapable destiny is to become the prey of the Sire who created one? Certainly, the fact that such Get are bound to their Sire by Blood Bond would partially mitigate the horror, but still some of the terrible knowing would remain.

Then, too, there are the few "rogue" Elders who have developed a taste for the blood of their Kindred, even though the vitæ of mortals would still support them admirably. The ecstasy, or Rapture, associated with the moment when a Vessel meets the Final Death must be addictive indeed. Why else would Elders, who could gain no concrete benefits from feeding on Neonates, risk extreme consequences to do so? Obviously, Neonates — the prime targets for such Diabolists because of their relative weakness — are among the most fervent when it comes to bringing rogues to face the Prince's judgement.

Conversely, of course, there are many "younger" Licks — those of the later generations — who covet the vitæ of their Elders for the very real boons it would bring them. Most ambitions of this type remain ambitions, since by their nature any Kindred of earlier generations are much more powerful; however, there are those Neonates and Ancillas who do hunt their Elders for their blood. Through cooperative action, through trickery, or simply through falling on an Elder in Torpor, such Diabolists have sunk their teeth into enough victims to make the fear many Elders feel toward their Progeny a reasonable thing.

Many Elders take reasonable caution much too far of course, letting it blossom into paranoia and hatred. There are those Elders whose outspoken concern that the Ancilla will shatter the Masquerade is merely a cover for their fear that those same Ancilla will one night come to drink their vitæ.

Tales among the Kindred tell of those few ambitious Vampires who hunt the greatest prize of them all: the vitæ

of the Antediluvians themselves. Most of the Damned believe these stories to be nothing more than folk tales, with no truth to them whatsoever. After all, the Havens of the Antediluvians are hidden so well that none may find them.

But still the stories recur, accompanied by whisperings about Neonates who have somehow determined the locations of those hidden Havens. Those individuals who have acted on this knowledge have — so the stories tell — never returned to Kindred society. Does this mean the Antediluvians (or the protections with which they would have hedged around their Havens) have destroyed these challengers? Or have the Neonates joined the Antediluvians, in one sense or another? To most of the Damned, this possibility does not bear thinking about ...

THE PROCESS

The basic process of Diablerie is as described in **Vampire**. First, the Diabolist must totally drain the Blood Pool of the Vampiric Vessel. When the Vessel's Blood Pool reaches zero, she slips into Torpor. Thereafter, the Diabolist must roll Strength, with a difficulty of 9. For each success, the Vessel loses one Health Level. This represents the draining not of blood, but of the Vessel's very life force, that which animates his undead body, and its transference to the Diabolist.



Kindred refer to this stage of the process as "Inspiration" or as the "Fire Within". Once the Diabolist has drained all the target's Health Levels, the Vessel passes into the darkness of the Final Death. And, if the Vessel is of an earlier Generation than the Diabolist, then the feeder advances (at least) one Generation, gaining all of the associated benefits. This is a very simple description. Although accurate, it misses some of the most significant elements of Diablerie.

Specifically, it has nothing whatsoever to say about the sensations involved in drinking the vitæ of another Kindred, and their consequences. These sensations must be extreme, to explain those Vampires who feed upon Vessels of later generations.

The initial stage of Diablerie, the Feeding, is when the Diabolist is actually draining blood from the Vessel. Vampiric vitæ is as different from mortal blood as blood is from water. The sensations of drinking such hot, potent vitæ are often almost overwhelming. The Diabolist experiences transports of ecstasy unlike any sensation he or she has felt before.

If the Feeding is euphoric, then the experience of the Inspiration, or the Fire Within, is transcendent. Once the Vessel is drained of blood, the Diabolist begins absorbing the very life force of the victim. To the feeder, it seems she is still drinking blood, but blood so pure and powerful that it could well be liquid fire. She feels a burning within her own veins, spreading outward from her throat and through her entire body. This burning is indescribable: pleasure so piercing it becomes agony, or pain so sweet it becomes ecstasy. Diabolists say that throughout the Inspiration, they can hear a sound like the tolling of a great and distant bell, slowing down and diminishing in volume until, at the moment the Vessel suffers the Final Death, it falls into silence.

And at that instant, the ecstasy of the Inspiration blossoms, almost impossibly, to even greater heights. So wracking is this pleasure that the Diabolist is incapable of muffling a cry of exaltation. Diabolists refer to this moment as the Rebirth. Somewhat predictably, the magnitude of these sensations depends on the Generation of the Vessel; the earlier his generation, the more intense the sensations.

On the other side of the equation, the Vessel undergoes a profound experience as well, although not a pleasant one by any means. During the Feeding, the Vessel — if conscious — is able to fight back in any way possible. At the moment that the Vessel's Blood Pool is reduced to zero, however, he becomes totally paralyzed. It is as if he slips into Torpor, except that he is completely and horribly conscious throughout the Inspiration that follows, but is unable to do a thing to stop it. As the Vessel's life force begins to leave his body, he is possessed by terror, and a panic that no reason can hold at bay. As the Vessel loses Health Levels, and the Final Death approaches, this panic grows until it is all-encompassing. Even for those Kindred who seek the Final Death, Diablerie is the most horrible way of attaining it that can be imagined.

CONSEQUENCES

So overwhelming are the sensations associated with Diablerie that they can have very real, physical consequences. For the Diabolist, there is a chance of Frenzy, which arises from the sheer magnitude of the experience. To avoid Frenzy, the Diabolist must make a Self-Control roll against a difficulty of 12 minus the Generation of the Vessel. (Thus, if the Vessel is of the Tenth Generation, the difficulty is only 2; if the Vessel is Third Generation, however, the difficulty is 9!) If the Diabolist fails the roll, he suffers Madness (the usual result of a Conscience Frenzy); so great was the ecstasy that the Vampire will try anything to regain it. If the Self-Control roll is botched, however, the Vampire gains a Terror Derangement; the experience was so literally overwhelming that it has shaken the Diabolist's sanity.

Further, the Diabolist must make a separate Self-Control roll against a difficulty of 7 minus the Vessel's Generation. If this roll is failed or botched, the Diabolist gains the Derangement, Delusions of Grandeur. This is in addition to any Derangement gained through Frenzy.

It is possible that the Vessel may survive the experience of Diablerie. Perhaps the Diabolist is dragged off or destroyed before she can drain all of the Vessel's Health Levels. Once the Inspiration has begun, however (that is, once the Vessel has reached zero Blood Points) there is a very real risk that the Vessel's sanity has been shaken by the terror of the experience. The Vessel must make a Courage roll against a difficulty of 4 plus the number of Health Levels drained. (For example, the Diabolist drained 4 Health Levels before he was stopped. The Vessel's Courage roll is against difficulty 8.) On a failed roll, the Vessel gains a Terror Derangement; on a botch, he gains two Terror Derangements.

BENEFITS

Rise in Generation

The Vampire rulebook states that only one character can rise in Generation by drinking the vitæ of a senior Kindred. For millennia, most Kindred thought this to be an absolute truth. Most Vampires "knew" for a fact that only the Kindred who actually drained the last Health Level from the victim would experience the Rebirth.

However, during the occult Renaissance that occurred in Europe during the latter half of the 19th Century, members of Clan Tremere discovered that this "truth" was in fact just another of the many myths surrounding the Undead. There is a way in which more Kindred can experience the Rebirth, and advance in generation, from the vitæ of a single victim of Diablerie. A very specific technique must be employed for this to work, however. This technique became known as the Ritual of the Bitter Rose.

It is interesting and important to note that the discovery of the blood-magic incorporated into the Ritual of the Bitter Rose did not come as a surprise to all Vampires. There were those (few and far between) who had heard myths and legends telling of ancient days when Diablerie was more widely practiced: harsh and dark days, well before the dawning of the Christian Era. Back in those deadly times, certain myths related, many of the Elders knew the secrets of the blood-magic now called The Ritual of the Bitter Rose ... or at least some of the secrets. The myths told of great Damned thaumaturges throughout the world who had somehow developed blood-magic rituals of immense power. One such mythical thaumaturge was known only as "The Wanderer." Today, few believe the myths and legends, and fewer consider the Wanderer to be anything but a fictional figure.

Myths aside, once they had developed the Ritual of the Bitter Rose, Clan Tremere decided to keep their new knowledge inviolably secret. This was for several reasons.

One was fear. If it became known that multiple Kindred could experience the Rebirth from a single victim, how much more attractive would the practice of Diablerie become for the Anarchs? Until that time, one of the major limitations on the practice of the Amaranth was that normally only a strong band could hope to defeat an Antediluvian, and then





only one member of that band could benefit from the act. Jealousy, and the very real consideration that participants in such a move would risk the Final Death for something that would benefit only one of their number, held many back. The Elders of Clan Tremere quite reasonably feared that if knowledge of the Ritual of the Bitter Rose became widespread, the risk to their august persons in the form of roving bands of Diabolists would drastically increase.

The second reason, of course, was a desire for personal power, and power for the Clan. Knowledge that the Ritual of the Bitter Rose existed could, the Elders believed, be used as a major bargaining chip in the infighting and squabbling that dominated the Camarilla at the time. If need be, it could be a powerful weapon. The Seven Elders, based in Vienna, could — if the necessity presented itself — turn to Diablerie themselves, using the Ritual to so advance their own generation so that none could stand against them.

Unfortunately, that plan — if such vague ideas could in fact be termed a plan — came to naught. To this day, nobody within Clan Tremere knows how it came to pass, but the secret of the Ritual of the Bitter Rose got out. Other members of the Camarilla learned that the Ritual existed, and took the Tremere to task both for developing the blood-magic in the first place, and for trying to keep it themselves. In response to the overwhelming pressure from the other members — escalating, at times, to threats of destruction by a coalition of the other Clans — the Seven Elders grudgingly destroyed all records of how the Ritual is performed. Those who developed the Ritual, and those within the Clan who had subsequently learned of it, were either destroyed or had their memories wiped clean by the Seven Elders. As far as the Camarilla knew, the Ritual of the Bitter Rose had effectively ceased to exist.

Somewhat predictably, this belief turned out to be little more than wishful thinking. As many other groups have discovered down the corridors of history, destroying knowledge once it has been gained is much more difficult than developing it in the first place — so much more difficult that it might well be impossible. Rumors of the Ritual of the Bitter Rose had begun to circulate through the length and breadth of Kindred society. Although nobody admitted to knowing how it might be performed, it could not be denied that knowledge of the Ritual's existence was no longer a secret.

Today, it is thought that no more than half a dozen Vampires know how to perform the Ritual of the Bitter Rose. How they gained this forbidden knowledge remains a mystery. Perhaps when the Seven Elders of the Tremere destroyed all records of the Ritual, someone within the Clan preserved some writings on the topic. Or perhaps the "mind-wiping" magics used to obliterate the knowledge failed in some cases. Or, maybe, the Seven Elders did not carry out the complete eradication they described to the Camarilla, and saved records for themselves — records which were subsequently stolen or otherwise disseminated. At the present

time, the Camarilla considers possession of a description of how the Ritual is to be performed to be identical, in the face of the Traditions, to be equivalent to actually performing Diablerie, and thus punishable by death.

There are many Anarchs who are searching for knowledge about the Ritual of the Bitter Rose. Exactly how they plan to use this knowledge, if they should gain it, is not precisely known ... although the Elders are sure they can make an unpleasant guess.

Even the Ritual of the Bitter Rose has serious restrictions when it comes to elevating multiple Kindred through Diablerie. With Kindred of Fourth Generation or later, the Ritual is generally useless, in that even with its use only one Diabolist can experience the Rebirth and subsequent elevation. The only exceptions lie in the case of extremely — and abnormally — powerful Vampires, or those who are exceptionally old. The vitæ of a Fifth Generation Kindred who is highly skilled at Thaumaturgy, or who is two millennia or more old, might have sufficient potency to raise two or perhaps even three Diabolists in Generation through the use of the Ritual.

For Generations earlier than Fourth, the number of Diabolists who can benefit through the Ritual increase. An average Third Generation Kindred would have sufficient potency to elevate three Diabolists; an average Second Generation Kindred (if such still exist) could theoretically elevate nine Diabolists. In the case of Kindred of the Second and Third Generations, relative power and age must also be taken into account, as with Vampires of later Generations.

The Ritual of the Bitter Rose (Level Three Ritual)

The Ritual allows multiple Kindred to experience the Rebirth and to elevate in Generation from the blood of a single Diablerie victim. (As discussed above, the number of Kindred who can be elevated depends on the Generation and power of the victim.) The procedure is as follows.

First, a single Diabolist must feed on the vitæ of the victim, draining all of the victim's Blood Points, and all but one of his Health Levels. (The experiences and consequences of this Inspiration are detailed above.) Then, when the victim is reduced to a single Health Level remaining, the Diabolist must stop drinking. So euphoric is the experience of the Fire Within that stopping it requires an immense effort of will: the Diabolist must make a Self-Control roll against a difficulty of 10 - the victim's generation. If the Diabolist fails or botches this roll, she drains the victim's last Health Level and alone experiences the Rebirth and elevation. (There is no further consequence of a botched roll unless the Storyteller wants the botcher to attack her comrades after the Rebirth.)

The heart of the victim must then be cut out using a dagger forged of cold iron. This brings the victim to the Final Death. The heart is placed in a clean earthenware bowl, where it is



crushed to a pulp using a mortar of marble, and mixed with a small amount of red wine. To this mixture is added the residue of an alder stake that has been burned to ash. Finally, one pint of pure water is added to the concoction. Traditionally, this water must come from an untainted mountain stream, although contemporary experiments have proven that distilled water will work just as well.

The character performing the ritual must make an Intelligence + Occult roll against a difficulty of 6 (the Storyteller should make this roll secretly). All characters wishing to experience elevation must then drink of this concoction. If the roll is a success, each drinker (up to the maximum number of Kindred specified in the previous section) experiences Rebirth, and is elevated by one Generation. If the character performing the Ritual fails the roll, the concoction is inert, and no character is elevated. If the character botches the roll, the concoction is rendered extremely poisonous, inflicting three aggravated wounds on the drinker. The number of wounds suffered is decreased by one for each success the character achieves on a Stamina + Fortitude roll against a difficulty of 5, but only if the drinker has Fortitude. (Yes, this makes the Ritual a calculated risk. But what great boon can ever be gained without at least some risk?)

There are many unsubstantiated yet recurring rumors that sometimes the Ritual of the Bitter Rose has gone decidedly and horribly wrong. Many rumors tell of a failed Ritual destroying the potency of the vitæ totally and utterly, while there are some that describe cases where the vitæ's potency has been drastically increased. In these latter cases, the



supernormally potent vitæ has elevated Diabolists by more than one Generation, although usually at great cost: the draught has inflicted hideous aggravated wounds on the drinkers, and has sometimes caused the Diabolists to suffer extreme and unusual Derangements. There are also tales of Diabolists spontaneously bursting into flame and being destroyed on drinking the treated vitæ. It is not known whether this was caused by a severe failure in the Ritual, or whether the potency of the vitæ was so increased as to be deadly to a drinker of relatively late Generation.

There are also rumors — again unsubstantiated — that vitæ treated by the Ritual can somehow be stored. Thus those Diabolists present can benefit by the blood of an Antediluvian, but any blood remaining can be kept potent to be used by others at a later date. There are even rumors that claim that a single Diabolist can store portions of the Ritually treated blood and drink them later, elevating one Generation each time. Most Kindred who understand at least a little about the workings of the Ritual claim that this latter story is nothing but wishful thinking. The vitæ, these “experts” claim, must be quaffed immediately on the completion of the ritual, and any stored blood will immediately become inert and useless. Still, however, there are many who believe that the Ritual can be used in this manner. How much more valuable, then, does the Ritual become. Theoretically, if this rumor is true, then a single determined Diabolist might produce from a single victim of the Third Generation enough treated draughts to elevate himself by a full three Generations. Those who believe this rumor claim that its denial by those

who understand the Ritual is simply a self-serving act with no other real significance.

Whatever the truth of the matter, it cannot be denied that the blood-magic involved in the Ritual of the Bitter Rose remains largely mysterious, and highly risky to those who would try to gain by it.

Curative Powers

Although not all Kindred believe them to be true, there are tales that of the curative powers of vitæ taken from Vampires of Fourth Generation or earlier. These tales relate that this vitæ, if stored in airtight vials or flasks, can be drunk by Vampires as healing draughts. Further, this blood is said to be efficacious against even aggravated wounds. And finally, it is claimed that the vitæ can also temporarily raise a Vampire’s strength and physical prowess. The same tales tell, however, that the potency of such stored blood remains only for a short time, even if it is kept from contact with the air.

It is only rarely that a Vampire of Fourth or earlier Generation is actually drained of vitæ, of course, and those who have achieved such a thing would rarely speak of it. This explains why so few among the Damned know for certain the truth or falsity of these tales. In fact, most of them are true, at least in part.

Healing

The blood of a Vampire of Fourth or earlier Generation can act as a kind of healing draft if quaffed by a Vampire. One Blood Point will heal a number of Health Levels equal to five minus the Generation of the Vessel. (Thus, drinking one Blood Point from a Third Generation Vessel would heal two Health Levels.) This vitæ can either be quaffed from a vial or flask — as described later — or directly from the body of the Vessel. If a wounded Vampire is drinking the vitæ directly from the Vessel, she can decide whether or not she wants to experience the healing properties of the draught. If so, a Blood Point used to heal is not added to the feeder’s Blood Pool. Note that the feeder cannot “split” the effects — i.e., using one Blood Point to heal incompletely, and adding all other Blood Points to his own Pool. If the Diabolist decides to heal at all, he is healed totally; any Blood Points only partially used for that purpose are lost. (For example, a Diabolist who is Mauled (-4) drinks five Blood Points from a Third Generation Vessel, and decides to heal himself. Each Blood Point heals two Health Levels. The first point heals two Health Levels, raising the Diabolist to Injured (-2); the second point raises him to Bruised. A third point heals the remaining one Health Level. The Diabolist can add only two points to his Blood Pool.)

To have this additional healing effect, the blood must be drunk directly from the Vessel, or from a suitable container. Even if she fully replenished his Blood Pool by feeding from

an Antediluvian, a Diabolist can only heal one Health Level for each point spent from her own Blood Pool. In other words, once the vitæ has been absorbed into the Diabolist's body, it is no different from her own blood in its effectiveness.

Increasing Physical Attributes

A Diabolist who drinks one point of blood directly from a Vessel or from a suitable container can raise any one of her Physical Attributes by an amount equal to 6 minus the Generation of the Vessel, for the duration of the scene. (Thus, if the Vessel is Fourth Generation, the Diabolist can drink one point of blood and raise any Physical Attribute by two.) These increases cannot be split between Attributes; all of the points of increase from one Blood Point must be applied to the same Attribute. A Blood Point drunk and used this way is not added to the drinker's Blood Pool. A Vampire can use only one Blood Point per turn in this way. The same rules apply as with healing once a Vessel's vitæ has been added to a Diabolist's own Blood Pool.

Aggravated Damage

Blood from an Antediluvian of Fourth Generation or earlier can heal aggravated damage if drunk directly from the Vessel or from a suitable container. One point of blood can immediately heal one Health Level of aggravated damage; the Blood Point used this way is not added to the Diabolist's Blood Pool.

Only one Health Level of aggravated damage can be healed this way in any 24-hour period. If a Vampire drinks and uses another Blood Point for this purpose less than 24 hours after the last such use, she loses an additional Health Level; this is aggravated damage.

Preservation

It is possible to collect vitæ from a Methuselah or Antediluvian and store it in vials or flasks, and to expect it to retain its efficacious qualities. Any amount of blood can be stored in this way, but vitæ drunk after being stored is lost at the rate of one point per day (this is figured after the character marks off the one Blood Point Kindred lose normally each day). Remember, one Blood Point from a Fifth Generation Methuselah might represent several ounces of liquid, while one Blood Point from a Third Generation Antediluvian might be a single drop!

Only glass containers can be used to store the blood. Each container must be totally empty, must have been washed out with rainwater before use, and must never have been used for another purpose. Once the blood is decanted into the container, the container must be closed with an airtight stopper. If the stopper is removed, allowing air to reach the blood within, the vitæ loses its efficacy in less than five seconds (long enough for a Vampire to drink it, but just).



CONSEQUENCES OF DIABLERIE

In all but the most extreme subsections of Kindred society, Diablerie is considered one of the most heinous of crimes. But what risk does this represent if the criminal carries out his actions without being caught in the act? Unfortunately for would-be Diabolists — and fortunately for those Elders who depend on the threat of social sanction as a deterrent — there are several ways in which other Kindred can sense that an individual has perpetrated Diablerie.

Firstly, the Thaumaturgy Path The Taste of Blood will definitively tell the user whether or not the subject has ever drunk the blood of a Vampire of earlier Generation. This "taint" is permanent; even millennia later, a Diabolist can be detected in this way. If the Diabolist has drunk the vitæ of a Vessel of his own Generation or later, the taint is not permanent, but obeys the time limit discussed below.

The aura of a Vampire who has practiced Diablerie is tainted with flickering rays of black; this taint lasts for the time limit discussed below. Any Kindred capable of seeing the precise color shade of an aura — requiring two successes with the Auspex power Aura Perception — can see the black tinges. Not everyone automatically understands what it represents, of course ... although many Elders certainly do!

Finally, any other Kindred coming into close contact with a Diabolist may sense "something wrong" about the individual. This requires a Humanity check against a difficulty of one-third the number of months since the Vampire practiced Diablerie (round fractions up) multiplied by the Generation of the Vessel. If the Diabolist has fed from more than one Vessel, the check should be made for the incidence that gives the lowest difficulty; further, the difficulty is decreased by one for each incidence of Diablerie in the past 12 months. (For example, a particularly dedicated Diabolist has performed Diablerie four times in the past year; the most recent incident, six months ago, saw him draining the life force of a Fourth Generation Methuselah. The difficulty for any other Vampire to detect the "taint" is equal to 4 — one-third the number of months since the incident (6 ÷ 3) times the Generation of the victim (4) minus the number of incidents in the past year (4).) Vampires who make this roll do not sense much more than a vague discomfort, a feeling that there is something unpleasant about the Diabolist. Most Kindred will not understand exactly what the feeling means, although some Elders might be able to interpret it correctly.

Note that the results of The Taste of Blood or Aura Perception are considered by most Princes as proof of Diablerie. The queasy feeling discussed in the preceding paragraph may be indicative, but it certainly is not proof.

Time Limit for Detection

The taint on a Vampire's "soul" that arises from Diablerie is permanent only with regard to a Vessel of earlier Generation, and then only with respect to The Taste of Blood. The other "stains" are temporary.

If the Vessel was of an equal or later Generation to the Diabolist, The Taste of Blood will discern the taint only within 40 weeks minus the Generation of the Vessel. This is also the time that the black flecks remain in a Diabolist's aura.

LAWS AGAINST DIABLERIE

To the vast majority of the Damned, Diablerie is considered to be against the all laws, natural and otherwise. The Sixth Tradition is a specific injunction against the destruction of other Vampires in most cases. Depending on interpretation, only a Sire has the right to destroy his Progeny, or only the

Prince has the right to destroy Kindred in his territory junior to him. Whichever is the correct interpretation, it is obvious that the Sixth Tradition automatically excludes those incidences of Diablerie when a Vampire drains the life force of a Vessel of earlier Generation. Based on the Sixth Tradition alone, most Princes will call a Blood Hunt against any Kindred proven guilty of Diablerie.

Interpreting the Sixth Tradition strictly, it would seem that Sires are free to perform Diablerie upon their Progeny if they so wish. Most Princes, however, promulgate strict laws forbidding any form of Diablerie. Again, the performance of Diablerie against such a law can be punished by a Blood Hunt.

There have been tales of Princes who themselves have created Progeny simply to serve them as Vessels. This is allowed according to a strict reading of the Sixth Tradition, and obviously such Princes would not bring in laws forbidding Diablerie, or would place themselves above such laws. Even a powerful Prince who acts in this way does so at significant personal risk. Most Vampires believe the words of a Tremere Elder, Troius, who once wrote, "The laws against Diablerie are unwritten on paper or parchment, but they are graven on the heart of every Kindred." The vast majority of the Damned find the concept of Diablerie as repugnant, and will refuse to associate with a known Diabolist. If Diablerie is against the laws of the local Prince, many Kindred will respond by turning the known Diabolist over to that Prince for judgement. If there are no such laws, or if it is the Prince himself who is the Diabolist, certain Kindred may take matters into their own hands. Kindred traditions contain several stories of unofficial Blood Hunts, where "lynch mobs" of outraged Vampires hunted down a known Diabolist and brought him to the Final Death in punishment for his crime. Even the most powerful of Princes will fall if all Kindred within his territory turn against him.

Whether or not there are any local laws forbidding Diablerie, the Inconnu have been known to take unilateral action against Diabolists. This kind of action on the part of the Inconnu could simply spring from fear that the Diabolist's next victim might be one of their own number. Alternatively, it could be intended as a kind of "object lesson", to discourage other would-be Diabolists, and to prevent the "taint" of Diablerie from spreading throughout Kindred society. The fact that many such "removals" are widely discussed after the fact hints that the Inconnu has actively disseminated information, which in turn lends credence to the "object lesson" theory.

Chapter Three:

The Wanderer

*When green buds hang in the elm like dust
And sprinkle the lime like rain
Forth I wander, forth I must
And drink of life again*

— A.E. Houseman

Still they called him a god. It would have been humorous, had it not been so tragic. They worshipped him for his powers — very real powers, not the overblown hyperbole of the people's myths — and they envied him. The priests, first among his worshippers, frequently begged him for the boon of immortality. (Who knows how they first guessed that he had the power to grant it?) From the outset he had refused, which had angered them. He knew — even though they believed he did not — that at the heart of most of the rituals supposedly dedicated to him were attempts to gain directly what he would not give them.

He had never granted the priests the boon they sought, though he had fed upon them from time to time. But that was not to say he had sired no Progeny. It was just that he had chosen simple peasant farmers on whom to bestow the Embrace. Certainly, he could justify his choice in other ways, but he had to admit the truth if only to himself. He had chosen them purely as a slap in the face to the oh-so-deferential priests; he had given them immortality, while denying it to the priests.

Those Progeny he had sired rewarded him with their total, unquestioning loyalty. But still they thought him a god, which prevented them from giving him what it was he really

wanted — friendship. The moment that he had realized this was the moment he began considering repeating the murderous journey that had brought him to this place, but this time from south to north. Impossible though it may have seemed to him at the time, he had to face the possibility that he was the only true and free-willed Kindred in this area of the world. (He was not counting his Progeny as such; their life-long indoctrination in obedience to the priests and the gods put true free will forever beyond their reach.)

The journey ... again? His will quailed at the thought. The first time had brought him face to face with the Final Death more times than he cared to recall. And he had been stronger then. His own Sire had never hinted at such a possibility, but it certainly seemed age was weakening him. Even the two or so centuries he had spent in this place seemed to have leached energy from his body. His physical strength seemed undiminished; the weakness he felt encroaching was more of the soul than of the body. For the hundredth — or the thousandth — time he considered simply falling upon the priests that so bedeviled him, draining them to husks but not offering them the Embrace they so coveted. Killing them all — all but his loyal Progeny, of course — in his own very personal image of Gehenna. But then he



discarded the idea. Unworthy it was... but also too exhausting to even contemplate.

Sleep. Perhaps that was what he needed. A century or two — or even more — of sleep. To rest his soul as every morning's sleep rested his body. Yes, that was the answer.

But that answer simply posed more questions. Where? Where could he sleep undisturbed? He had found himself incapable of merging with the earth. He had no choice but to find another Haven that might survive for centuries undisturbed. But where? He looked around him idly.

Angular geometric shapes were silhouetted against the sky, black and deeper black. He smiled slowly. Yes, that was the answer. Within a few weeks he could make the necessary preparations.

And then he could rest.

THE MAYAS

"Maya" is the name applied to a group of related Indian nations or tribes belonging to the Mayan linguistic stock,



who lived in the Mexican states of Campeche, Chiapas, Tabasco, Veracruz and Yucatan, as well as portions of Guatemala and El Salvador. Traditional history relates that the Mayan civilization began in the 7th Century BC. The multiple Mayan tribes enjoyed political unity between AD 200 and 600, the period commonly called the Old Empire. Another period of importance and power was the New Empire, between AD 1000 and 1200. A time of wars with the Toltecs and later with the Aztecs, and growing internal dissention weakened the Mayan Empire. With the Spanish conquest in the 16th Century, the Mayan empire effectively came to an end, even though it took the Mexican government until 1901 to conquer the last independent Mayan community. Today, Mayan stock — short, dark and muscular, with broad heads — make up the majority of the peasant population in their former territories.

During its heyday, the Mayan civilization produced some remarkable architecture, of which great ruins exist throughout the region. Major ruins can be found at Chichen Itza, Mayapan, Palenque and Uxmal. In some areas, the forest is now so thick that it is vaguely possible major ruins may exist that have yet to be discovered. (In fact, as will be discussed later, this is the case with the ruins of Tzental.) Most of these sites comprise pyramidal mounds, often topped by temples or other buildings, grouped around open squares or plazas. The pyramids are built in successive steps, unlike the pyramids of Egypt, with steep staircases running up one or more sides. Most of these pyramids have cores of rubble or broken limestone mixed with mortar, which are then faced with cut stone blocks. As a consequence, most — but not all — pyramids of this type had no internal chambers or rooms.

MICHLANTECUHTLI, "THE WANDERER"

The man who would later be known as Mictlantecuhtli was born in the Pacific Northwest in the year 67 BC, in a small fishing settlement situated near the natural harbor that would eventually become the city of Vancouver. His true name was Mictantecle, a member of the native American tribe that would, centuries later, take the name Musqueam. At the time of Mictantecle's birth, they simply called themselves "the People" ... as did most tribes in the region.

Mictantecle was born into a hard life, and he grew up quickly. By the age of 15, he was more than five-and-a-half feet tall — taller than his father — and very muscular. By dint of his skill as a fisher and a hunter, the band chief granted Mictantecle permission to marry his only daughter. This was a signal honor, particularly since the band chief had no sons, and was already in his early forties — an incredibly advanced age or one of the People. It seemed obvious to all that within a handful of years Mictantecle would find himself in the position of chief, probably before he was 20.

The Stranger

It was in Mictantecle's 16th year that the stranger arrived. Nobody knows where he came from; he spoke a language even the band elders had never heard before. Even though he seemed unable to learn the language of the People — and the People, predictably, were disinclined to learn his — he managed to ingratiate himself with Mictantecle's band. He achieved this through an eloquent language of gesture, and through an almost supernatural ability to sense what people were thinking. The People valued strength and speed in a man, and the stranger was well endowed with both; in fact, he far outstripped everyone else in the band in both of these attributes. Mictantecle — and others — came to envy him his prowess, so much so that they were undismayed by the fact that the stranger was seen only by night, and seemed to vanish during the daylight hours.

The young Mictantecle, in fact, found himself obsessed with the mysterious stranger. Even though the youth found something disturbing about the older man — particularly when the stranger's troublingly steady and cold gaze settled on him — he spent many nights following the mysterious figure. To Mictantecle's surprise, the stranger seemed undisturbed by this attention. Even though they never exchanged a single word — impossible, because of the language problem — Mictantecle came to believe that the stranger liked him, or perhaps respected him, in some way.

The stranger had been living in the People's village for several months when the first strange event occurred. Mictantecle had been following the silent figure through the nighttime forest outside the village, but had lost sight of his quarry. Disgusted, the youth struck off through the forest in the direction in which he thought his home lay. He was passing through a clearing when he heard a voice speak clearly; the voice said the one word guaranteed to strike fear into the youth: "Grizzly." Mictantecle had been told many times by his elders that the correct thing to do when one encountered a grizzly bear was to collapse to the ground and play dead. In the night-black forest, alone, Mictantecle forgot his training, however, and broke into a run. Behind him he heard a roar, and a crashing in the underbrush. The cold realization of impending death washed over him.

Even at this point he could possibly have saved his own life by dropping and lying still. But the adrenalin was in his bloodstream, and he fled through the forest in panic, as he heard the bear quickly closing the gap behind him.

His recollection of that flight would always be hazy — perhaps fortunately so. When the bear first struck at his back with its massive paw, the impact was enough to send him tumbling. He screamed as the grizzly's claws ripped through the flesh of his back and side. He rolled, and fetched up against the bole of a great tree. The flash of agony was gone, and his torn back was cold and numb. As he lay, watching the black mass of the grizzly rear up over him, Mictantecle knew that the wound to his back was mortal, even if the bear did not strike at him again.

But it seemed that the bear would strike again. Mictantecle closed his eyes, and braced himself for the blow that would certainly end his life.

That blow never fell. Lying there, unable to move, Mictantecle heard the bear's angry growls take on a new pitch, a tone that he could only describe as puzzled. He opened his eyes.

A tall, thin figure stood between him and the bear. It was the stranger, standing like a statue, his cold stare locked with the bear's gaze. The bear fell silent, tilted its head on one side quizzically. Then it lowered itself heavily to all-fours again, and shambled off into the night. As the stranger knelt beside him, the shock overcame Mictantecle and he fainted.

When he came to himself again, it was still night, but he was now in a small cave near the village. His back was no longer numb; in fact, the throbbing pain was enough to make him cry out. The stranger was kneeling beside him, and laid a cold hand on the youth's forehead. At the touch, the agony in his back seemed to ebb slightly.

"You are dying." The words sounded clear and crisp, and Mictantecle knew the stranger was speaking to him. Yet the





mysterious figure's thin, white lips were not moving. It took Mictantele some seconds to realize that the words had sounded directly in his brain — and, further, that the warning about the grizzly had been communicated to him in the same way. He looked up into the hard eyes of the stranger, and a new fear washed over him, colder than the mere fear of death.

"You are dying," the stranger repeated voicelessly. "Would you accept that? Or would you live?"

The choice at first seemed meaningless to Mictantele. Such was the philosophy of the People that death was inevitable and would come to all eventually, with no choice involved. But the steady gaze of the stranger seemed to tell him that this was a very real choice he was being offered. Even though his back was flayed to the bone, and his spine broken, he had to believe that the stranger could somehow grant him the boon of life.

"I would live," he gasped out, the salt taste of blood in his mouth.

The stranger nodded silently, and bent forward.

Mictantele fainted at the start of the feeding. He would never remember the sensations of his Embrace.

Damned

When he came to himself once more, he was alone. The sky was pink; at first he thought it was dawn, but then realized it was sunset, and knew he had slept a full day. He rose cautiously, found his back free of pain, and seemingly unwounded, although his clothes hung in shreds across his shoulders. As he made his way back to his village, he somehow knew, deep in his soul, that he would never see the stranger again.

He almost faced the Final Death at his first sunrise. Having returned to the village and suffered the weeping attentions of his wife and mother, both of whom had thought him dead, he prepared to join the fishermen who would be going out with the dawn. But as dawn approached and the sky lightened, he felt his skin itching and stinging painfully with the pinkening sky. Embarrassedly claiming sickness, he returned to his place in the wooden longhouse to sleep. The logs of the longhouse were not perfectly seated, however, and there were many small gaps. When the sun rose, its first rays shone in through one of those gaps, and fell on Mictantele's bare hand. The light pierced his flesh-like lances, and he screamed with the pain, as bright and strong

as if he had plunged his hand into a cookfire. He spent the rest of that first day wrapped like a cocoon in many blankets.

Some of the folk tales of the People described individuals who had "passed through the Land of the Dead" and emerged changed, but unscathed. Mictantele quickly decided that this was what had happened to him. The fact that the sunlight was painful — and perhaps lethal — to him seemed to be a small price to pay for his life. The folk tales all stated that a "night voyager" — as they called people such as himself — must leave his village and his band and strike out on his own, living on the blood of the animals of the forests. Accordingly, at the next sunset, Mictantele slipped away from his village, never to return.

Without any guidance whatsoever from his Sire — who was, somewhat predictably, of Clan Gangrel — it took Mictantele months to discover the abilities and limitations that his new form had given him, and years after that to discover his true nature. For the first year or so, he subsisted purely on the blood of animals, even though he felt almost overwhelmingly drawn to taste the *vitæ* of the mortals he sometimes saw moving through the nighttime forests which had become his home.

His first taste of human blood — and his first Frenzy — came when he felt himself drawn to approach a fishing village very much like his home. The fishermen and hunters were sitting around the cookfire, singing and telling folk tales very much like those Mictantele grew up with. Apparently he came too close, because two hunters reacted to his presence. They must have sensed something moving in the trees around the village; they took their spears, and came searching for him. Even though he realized that discretion would be the best choice, Mictantele's pride was still strong, and he refused to back down before their threat. Instead, he stayed still, expecting them to just pass him by.

But one of the hunters seemed able to sense Mictantele's presence. Unerringly he drew near to the Vampire's hiding place, and started probing the underbrush with his wooden spear. Somehow Mictantele sensed that this wooden shaft represented a very real danger to him. Fear, mixed with proud anger, made him leap at the hunter. His initial intention was solely to disarm the man, but so fast were the hunter's reaction that he sensed the Vampire's leap and swung his spear around fast enough to tear Mictantele's side. The pain — coupled with hunger — triggered a Frenzy. Mictantele tore into the hunter, breaking his bones and drinking him dry, then hunted down and drained his partner. When he emerged from Frenzy, Mictantele found himself gore-spattered and sated. Horrified as never before by the true nature of what he had become, he slunk off into the night.

Setting Out

It took Mictantele years to come to terms with his "life" as one of the Damned, years during which he tried to track

down the stranger who had been his Sire. Perhaps his Sire, as is the way of the Gangrel, had intended to return to meet Mictantele when he had "matured" as a Kindred. But something had obviously prevented this, for Mictantele never saw the stranger again. Occasionally the Neonate was sure he "heard" distant echoes of his Sire's mental speech, but he was never able to track them down.

As a mortal, Mictantele had never felt any desire to travel; for him, the meaningful universe consisted solely of the oceans and forests around his village. In his new form, however, his curiosity about the greater world about him steadily grew. Perhaps the Gangrel heritage had something to do with it, but whatever the reason Mictantele became a wanderer. It took him decades to cross the region that would eventually be Canada. On the Atlantic coast, he met for the first time more of his kind — other Kindred derived from an unnamed ancient who had somehow made the perilous crossing from Europe. These Kindred were of very different mortal backgrounds from Mictantele, and none were of Clan Gangrel. For these and other reasons, Mictantele never felt comfortable with them. He did, however, learn much more about the nature of the Damned; he also gained considerable skill at learning new and different languages.

After a decade or two, he heard the wild geese calling again, and continued his wandering — south, this time. He started his journey making good speed, but as years turned to decades, he began to slow down. Even though he felt little kinship with the Atlantic coast Kindred, now he found himself missing their company. There were no Kindred in the areas through which he travelled — or, if there were, he did not find them. But his pride was still strong, so he pressed on.

By the time he reached the Gulf Coast, Mictantele had been a Vampire for almost two centuries. Even though his body showed no sign of aging, in his soul he had begun to feel ancient. But still he continued.

His journey took him across a river that would centuries later be called the Rio Grande, and south into Mexico. Again, there were no Kindred, and Mictantele began to feel he would always be alone. In retrospect, he realized during this period that his solitude — in terms of those of his kind — had unhinged his lonely mind.

In central Mexico, near what would become Veracruz, he encountered an Indian tribe calling itself the Huastecs. There were no Kindred among them, but by now even the company of mortals seemed of great value to him. His vaguely formed intention was to live among them, learning their language, and pretending to be one of them.

Unfortunately for him, the Huastecs had some previous experience with Vampires. (Presumably, another of the Kindred had passed through this region in the past, and the Huastecs still remembered the depredations of this creature.) Somehow the priests recognized him for what he was, and brought down upon him the wrath of the whole tribe. By night, volunteer warriors willing to die dogged his steps; by

day, the women searched for whatever Haven he had scraped out for himself. It was only through sheer luck that Mictantecle managed to survive. More cautiously now, he pushed on south, and then turned northwest onto the Yucatan peninsula.

Arrival

By this point, Mictantecle's sanity had definitely fled. In retrospect, he may well have developed a death wish, because he showed himself to the natives of the region — the Mayas — and even demonstrated his true nature to them. Had the Mayas been like the Huastecs, he would have been destroyed. As it was, however, they welcomed Mictantecle among them, revering him for his powers, seemingly unconcerned about his dietary predilections. In later years, Mictantecle could not recall his first decade among the Mayas, or his "ascension" to the state of godhood ...

Thus the Mayas quickly came to worship the Vampire as a god — a cruel and terrible death god, of course, but a god nonetheless. They were unable to pronounce his true name, and so bastardized it into Mictlantecuhtli (Mikt - lahn - te - kut' - li:), and it was as Mictlantecuhtli that he would thereafter be known. He tried to explain to them where he had come from, but his grasp of the language was still incomplete. His explanation of having come from the north was misinterpreted as his having come from the north star, and this tradition continued despite his attempts to change it. (In fact, this misunderstanding was perpetuated and overgeneralized such that many later legends describe all Mayan gods as having come from the stars.)

The Vampire had arrived in the Yucatan just before the beginning of what historians class as the Old Empire of Mayan culture. He was able to see civilization rise around him to heights that his contemporaries among the People — now all long dead — could never have even imagined. The town in which he had settled, called Tzentel, grew into a great city, and the priests raised pyramids and temples dedicated to the great god Mictlantecuhtli.

Slowly Mictlantecuhtli's sanity returned, and he realized that his existence in Tzentel was as close to paradise as one of the Damned could expect. He was revered as divine, which meant that anything he wished was acceptable simply because he wished it. He never had to hunt; each night, if he wished it, the priests would bring him a Vessel on which to feed, and on the night of the new moon they would bring him two score or more sacrifices from among his worshippers. His priests and his worshippers were obedient to his every wish. Interestingly enough, he discovered that his priests were actually highly skilled in the occult arts.

Blood Magic

Although the priests of the Mayas specialized in forms of thaumaturgy little used by the Kindred, such as fertility and

astrology, they had considerable skill in blood-magic. Somewhat predictably, Mictlantecuhtli found himself fascinated by their studies, and dedicated himself to learning as much as he could of their abilities. Most interesting of all, he discovered that the priests knew a magical ritual, involving wood ash, pure water, and the heart of a victim, that seemed to concentrate the potency of a Vessel's blood, making it even more delicious than usual and endowing it with mildly narcotic properties.

Over the years, Mictlantecuhtli learned much concerning the practice of thaumaturgy. Some of the rituals performed by the priests he could use unchanged; others, however, required him to significantly redraft the procedures to align with his Vampiric nature. He recorded his learning and the results of his research in a codex, a great book in which he wrote using a combination of Mayan characters and the simplistic symbols used by the People of his home. Over time, he researched and further refined the ritual that increased the potency of blood, until it became the centerpiece of the written work that would eventually be called the Codex of the Damned.

The Stranger, Part II

Even though his sanity had returned to him, Mictlantecuhtli still felt the familiar weariness deep in his soul. This weariness was only increased when his priests began petitioning him — always in the most respectful ways possible — to grant them the boon of immortality. For his own reasons, he refused to bestow upon them the Embrace, however. Soon thereafter he discovered that the priests were performing blood sacrifices of their own, with the obvious goal of achieving immortality without the intercession of their "deity." Mictlantecuhtli found this inexplicably aggravating, and swore to himself that he would never Embrace the priests. Thus he spent his nights restless, with no one he considered an equal, no one he could respect and no one who could relieve his boredom.

Then, one night as Mictlantecuhtli studied in his chambers, he felt a presence behind him. Turning, he saw a figure more horrid than a corpse leaning against a stone wall. Then the same "mind speech" which his master has used and he himself had learned rang out in his head.

"You are the Wanderer," it said. "Others have spoken of you with respect. I would learn what it is they found so fascinating. Talk to me."

Every night for a month the two spoke. At first overjoyed by the opportunity which had come from nowhere, Mictlantecuhtli soon found the other's thoughts worrisome. The Nosferatu (for that is what he called himself) spoke of a great war among the Kindred, a war between good and evil. When the Nosferatu asked him to come fight on his side, Mictlantecuhtli knew fear for the first time since fleeing the Huastecs. To be caught in such a Jyhad was the only thing

he could picture worse than his isolation. Thus he plotted the death of his new companion.

It came on the night of the Mayan sacrifice to him. Mictlantecuhtli presented the newcomer to his worshippers as another god, and demanded that they both have sacrifices. Mictlantecuhtli drank first and, when the Nosferatu bent to take his victims, leapt at his throat. The battle was as quick as it was deadly. Mictlantecuhtli had ensured his visitor was thirsty before the sacrifice, and he managed to channel the power his own recent feeding had given him. Soon Mictlantecuhtli heard bells tolling, and then it was over. Overcome by the Rebirth, he fled back to his chambers, where he spent the remainder of that night, as well as the next 12.

The Weariness

After the first night, Mictlantecuhtli found the glories of the Rebirth fading from his memories. He felt stronger in body, but his act against one of his own kind left him feeling far weaker of spirit. Additionally, when he finally found the strength to leave from his chambers, he discovered the story of what he had done was being spread among the Mayas by his priests. They told the people he had slain a demon who had come to destroy them. Horrified that his act of infamy and treachery against one who had offered him friendship



had become a legend of good versus evil, Mictlantecuhtli felt his hatred of the sycophantic priests grow. As a form of revenge against them, he Embraced several of the peasant-farmers who worshipped him, thus snubbing his priests. These Neonates were totally and unquestioningly loyal to him, but so constrained were their minds by tradition that they could never give their "god" the friendship he wanted.

Over a period of several years, Mictlantecuhtli experimented with drinking the vitæ of his Neonates, even going so far as he full practice of Diablerie. (He felt few qualms in taking from them the immortality he himself had bestowed, and the Neonates themselves would gladly do anything for him, even die.) He also experimented with "enhancing" their vitæ using the thaumaturgic ritual he had developed. Over time, he discovered that this ritual had even stronger effects on Vampiric vitæ than it did on human blood. As usual, he recorded his results in his codex. Although he was of course unaware of it, Mictlantecuhtli's research had elucidated many of the principles on which the Ritual of the Bitter Rose would eventually be based.

The Lupines

During this period, Mictlantecuhtli discovered that there were other inhuman creatures in the region — not Kindred such as himself, but Lupines. Perhaps it was because Mictlantecuhtli had never been taught about the "traditional" enmity between Vampires and Werewolves, or perhaps it was his Gangrel heritage. Whatever the reason, he established amicable and respectful relations with the Lupines of the region. In fact, over the decades, the tribes of Lupines came to consider Mictlantecuhtli as their liege, and even paid the city of Tzentel tribute!

The stability of having an immortal "divine" ruler strongly benefitted the city of Tzentel. It climbed the ladder of civilization faster than anywhere else in Mayan territory; and, as other Mayan cities began to slip downhill around AD 600, Tzentel remained at the apex of culture. By this time, however, Mictlantecuhtli had been a Vampire for over six centuries, and his soul-weariness was becoming intolerable. He needed to sleep.

In the year 615 he made his decision. He would sequester himself away in the pyramid that bore his temple, and enter Torpor for a century or two. When he rose, he expected that he would feel rejuvenated. His people, his tributary Lupines, most particularly his loyal Get — all bowed to his will. After all, he was a god, and if a god wanted to sleep beneath his temple for hundreds of years, who were they to say anything against it? The priests resisted, but Mictlantecuhtli solved that problem by decreeing that they would share his centuries-long sleep as well ... but only after he'd Dominated them into magically warding his Haven.

Mictlantecuhtli's Get begged to share his sleep too, and he gladly granted them their request. After all, when he was

ready to arise he would have to have someone loyal to him available to feed him the vitæ he needed to revive.

And so it was on Midsummer Night, 615, with great ceremony, that Mictlantecuhtli the God of Death descended into special chambers beneath his temple prepared specially for this purpose. He was accompanied by his willing Get, and by his less-than-willing priests. At the hour before dawn, the great stones were moved into place to close the entry. And Mictlantecuhtli slept.

Tzentel Falls

Over the next decades, the travails that had caused the fall of the cities elsewhere in Mayan territory also affected Tzentel, and the great city slipped back from its peak. For centuries the stories of "the Sleep of Mictlantecuhtli" continued, and the inhabitants of the Tzentel region awaited his return.

But Mictlantecuhtli did not return. Around the year 1000, the New Empire arose, but the new growth of power failed to affect Tzentel. The great city began to decay, and the forests encroached on its wide plazas and triumpharies. Slowly but surely the people moved away, until the relentless jungle had totally conquered the great city. By the time the Conquistadors arrived in the 16th Century, Tzentel had been forgotten, and the god Mictlantecuhtli had become a figure of myth and legend, with no more reality than other Mayan deities like Kukulcan, Quetzalcoatl and Itzamna.

To this day, Mictlantecuhtli sleeps, presumably undisturbed. Virtually the only thing that hints at the truth of the legends concerning the "god" is a scrap of poetry, translated from the Codex Tro (an old Mayan document):

*Cold is bone and iron thew,
Old when stone and earth were new,
In chambers measureless and deep,
The Wanderer sleeps his silent sleep
Alone, but not forgot.
Beasts in man-form guard their lord,
Eyes that watch by night [Here the fragment ends]*

Mictlantecuhtli

Sire: ?

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Leader

Generation: 4th

Embrace: 51 BC (born 67 BC)

Apparent Age: Late teens

Image: About 5 feet 7 inches, with broad shoulders, broad head, and very well-developed muscles. His skin is naturally golden-brown and somewhat leathery. His hair is shoulder-length, black and straight. His eyes are dark, and alive with intelligence. As a Gangrel, his appearance includes animalistic carry-overs from his Frenzies: his incisors and canine teeth are pronounced, his finger- and toenails resemble the claws of a beast, and the backs of his hands and feet are covered with black pelt that does not look at all human.

Roleplaying Hints: You speak no modern languages, but your manner makes it clear that you are used to wielding power and enjoying instant obedience. You will not hesitate to fight if you believe your life is in danger.

Haven: The central pyramid of Tzentel.

Notes: Mictlantecuhtli's traits reflect the many years he has spent in torpor. If he survives his encounter with the characters, add 2 dots to each of his physical Attributes and 1 to his Perception. His sixth level of Animalism allows him to communicate with a group of animals as long as they are of the same species.

Puissant Shield

This level four ritual establishes an invisible kinetic shield around the caster, at a distance of one foot, which blocks all inanimate projectiles — bullets, thrown knives, etc. Such projectiles visibly deflect from the shield. This shield cannot stop a character — mortal or Kindred — from closing and meeleing with the caster, nor has it any effect on a melee weapon (a spear, perhaps) in the grip of an attacker. Neither will it stop the effects of Thaumaturgy or other Disciplines. Fire, air, sunlight, water, etc. will all pass unaffected through the shield.

Establishing the shield requires one minute of concentration while the caster blows on a strip of cowhide and it lasts for one hour. Mictlantecuhtli has focused the essence of this ritual on a hollow crystal he wears on a leather thong around his neck. All he (or anyone) has to do is blow on the crystal and the shield will protect him.

Quenching the Lambent Flame

Mictlantecuhtli learned the basics of magical practice from his priests, but extended their teachings with his own research, which allowed him to develop abilities more suitable to his Vampiric nature. When he was considering retreating into torpor, he intuitively understood that his Vampiric attendants — the peasant farmers he had Embraced — were of a sufficiently high Generation that they would be unable to subsist for long on the blood of animals. Since it was his intention to keep these attendants within the pyramid with him, as personal bodyguards and servants, he developed this ritual to solve the problem.

This ritual increases the effective Generation of a Vampire to 13th. Blood Pool and all other characteristics are altered to reflect this change in Generation. Attributes higher than the maximum allowed to a 13th Generation Kindred are decreased to those maxima. The effect of this ritual is permanent.

The ritual takes one hour, during which time the subject must lie motionless — or be immobilized — in the center of a circle drawn with his own blood. If the subject is willing, no roll is required. With an unwilling subject, however, an Intelligence + Thaumaturgy roll against the subject's Willpower is required, with the caster needing three successes.

It might seem that no Kindred would ever submit willingly to this ritual. In point of fact, however, there are some advantages to being of a later Generation — most notably the fact that much less blood, and animal blood at that, is required to sate the subject's hunger. It is only in a stratified society based on power — like Kindred society in Chicago — that Generation and physical prowess is a significant issue.

Physical: Strength 6, Dexterity 5, Stamina 6

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 6, Intelligence 9, Wits 8

Talents: Alertness 7, Brawl 8, Dodge 7, Empathy 6, Intimidation 8, Leadership 9

Skills: Melee 5, Stealth 4, Survival 5

Knowledge: Linguistics 3

Disciplines: Animalism 6, Auspex 2, Celerity 3, Dominate 2, Fortitude 5, Potence 5, Presence 3, Protean 2, Thaumaturgy 5 (Taste of Blood 5, Movement of Mind 5, Lure of Flames 4)

Rituals: Quenching the Lambent Flame, Puissant Shield, any others you want him to have.

Virtues: Conscience 0, Self-Control 3, Courage 3

Humanity: 0

Willpower: 9

The Codex of the Damned

Mictlantecuhtli recorded the details of his thaumaturgical research in a book that came to be known as the Codex of the Damned. The Wanderer kept the codex close to him at all times — not really from fear that anyone would take it, but simply to protect it from accidental harm. He also kept its contents secret.

Many of the priests in Tzentla were investigating blood-magic themselves, trying to find a way of making themselves immortal like Mictlantecuhtli. They knew their "god" was exploring realms of thaumaturgy that might help them, and so they decided to gain access to the Wanderer's codex. Using their magical abilities, they brainwashed one of Mictlantecuhtli's mortal aides into helping them.

Every day for months, when Mictlantecuhtli lay asleep, sheltered from the burning rays of the sun, the aide brought the Codex of the Damned to the priests. Unable to translate the mysteries of the codex directly, the priests copied it symbol for symbol, so that they could decrypt it at their leisure. Mictlantecuhtli never learned that the priests had made a copy of his precious codex. For their part, the priests were never able to translate the codex into something they could comprehend or use.

When Mictlantecuhtli descended into the pyramid to slip into Torpor, the mortal priests were imprisoned in the stone crypt along with him. With the priests dead, the copied codex passed from owner to owner. Although they were unable to decipher it, the codex's owners protected it for generations.

How the codex left the Tzentla area is unknown, but leave it did. Still untranslated, a copy of the codex appeared in Zurich during the Renaissance. Other copies — more or less corrupted by repeated sloppy copying — appeared elsewhere around the world.

Nobody knows who first translated the codex. Some Kindred believe it was the Seven Elders of Clan Tremere who managed the feat, using the contents of the codex to develop the Ritual of the Bitter Rose.

There are thought to be two true translated copies of the codex still in existence. One, translated into Latin, is thought to rest with Clan Tremere. The other, translated into English, has vanished from Kindred ken.

False translations appear from time to time, attracting flurries of interest. These false translations are all useless, however.



Chapter Four:

Involving the Neonates

I couldn't help it. I can resist everything except temptation.

— Oscar Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan*

Before the Neonates can visit the Tzental pyramid and encounter Mictlantecuhtli the Wanderer, they must discover the existence of both. Certainly, the Storyteller could simply tell the players what he or she wishes them to know, then let them proceed from there. Taking this one step further, the Storyteller could even begin the story with the characters already in Mexico, near to the ruins of Tzental. This option denies both players and Storyteller one of the more interesting aspects of this story, however: actually getting from wherever the Chronicle is taking place to the Yucatan without being unmasked or destroyed along the way. It is therefore much more appropriate for a one-shot story that is not part of an ongoing Chronicle.

Further, if more than one character is to benefit from performing Diablerie on Mictlantecuhtli, the Neonates will have to learn about the Ritual of the Bitter Rose. Again, the Storyteller has several options here. Firstly, she can just declare that one of the Neonates — probably a Tremere — has learned the Ritual from his Sire. Alternately, the Storyteller can allow the Neonates to learn the Ritual from any of the more powerful Kindred they may know in their home

city. A more dramatically satisfying means of allowing the Neonates to learn the Ritual of the Bitter Rose is through the Codex of the Damned, discussed in the preceding chapter.

Following is a brief list of ways in which the Storyteller can introduce the material in this story, and engage the interest of the players (as well as of their characters).

PLANTING THE SEEDS

In an ongoing Chronicle, it is a relatively simple task for the Storyteller to drop hints that will, over time, build up into a body of myth and clues that the Neonates will be unlikely to ignore or resist. As was described in the chapter on Diablerie, there are recurring legends circulating throughout Kindred society concerning the resting places of the Antediluvians and those Methuselahs who have sunk into Torpor themselves. Throughout the course of play, the Neonates should hear a number of these — true and false — mentioned casually, in passing, or for other reasons by characters in the Chronicle.



One or more of these legends should mention a mythical Vampire figure known variously as the Ancient or the Wanderer, who is claimed to have walked throughout North America over a period of several centuries. Different tellings of this legend should have significant variations: in one the Wanderer was destroyed around the time of Christ; in another the Wanderer is equated directly with Caine himself; in yet another the Wanderer is said to lie in Torpor somewhere in Mexico or Central America.

THE LURE OF MEXICO

After the myth of the Wanderer has been firmly planted in the Neonates' minds, they should stumble across something that confirms the myth's historicity. If you are using *Chicago by Night* as the basis for your Chronicle, then you can use the following plotline. If you are not using that supplement, then this sequence can easily be adapted for any city. There are three Kindred in Chicago who have heard the same rumors and myths as the Neonates. Possibly unlike the Neonates, these other Vampires have determined to their satisfaction that the Wanderer actually does exist. The three Kindred in question are all described in *Chicago By Night*; they are Johann Weltmann, Erichtho, and Wendy Wade. These individuals do not know much, just that there is enough evidence to convince them a Methuselah lies in Torpor somewhere in Mexico or Central America. They have checked all the sources of information available in Chicago — in other words, the sources that the Neonates will probably seek out — and will have informants (possibly Dominated) in place to inform them if anyone else seems interested in the same material.

Once these powers have learned the Neonates are following the course of their own research, they will probably try to contact them. Their major motivation is to discover if the Neonates have learned anything of value that they themselves have missed. They will be extremely subtle when it comes to finding this out; they do not want the Neonates to believe they are on the trail of anything important. If the Neonates know nothing new — which is the most likely situation — they will then try to convince the young Kindred that any rumors they may have heard about the Wanderer are just that: rumors. Again, they will be extremely subtle in this.

The most likely reaction is that the Neonates will come to believe that there actually is some truth to the rumors. After all, if the myths were meaningless, why would important Kindred like Weltmann, Graves and Wade be so interested in convincing them not to waste their time?

The Archaeologist

There is one individual in Chicago who knows a lot about myths and legends concerning Mictlantecuhtli, the God of Death. He is a mortal, an old man called Samuel Clearwater,

who lives on 58th Street near the University of Chicago. Clearwater is the Midwest's premier expert on the Mayan culture, and on its folklore. He has researched many myths revolving around the God of Death, and has become convinced that they must be based on some historical event or personage. Of course, as a mortal, he knows nothing of the Kindred, and it would never occur to him to guess that Mictlantecuhtli was actually a Vampire.

At one time or another, Weltmann, Graves and Wade have all visited Clearwater, to expand their knowledge of Mayan folklore. The old man was glad to be of whatever help he could — not much, unfortunately. All he could do was confirm to them that there was something interesting — historically and mythographically speaking — about Mictlantecuhtli.

If the Neonates are serious about investigating Mexican folklore, they will eventually be referred to Clearwater. Although most "conservative" historians believe the old man to be eccentric to the point of senility, they cannot deny that his knowledge of such matters is encyclopedic.

The most logical tack for the Neonates to take is to contact Clearwater by phone, and arrange a meeting. He will answer simple questions to the best of his knowledge over the phone, but if the Neonates ask more complex questions, he will insist they visit him so that he can show them certain entries from books in his library.

Unfortunately for the Neonates — and for Clearwater himself — Wendy Wade has been keeping a close eye on the old academic. She will know that the Neonates have contacted him, and will decide that it would be best all around if Clearwater were not available as a resource for the player characters.

When the Neonates arrive at Clearwater's house, they find him dead — stabbed through the heart with a Mayan ritual dagger from his collection. When Wade killed him, she did not drink his Vitae, so there is no direct physical evidence that a Vampire did the deed. The Neonates can learn a little more by using the Psychometry power of *Auspex* on the dagger. The difficulty is 5, and the number of successes the character rolls determines the amount of information gained, as follows:

1 success At the time that Clearwater last touched the dagger (when it was driven into his heart) his aura was mottled, rapidly shifting between violet, brown and silver, indicating a mixture of fear, confusion and sadness.

2 successes The owner of the dagger was Samuel Clearwater himself, age 72.

3 successes At the time of his death, Clearwater was confused: he thought he was alone in his house, when a figure seemed to appear out of nowhere and stabbed him.

4 successes The character receives a mental "snapshot" of the event. The individual who killed Clearwater was a woman, but her features are very indistinct (Clearwater did



not have time to notice more). Her eyeteeth are slightly extended, indicating she may well have been a vampire.

5 successes Clearwater acquired the dagger on a trip to the Chichen Itza ruins in the Yucatan.

Note that the only important revelation here is that Clearwater was killed by a Vampire.

Again, the fact that someone is trying to stop the Neonates from learning more about the Wanderer should confirm to them that there is actually some truth to the myths and legends they have heard.

If the Storyteller wants to make life a little more interesting— and challenging — for the Neonates, the police can arrive on the scene scant minutes after the Vampires reach Clearwater's house (Wendy Wade called in an anonymous report of the academic's murder). The Neonates will have to be quick if they want to avoid getting arrested for killing Clearwater.

If they take the time to search Clearwater's house, they will find a photocopied tract from a research book lying on the hall table (Clearwater copied this to give to the Neonates when they arrived). It is the fragment of poetry from the Codex Tro quoted at the end of the last chapter. Scrawled beneath the fragment, in Clearwater's handwriting, is the notation:

Wanderer = Mictlantecuhtli

FURTHER RESEARCH

This should give the Neonates something more on which to base their research. The next step might be for the Neonates to hit the libraries or the on-line data sources. With the hint from the Codex Tro to guide them, they should have little difficulty digging up further information. Neonates with any Skills that incorporate some research-related components — such as History, Computer, Investigation, etc. — would be able to find in a library or on-line database the fact that the Mayans had a death god by the name of Mictlantecuhtli (this would require a Skill check with a difficulty of four). A little more digging (another Skill check with a difficulty of five) would turn up a description of the “mythical” god Mictlantecuhtli that would seem to imply that the real subject of the myths was actually a Vampire. Further research — and yet another Skill check, this time with a difficulty of 6 — would reveal that worship of the god Mictlantecuhtli was at its peak during the Old Empire of the Mayan civilization, and centered around the city of Tzentan in the Yucatan, the ruins of which have yet to be found. At the Storyteller's option, further research — in a wide number of different areas, requiring considerably higher difficulties

—could give the Neonates further clues as to the exact location of Tzentel.

THE STRANGER

The Neonates can gain further clues about the resting place of the semi-mythical Wanderer from a new Kindred who comes to town. He is a stranger, known to no one in Chicago (or in Gary, for that matter), and nobody has the faintest clue as to his origin. He initially avoids all contact with any of the Chicago Kindred, eventually making careful — almost furtive — contact with the Neonates while they are pursuing their research into the Wanderer and the Yucatan. It seems that the stranger has learned of their interest in the topic, and wishes — like Wendy Wade and the others — to learn how far their work has progressed. Unlike Wade *et al*, his intention is not to prevent them from reaching their goal, but to actually help them ... and, perhaps, receive some help in return.

Initially, the stranger will do whatever he can to discern the Neonates' progress — and motives for proceeding — without telling them anything about himself. After he has a rough idea of how far they have gotten, however, he will introduce himself as Sheaffer, and tell them that he has information that may be valuable to them in their search. He will try to arrange a meeting with them the next night at his temporary Haven, a rooming house in Evanston. The Neonates will almost certainly press him about what he can tell them. He will not divulge anything right away, insisting that they meet him as he requests; he will tell them, however, that he has personal evidence that the object of their search actually does exist, and that he knows the Wanderer's resting place. He will tell them no more. Although the Neonates might not believe it at first, Sheaffer's circumspect behavior does not hide some covert plan. In fact, he fears for his very existence.

The Codex of the Damned Comes to Chicago

As mentioned in the preceding chapter, there is thought to be one correct copy of the book in which the Wanderer



recorded his thaumaturgical research. In point of fact, it is now in the possession of the Vampire who calls himself Sheaffer. He purchased it from another Kindred who was unaware of its value; who had in turn received it from a friend to hold for safe-keeping. This friend was sent to the Final Death under mysterious circumstances, so Sheaffer's contact kept his possession of the Codex secret to all but Kindred he trusted. Sheaffer has, so far, been unable to retrace the path of the Codex beyond the first two links of the chain.

A Malkavian with some theoretical knowledge of Thaumaturgy, Sheaffer has analyzed the text. Combining the Codex's contents with mythical descriptions of the Ritual of the Bitter Rose, Sheaffer has reconstructed the research that led to the original development of the Ritual. He has added his conclusions to the book as marginalia written in a tight, precise hand.

Sheaffer has no intention of ever performing the Ritual. He has no desire for power or advancement; all he cares about is the advancement of knowledge.

In addition to the contents of the codex, Sheaffer has tried to divine its origin. Although multiple translations and paraphrasing have pressed much of the "cultural subtext" from the work, Sheaffer has found enough clues to convince him that the original was written in ancient Mexico or Central America. He believes, although he is not totally certain, that the writer was a Mayan — perhaps a priest. The marginalia he has scrawled in the Codex contain these conclusions as well.

Sheaffer has come to Chicago to continue his research. He learned that Samuel Clearwater was reputed to be the person who could best help him out. Unfortunately, as described earlier, Clearwater was killed (If the Storyteller decides not to involve the Neonates in that complication, Wade killed the academic to prevent him from speaking with Sheaffer, and the characters may have learned about it through normal news sources.). Furthermore, Sheaffer has come to realize that he is being followed. It is obvious that his "shadow" is one of the Kindred — nobody else could manage it — and he concludes, quite reasonably (although incorrectly) that the Vampire on his trail also murdered Clearwater.

Sheaffer

Sheaffer is a Malkavian, and so suffers a major derangement. Fortunately, perhaps, his derangement is Intellectualization, which does not prevent him from functioning in night-to-night life. In fact, the derangement is only a slight exaggeration of Sheaffer's mortal personality.

He was fascinated by knowledge in all its forms, but history and philosophy held special fascinations for him. He would have happily spent his entire life researching some piece of esoterica far beyond the grasp — or interest — of

anyone else. Unfortunately, he was foolish enough to wander into the wrong part of Los Angeles, and was cut down in a drive-by shooting. The last person he saw before his "death" was a strangely-dressed old man with wild eyes and slightly enlarged canine teeth...

To Sheaffer, knowledge and understanding are everything. Power and wealth are nothing, except when they can be used to enhance discovery (e.g., to buy new books). He fears destruction, but mainly because the Final Death would put an end to his researches.

Sire: ? (a wandering Malkavian, never known to Sheaffer)

Nature: Loner

Demeanor: Pedagogue

Generation: 10th

Embrace: 1944 (born 1910)

Apparent Age: Mid 30s

Image: A short, slender man with thinning sandy hair. Behind thick glasses his eyes look weak and watery.

Roleplaying Hints: You are much more interested in knowledge than in anything else. You have learned that sometimes it is valuable not to let on everything you know ... but you have never learned how to conceal it.

Haven: No permanent Haven in the Chicago area. Temporary Haven is a cheap rooming house in Evanston.

VAMPIRE™ Shaeffer

Attributes

Physical	Social	Mental
Strength ●●○○○	Charisma ●●○○○	Perception ●●○○○
Dexterity ●●○○○	Manipulation ●●○○○	Intelligence ●●○○○
Stamina ●●○○○	Appearance ●●○○○	Will ●●○○○

Abilities

Talents	Skills	Knowledge
Acting ●●○○○	Animal Ken ●●○○○	Bureaucracy ●●○○○
Alertness ●●○○○	Drive ●●○○○	Computer ●●○○○
Athletics ●●○○○	Etiquette ●●○○○	Finance ●●○○○
Brawl ●●○○○	Ferocity ●●○○○	Investigation ●●○○○
Dodge ●●○○○	Melee ●●○○○	Law ●●○○○
Empathy ●●○○○	Music ●●○○○	Linguistics ●●○○○
Intimidation ●●○○○	Repair ●●○○○	Medicine ●●○○○
Leadership ●●○○○	Security ●●○○○	Occult ●●○○○
Streetwise ●●○○○	Stealth ●●○○○	Politics ●●○○○
Subterfuge ●●○○○	Survival ●●○○○	Science ●●○○○

Advantages

Disciplines	Backgrounds	Virtues
<u>Auxiliary</u> ●●○○○	<u>Contacts</u> ●●○○○	Conscience ●●○○○
●●○○○	<u>Resources</u> ●●○○○	Self-Control ●●○○○
●●○○○	●●○○○	Courage ●○○○○
●●○○○	●●○○○	

Other Traits	Humanity	Health
<u>History</u> ●●○○○	●●●●●○○○○	Bruised <input type="checkbox"/>
●○○○○	●●●●●○○○○	Hurt -1 <input type="checkbox"/>
●○○○○	●●●●●○○○○	Injured -2 <input type="checkbox"/>
●○○○○	●●●●●○○○○	Wounded -3 <input type="checkbox"/>
●○○○○	●●●●●○○○○	Mauled -4 <input type="checkbox"/>
	●●●●●○○○○	Crippled -5 <input type="checkbox"/>
	●●●●●○○○○	Incapacitated <input type="checkbox"/>

Combat	Blood Pool	Experience																
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Weapon</th> <th>Difficulty</th> <th>Damage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Weapon	Difficulty	Damage													●●●●●○○○○	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td> </td></tr> </table>	
Weapon	Difficulty	Damage																

Attributes: 7/5/3 Abilities: 13/9/5 Disciplines: 3 Backgrounds: 5 Virtues: 7 Freebie Points: 15 (7/5/21)

The Diabolist

In fact, the Vampire following Sheaffer is a Brujah called Pietr, a dedicated Diabolist driven by a lust for power. He is, strictly speaking, 12th Generation, but he has advanced to become effectively Ninth Generation by drinking the blood of Elders. He learned about Mictlantecuhli the Wanderer



from his own sources, and immediately travelled to the Yucatan to drink the Antediluvian's Vitae. As it was, however, he was defeated and almost destroyed by Mictlantecuhli's defenses. Among other injuries, he bears hideous scars from the claws of one of the Wanderer's loyal guardians. He came very close to the Final Death at that point, and just managed to flee. Unfortunately, he did not manage to keep his sanity intact. He suffers from an Obsession with tracking down the Ritual of the Bitter Rose and learning to perform it. When he can do so, Pietr believes, he will be able to increase the potency of a Diablerie victim's Vitae, giving him enough power to go back and destroy the Wanderer. (This is not particularly logical, but Obsession rarely makes much sense. In fact, of course, he is focussing on his search for the Ritual to avoid dwelling on his close brush with destruction in Mexico, and his overwhelming fear of facing it again.)

Pietr has learned that the Codex of the Damned may contain enough background material for him to learn how to perform the Ritual of the Bitter Rose. He has also learned that an English translation of the Codex is in the possession of a Kindred named Sheaffer, and that Sheaffer has come to Chicago. What better opportunity to acquire the Codex?

The Codex

Two days after Sheaffer's death, an envelope arrives in the mail at one of the Neonates' Havens. The envelope is from Sheaffer, and contains both the Codex and a map of Mexico. In fact, on his last day of existence, Sheaffer believed that the Vampire following him was planning him harm. It seemed logical to the scholar to protect his research from theft. He knew nobody he could entrust it to in Chicago ... except for the Neonates. His plan, of course, was to regain

the book from them when things had settled down. Thus, the Codex was not in Sheaffer's room when Pietr came to call.

The Codex includes Sheaffer's marginalia as described earlier. On the map, a line has been drawn between two cities in the Yucatan — Campeche on the west coast of the peninsula, and Chetumal on the east coast, right on the Guatemalan border. Near the middle of the line is a black dot, next to which is scrawled the word "Tzental". This should be the final clue the Neonates need to locate the Haven of Mictlantecuhli the Wanderer.





Chapter Five: The Pyramid

Protection is not only dead, but damned.

— Prime Minister Disraeli, *Life of Disraeli*

This chapter describes Mictlantecuhtli's Haven and its various defenses — living, unliving and inanimate.

PHYSICAL LOCATION

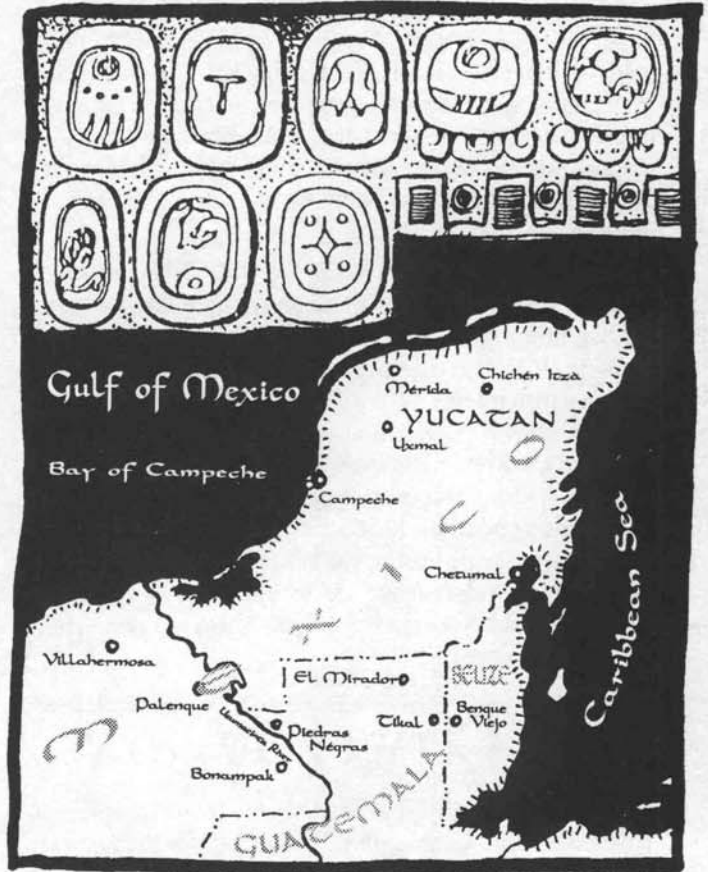
Mictlantecuhtli's pyramid is located in the center of the ancient Mayan city of Tzental. In the centuries since Mictlantecuhtli went into Torpor, Tzental has been forgotten by historians and by the natives of the region. After Mictlantecuhtli's disappearance, the city was deserted, and soon thereafter it was swallowed by jungle so thick that the ruins cannot be spotted from the air.

Tzental is located almost exactly halfway between the towns of Campeche, on the west coast of the Yucatan peninsula, and Chetumal, on the east coast, right on the Guatemalan border. Both towns have airports, if the Neonates decide to risk travelling by plane.

There are no roads through the jungle that lead to Tzental. The nearest settlement is the small town of Dzitbalchen, in the Campeche province. From Dzitbalchen, Tzental is a tough 35-mile hike through jungle so dense that machetes are absolutely required to make any progress whatsoever. Neonates would be well-advised to hire — or Dominate — native guides to help them find their way to the city. Survival skill will be of vital importance; even though Vampires will be largely unaffected by conditions that could kill mortals, the journey to Tzental will still be an incredibly difficult and taxing one.

Travelling the Jungle

The jungles of the Yucatan which surround the lost city of Tzental are heavy going for any traveller. For the Kindred,



who cannot travel by day, the journey can be even more arduous.

First, navigation is a significant problem. There are no landmarks, and it is almost impossible to navigate by following topographic features like ridge-lines. Even with a compass, it is frighteningly easy to become lost, simply because the direct route is frequently impassable due to heavy concentrations of trees and underbrush. Travellers must frequently detour from their route, and are sometimes led miles out of their way.

Second, the undergrowth is frequently so thick that a route must be hacked out using machetes. Travellers often find that their rate of progress decreases to one mile per hour or even less. Even where conditions are better, speeds greater than four miles per hour are almost impossible to attain.

Then there are other risks. Predators like jaguars prowl the jungles at night. Although they will only rarely attack Kindred once they have recognized them as such, predators will sometimes leap from the trees above onto passers-by, and inflict damage before the beasts realize that their prey is actually something unnatural.

If the Kindred have managed to protect themselves from the rays of the sun — by the Invulnerable Weakness ritual, perhaps — the high daytime temperature of the jungle still poses a significant risk. Vampires have no need to drink water, and most are incapable of doing so. This means that they cannot sweat normally to moderate their body temperature. Unless the Kindred can find some other way of combatting the heat, protracted exposure to high temperatures causes them to lose both Strength and Dexterity temporarily.

When the temperature is above 100° F — which it frequently is in the Yucatan — a Vampire can normally survive unscathed for as many hours as he has points of Stamina (If he is engaged in strenuous activity — such as cutting a path through heavy jungle— however, this “grace period” drops by as much as half). After this period, the character loses one point each from Strength and Dexterity per hour (two points per hour of strenuous activity). If the character reaches 0 in either Strength or Dexterity, he must immediately sleep. Lost points are regained at a rate of one — in each of Strength and Dexterity — per two hours of sleep. This sleep costs the Vampire a Blood Point just as does normal sleep.

THE CITY OF TZENTAL

At its peak, the city of Tzental housed 10,000 people, and covered several square miles. Most of the buildings were wood or light stone construction, and have not survived to the present day. The center of the city was reserved for the priest class, except on days of important ceremonies when worshippers were allowed to fill the central concourses.

The “temple region” was centered around the Pyramid of Mictlantecuhtli, from which four wide avenues extended along the cardinal points of the compass. Around the central pyramid were smaller pyramidal buildings: the Pyramids of the Sun, the Moon, the Earth and the Sky.

Tzental has been totally swallowed by the forest, so the city is invisible from the air. The paving stones of the four cardinal avenues have been broken up by centuries of plants growing through them and tree roots spreading beneath them, but the radial layout can still be discerned. All of the pyramids are covered in vines, moss and other growth, making them appear as large, green alluvial humps. The four minor pyramids are 200 feet high, and their square bases are 200 feet on a side. The Pyramid of Mictlantecuhtli is 300 feet high, and 300 feet on a side.

The Subordinate Pyramids

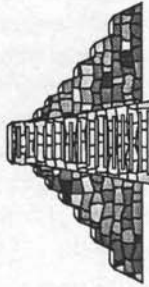
The four “subordinate” pyramids are built along standard Mayan lines. Their cores are rubble and broken limestone, faced with stone blocks. They once had small temples, shrines and altars atop them, but they have no internal chambers.

As with most Mayan pyramids, these were created in two major steps. First, the builders created a huge pile of earth and rubble in the approximate shape they wanted the completed pyramid to take. Then they constructed the outside of the pyramid using slabs of stone as facing. This stone was transported to Tzental from quarries many miles away. The stone facings on the pyramids are only two or three feet thick; beneath the stone is rubble. Thus, Mayan pyramids are very different in construction from the Egyptian pyramids, which are built from huge blocks of dressed stone. Unlike Egyptian pyramids, the Mayan constructions generally have no interior chambers, since the standard building technique does not allow for this.

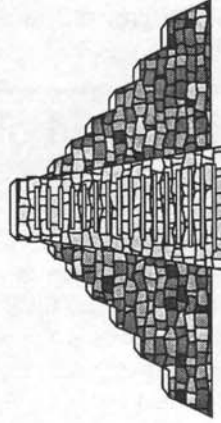
The facing stone is elaborately carved, with religious symbols, scenes from myth, and representations of the gods to whom the temples were dedicated. Over the centuries, of course, much of the embellishment has been weathered away. The stone is pitted and discolored, and only the largest features of the carvings still remain visible.

The Central Pyramid

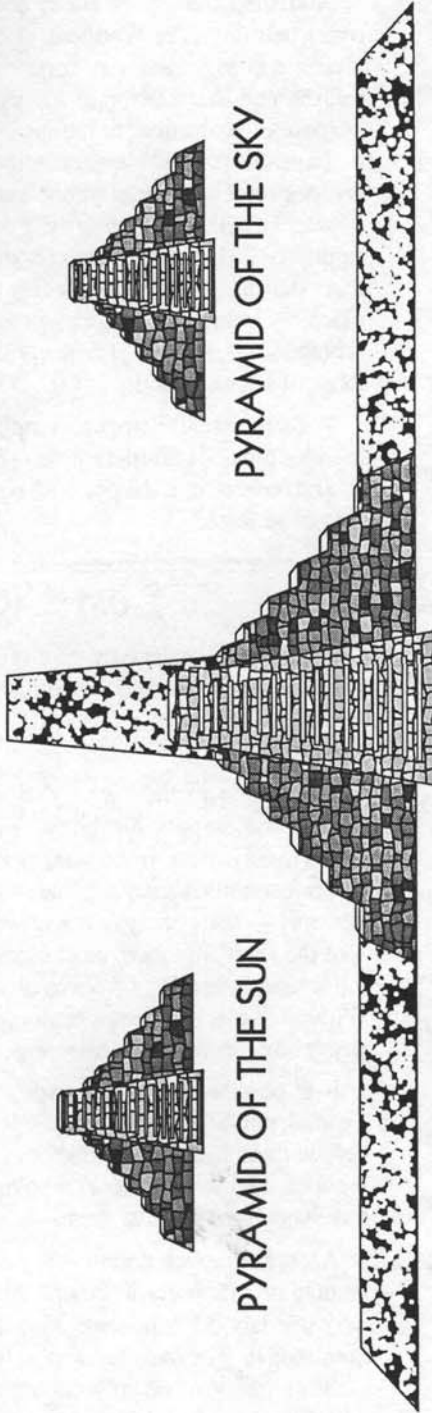
At first glance, the central pyramid appears to follow the same design paradigm as the other four, simply on a larger scale. In fact, however, the Pyramid of Mictlantecuhtli was built over and around previously existing stone buildings. In other words, typical Mayan buildings were constructed from blocks of dressed stone. When they were complete, rubble was piled on top of them. Finally, when the pile of rubble and earth was complete, the pyramid was faced with stone as usual.



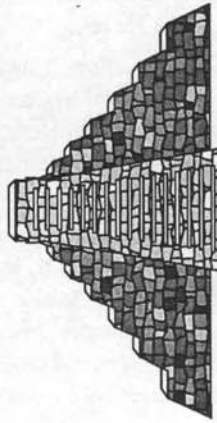
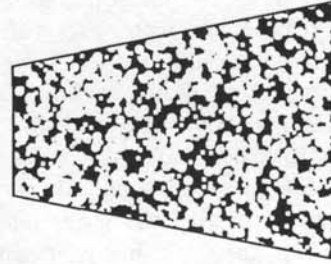
PYRAMID OF THE SKY



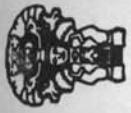
PYRAMID OF THE MOON



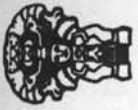
PYRAMID OF THE SUN



PYRAMID OF THE EARTH



TZENTAL



These buildings are now chambers and rooms within the rubble of the pyramid's core. Contrary to most people's perceptions, the entire pyramid is not networked with passages and chambers; in fact, only a small percentage of the space is taken up with rooms. (Of course, the pyramid is 100 yards on a side, so there is a lot of space ...) There is one ground-level entrance connecting these chambers to the outside. Details of the pyramid are provided in a later section.

History of the Pyramid of Mictlantecuhtli

When the Wanderer first reached Tzentel, there was no central pyramid. Instead, the four smaller pyramids — the Pyramids of the Sun, the Moon, the Earth, and the Sky — framed a central plaza. This plaza was used for certain religious pageants, as well as for sporting events. It was only after Mictlantecuhtli had arrived — and had been “recognized” as a god — that plans were discussed for building a central pyramid.

Throughout his journeys, the Wanderer had seen many fascinating structures: giant wooden longhouses with many rooms; temples and sanctuaries built into the living rock, either carved out over decades, or constructed from already-existing caves. In his still slightly insane state, the “god” Mictlantecuhtli demanded that his followers build him a similar sanctuary — a Haven all his own. Although the construction that their god demanded was like nothing they had ever done before — a pyramid with internal chambers? — the people set to with a will. Within several years, the Pyramid of Mictlantecuhtli, with its hidden chambers, was complete. The Wanderer took it as his Haven.

As the tide of Mictlantecuhtli's madness turned, he added new features to his Haven. The ground level he converted into a temple, a place where the priests could come to meet with their “god.” The smaller sublevel, or basement, he reserved for himself as his personal retreat.

Circumstances changed for Mictlantecuhtli, and so did his mind and intentions. He Sired Get — peasants, loyal to their god—as vengeance against his priests. He also began to experiment with thaumaturgy, and expanded his skills. Now the lower level became more than his personal sanctuary; it also became something of a thaumaturgical laboratory.

Over the decades, a soul-sick weariness fell upon Mictlantecuhtli, and he began to look on his Get somewhat differently. Instead of simple symbols of his feelings toward his priests, now he came to view them as creations — as tools, as weapons. Tools and weapons must be honed, he decided. Using his newfound thaumaturgical skills, he created tests for his Get — tests that would plumb the depths of their souls and show their true mettle.

No one knows how many of Mictlantecuhtli's Get were destroyed by his tests. Those who managed to survive them

were refined by the experience — tempered, as a sword blade is tempered by heat and cold oil. They were, Mictlantecuhtli believed, much more worthy to survive, and to serve him.

And then the soulsickness became deeper and more overwhelming. The Wanderer decided that the only logical choice was to retreat into Torpor and rest. Once more, he refashioned the interior of his pyramid, this time for the purpose of protection, of defense. He feared that invaders, perhaps allies of the Nosferatu, might break into his sanctuary and destroy him. Initially, his fear was focused on mortals — warlike nations invading the Yucatan region. But then the Lupines who lived in the area (discussed below) warned him that other Kindred might one day come seeking his resting place. Using his magical prowess, he created arcane protections designed specifically to ward his Haven against those of his own kind.

With the final changes complete, Mictlantecuhtli surrounded himself with his retinue — both willing and unwilling — and ordered that the pyramid be sealed. Within, in peace at last, he rested.

Lost Cities

Some may wonder why the city of Tzentel has never been found by explorers or archaeologists, or why the natives of the region have never reported it. There are several very good reasons.

The jungle in the vicinity of Tzentel is exceptionally heavy — not impassable, but very difficult to traverse. The city is totally overgrown, making it impossible to spot from the air (certainly, survey satellites with ultraviolet and infrared cameras — and perhaps even down-looking radar — could spot the ruins, but there has never been any reason to train those high-technology devices on this area of the Yucatan). Without some very good reason, nobody would consider struggling through the heavy vegetation.

It is possible that some explorers have stumbled upon Tzentel, but failed to survive to tell their tales. As described below, there is a small “tribe” of Lupines (werewolves) in the area, and these may well have killed any mortals who have wandered into the area.

As for the natives, the entire region of Tzentel is considered an area of extremely ill omen. No one alive today knows why this taboo might have arisen, but conversely nobody questions it. The natives simply stay away from this region of the jungle. Various anthropologists have picked up on this taboo, but have concluded that the evil omens actually arise from the fact that the region is a breeding ground for malaria and other diseases. (Some anthropologists might have questioned this conclusion and investigated, but — again, thanks to the Lupines — none have lived to discuss the matter.)

THE LUPINES

Centuries ago, when Tzentel was at its peak, Mictlantecuhtli established amicable and respectful relations with the Lupines who lived in the area. The Lupines, in fact, swore a binding oath to protect the interests of Mictlantecuhtli against outsiders (the fragment of poetry from the Codex Tro hints at this).

Lupines, if nothing else, are creatures of their word. Although their agreement to protect Tzentel from outside marauders dates from the second century, they still consider it to be in force today — regardless of the fact that 17 centuries have passed and that Mictlantecuhtli himself has been in Torpor for over 1,300 years.

During the decline of Tzentel, the Lupines transferred their loyalty and responsibility from the city to Mictlantecuhtli himself. There are only two Lupines still in the region — a mated pair, resembling aged natives — but they believe wholeheartedly that it is their right and their duty to allow their liege lord to sleep uninterrupted for as long as he likes.

The Lupines are suspicious of mortals. In the past, when there were more Lupines in the vicinity, the creatures would kill anyone who wandered into the region. Now things are

different. Although isolated, the Lupines understand that the world has changed since their ancestors swore their oath to Mictlantecuhtli. Channels of communication are almost magically swift. Before, the world at large would never even realize that explorers had gone missing in the Tzentel region. Today, however, mysterious disappearances would attract to the area the very attention the creatures wish to avoid.

Therefore, rather than killing mortals on sight, the Lupines would watch them closely for signs of interest in Mictlantecuhtli's Haven. If they were to evidence any such interest, the Lupines would try to lead them away or perhaps drive them off, all the while being very careful to make the events as unremarkable as possible. Only if no other option was open would they slay mortal explorers, and even then they would try to find some way of avoiding notice. (Perhaps they would drag the bodies elsewhere, leaving them to be found. This way, anyone following up on a "lost expedition" would conclude that the explorers died elsewhere, thus diverting attention from the Tzentel area.)

Kindred visitors, however, are a totally different case. Their agreement with Mictlantecuhtli has not diminished the Lupines' traditional enmity toward Vampires, and the creatures would gladly destroy any of the Damned who stumble upon this place. The Lupines would gladly destroy one or two Kindred who reached Tzentel; if the creatures believe that they could overpower a group of Vampires, they would attack and fight to the death.

Although they consider the discharge of their oath more important than their lives, the Lupines are realistic. If there are more Kindred than they can defeat, they will use other means. In human form, they will approach the Kindred, and volunteer to serve as guides ... and then, of course, lead them far from Tzentel. Alternatively, they may carry on guerilla warfare against the explorers, destroying their camps, killing their guides and porters, and generally doing whatever they can to drive the Kindred off. If they can, they will split up the group, and attack any stragglers. If intruders enter the pyramid, the Lupines will not follow, but will set up an ambush and await their reemergence.

Although relatively primitive, the Lupines are not stupid, and should represent a very real danger to the Neonates when they visit Tzentel. The Lupines will use stealth to observe the actions of the Neonates, possibly learning where they have set up their temporary Havens. Since the Lupines are able to operate by daylight, the easiest way they have to destroy the Vampires is to find them in their Havens during the day!

The Lupines of Tzentel are the descendants of Mayan peasants, and retain that appearance in human form. They live a simple existence in the Tzentel region, frequently engaging in banditry. They each have a bolt-action hunting rifle and a handful of shells. The Lupines speak Mayathan, the traditional language of the Mayas, as well as pidgin forms of English and Spanish. Refer to the *Vampire* rulebook for more information on Lupines.



Cobb

VAMPIRE™ Lupines

Attributes

Physical	Social	Mental
Strength.....●●●●●	Charisma.....●●●●●	Perception.....●●●●●
Dexterity.....●●●●●	Manipulation.....●●●●●	Intelligence.....●●●●●
Stamina.....●●●●●	Appearance.....●●●●●	Wits.....●●●●●

Abilities

Talents	Skills	Knowledge
Acting.....●●●●●	Animal Ken.....●●●●●	Bureaucracy.....●●●●●
Alertness.....●●●●●	Drive.....●●●●●	Computer.....●●●●●
Athletics.....●●●●●	Etiquette.....●●●●●	Finance.....●●●●●
Brawl.....●●●●●	Firearms.....●●●●●	Investigation.....●●●●●
Dodge.....●●●●●	Melee.....●●●●●	Law.....●●●●●
Empathy.....●●●●●	Muscle.....●●●●●	Linguistics.....●●●●●
Intimidation.....●●●●●	Repair.....●●●●●	Medicine.....●●●●●
Leadership.....●●●●●	Security.....●●●●●	Oxalt.....●●●●●
Streetwise.....●●●●●	Stealth.....●●●●●	Politics.....●●●●●
Subterfuge.....●●●●●	Survival.....●●●●●	Science.....●●●●●

Advantages

Disciplines	Backgrounds	Virtues
Celerity.....●●●●●	.....●●●●●	Conscience.....●●●●●
.....●●●●●	.....●●●●●	Self-Control.....●●●●●
.....●●●●●	.....●●●●●	Courage.....●●●●●
.....●●●●●●●●●●	

Other Traits

History.....●●●●●

.....●●●●●

.....●●●●●

.....●●●●●

.....●●●●●

Humanity

.....●●●●●○○○○

Health

Bruised.....

Hurt.....-1

Injured.....-2

Wounded.....-3

Mauled.....-4

Crippled.....-5

Incapacitated.....

Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage

Willpower

.....●●●●●○○○

□□□□□□□□□□

Blood Pool

○○○○○○○○○○○○

Attributes: 7/5/3 Abilities: 13/9/5 Disciplines: 3 Backgrounds: 5 Virtues: 7 Freebie Points: 15 (7/5/2/1)

Pieter, the Diabolist described in Chapter 4.). The ghouls never re-appeared, and the Lupines assume that he has been destroyed.

When they approached the central pyramid, the Lupines found that the intruder had removed the heavy stone blocks that closed the entrance. They replaced these to block the portal once again.

THE PYRAMID OF MICTLANTECUHTLI

Unless otherwise specified, all walls within the pyramid are of the same dressed stone blocks that face the outside of the pyramid. The floors are paved with flat slabs of the same stone. Ceilings are about twelve feet high (unless otherwise specified), and walls are about a foot thick (refer to the rules in the Vampire rulebook; breaking through such a wall would require a dice pool of 13).

There is no artificial light within the structure (of course!). In general, the air is still, dry and musty, about 70° F (day and night), and redolent with the odor of decay — mainly vegetation, but with a trace of something else.

Entering the Pyramid

There is one entrance to the chambers within the pyramid, halfway along the northern side of the base, at ground level. Most of the pyramid is covered with tangled lianas and other plant growth; this webbing of vines has been torn away from the area of the entrance.

The entrance itself is a square doorway, 10 feet high but only three feet wide. Large cubic blocks of stone have been piled like children's blocks to close the entrance. There are eight such blocks, each about two feet on a side and weighing 1,500 pounds. The blocks are positioned in such a way that there are gaps between them; these gaps range from less than an inch wide to about six inches.

Refer to the Vampire rulebook for rules on feats of strength. Of course, the Neonates do not have to dead-lift the blocks; there are many other ways of removing them, but they will take time — time the Kindred may not have if they are being attacked by Lupines, for example.

The Mayas never learned how to build arches, either for doorways or ceilings. Instead, they created overheads by stacking blocks of stone in a step-wise manner; the blocks offset toward each other on each layer until they finally met at the top. This led to high ceilings and doorways, with narrow rooms and doors. Most surfaces were carved showing naturalistic and mythical figures of people and animals. On the outside of the pyramid, these carvings have largely weathered away. Within, however, they are untouched by the elements. Inside Mictlantecuhtli's pyramid, the carvings

Lupines

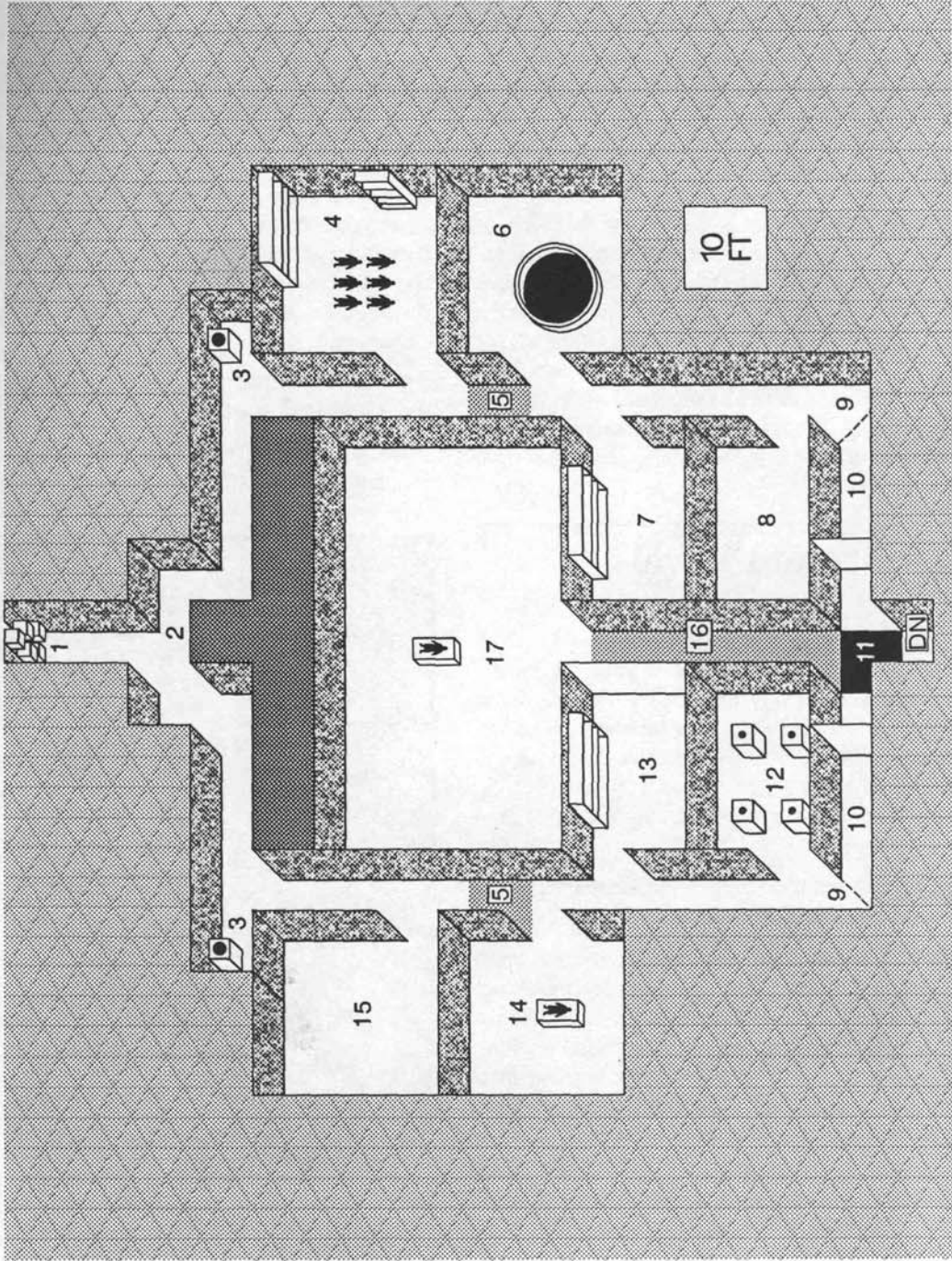
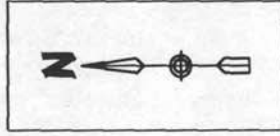
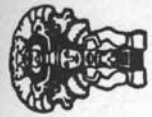
Image: About 5'6", squat and powerful, with cinnamon-colored skin and black hair.

Roleplaying Hints: You don't speak English well, and you hate Vampires!

It is conceivably possible that the Neonates might capture a Lupine and interrogate him or her. Under suitable questioning, a Lupine might be forced to admit that the great god Mictlantecuhtli — an ancient Vampire — lies in Torpor beneath the central pyramid of Tzentel. The Lupine suspects that there will be fairly elaborate defenses to protect the sleeping Mictlantecuhtli, but cannot even begin to speculate on their nature.

Vampires and mortals have come to Tzentel before, presumably seeking Mictlantecuhtli. In all but one case, the Lupines drove them off or destroyed them. Less than a month ago, one Vampire, accompanied by a ghoul, managed to get by them and enter the central pyramid. The Lupine's oath prevented them from following, so they waited outside for the pair to reemerge. Reemerge the Vampire did... fleeing as though the very devil were at his heels. He was so torn and mangled as to be almost unrecognizable. His aspect was so hideous that it shocked the Lupines into inaction for long enough for him to make his escape (This intruder is

PYRAMID OF MICTLANTECUHTLI GROUND LEVEL



The Pyramid



depict Mayans at work and at worship. A recurring motif depicts priests, with elaborate headdresses, holding large goblets. (These, of course, contained the blood of human sacrifices.) There are no direct representations of the God of Death, Mictlantecuhtli, except as specified below. Some of these carvings were embellished with red and green dyes, but over the years the colors have faded. All stone surfaces are medium grey — rough and gritty.

The interior of the pyramid is claustrophobic, even with the high ceilings. The floors are earth or stone. Much of the stonework is covered with moss and lichen-like growth.

A Note on Frenzies

Any Kindred is going to find the exploration of an ancient pyramid — particularly one that is haunted and the Haven of a Methuselah — a frightening and emotionally-charged experience. The Neonates will be under extreme emotional tension, making it significantly more difficult to resist Frenzies. To reflect this, increase all difficulty numbers for resisting Frenzy by one (This increase has already been taken into account in the difficulty numbers quoted in this chapter. For potential Frenzies caused by other events not specifically described below, the Storyteller should keep the penalty in mind.).

Ground Level

1. Entrance Corridor

The portal from the outside is only three feet wide; immediately within, however, the corridor widens. In the light of the Neonates' torches, the floor seems to writhe and shift. After a moment, the characters realize the corridor is home to dozens of rats. These rats will try to avoid the Vampires; the Vampires, for their part, may want to use the rats to sate their hunger.

2. Mosaic

A mosaic of incredibly intricate design covers the south wall. Using multi-colored stones, some little larger than grains of sand, it illustrates how the city of Tzentel looked in its heyday. Above the central pyramid is a depiction of the "god" Mictlantecuhtli, a dark-haired, dark-skinned man drinking from a golden goblet. The liquid in the goblet is dark red, and could be either fine wine or blood.

The intricacy of the mosaic is such that no human could ever have constructed it; it is obviously of Vampiric creation. The mosaic is so intricate, in fact, that it can have a hypnotic effect on Kindred. Any Vampiric character who so much as glances at the mosaic must make a Willpower roll against his or her Perception + Auspex (the difficulty for Toreadors is *two* higher). On a failed roll, the character is entranced by the mosaic and will remain motionless, staring at it in wonder, until he is dragged away by companions, or his view of the

mosaic is blocked. On a botch, the character will become catatonic; this condition will last for 10 minutes after the character can no longer see the mosaic.

The mosaic was originally created by Mictlantecuhtli's Get. Its hypnotic qualities are a consequence of the level of detail, not something that the designers strove to achieve from the outset.

3. Cleansing Fonts

Each alcove has a stone font that used to contain pure water. Now they contain dust, rat skeletons, and the bloodless bodies of one or two rats. The fonts are carved from the same igneous rock as the rest of the pyramid. They have square bases, and stand about three feet high. Shallow, circular depressions have been carved into their tops. When the pyramid was used as the temple of Mictlantecuhtli, priests and Mictlantecuhtli's Get would use the water here to ritually cleanse themselves before passing deeper into the chambers.

4. Priests' Room

There are six perfectly-preserved male bodies, lying peacefully on the floor. All are dark-skinned and dark-



haired, wearing short linen robes. So well preserved are they that they look as though they might just be sleeping. In fact, however, a close examination will show that all have been drained of blood through wounds in their throats. These are the bodies of some of the priests who Mictlantecuhtli decreed would share his repose in the pyramid.

Two of the priests, while alive, had such powerful wills, that upon death their spirits remained to haunt this room. Their hatred of their god — who denied them the boon of immortality, and who in fact decreed that they should die when he went into Torpor — remains, and has grown over the centuries. Now, however, their hatred has generalized and turned to madness. They hate and envy the living — or those who can still move freely and experience the world. Driven by this undying hatred, they will fall upon any intruder — mortal or Kindred — who enters, gibbering and screaming their hatred all the while.

These spirits are totally incorporeal, appearing as transparent apparitions. They have a “touch” attack which allows them to drain Willpower. They attack with seven dice against the victim’s Wits + Dodge. Every success drains one Willpower point from the victim. If the victim has Fortitude, the drain can be resisted by a Courage + Fortitude roll with a target of 9. For every success, one less Willpower point is lost.



The spirits cannot be harmed by any attack, whether physical, mental or magical. The only way to destroy the spirits is to burn their physical bodies to ashes. Instead of fighting them, the Neonates can simply avoid them by leaving the room; the spirits have bound themselves to their bodies and unable to leave the room, even to pursue the objects of their hatred.

In life, the priests spoke only Mayathan, and have had no opportunity — or desire — to learn any other language since their deaths.

5. Dart Traps

Each symbol represents a square slab of thin stone on the floor of the corridor. The stone has been covered with a thin layer of dirt and soil, making it difficult to notice they are different from the rest of the corridor (characters may make a Perception + Wits roll against a difficulty of 7 to notice the stones). If a weight of more than 80 pounds is applied to the stone, the trap is triggered. Ten sharpened wooden darts — each about six inches long, and wickedly barbed — are fired from holes in each wall, creating a lethal “crossfire” in the corridor. The holes are small, less than 1/4 of an inch in diameter, and are worked into the carvings on the wall to make them harder to spot. Noticing the holes requires the characters be studying the walls and make a Perception + Wits roll against a difficulty of 8.

A character who triggers the trap by standing on the stones will be struck by 2-20 darts, each of which has a damage rating of 1. The target of these darts can only dodge if he or she has previously spotted the holes in the walls (whether or not the character has realized their significance). After they hit, the darts combine to do their damage. Thus, if a character was hit by 10 darts, she would take 10 dice of damage.

Once the traps have been triggered, they cannot be reset. Obviously, since the stone slabs — the pressure sensors — are only 10 feet wide, the easiest way to avoid the traps (for Kindred, at least) is to jump over the area.

These traps were installed long after the remainder of the pyramid was completed. In fact, they were among the final additions to the structure, created just before Mictlantecuhtli retreated into his Haven to slip into torpor.

6. Pool of Blood

In the center of the room is a shallow pool surrounded by a low stone lip a foot high. When the civilization of Tzentel was at its peak, blood drained from human sacrifices was brought here and poured into the pool as a symbolic offering to Mictlantecuhtli (symbolic because the “god” rarely if ever drank the Vitae so delivered). Mictlantecuhtli appreciated the symbolism: the life-blood of his worshippers brought here into the heart of his temple.

One of the results of the Wanderer’s thaumaturgical research was a ritual designed to prevent the putrefaction of



blood. Mictlantecuhtli used this blood-magic to make the symbol of the pool of blood eternal.

Over the centuries, however, the power of the magic has faded. There is still blood in the pool, to a depth of three or four inches. However, it has partially putrefied: the top half inch has decayed and dried into a red-black crust. Beneath this protective crust, the rest of the blood is protected from oxygen and hence from putrefaction. The crust is brittle, and will crumble if any weight of more than a couple of pounds is applied to it.

The presence of the blood has filled the room — and only this room — with the rich, strong smell of vitæ. It is so intense that any Neonate with 5 or fewer Blood Points must make a Conscience roll against a difficulty of 7 to avoid a Madness Frenzy. If the crust is broken to expose any of the fresh blood before the characters enter the room, the difficulty increases to 8.

Characters are free to replenish their Blood Pools from the pool of blood; there is more than enough blood here to sate several dozen Neonates. (Trying to take the blood out of the room — in a canteen, for example — will not work. The magical preservation is limited to this room alone. As soon as the blood leaves this room, its age catches up to it and it instantly putrefies.)

7. Robing Room

It was here the priests of Mictlantecuhtli robbed themselves before conducting ceremonies in his honor. The entire western wall is a sheet of silver metal polished to mirror-brightness. A spell has been cast on the metal mirror so that any Kindred who looks in it will see not his own image, but the image of the Beast within him: a hideous, red-eyed, slaving monster with blood-dripping fangs. Any Kindred viewing herself in the mirror must make a Conscience roll against a difficulty of 6 or lose one point of Willpower. On a botch, she loses one point of Humanity.

This “revealing mirror” was one of the major psychological tests Mictlantecuhtli used to “temper” his Get. Since they saw their Beasts every time they robbed for a service, they could never forget their true nature. With repeated exposure, however, the psychological trauma — the cause of the potential Willpower loss — diminished. Eventually, the Get were able to face their Beasts undismayed.

The mirror also has an effect on mortals. A human who looks in the mirror sees himself as a decaying corpse — again, a representation of his true nature. This reminder of mortality was a cruel jest that Mictlantecuhtli’s mortal priests had to face whenever they robbed for a ceremony.

8. Mosaic Room

All four walls of this room are covered, from floor to ceiling, with intricate mosaics and Mayan hieroglyphic

VAMPIRE™

Anton

Attributes		
Physical	Social	Mental
Strength ●●●●	Charisma ●●●●	Perception ●●●●
Dexterity ●●●●	Manipulation ●●●●	Intelligence ●●●●
Stamina ●●●●	Appearance ●●●●	Wits ●●●●

Abilities		
Talents	Skills	Knowledge
Acting ●●●●	Animal Ken ●●●●	Bureaucracy ●●●●
Aleriness ●●●●	Drive ●●●●	Computer ●●●●
Athletics ●●●●	Etiquette ●●●●	Finance ●●●●
Brawl ●●●●	Firearms ●●●●	Investigation ●●●●
Dodge ●●●●	Melee ●●●●	Law ●●●●
Empathy ●●●●	Misc ●●●●	Linguistics ●●●●
Intimidation ●●●●	Repair ●●●●	Medicine ●●●●
Leadership ●●●●	Security ●●●●	Occult ●●●●
Streetwise ●●●●	Stealth ●●●●	Politics ●●●●
Subterfuge ●●●●	Survival ●●●●	Science ●●●●

Advantages		
Disciplines	Backgrounds	Virtues
Potency ●●●●	●●●●	Conscience ●●●●
●●●●	●●●●	Self-Control ●●●●
●●●●	●●●●	Courage ●●●●
●●●●	●●●●	
●●●●	●●●●	

Other Traits		Humanity		Health	
●●●●	●●●●	●●●●●●●●		Bruised	<input type="checkbox"/>
●●●●	●●●●			Hurt	-1 <input type="checkbox"/>
●●●●	●●●●			Injured	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
●●●●	●●●●			Wounded	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
●●●●	●●●●			Mauled	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
				Crippled	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
				Incapacitated	<input type="checkbox"/>

Combat		Blood Pool		Experience	
Weapon	Difficulty	Damage	●●●●●●●●		

Attributes: 7/5/3 Abilities: 13/9/5 Disciplines: 3 Backgrounds: 5 Virtues: 7 Freebie Points: 15 (7/5/21)

script. The intricacy of this work is nowhere near as great as that in area 2, so the hypnotic effect does not recur. If a Neonate can read the hieroglyphs, they relate the history of Mictlantecuhtli, providing the background information from Chapter 3.

The room is occupied by a single ghoul, Anton. This is the poor creature who accompanied Pietr the Vampire into the pyramid. Pietr was badly mauled by Mictlantecuhtli's defenders, but the attendant Vampires did not destroy this ghoul. Instead, they have allowed him to cower within the depths of the pyramid, fearing the sounds of their movements. (This, they decided, was an even crueller punishment for his trespasses than destroying him.)

The ghoul was already slightly insane when he accompanied Pietr to Tzental; now he has lost all touch with reality. In the weeks since his arrival here, he has felt the pangs of hunger for both food and blood as the potency of Pietr's blood in his veins has begun to fade. He knows, instinctively through his madness, that unless he drinks the Vitae of a Kindred again soon, he will become fully mortal once more ... and then he will die. He is too afraid of the Vampiric attendants of Mictlantecuhtli to attempt to feed from them, but any other Vampire who enters the pyramid is another story.

If the Neonates have lights or make noise, the ghoul will be warned of their approach, and he will hide himself around the corner just within the room. As the Neonates approach, he will fling himself upon the closest character and try to drink his or her blood. The ghoul is by now so insane that he will fight until he is destroyed.

Anton

Image: A wild-eyed man in torn clothes, hair awry, gibbering with fear, madness and bloodlust.

Roleplaying Hints: Scream wildly, and attack the Neonates in a frenzy.

9. Fire Traps

The dotted line diagonally crossing each corner is a tripwire three inches off the ground. If the tripwire is pulled, a square, barred cage — seven feet high and open at the bottom — drops from the ceiling, trapping within it the character who triggered the trap. The cage has a large stone slab on top of it and weighs approximately 1200 pounds, requiring a dice pool of 9 to lift it. Bending the bars — to allow the victim within the cage to escape — requires a dice pool of 6.

Once the cage has fallen, the floor beneath it bursts into magically-created flames. These flames start at about 6 inches in height, and increase in height by one foot each turn until — after the seventh round — the cage is filled with flame. The fire lasts a total of ten rounds, then vanishes.



The victim in the cage must make a Stamina + Fortitude roll to resist damage from the fire, against a difficulty of 5. On turns one and two, the fire inflicts one wound per turn; on turns three through five, it inflicts two wounds per turn; and on turns six through 10 it inflicts three wounds per turn. Note that this is aggravated damage.

Apart from the damage — which is deadly enough — the situation of being trapped within a fire-filled cage is immensely terrifying to a vampire (or to anyone else!). Each turn, the victim must make a Courage roll against a difficulty of 8 or enter a Terror Frenzy — a potentially lethal development, since a victim in Frenzy can do little to save himself!

Obviously, once the trap has been triggered, it cannot be reset. Again, as with the dart trap, the easiest way to avoid the danger is to notice the tripwire and step over it. The fire traps were installed immediately before Mictlantecuhtli went into Torpor to protect him from those who would invade his Haven.

10. Mirrors

The dotted line crossing the corridor represents a floor-to-ceiling mirror of metal, polished on both sides. The mirror is six feet wide in a 10-foot-wide corridor, meaning that there is a gap of two feet on either side — enough space for individuals to slip by. The metal is soft, and bullets will



penetrate it (successful damage dice are reduced by 10). (Note that the mirrors are intended merely as aggravations for the Neonates, and were originally intended to give the pyramid's defenders warning as to the invaders' location. Now it is quite likely characters will open fire on lights they see ahead of them — unaware that they are their own lights, reflected in the mirrors — thus wasting precious bullets.)

11. Pit Trap

This is another 10-by-10 foot pit, 10 feet deep, concealed by a magical illusion of floor. Characters watching the floor ahead gain a Wits + Occult roll against a difficulty of 8 to notice that the image of the floor shifts slightly, somewhat like a mirage. The illusion vanishes as soon as a material object passes through the plane of the floor.

As soon as an object weighing more than 100 pounds lands on the floor of the pit, a cubic block of stone just a little less than 10 feet on a side is released from the ceiling. Theoretically, this stone should drop free, instantly crushing anyone inside the pit, and completely filling it. Over the centuries, however, earthquakes have shaken the pyramid a little out of alignment. When the block is released, it falls about four feet, then stops with a loud grinding noise, dropping rock dust into the pit. The block is too heavy to remain stuck like this for long, however. The Neonates have two turns in which to pull one or more of their number out of the pit; at the end of the second turn, the block of stone falls free and slams into the pit. The top of the block is approximately level with the corridor floor.

A 10-by-10-by-10 block of stone weighs on the order of 90 tons. Any character caught beneath this block when it falls is Extinguished, and any equipment they may be carrying is unrecoverable.

12. Shrine of Friendship

When Mictlantecuhtli reached his agreement with the Lupines, the treaty was sealed with the exchange of items of value to both sides. Mictlantecuhtli bestowed upon the Lupines items of worked gold, which the werewolves have secreted somewhere safe. In return, the Lupines gave to Mictlantecuhtli four huge emeralds.

In this room there are four stone pedestals, carved from the same grey rock as the rest of the pyramid. Each pedestal bears an emerald the size of a man's fist, each of which is worth approximately \$200,000 to the right buyer.

Mictlantecuhtli placed the gems on display here largely as a reminder to his followers of the binding treaty with the Lupines. He also thought they would serve to remind his mortal priests that there was more to the world than they knew, and that he had ties to forces they did not understand.

Further, the gems represented yet another test — for both his Get and his mortal priests. Obviously, the gems were incredibly valuable, and thus a significant temptation. He

was interested in finding out whether greed would outweigh the fear of punishment, and prompt his followers to steal the gems.

Symbolically, Mictlantecuhtli thought it would be fitting if such a lapse in self-control were punished — at least in part — by further loss of self-control, to bring home to the thief the enormity of his or her weakness. Thus he cast various powerful rituals, in the form of a curse, on the stones. Anyone who carries one of these stones on their persons for more than six hours is subject to this magical curse.

For a mortal, the curse manifests itself as progressive loss of self-control, leading quickly to homicidal rages with little to no provocation. For a Vampire, each six hour period the character keeps one of the stones on her person, she temporarily loses one point of Self-Control. When the character's Self-Control score reaches zero, she immediately and automatically Frenzies. The character can terminate the Frenzy by making Willpower rolls as normal, but when the Frenzy ends she automatically gains a Rage Derangement. Lost Self-Control points return at a rate of one point per day, starting the day after the character has disposed of the stone.

13. Robing Room

This is another room where the priests of Mictlantecuhtli robbed themselves before conducting ceremonies in his honor. The entire eastern wall is a sheet of silver metal polished to mirror-brightness. A spell has been cast on the metal mirror so that any Kindred who looks in it will see an image of himself consumed in flames, dying in agony. Any Kindred who views himself in the mirror must make a Courage roll against a difficulty of 6 or lose one point of Willpower. On a botch, the character loses two points of Willpower.

This magical mirror was created as yet another way of tempering Mictlantecuhtli's Get: by facing them with one of their greatest fears, he intended to develop their courage.

14. Crypt

In the center of the room is a low bier of intricately-carved limestone on which lies a motionless male figure. Like the bodies in room 4, he is dark-skinned and dark-haired, wearing a white linen robe. This figure is, in fact, the most trusted of Mictlantecuhtli's Vampire attendants (see *Dramatis Personae* below for statistics), currently lying in light Torpor. He is currently down to only two Blood Points, not the four Blood Points as stated below for the other attendants, and the scent of Kindred Vitae — whether from wounds suffered by the Neonates, or just the faint odor secreted by their skin — will be enough to rouse him. If unfamiliar Vampires — i.e., the characters — approach within six feet, he will rouse instantly and enter Frenzy, falling upon the stranger and trying to drink her blood. He will continue to Frenzy until he is destroyed, or until he has drunk eight Blood Points.

This attendant has a knife in a sheath at his hip. This knife has been imbued with magical powers, so that any wounds

it inflicts are considered Aggravated Damage. A character using Psychometry can learn that this weapon was created by Mictlantecuhtli himself and bestowed as a gift upon a loyal servant.

The room and the crypt were constructed as a personal Haven for Mictlantecuhtli's favorite attendant.

15. "Empty" Room

When the Neonates first entered the pyramid, their lights and the sounds of their movements alerted a Vampire attendant who was in this room to their existence. Using Obfuscate, he conceals himself in the northeast corner of the room. If detected, he will fight to the death to destroy the intruders. If the Neonates do not spot him immediately, he will follow them, attacking from behind when their attention is elsewhere (pushing one or more characters into the various traps, for example).

Before Mictlantecuhtli entered Torpor, this room was used as a small "chapel", a room in which ceremonies of lesser significance were performed.

16. Corridor of Fire

This hallway is magically warded against Kindred. Mortals can pass through it unhindered; when a Vampire reaches





the middle of the corridor, however, flames burst from the walls in a silent concussion of fire and fill the entire hallway for a period of one turn. Any Kindred within the hallway suffers two Health Levels of damage; victims can roll Stamina + Fortitude against a difficulty of six to resist this damage. After the fire has been triggered once, the warding is totally discharged and Vampires can traverse the corridor safely.

A character with senses heightened by Auspex is entitled to a Perception roll against a difficulty of eight. If he achieves one or more successes, he senses an aura of magical power blocking the hallway, although he gains no more information about what that power might be capable of doing. The only way a Vampire can traverse the hallway without triggering the warding is if he or she is wearing — not carrying — one of the black stone rings worn by the Vampire attendants of Mictlantecuhtli.

17. High Priest's Tomb

Lying on a low stone bier in the center of this room is another perfectly-preserved, dark male figure. This was, in life, the high priest of Mictlantecuhtli. There is a wound in his throat, and his body is drained completely of blood. Around his neck, on a fine gold chain, is a black stone pendant in the shape of a rayed sun, about as big as a man's palm. A character who uses Psychometry on this pendant will sense that it is imbued with faint magical energy, although the nature of its powers — if any — is unclear. This

Discipline will also indicate that it was the high priest himself who imbued it with its magic.

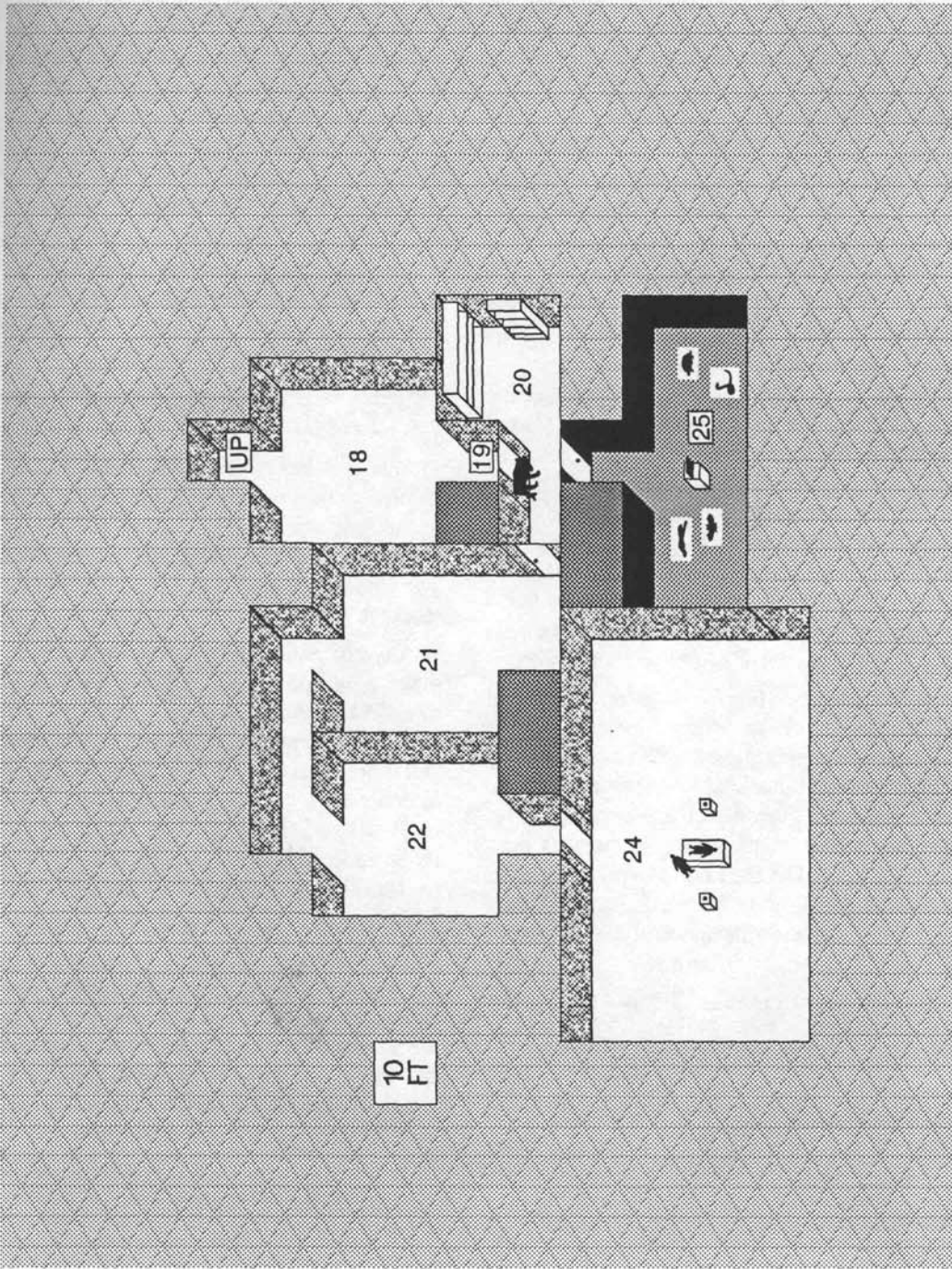
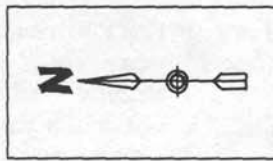
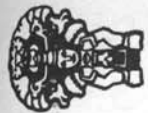
During his life, this black sun symbol was indicative of the man's position as high priest of Mictlantecuhtli. As such, it allowed him to gain entrance to the "god's" Haven on the sub-level of the pyramid, and this was a matter of great pride to the man. Even death was unable to eradicate the priest's pride in what the pendant represented.

If anyone removes the pendant from around the priest's neck, his spirit will manifest itself as an insubstantial figure, and attack whoever possesses the pendant. This spirit has a "touch" attack which allows it to drain Willpower. It attacks with eight dice against the victim's Wits + Dodge. Every success drains one Willpower point from the victim. If the victim has Fortitude, the drain can be resisted by a Courage + Fortitude roll with a target of 9. For every success, one less Willpower point is lost. In addition, the spirit has a three rating in the Lure of Flames aspect of Thaumaturgy.

The spirit cannot be harmed by any attack, whether physical, mental or magical. The only way to destroy it is to burn the priest's body to ashes. Unlike the other spirits in room 4, this apparition is not bound to this room, and will pursue the Neonates until it or they are destroyed.

Originally, before the construction of the lower level, this room was Mictlantecuhtli's personal Haven. As his soul-weariness grew, he became concerned that other Kindred might seek him out and attempt to destroy him. Using his growing Thaumaturgical prowess, he enchanted the Corri-

PYRAMID OF MICTLANTECUHTLI SUB-LEVEL



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dor of Flame as a defense mechanism. Since he and his Get needed free run of the entire pyramid, he created the black stone rings as tokens of passage to prevent the fire trap from harming those who had a right to be in the chambers.

Sub-Level

On this level the floors are all packed earth, and the ceilings are much lower — no more than seven feet. Again, there is no artificial lighting.

18. *Hall of Fear*

This room has been enspelled with powerful magics affecting the mind of any Kindred who enters. As soon as the characters enter this room, their minds are possessed by its enchantment. Each character suddenly finds himself alone, or so it seems; to each character, it appears that the others have suddenly vanished, and that he is alone in this room (This will probably require that the Storyteller handle each player individually, in private.).

Once he is alone, the character is faced by a physical foe who embodies what the character most fears. The Nature chosen by the player for the character might well give the Storyteller a clue. A Bravo might be faced by an even bigger bully than he is; a Deviant by a representative of authority; a Plotter by someone who knows all his secrets and will tell them to the world. If the character's Nature or behavior does not give the Storyteller a clue, something generic — like a humanoid being consisting entirely of flame, or one who burns with the light of the sun — would be appropriate.

No matter what appearance this foe takes on, its Physical Attributes and combat skills are exactly the same as the character (although the player should not know this). The foe immediately attempts to make the character Frenzy, in whatever way seems the most effective: insults, taunts, attacks on the character's deepest fears, or perhaps even outright physical attack. The foe knows everything about the character, and so knows his or her weaknesses. (This is because the foe is actually a manifestation of the character's own subconscious fears and death-wish.)

If the foe enters combat, it uses its teeth and claws. The character must fight it hand-to-hand; the only weapons allowed to the character are melee weapons that have somehow been imbued with magical powers. The character is free to use Celerity, Fortitude or Potence (if he has them) to better his odds against the foe, but neither combatant can use any other Disciplines.

The character fails the Test of Fear if he is driven to Frenzy. If this happens, the wounds he suffered are healed, but he permanently loses one point of Courage. A character reduced to zero Courage can never again resist a Terror Frenzy. (This loss is in addition to any consequences of the Frenzy itself.)

The character is considered to have passed the Test of Fear if he avoids Frenzy and manages to defeat the foe (The meaning of "defeat" depends on how the foe approached the character, and is up to the Storyteller.) Once the foe is defeated, it vanishes, and any wounds the character may have sustained are healed. Furthermore, the character temporarily gains one point of Courage and one point of Humanity; these temporary points last for 12 hours, a reward for the character conquering his fear.

Each character must experience this encounter the first time he or she enters this room. From the point of view of a character standing outside the room, watching another character, the encounter is invisible and instantaneous. One moment the character in the room is normal, the next he or she could well be in Frenzy, with no immediately apparent precipitating factor.

Obviously, Mictlantecuhtli created this room — and the Hall of Dark Dreams and Hall of Victims described below — as part of his campaign to test and temper his Kindred followers.

19. *The Jaguar Door*

This is a heavy door carved from a beautiful amber-colored wood. Worked into the door is an intricate carving of the face of a jaguar. The two eyes are highly-polished black stones that catch and reflect any light that falls on them. The work is so intricate and beautiful that the jaguar almost seems to be alive.

Any character who examines the carving closely must make a Willpower roll against her Perception (possibly modified by Auspex). On a failed roll, the character is entranced by the carving and will remain motionless, staring at it in wonder, until he is dragged away by companions, or his view of the carving is blocked. On a botch, the character must make a Self-Control roll against a difficulty of five or fly into a Rage Frenzy. If a character has been entranced by the carving, the Storyteller should make a note of it.

On the other side of the door, a creature is prowling: a jaguar that has been turned into a ghoul by the Vampire attendants (see below). This creature will attack intruders on sight, and will fight until it is destroyed. Any character who has been entranced by the jaguar door must make a Courage roll with a difficulty of seven when attacked by the jaguar ghoul, or Frenzy. The sounds of combat will immediately summon the Vampire attendant from room 20 to join the fray.

The Jaguar

Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4, Alertness 5, Brawl 4, Dodge 5, Potence 3, Celerity 2. It attacks physically with a bite and a claw attack each turn. In both cases it attacks with six dice; difficulty is five for bite and four for claws. A bite inflicts damage 7, while a claw attack inflicts damage 6.

20. Storage Room

Once a storage room, this is now used as a Haven by the Vampire attendant to whom the jaguar ghoul is Blood Bound. If the attendant defeats any intruders, it will be here that he retreats to tend any wounds he has suffered.

21. The Hall of Dark Dreams

The enchantment cast on this room affects the minds of any Kindred who enter it, in much the same way as did room 18. Again, each individual to enter suddenly believes himself to be alone ...

But only for a moment. Suddenly he is surrounded by insubstantial images of people from his past who witnessed or otherwise were aware of his greatest failures. Maybe the shades surrounding him were victims of these failures, or caused them. In any case, the shades start taunting the character about the failures, laughing at him and deriding him, trying their best to totally humiliate him. The character is unable to do anything physical to stop the taunting; the shades are completely insubstantial and cannot be harmed in any way. Any attempt to physically harm them will automatically fail, giving them yet another thing to taunt the character about.

This is a good opportunity for roleplaying. The Storyteller should pull embarrassing incidents out of the character's past, and ridicule the character's — not the player's — actions. The ridicule will continue until the character realizes the shades are playing on her sense of self-doubt, and decides to steadfastly ignore the taunting, or stands up for her actions in a forthright and honest way. At this point, the player should make a Perception + Empathy roll against a difficulty of 7. On a successful roll, the character temporarily gains one point of Self-Control; this temporary gain lasts 12 hours, a reward for confronting self-doubt. On a failed roll, she permanently loses one point of Self-Control, and must immediately make a Self-Control roll — using her new level — against a difficulty of 6 or fly into Frenzy. On a botch, the character Frenzies and gains a Rage Derangement. A character reduced to zero Self-Control can never again resist a Rage Frenzy. Each character must experience this confrontation

the first time she enters this room. Again, from the point of view of a character standing outside the room, watching another character, the confrontation is invisible and instantaneous.

22. Hall of Victims

In this room, Kindred undergo another mental test in which they must come to terms with the many deaths on their conscience. The set-up is similar to that of the previous room: each Kindred who enters the room suddenly finds himself alone, then an instant later is surrounded by shadowy figures of his many victims. These insubstantial shapes wail



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and cry, blaming the character for sending them to the hell they currently inhabit. The shades swarm around the character, buffeting at him and blocking his vision. There is no way of physically attacking these shapes or driving them off. They will not listen to his justifications or his anger, and react as though they simply don't hear him.

After this has continued for a short time — during which the player should be encouraged to roleplay his character's reaction — require a Perception roll against a difficulty of 6 (possibly modified by Auspex). On a successful roll, the character spots the figure of a child, standing motionless just beyond the chaos of the swirling shapes. This child, staring wide-eyed and fearful, looks exactly as the character did when he was a child. The character must now make a Wits + Empathy roll against a difficulty of 6. If the roll is successful, the character realizes that — in some way — this small figure is the child that he once was, frightened and horrified now by what he has become. The child needs to be accepted and welcomed, the character senses.

It is up to the player how his character responds to this child. If he reacts in any accepting or nurturing way — hugging it, speaking soothingly to it, greeting it as a lost friend, etc. — he has passed the test. He temporarily gains one point each of Conscience and Humanity; this temporary gain lasts 12 hours, a reward for coming to terms with his own lost innocence.

If the character fails either roll, or reacts negatively to the child, he instantly and permanently loses one point each of Conscience and Humanity, and must immediately make a



John J. Cobb

Conscience roll — using his new level — against a difficulty of 6 or fly into Frenzy. On a botch, the character Frenzies and gains a Madness Derangement. A character reduced to zero Conscience can never again resist a Madness Frenzy.

Each character must experience this confrontation the first time he or she enters this room. Again, from the point of view of a character standing outside the room, watching another character, the confrontation is invisible and instantaneous.

23. The “Black Sun” Portal

The door is heavy and strong, carved out of light-colored wood. Carved into the door is an emblem of a multi-rayed sun (the same symbol as that worn around the neck of the priest in room 17); this sun symbol is almost three feet in diameter, and is stained black. Inset into the center of the sun is a smaller copy of the symbol, about the size of a man’s palm, made of polished black stone. (This stone symbol is exactly the same size, shape and material as the priest’s pendant.) Psychometry will indicate to a character that this stone symbol — but not the door as a whole — is imbued with magical energy. (If the character has already assayed the priest’s pendant symbol, on a Perception + Occult roll he can recognize that the patterns of magical energy in both symbols are virtually identical.)

The door has no handle or doorknob, and is securely locked from within. There is no apparent locking mechanism, however, and no keyhole. (Thus it is impossible to “shoot out the lock”.) Breaking down the door requires a Dice Pool of 5 (see page 145 of the Vampire rulebook), but the commotion will definitely give everyone within room 24 one turn (at least) to prepare for action.

In fact, the door is magically secured, and the symbol that the priest from room 17 was wearing as a pendant is the key. If the rayed sun symbol from the pendant is placed in contact with the similar symbol set in the middle of the door, the door will unlock and silently swing open. The Kindred — and other creatures — within room 24 will be surprised and unable to act for one turn.

This magical portal is the last defense Mictlantecuhtli created to guard his resting place. He recognized that when he awoke from Torpor he would need assistance in regaining his strength, and so designed a door with a magical lock, rather than a portal only he could open from the inside.

24. Mictlantecuhtli’s Haven

The room has a 12-foot-high ceiling, and the floor is paved with slabs of the same stone that makes up the walls and ceilings. Much of the wall-space is covered with intricate mosaics. (This is human work, and hence has no hypnotic or magical effect.) The room is lit by two bronze braziers set on stone pedestals. In the center of the room is a low stone bier on which lies a sallow-skinned, dark-haired



figure wearing a long black robe, bedecked with gold jewelry; this figure is Mictlantecuhtli himself.

Standing beside Mictlantecuhtli is a Vampire attendant, wearing the familiar white robe. He has a “black sun” symbol — like the one worn by the priest interred in room 17 — worn as a pendant around his neck. In addition, he has a knife in a sheath at his hip. This knife is similar to the one possessed by the attendant in room 14, in that any wound it inflicts is considered Aggravated Damage. The attendant has self-inflicted wounds at his wrists, and Mictlantecuhtli has blood on his lips and chin.

If the Neonates have opened the door silently, then they will catch the attendant in the midst of his activity: carefully feeding Mictlantecuhtli blood from his wrists to re-establish his own Blood Pool. (This was a dangerous activity, but the Methuselah managed to avoid Frenzy during the early stages of the process.) The attendant will be surprised for one turn when the door swings silently open; on the next turn, however, he will leap to the attack. The turn after, Mictlantecuhtli will slowly sit up and stare at the Neonates with eyes that look blood-red in the firelight.

If the Neonates had to break down the door, the attendant within will be alerted to their presences. As soon as they open the door, the attendant will fall upon them. On the next turn, Mictlantecuhtli will sit up and stare at the Neonates.

The stare of a Methuselah like Mictlantecuhtli is a terrifying thing to behold, even without factoring in his Dominate and Presence disciplines. This is particularly so since the Neonates were probably expecting to find him safely in Torpor when they arrived to drink his vitæ ...

Presumably, the Neonates will be armed with guns, and will start pumping rounds into the attendants. As soon as Mictlantecuhtli sees this and realizes that the strange objects in the intruders’ hands can inflict damage at a distance, he will establish his Puissant Shield (see Chapter 3) to protect himself. He will then enter the fray, using his powers to their best effect. Each time a Neonate is wounded, Mictlantecuhtli must make a Conscience roll against a difficulty of 5 or Frenzy.

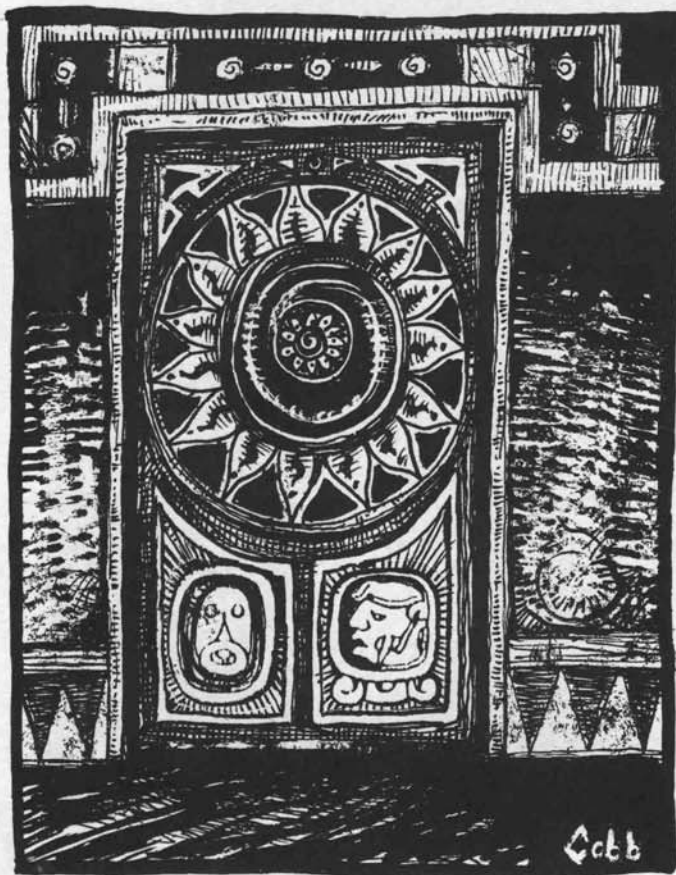
If the Neonates manage to defeat Mictlantecuhtli, they can drink his ancient and potent vitæ.

Mictlantecuhtli wears gold rings, chains, bracers and earrings worth about \$50,000 on the open market. Further, around the Methuselah’s neck hangs a large iron key on a fine chain. This is the key to the treasure room, room 25.

25. Treasure Room

The door is securely locked. The key to this lock hangs around the neck of Mictlantecuhtli himself. The door can be broken down; this requires a Dice Pool of 4.

Within this room are some of the treasures of Mictlantecuhtli. The walls are painted unrelieved black, while the ceiling and floor are painted blood-red. Clay effigies of various mythological creatures stand about the floor. These range in size from a foot-high representation of a lion-headed dragon to a full-size replica of a jaguar. So fine is the workmanship that the figures almost seem alive. These effigies range in weight from about 20 pounds up to several hundred pounds, and would prove valuable to the right



buyers ... if the Neonates could find some practical way of moving them out of the pyramid.

On a wooden stand is a large circular plaque of beaten gold. The plaque is three feet in diameter, and bears a representation of a Mayan calendar. Weighing about 350 pounds, the plaque is worth almost \$2 million dollars.

Mounted on a wooden frame is a finely-woven cloak in black and blood-red. Psychometry will show that the cloak is imbued with magical energy. In fact, the wearer of the cloak can use the power Puissant Shield, drawing on the power of the cloak and not on the wearer's own Thaumaturgy skill; in fact, the wearer can use this power whether or not he has any rating whatsoever in Thaumaturgy. To use the power, the character must simply concentrate. The player then rolls five dice — the power rating of the cloak — against a difficulty of 6. The Puissant Shield lasts two turns for each success achieved. If the player fails this roll, he must then make a Courage roll or fly into Frenzy. On a botched roll to use the cloak, the character automatically Frenzies,

and automatically gains a Terror Derangement. Obviously, the cloak is very powerful and extremely useful, but it represents a very real risk.

The Neonates should be forced to be very creative to get these "treasure" items out of Mexico. The Mexican government has strict regulations about taking archaeological artifacts out of the country. While these regulations can be circumvented — through judicious bribery, for example — it is not easy, and could well subject the Neonates to serious risk of discovery.

Dramatis Personae

Vampire Attendants

Sire: Mictlantecuhtli

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Fanatic

Generation: 13th

Embrace: c. 575 AD

Apparent Age: Mid 20s

Image: Short and muscular, with golden skin and black hair, dressed in white robes. Each wears a ring of black stone. After more than a millennium wandering the pyramid in the dark, they can find their way around perfectly with no light. (Specifically, they know exactly where the traps are and avoid them.)

Roleplaying Hints: You don't talk, you just attack intruders and destroy them or die trying.

VAMPIRE™		
Vampire Attendants		
Attributes		
Physical	Social	Mental
Strength.....●●●●	Charisma.....●●●●	Perception.....●●●●
Dexterity.....●●●●	Manipulation.....●●●●	Intelligence.....●●●●
Stamina.....●●●●	Appearance.....●●●●	Wits.....●●●●
Abilities		
Talents	Skills	Knowledge
Acting.....00000	Animal Ken.....00000	Herescency.....0000
Alertness.....●●●●	Drive.....00000	Computer.....00000
Athletics.....00000	Etiquette.....00000	Finance.....00000
Brawl.....●●●●	Firearms.....00000	Investigation.....00000
Dodge.....●●●●	Melee.....●●●●	Law.....00000
Empathy.....00000	Music.....00000	Linguistics.....00000
Intimidation.....00000	Replay.....00000	Medicine.....00000
Leadership.....00000	Security.....00000	Occult.....●●●●
Streetwise.....00000	Stealth.....●●●●	Politics.....00000
Subterfuge.....00000	Survival.....●●●●	Science.....00000
Advantages		
Disciplines	Backgrounds	Virtues
Animalism.....●●●●	.....00000	Conscience.....●●●●
Obscure.....●●●●	.....00000	Self-Control.....●●●●
.....00000	.....00000	.....00000
.....00000	.....00000	.....00000
.....00000	.....00000	.....00000
Other Traits		
.....00000	Humanity●●●●●●●●	Health
.....00000	.....00000	Brained..... <input type="checkbox"/>
.....00000	Willpower●●●●●●●●	Hurt.....-1 <input type="checkbox"/>
.....00000	.....00000	Injured.....-2 <input type="checkbox"/>
.....00000	.....00000	Wounded.....-3 <input type="checkbox"/>
.....00000	.....00000	Mauled.....-4 <input type="checkbox"/>
.....00000	.....00000	Crippled.....-5 <input type="checkbox"/>
.....00000	.....00000	Incapacitated..... <input type="checkbox"/>
Combat		
Weapon	Difficulty	Damage
.....
.....
.....
.....
Blood Pool.....0000000000		
Experience		
Attributes: 7/5/3 Abilities: 13/9/5 Disciplines: 3 Backgrounds: 5 Virtues: 7 Freebie Points: 15 (7/5/2/1)		

Chapter Six:

Conclusion

There can be several interesting consequences of this story. If the Neonates succeeded in drinking the Vitae of Mictlantecuhtli, then one — or perhaps more, if they used the Ritual of the Bitter Rose — will have advanced in Generation. To have defeated Mictlantecuhtli, they would also have had to destroy or drive away his servitors within the pyramid, which means that there will be no Kindred left to complicate the unlife of the Neonates in the future. (Storytellers can certainly add such complications if they like, of course. Some suggestions are provided in a later section.)

The Neonates might not have succeeded, however. They might have been driven off, or outright destroyed, by Mictlantecuhtli, his servitors and his other defenses. If he has not been destroyed, Mictlantecuhtli will continue the slow return to full activity and power that he has begun. When he feels healthy once more, he will emerge from his pyramid, possibly with the intention of reestablishing a Mayan empire in the Yucatan with him as its divine leader (The Mexican government would not look too kindly on this, of course. Neither would the Inconnu, since Mictlantecuhtli's actions would probably be a severe threat to the Masquerade.). If he survives, Mictlantecuhtli's future plans are entirely up to the Storyteller. Should the Neonates have been driven off rather than destroyed, they might decide that it is their duty to see the Wanderer eliminated, and try to gain assistance from other Kindred they know. A surviving Mictlantecuhtli can be the center of many future stories.

The Return of Pietr

Pietr, the Diabolist who destroyed Sheaffer in Chicago, is obsessed with the idea of drinking Mictlantecuhtli's Vitae. It is possible that he learned of the Neonates' journey to Tzentel, and followed them. His hope in this was that they would fail in defeating the Methuselah and be Extinguished, but that they would weaken the Wanderer's defenses in so doing — weaken them sufficiently for him to finish what they started.

If the Neonates have defeated or driven off the Lupines from outside the pyramid, there is no reason why Pietr could not be waiting in ambush for them to emerge. Even if they

have already destroyed Mictlantecuhtli, Pietr has much to gain from destroying them — namely, access to whatever treasure they might have found within the Wanderer's Haven. If he is waiting in ambush, Pietr will have armed himself with — at the very least — a powerful hunting rifle. He could also have hired or Dominated unscrupulous mortals to help him gun down his rivals.

Complications

The Storyteller can make many changes and add countless twists to this story. Following are several simple suggestions that Storytellers can use as "seeds" from which to build their own complications.

Perhaps other Kindred from their home city are on the trail of the Neonates, attempting to head them off before they can drink the Vitae of the Wanderer, or planning to destroy them should they succeed. The possible motives behind this are various. The pursuers might be Elders, or even members of the Inconnu, who wish to stamp out all Anarchs who perform — or even plot to perform — Diablerie. Alternately, they may be Anarchs who fear the Neonates will become direct threats to their plans, or the pursuers might have the same intention as Pietr: letting the Neonates operate as unwitting "point men", tripping the defenses of Mictlantecuhtli's pyramid and then moving in themselves to drink the Antediluvian's blood. (If Pietr is waiting for the Neonates outside the pyramid, this could lead to a three-way battle.)

Even after the Neonates have succeeded, the story does not have to be over. Some of the Kindred from their home city (especially if it is Chicago) might have figured out what the Neonates were planning when they went to Mexico, and could well have passed on their conclusions to the Prince. The Neonates could return to find a full-scale Blood Hunt awaiting them. Even if nobody knew beforehand what their intentions were, if they return to Chicago having drunk the vitæ of a Fourth Generation Vampire, many Kindred will detect the "taint" of Diablerie on their souls, and react accordingly. The Neonates could well discover that their efforts have earned them not only an advance in effective Generation, but the undying animosity of Chicago's entire Kindred society!

Bloody Hearts
Diablerie: Britain

By Dustin Browder



*Gigantic daughter of the West
We drink to thee across the flood ...
For art thou not of British blood?*

— Lord Alfred Tennyson, "Hands All Round"



Diablerie: the ultimate thrill ... and the ultimate crime. Who can resist its tempting lure? Who can refuse the chance for immortal vitæ? Who can survive even the first taste?

After all, there are even worse things than diablerie — as many Diabolists have learned too late. But now a prize beyond reckoning is available. What price will the Diabolists pay for immortal power?

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Ken "Seamy Side" Cliffe, for telling Bill all the best places to go in Toronto.
Bill "Nova Scotia" Bridges, for how well he followed Ken's suggestions.
Rob "Etiquette 101" Hatch, for wincing his way through Sugarsmack.
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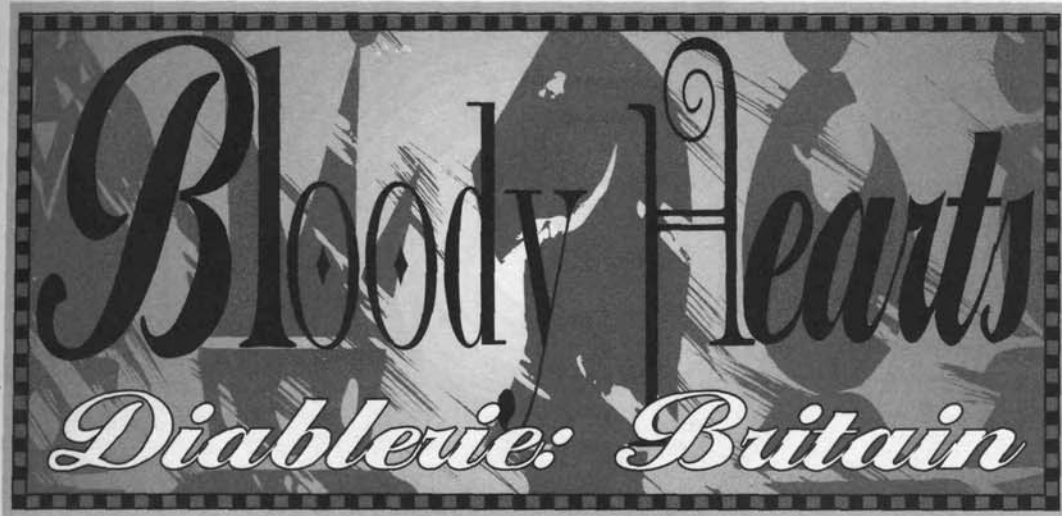
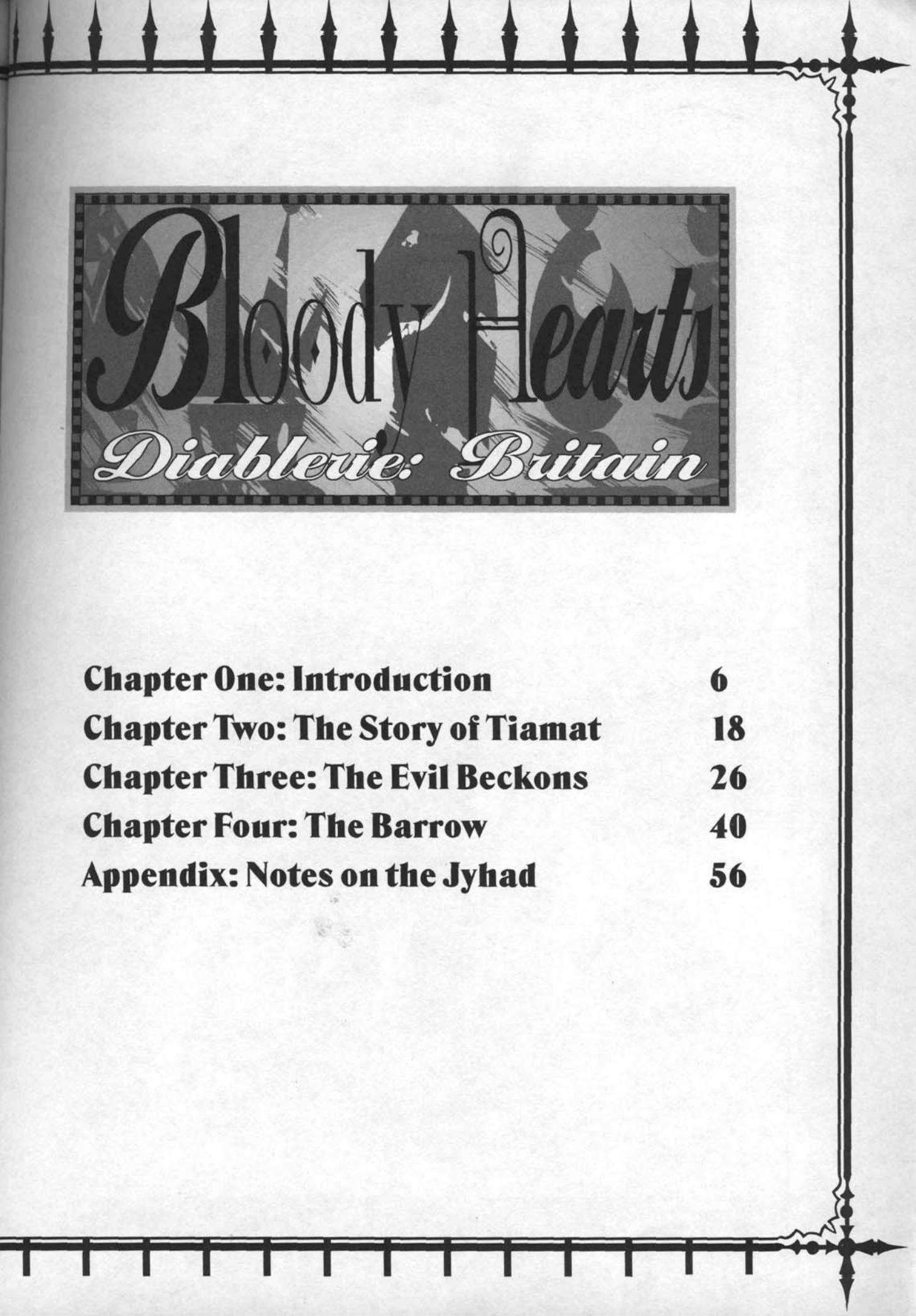
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Bloody Hearts

Diablerie: Britain

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Chapter One: Introduction

*Dreams of war, dreams of liars
Dreams of dragon's fire
And of things that will bite.*

— Metallica, "Enter Sandman"

Bloody Hearts is the second book in the **Diablerie** series for **Vampire: The Masquerade**. This book tells the story of Tiamat, a Ventrue Embraced prior to recorded history. Tiamat is one of the most evil beings on the face of the earth. **Bloody Hearts**, like the previous **Diablerie** book, gives characters the opportunity to discover the whereabouts of a powerful Methuselah, enter the tomb where she has slept for centuries, and drink her blood.

All power has its price, however, and the price of Tiamat's vitæ is very high indeed. Every inch of corridor, every door, every stone of Tiamat's tomb must be paid for in Diabolist blood. Built centuries ago by a tribe of savage Britons, Tiamat's barrow is a terrible place fraught with dangerous traps and powerful magic. Furthermore, Tiamat harbors an ancient and terrible secret in her breast. Her secret will only be revealed once she awakens, and then it may be too late....

Contents

Bloody Hearts contains four chapters and an appendix. This introduction presents the Justicars and their deadly spies and servants, the Archons. These vampires hunt Diabolists and others who break the Camarilla's Six Traditions. The introduction also discusses these enforcers' methods and the means of catching a Diabolist. Finally, herein is Madame Guil, a powerful, young Justicar who can

appear in chronicles or who can inspire a Storyteller to build his own Justicar chronicle.

Chapter Two is the story of Tiamat. It describes the dark road she has traveled down the ages, one that has brought her to her barrow. Chapter Three suggests how to involve the characters in **Bloody Hearts** and how to get them to England so they can meet Tiamat face to face. Finally, in Chapter Four, the Diabolists creep into Tiamat's barrow and challenge her to mortal combat as only immortals can.

The appendix discusses Gehenna, when the oldest vampires will awaken. When or if this event will ever happen is a source of much conjecture among the Kindred. Dr. Mortius, a revered Tremere scholar, shares his notes on an ancient text that may reveal a fraction of the truth.

Blood Justice

*At last! The clear trail of the man. After it, silent
but it tracks his guilt to light. He's wounded —
go for the fawn, my hounds, the splash of the blood,
hunt him, rake him down.*

— Aeschylus, *Eumenides*

In a world of hunters, leopards and jackals, few try to control the undying appetite. When hunter turns on hunter, however, all are at risk. Those who dare to hunt cannibal

Kindred are the Justicars. Justicars are usually of great age and power, and their ferocity is unparalleled. Few can stand against them and fewer still would dare to try.

There are but seven Justicars and they cannot be everywhere at once. True, the Justicars have many servants. However, many more vampires seek to violate the Masquerade — or worse, slay another vampire and drink her blood. The only way for the Justicars to stem the rising tide of diablerie is to stop these crimes before they happen. The way they achieve this is through fear.

The Justicars cultivate terror. They wield it as a weapon and few vampires are more adroit in its use. The coming of a Justicar is a great event. The prince must quickly patch up all of his quarrels with the elders and prepare. The elders must hide all of their little indiscretions. Before a Justicar arrives, all those mortals in the city who know of the Kindred are often slain, thus giving the Justicar no excuse to enforce the First Tradition. Even as the elders hide their minor crimes, the anarchs prepare for war. Few anarchs have not committed some crime against the Camarilla and few are willing to cower and beg forgiveness.

Frequently, the Justicar has come for but a single vampire or single coterie, and has no interest in any other crimes. The Justicar's servants, the Archons, are often enough to handle the breaking of a Tradition. The mere threat of a Justicar's personal intervention can make even a prince mend his ways. A Justicar cannot waste her time with every little infraction of the rules; only capital crimes are worthy of her attention.

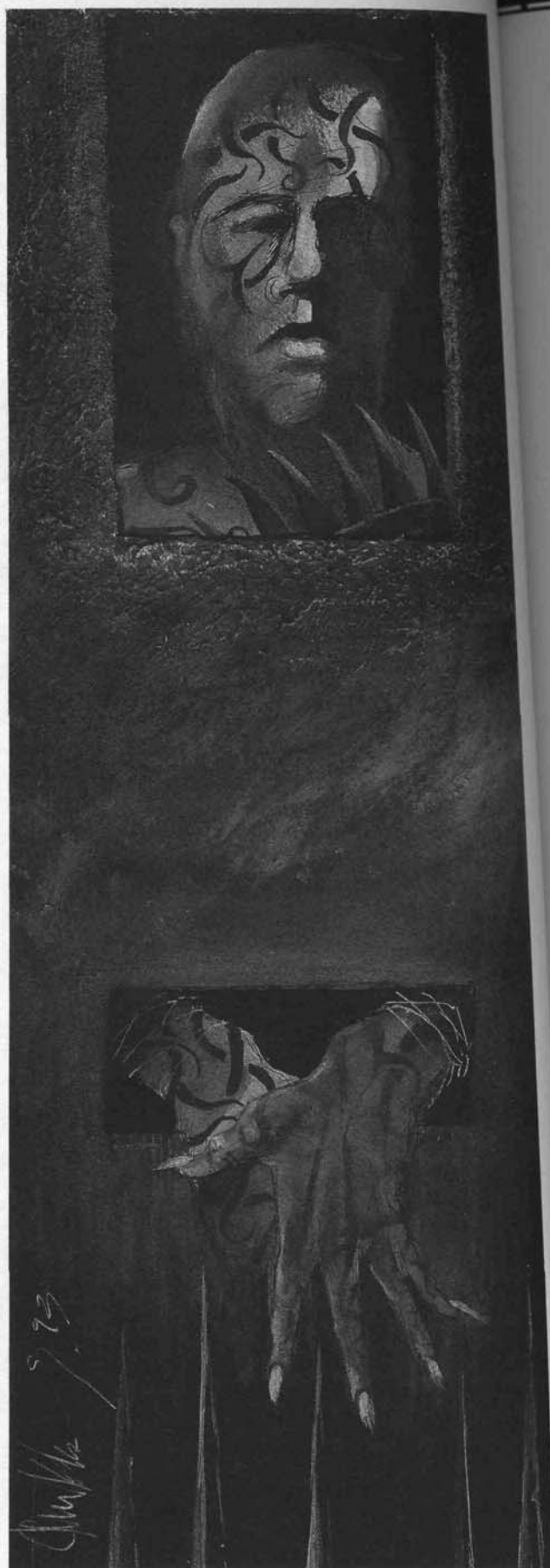
Punishments

It is through their punishments that the Justicars spread fear. Justicar punishments are always inventive and cruel. Justicars are feared not only for their power and age, but also for their creativity and cunning. Only the strongest vampires can escape the clutches of a Justicar.

Justicars are the prototypical Mikados: the punishment must fit the crime. It is not enough for a vampire who slays another vampire to be slain in return. She must be killed in an inventive way.

For instance, a vampire found guilty of diablerie might be tied to a table and drained to a single Blood Point. Various grubs and other larvae, which have been turned into ghouls immediately prior to metamorphosis (and thus require massive amounts of food), are then inserted into the offender's orifices. The hungry vermin proceed to burrow through the offender's flesh, consuming the Diabolist just as he consumed his Kindred. The Diabolist takes nights to die and writhes in hellish agony the entire time. The remaining flesh and vermin are then burned and fed to the Justicar's hellhounds.

Punishments such as the above frighten even the killers of Kindred, and are how a Justicar maintains a reign of terror that can cover several continents.



The Justicars often unofficially compete to see who can invent the most creative punishments. Many punishments are magical in nature and often involve trapping or torturing the soul of the offender. Justicars often decorate themselves with jewels and stones, and rumor has it that each stone holds the soul of a Diabolist. While this is unlikely, it does inspire fright.

Justicars often use others to torture a Diabolist. For instance, it is rumored that a Justicar once locked a Diabolist in a tomb with his vampire lover. The two slowly went mad with want of blood and fought one another. Finally, the Diabolist slew his lover and drank her blood and spirit. When released from the charnel prison he went mad and spent hours haunting that same tomb for years, gibbering quietly to himself.

Creativity is the key. You consume another, so you will be consumed. If you eat the spirit of another, so your spirit will be eaten. If you slay the love of another, so you will slay your love. Thus, the Justicars maintain control and frighten into submission those who would break a Tradition, particularly the Sixth Tradition.

Methods

The easiest method to detect a Diabolist is to observe her aura and search for the black, tainted lines. If such an aura is seen, a Justicar may simply pass judgment immediately. For this reason, most Diabolists do not even want to meet a Justicar or Archon face to face.

Aura Perception is not the only means by which a Diabolist can be detected. The easiest and most commonly used method is simply to ask. A city's Kindred generally know who the Diabolists are, and most Kindred fear the Justicars enough to tell them whatever they want to know. Though effective, this method carries its own dangers. Kindred often try to use a Justicar to persecute their enemies and help their allies, no matter who is guilty or innocent.

To guard against this, many Justicars have learned a Thaumaturgical ritual enabling them to sense the truth. Few other Kindred have learned this ritual, but it is invaluable to Justicars, and it has saved more than one innocent Kindred. Storytellers may wish to add this ritual to their chronicles, though it is generally recommended only for Archon chronicles.

The Court

The Justicars often hold courts to pass sentence on suspected criminals. Each Justicar follows her own style in holding these courts, and each court has its own rules and regulations. Some Justicars hold court in an Old World style, wherein the prisoner is displayed prominently while witnesses are arraigned against him. These Justicars rarely listen to the prisoner.

Other Justicars simply gather information until they are satisfied and then carry out their sentence on the offender. At least one Justicar is said to hold courts wherein

Cloak of Blood

Many Licks would give much for a way to conceal the black stains left on their auras by diablerie. Fortunately, there is a ritual to accomplish this effect: the Cloak of Blood. It is only a Level One ritual, easily performed by a neonate, but the ingredients and effort required make it very difficult. Before the ritual's casting, the Diabolist must fast for seven nights. During this time the Diabolist must not drink any blood, for the Diabolist's heart must be cleansed of tainted vitæ. After the seventh night, the Diabolist inscribes a rune on her chest, in her own blood (the Diabolist or another may perform the actual ritual).

Then the Diabolist must take blood from an innocent mortal. The blood must be freely given and not taken through violence, force or coercion. Deception is the usual method. This can be very difficult, for the Diabolist is extremely low on blood at this point and is likely to go into a frenzy, drinking her fill by force rather than guile.

Once the vampire drinks the blood, the black lines in the Diabolist's aura are hidden for a number of nights equal to the Blood Points taken from the innocent mortal. If any Blood Points are spent prematurely (to heal or to enhance Attributes), reduce the effect's duration by the number of Blood Points spent. If the Diabolist drinks from another source, the spell's effect is diminished. No longer are the black blotches invisible, although the number of Auspex successes required to detect the marks is still raised by one per remaining Blood Point.

Needless to say, if diablerie is committed after the ritual is cast, all benefits are lost and the black lines are more visible than ever. The use of this ritual itself often causes Humanity loss, as the deception and possible death of an innocent are always involved.

True Sight

This ritual turns a vampire into an undead polygraph. It is often used by Justicars to catch Diabolists. Once the short ritual is performed (requiring about five minutes), the vampire's senses become amazingly enhanced, allowing her to hear the slightest quaver in a person's voice, see the minute twitching of a liar's mouth, or notice how a liar's eyes blink too much. Once this ritual is cast, a vampire may double her Perception Attribute with regard to interpersonal relationships. These additional dice may be used to negate a lying vampire's Manipulation and Subterfuge.

True Sight only detects deliberate, willful lies. If the other party believes he is telling the truth, then what he says will appear to be true. The ritual detects the state of nervousness, not whether the truth was spoken.

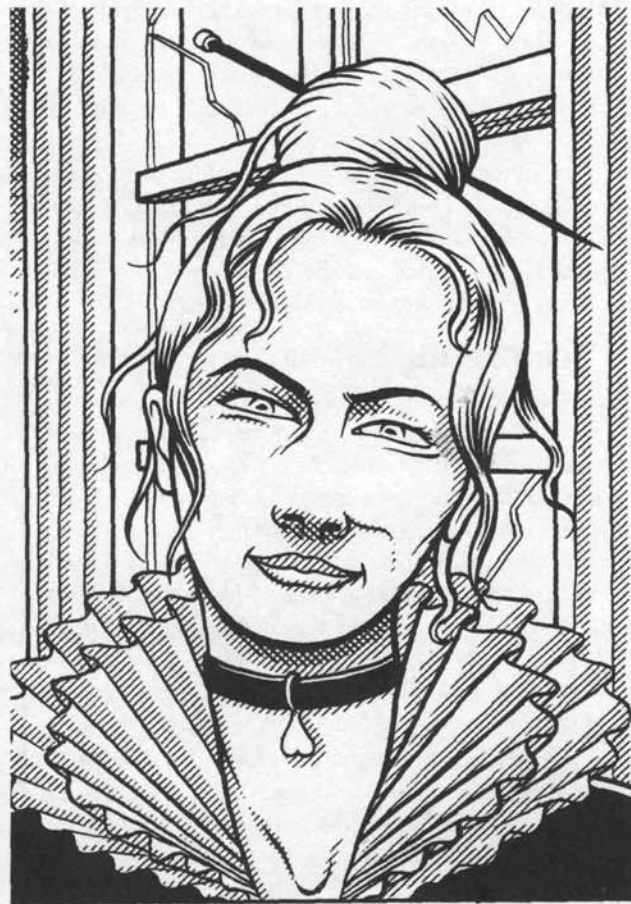
the criminal is innocent until proven guilty, though such leniency would certainly be a rarity among the Justicars. The Justicars do not have to hold a court, for they may do as they please; in many cases there is no trial.

The Spies

In many cases, a trial will only unearth more lies. Disciplines can be fooled and witnesses can deceive. This is why the Justicars use Archons. Archons comb the world searching for criminals and especially Diabolists. Anarch gangs, which are often filled with would-be Diabolists, often have an Archon hidden among them. Indeed, entire groups of Diabolists have slain one another in an attempt to remove an Archon whose presence was never verified. More often than not, no Archon is present, but the fear that one might be present often keeps Diabolists from cooperating.

Princes go to great lengths to learn the identities of the Archon spies in their domains. While diablerie is committed often enough, the spies usually catch only those who have fallen out of favor with a prince or an elder. The prince simply steers the Archon and the Diabolist together, thus easily and legally removing her enemy.

The Justicars are aware of this weakness in their system, and are also aware that witnesses lie and that informants have their own agendas. All methods for catching a Diabolist are fraught with error and confusion. Rarely are things



as they seem. In the end, a good Justicar relies on his own intuition as much as anything else. He must be able to see into the hearts of the Kindred, past their faces and their words. Though Diabolists fear a Justicar for many things (his magic, his Archons and his great age), it is his intuition that they ought to fear most.

Hunters of Hunters

Here is Madame Guil, a sample Justicar a Storyteller can use as he sees fit. If he plans to run an Archon chronicle, this group can be used directly. It can also serve as a peer group with which the characters can work or against which they can compete. Most Justicars have at least 15 to 20 Archons and countless informants around the world. However, as with all levels of Kindred society, there is a hierarchy. Only Madame Guil's most powerful and important Archons are presented here; all are Blood Bound to the Justicar, of course.

Madame Guil - Justicar

She who would become Madame Guil was born to a French peasant. She grew up knowing only hunger and cold, but neither of these affected her great beauty. When she was 16, she was betrothed to a young craftsman in the next village. Though she did not know him, he was young and handsome and she believed herself in love with him. However, her young beauty did not go unnoticed and she was seized by the Baron Vollgirre, her feudal lord. He had his pleasure with her and when he was done, he Embraced her.

It was thus that Madame Guil learned to hate. Baron Vollgirre planned to keep her to share his eternal existence — at least until he tired of her. However, she had other plans. Before Madame Guil could be Blood Bound to her sire, Baron Vollgirre's castle caught fire and he perished inside. Madame Guil disappeared from the public eye and from the history of both Kindred and kine.

Two centuries later, the Revolution shook France, causing the deaths of thousands of mortals and many Kindred. Anarchs took full advantage of the chaos, rising in force to destroy their elders. Nothing like the French Revolution had ever occurred before, and the princes of Europe trembled, fearing an outbreak of this madness in their own cities. Bloody mobs filled the streets, killing any who displeased them. Those who were deemed against the people, or for aristocracy, or for the rich, or who were foreigners, became victims.

Most of the elder vampires were aristocrats, of course, and because the Revolution glorified the murder of aristocrats, Paris lost many of its elders, either at the hands of young anarchists or to roving bands of murderous mortals.

Subsequent investigations have revealed most of the factions behind the Revolution. Anarchs, Sabbat, Setites and others share much of the blame. One who has never been tied to the upheaval is Madame Guil, who was instrumental in inspiring the Revolution. She was a woman driven with hatred for the aristocrats, and she and her Kindred followers helped throw France into confusion to hide the murder of their elders.

Madame Guil was successful. The Revolution raged out of control and the aristocracy of France, both mortal and undead, was wiped out. Unfortunately, the Revolution engulfed even her. The mortals eventually ordered Madame Guil to the guillotine. However, Madame Guil had a ghoul double, a young woman whom Madame Guil had twisted and warped through blood, torture and brainwashing. This ghoul, having worked as hard as she could for her entire life to look like Madame Guil, considered it a "far, far better thing" to take her mistress' place.

Guil's other allies were not so lucky as she, and most were destroyed by one faction or another. Unable to end the turmoil wracking the country, Madame Guil was eventually forced to come to terms with the exiled Prince of Paris, Francois Villon. Together they began to rebuild France. Thus, when the Camarilla began to investigate Paris, looking for someone to blame, they found Madame Guil emulating the elders she despised. She turned the Archons onto her anarch enemies, and watched as others were destroyed for her crimes.

Thus Madame Guil escaped the hands of the Justicars. They believed her claims that she was rebuilding France and making Paris a safe hunting ground again. She gained status among the Camarilla and, without realizing it, actually became an elder.

She rapidly grew in power and status. Indeed, when Gunther, an ancient Justicar, disappeared, she seized the moment — and his position. Madame Guil gladly became both judge and executioner, a position she had held often enough during the Revolution and one she secretly relished.

Power has not been kind to Madame Guil. She initially planned to use her position to battle the elders, but has found herself fighting Diabolists and anarchists far more often. Indeed, she has been forced to seek out and punish anarchists just to squelch constant rumors that she is in their camp — a charge that could destroy her and all she seeks to accomplish.

Madame Guil has become an aristocrat among vampires, for there was little else she could do. The stress has had a century to work its poison on her. Her mind has slowly become unhinged, and she now delicately balances on the brink of madness.

It has been a long, hard battle to maintain her position and she has not always been victorious. Justicars only hold their positions for 13 years and Madame Guil has been voted out of her position by the Camarilla. Only Prince Villon's

continuing support and her own ability to destroy anarchists have kept her in power. The Jihad has many faces, however, and none know what other secret players may control this powerful pawn.

Guil hunts elders as often as she can, searching for their failings and exacting hideous and terrible punishments on those who have violated the Traditions. Her favorite criminal is an elder who has committed diablerie. The punishment for such a criminal is Final Death, often by fire, after a lengthy period of torture — a task she is more than happy to perform. Against anarchists she is more lenient, though Final Death is often involved. Anarch crimes she tries to ignore, unless there is some pressing reason why she must attend to them.

Her cruelty has become legendary, and some elders are aware that she has a definite bias against them. This makes her few friends and limits her abilities as a Justicar. Elders in a city have been known to band together against her and protect their own out of sheer principle, no matter what the crime.

Sire: Baron Volgirre

Clan: Toreador

Nature: Director

Demeanor: Bravo

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 1579

Apparent Age: 16

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 7, Stamina 6

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 7, Appearance 6

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Talents: Acting 6, Alertness 4, Artistic Expression 2, Brawl 5, Dodge 4, Empathy 1, Intimidation 7, Leadership 4, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Etiquette 4, Firearms 4, Melee 5, Music 3, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Camarilla Lore 5, Investigation 6, Law 4, Linguistics 6, Occult 3, Politics 5, Sabbat Lore 2

Disciplines: Auspex 6, Celerity 5, Fortitude 3, Potence 3, Presence 6, Protean 2, Serpents 3, Thaumaturgy 3

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 7, Herd 6, Influence 6, Resources 6, Retainers 7, Status 7

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 4, Courage 5

Humanity: 2

Willpower: 8

Image: Though Madame Guil looks like a young girl, fresh as a spring flower, there is something about her that makes her seem ferocious. She has a way of looking at people as though they are victims. She favors light, flowing dresses that make her seem waif-like — and allow her free movement in combat. She also has connections to the greatest fashion houses in France, however, and no one looks better than she at a formal affair.

Roleplaying Hints: Smile cruelly. Make everyone afraid of you. Show no mercy to anyone. The concept of mercy does not exist for you. You have learned over the years that battle is the only way to get what you want, and you have the heart of a soldier. Everyone is the enemy.

Michael Unther - The Perfectionist

Head of a Prussian regiment, Colonel Unther always demanded absolute perfection from his soldiers. In the late 18th century, the country of Prussia had the most rigorous and cruel military in Europe, with severe punishments for the slightest infractions. The colonel was not a forgiving man.

Unther was present on May 23, 1802, when Prussia signed one of its short-lived peace treaties with Napoleon. At one of the many functions that night, he met Madame Guil, then gathering support for what she feared would be a war with the Camarilla. By that time he was nearly 50 years old, but he had nerves of steel and a stance like forged iron. She teased him, calling him the "Metal-Man," and invited him up to her chambers.

Colonel Unther would never have accepted such a proposal, but there was something about Madame Guil that was impossible to refuse. She Embraced him that night, and he became one of her minions. Unther has never quite forgiven his mistress for the improprieties of that night. He still struggles between his anger and his Blood Bond.

For centuries he has worked with her, first as a bodyguard against would-be assassins and then later as her Archon when she became a Justicar. He has made connections throughout the sect, and his reputation is one of his most valuable assets.

Unther is a master of detecting deceit and inventing cruel punishments. He hungers for power and though there is no question of his loyalty, it is clear that he hopes one night to become a Justicar himself. Perhaps when his mistress is dead, he might inherit her position. His cruelty is almost the equal of Madame Guil's own and he is feared by Diabolists everywhere.

Sire: Madame Guil

Clan: Toreador

Nature: Judge

Demeanor: Perfectionist

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1802

Apparent Age: 45

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 5, Intimidation 5, Leadership 6, Sense Deception 5

Skills: Etiquette 4, Firearms 5, Melee 4, Music 2

Knowledges: Camarilla Lore 4, Investigation 5, Military Science 4, Politics 4, Sabbat Lore 1

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Celerity 5, Dominate 4, Fortitude 4, Potence 2, Presence 4

Backgrounds: Allies 1, Contacts 6, Herd 2, Influence 4, Mentor 5, Resources 4, Retainers 2, Status 4

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 5, Courage 5

Humanity: 3

Willpower: 9

Notes: Unther does not manifest the Toreador weakness in the same way that most of his clanmates do. Unther has little use for beauty *per se*, but can become overwhelmed by absolute, perfect order or precision. He may well turn up his nose at a lovely painting, only to weep bloody tears at the sight of a perfectly drilled military parade.

Image: Unther is a stern, austere, middle-aged man with whitening hair and a thick, bristly mustache. He often wears archaic clothing. He thinks it is the "proper" clothing for all civilized people.

Roleplaying Hints: You have the appearance of someone's uncle, but underneath the facade lurks a killer. Before you were Embraced you were a commander in one of the cruelest armies in the world. Being an Archon is little different. You especially hate anarchs as they offend your sense of tradition and propriety.



Hafsa - The Watcher

In order to train their assassins, the Assamites sometimes take their future members just after they are born, raising and training them in the clan fortress until they are ready for the Embrace. Once done, the Assamite clan has a new and powerful member, nearly unstoppable and loyal until the Final Death.

Or so the clan leaders hope. Hafsa was powerful, but she was not loyal. The quiet fortress of the undead assassins is no place for a little girl to grow up. Hafsa had no friends except for her ancient tutors, and she had no games but exercise. She was not used as a vessel, as it was forbidden to endanger her health so, but she saw many others who were brought to the fortress for that purpose.

As Hafsa grew older, she was denied the company of other boys or girls, and she was taught nothing but physical skills: fighting, hunting, hiding and anything else that would help her slay others. When she was finally Embraced, she learned what it was to hate. She had always loved spending time in the fortress during the day, when it was so quiet and nobody was about. Then she would sneak around, avoiding the few guards and finding quiet hiding places among the nooks and crannies of the castle. From here she could watch the sunbeams make their weary way across the old, tired stones until the sun finally winked below the horizon.

Now Hafsa could never again enjoy the days. The sun burned her like a fire on those rare days she could stay awake. All her time was spent learning the art of killing and the science of murder. She grew to hate the clan and once she had learned enough, she left it. Hafsa fled nearly 50 years after she arrived, though she looked no older than 22.

Once Hafsa was gone, she was gone for good. The Assamites searched for her, but she flew far and fast. Hafsa, having been taught much about the Kindred world, wished to join a Justicar and serve the Kindred world with her skills by uncovering those who, like her Assamite masters, are killers.

Little did she realize how difficult it was to become an Archon. She found Madame Guil but the Justicar would have nothing to do with her. So Hafsa went on a campaign to convince Madame Guil of her usefulness. After years of following and watching Madame Guil, she finally presented Guil with complete documentation of where the Justicar had been and whom she had been with every night for the last few years. Hafsa became an Archon.

Hafsa's espionage work is now of a different sort. She travels across Europe looking for Diabolists and those who would break the Six Traditions. She is so good at her job that she can easily watch over several cities at once. She has an extensive information network and little escapes her notice. She never kills; another Archon is always called in to do the dirty work.



To this day, Madame Guil is still suspicious of Hafsa. She has heard rumors that there is a spy among her Archons and Hafsa is her prime suspect. She has also heard rumors of an ancient Assamite who is planting his own pawns in positions of power around the world, for some unspoken purpose.

Sire: Anji
Clan: Assamite
Nature: Child
Demeanor: Fanatic
Generation: 8th
Embrace: 1934
Apparent Age: 22
Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4
Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2
Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 3
Talents: Acting 5, Alertness 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 2, Streetwise 4
Skills: Drive 3, Firearms 5, Melee 5, Stealth 5, Survival 2
Knowledges: Chemistry 4, Computer 1, Investigation 4, Politics 2
Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 3, Obfuscate 4, Quietus 5
Backgrounds: Contacts 5, Resources 1
Virtues: Conscience 4, Self-Control 3, Courage 4

Humanity: 8

Willpower: 7

Image: Hafsia is thin and wiry, with scraggly black hair. She is not a pretty girl, but she has a certain charm and innocence about her. She loves beautiful clothes, having only had the most spartan of outfits in the fortress. She wears many different kinds of clothes, but her combinations rarely match, for she still has little understanding of fashion.

Roleplaying Hints: Be very honest. You are a crusader. You believe in good and evil and you believe that you are good. You believe that Madame Guil is good. You know that others lie, but you can punish them.

Masdela - The Spy

When Kindred go to war, they are accompanied by a bevy of new Kindred, all Embraced as cannon fodder. Few of these neonates survive. Masdela, a young Italian smith, was Embraced for such a purpose.

Masdela was Embraced purely for his strength. Before he had time to discover what it was to be a vampire, he was forced into battle with others of his kind. Elonzo, his lord and sire, was defeated and Masdela was captured while defending Elonzo's retreat.



After a brief period of torture, Masdela was sealed inside a cell in his enemies' dungeon and left to rot. He lasted for a while on rats and other rodents, but soon he entered torpor. He did not awaken until Elonzo rescued him nearly 300 years later.

Elonzo knew of his childe's heroism in that last battle and he also knew of his capture, but the Kindred are ancient and their plans can take years to come to fruition. Elonzo defeated his undead rival in the 19th century. It was then that he gained access to the castle in which Masdela was entombed.

Elonzo took advantage of his childe's gratitude and anonymity, setting him to work right away as a spy and an informant.

Currently, Masdela is spying on Madame Guil. She uses him as muscle when she needs a strong arm. He reports almost everything to Elonzo and Madame Guil suspects nothing. Madame Guil keeps him around because of his bravery, fighting abilities and apparent dedication, as well as his odd ability to discover needed information. In fact, Elonzo feeds Masdela information to keep Masdela valuable to Madame Guil. If left to his own devices, Masdela would never maintain his position.

Sire: Elonzo

Clan: Toreador

Nature: Praise-Seeker

Demeanor: Cavalier

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1543

Apparent Age: Early 30s

Physical: Strength 6, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Acting 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 5, Intimidation 3

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Blacksmithing 3, Firearms 1, Melee 3

Knowledges: Metallurgy 1, Politics 1

Disciplines: Auspex 1, Celerity 1, Fortitude 1, Potence 4, Presence 1

Backgrounds: Mentor 6, Resources 2

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 3, Courage 4

Humanity: 6

Willpower: 7

Image: Masdela was a strong young man when he was Embraced. He is very handsome, with dark hair and dark skin to complement his fine Italian features.

Roleplaying Hints: You do your best to be loyal to Elonzo, and that is your only purpose in the world. The Embrace has a tendency to consume mortals, leaving them as nothing but dry husks of their former selves. This has happened to you. You have not been an awakened vampire long enough to be immune to this effect, and all your energies are focused on your lord. When with those who

believe you loyal to Madame Guil, simply transfer all of that loyalty to her name, temporarily forgetting your other allegiance.

Pierre Gedou - The Killer

Pierre was a poor agricultural worker, but he had a reasonably warm and clean home and a happy, young family. All this changed when he was 22. Winter was always the worst time of year for small villages, and that year had already seen widespread famine. Both his wife and son died of fever. Pierre knew that cold and hunger had weakened them. For that, he blamed himself. Pierre knew he was supposed to be the provider for the family and when they died, he had failed them. Even worse, he felt as though he had murdered them through his own inability to find work.

On his way to take his wife and small child to the churchyard, he was met on the road by Duke Manette, who according to feudal law owned the manor, the entire village and all the inhabitants. The duke's carriage crowded Pierre's broken-down cart, and Pierre marveled at the carriage's beauty.

There was only enough room for one carriage on the road, and the coachman ordered Pierre to pull to the side. There was no room and Pierre was forced to step down from his cart and coax his nag to back up, all in freezing weather. By the time he had managed to find a place to pull off, his feet, clad in the remnants of what had once been shoes, had lost all feeling.

The funerals were small pauper burials where the bodies were wrapped in linen and thrown into a mass grave. Pierre covered his loved ones with plenty of lye to keep them from stinking until the grave had accumulated enough corpses to cover them. By the time Pierre had thrown his wife and son into the pit, his feet had frostbite. By the time Pierre had four toes amputated, he had shifted all his hatred to Duke Manette.

Pierre gathered his remaining possessions and made his way to Paris, hoping for work. The poverty of the city far exceeded that of his native village, and his hatred for the nobility grew to a fevered pitch as he watched the nobles abuse the peasants on a daily basis. Soon he was little better than a beggar, but then the Revolution came and Pierre had a purpose. He quickly joined the ranks of the Federalists and became a ferocious killer.

Though he was not noteworthy in any of the early battles of the Revolution, he hired on as an executioner and took at least 20 heads a day. As the bloodbath continued, he drew the attention of Madame Guil, who made him a ghoul. She used him as a spy and a tool to watch others. He would watch the faces of the crowd when he used the guillotine and see who was joyful and who was grieving. It was a crime to grieve for a traitor; in this way Madame Guil uncovered and prosecuted her enemies.



Pierre Gedou has remained a ghoul through the centuries, perfecting the art of murder and death. He is known as Madame Guil's hatchet-man. When there is an especially dirty job to do, he is called. Rumor has it that he will bury vampires alive after he has drained all of their blood, leaving them to rot and go mad.

Clan: Ghoul

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Deviant

Apparent Age: Late 20s

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Talents: Brawl 5, Dodge 3, Intimidation 4, Streetwise 3

Skills: Firearms 4, Melee 5, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Politics 2

Disciplines: Celerity 1, Potence 1, Fortitude 1

Backgrounds: Mentor 5, Resources 2, Status 1

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 1, Courage 4

Humanity: 2

Willpower: 6

Image: A short, squat little man, Pierre resembles nothing more than a toad. His clothes are always unkempt

and his hair is always a mess. His fingernails are never cut and they are almost always caked with blood. He leaves his hands bloody for as long as possible to get this effect. He is still missing his toes and he sometimes does not wear shoes, showing off this gruesome deformity.

Roleplaying Hints: You are a killer. Nothing pleases you more than watching others die by your hands. Keep your eyes constantly shifting and moving, for you don't trust anyone. You are uncomfortable with conversation because you don't know what to say.



The Justicar Chronicle

There are many advantages to running a chronicle based on a Justicar and his activities. The players could play the Justicar's Archons, searching cities all over the world for Diabolists and other undead criminals. This provides more mobility than is normal for a **Vampire** chronicle. It also lets a Storyteller and her troupe play vampires with a solid group goal and, possibly, noble intentions.

The Storyteller can control the Justicar and thus exercise a good deal of control over the chronicle, guiding it in interesting directions. As Archons, the characters will meet the most vicious and terrible of all Kindred. While Archons have a great deal of power because they are backed by the Justicar, they will inevitably face powerful, desperate Cainites while the Justicar is very far away. A good poker face and strong negotiation skills will be as useful as physical persuasion.

The Traditions are the only written rules of Kindred society. There are no other laws or regulations. They are very important and none wish to be caught breaking them. Archons face only the most desperate of Kindred — those who have been discovered following the darkest roads in the

world of the undead. They are often powerful (or at least power-hungry) and always dangerous. There is no safe way to deal with them and no method designed to handle them. The Archon is on his own against the predators of predators, with the threat of the Justicar's wrath as his only weapon.

Intrigue will be at least as common as violence, for many prominent vampires violate the Traditions. Guilt and innocence are often less important than are the politics of the situation. Characters should not be surprised when their investigations turn up a criminal, only to see him go free in some deal they cannot hope to understand — yet.

Setting It Up

First the Storyteller needs to create a Justicar on whom to base the chronicle (see *Madame Guil*, above). There are many ways to do this, but it is often wise to make the Justicar a terrible and frightening Cainite. The Justicar is someone on whom the characters do not want to call for help too frequently. If they call him unnecessarily, they will suffer. A Justicar has a reputation to maintain and cannot afford mercy when he is called to a crisis situation. When the Justicar arrives, somebody dies.



A Justicar chronicle can prove challenging in many ways. The Storyteller will have to create more settings, for each evening's play could be set in a different city. Diablerie and violations of the Traditions exist everywhere — St. Petersburg, Madrid, Cairo, Bogota or San Francisco. While this is more work, it provides great variety. The Archons can discover worldwide plots and connections between events across the globe.

The Archons must be Blood Bound to their Justicar, but they also spend a great deal of time away from him, so the ties can weaken. Blood Bonds also create dramatic tension, as the characters must determine what is really in their Regnant's best interests, as well as weighing it against their own.



Chapter Two: The Story of Tiamat

*I'm the evil in the Bible,
go to church but never pray
I'm a sister with a habit,
a preacher never saved.*

— Lynch Mob, "No Good"

She crouched in the darkness, waiting for them to finish. She had gained control of her body for several months, and for several precious months "it" had been allowed no power. *Release me! Stop! Anything you like; let me out!* She laughed to herself — a cruel, wicked laugh — to hear it cry out in terror so. Terror. She knew about terror; indeed, she knew more than she had ever thought possible.

It had taken her those precious months of freedom to make her way through an empire in ruins to this tiny island called Britain. Here she was safe from those who followed and she could at last sleep. Sleep! She had been denied sleep for 2,000 years, day or night. *Sleep now; I would let you sleep. Rest, you need rest.* Not yet; a few hours more and it will be done.

The Britons had been frightened of this bold Roman matron, especially when she demanded that they dig a barrow for her. They did as she requested, however, and she had only been forced to break a few bones to force their cooperation. *Please, not this, not the unending sleep, not oblivion.* Yes, oblivion. That is what she sought, though she had not known this until it had spoken just then.

Oblivion, where evil could sleep forever undisturbed. The barrow was almost finished, the traps were laid and all the Britons needed now was a body to place inside. She

walked toward the barrow. *No, let me go and you can live. I will return from where you called me.*

There was only one thing left to do. She would soon disappear from the memory of mortals, but another vampire might come looking for her, even in this faraway place. Then the Britons might tell where she was sleeping or how the traps were laid. One last killing, this time no more than a small tribe. Surely she could manage that before sunrise, before she slept.

The Tale

The true story of Tiamat, the one that will never be told, is a tragic one. It is a tale that Tiamat herself has yearned to tell for thousands of years. She was known among the Kindred as a great hunter, a vampire of terrible strength, wickedness and lust for power. She was a killer incarnate, one who could kill with a look or a word and who often did. She vanished in the great flames of the Jyhad she had worked so hard to fuel.

Tiamat's evil was legendary and that is what Kindred remember of her. Like so much legend, it is rife with falsehood. This is her story, as she would have told it had she been given a chance.

The Beginning

Tiamat was born in prehistoric Ur, then a great city in Sumer, though today it would be considered no more than a town. Her father named her Lantla and, because he already had three daughters, got rid of her at the first opportunity. When a woman of power came seeking the girl, Lantla's father turned her over with no regrets. Lantla was sent to live with a woman who was both a witch and a doctor. The witch chose Lantla because she saw power in the young girl and, foolishly, she told Lantla so.

Lantla began to covet the power her mistress promised. The foolish witch, however, could not draw that power out, nor did she have any spells that required the use of any real power. Thus Lantla grew frustrated. The witch set her to menial tasks as befit her station, but Lantla was nettled and rebelled. When in the market, she would sidle up to wealthy-looking men and attempt to gain their attention, hoping to marry out of her station and gain access to money and comfort.

Wealthy men did not come to the market; they sent their slaves instead. Lantla, in her ignorance of such things, wasted much of her time on them, mistaking them in their clothing for men of power. The more she dawdled in the market, the more angry the witch grew with her and the more Lantla was beaten. The beatings got worse and she could no longer hope to gain attention in the market with large bruises on her face. So she would wrap a cloth around her head and creep in and out by back alleys.

The witch became more and more cruel as she grew older and more senile. One day the beating was so bad that Lantla lay on the floor, nearly dead. When she awoke, not knowing where she was, the old witch advanced upon her again with a hatchet. Lantla, suddenly terrified, shouted out and her power, released by fear and hatred, became real. An ancient word of magic sprang to Lantla's lips. With a sudden scream, the witch burst into flames and burned from the inside out.

Lantla was called a murderer and worse. She would have been banished or killed had it not been for a certain priest called Arakur. The man was almost a god and was greatly feared and respected. He had many wives and was one of the few men who was allowed such luxuries. Arakur was rumored to live in the great ziggurat that towered over the city. His brides supposedly lived there too, for they were never seen after he had taken them away.

In fact, Arakur was a fourth-generation vampire. His brides were his vessels, sometimes killed outright and sometimes slain over a period of many nights. He took Lantla as a wife and his word was law. Murder was forgotten and she was whisked into the temple, gone forever in the minds of the people.

Arakur had many plans for Lantla, and slaying her was not among them. The question of how she could call upon a powerful word of magic known only to a few aroused



Arakur's curiosity. More importantly, he wished her to be his child and his servant in times of crisis. On her wedding night, Lantla was Embraced and became immortal.

Lantla was horrified by her new existence and her new dietary requirements. She would not drink from the blood of others and several times tried to throw herself into the sunlight. Arakur would not allow it and he kept her alive, often forcing her to drink his own blood. Quickly, within the course of a few nights, she grew to accept her condition and she served Arakur well, learning much about magic and its uses. Thus, Lantla got her wish: to marry a rich man and escape her poor life.

The Coming of the Evil

One of the earliest warlords of Western civilization was Urlon of Uruk. Like many great figures of those earlier times, he was a vampire. He came to Ur to conquer. Naturally, Arakur and Lantla resisted, but Urlon had learned the power of mortal flesh and he had more troops than they did. When it became certain that Ur would fall, Arakur fell into despair and retreated into his haven to await the end.

Lantla, however, did not despair. She hated Urlon as a bully (which she understood too well) and the rage she had felt toward her old witch mistress was refocused upon Urlon. If the city could but hold out a week or two longer, Lantla thought she could do something. She studied her tablets and finally she called upon a great demon to aid her in battle. The demon was called Drakonskyr and it possessed her body, giving her great strength and power.

Drakonskyr offered to aid her still further by helping her to forge a magical weapon. This weapon, promised the demon, would allow her to kill not only the mortal followers of Urlon, but Urlon himself. Lantla readily agreed, not realizing the consequences. When Urlon's men finally broke through the outer walls, she was ready.

Naturally, Urlon hoped to slay Arakur. That was why he had come to Ur with an army of mortals. Urlon was one of the first warriors of the Jyhad, and this would be one of its earliest battles. When Urlon came to the ziggurat, he found Arakur already dead. Lantla stood over her sire, her teeth stained with his blood. Drakonskyr had taken control of Lantla and decided that they needed more power to defeat Urlon.

Urlon was no match for the two-who-were-one, especially after Lantla had consumed the soul of Arakur. Drakonskyr's sword, which it had named the Sword of Nul, slew Urlon with one blow.

Then, using Lantla's body, Drakonskyr went on a killing spree through the city, slaying Urlon's followers and the people of Ur indiscriminately. When the night had ended, Lantla found herself at the edge of the Tigris, her clothes soaked in blood. Drakonskyr laughed in her mind. Now the demon sought to leave her body. Thus it would be free on the earth to do anything it pleased, and its sentience would be uninhibited by a physical shape. Close proximity

to Drakonskyr had taught Lantla much. She realized that she allowed the demon to escape her body, she would have loosed a terrible evil upon the earth.

When Drakonskyr tried to escape, Lantla held it fast with her spirit and her magical power, binding it inside her. The demon was shocked and terrified that it could not escape. In that first moment of confusion, Lantla regained control of her body. She then flung the Sword of Nul into the Tigris. It resurfaced many times down the centuries, in many places, and was called many things, but it was never again seen by Drakonskyr.

With the weapon gone, Drakonskyr found its power greatly diminished. It could not escape from Lantla, though it could still control her body. The demon forced Lantla to stand on the shore in the rays of the sun as it rose over the river. Lantla had never known such pain. Still, she held onto Drakonskyr. Finally, afraid of what might happen to it should Lantla die, Drakonskyr relented.

Together they crawled back to the city. Lantla held their spirits so close together that it seemed there would be no escape, even in death. Wherever Lantla went, Drakonskyr feared it must follow, and it still hoped to remain on this plane.

The Unending Battle

The following night Drakonskyr went on another killing spree through the city, enjoying itself but horrifying Lantla, as her hand was used to inflict every atrocity it committed. Drakonskyr did this in an attempt to force Lantla to release it. With every murder and act of torture, the demon told her that all she had to do was let it go and she would never again have to kill.

Lantla knew that even if she did not have to see it, Drakonskyr's evil would be much greater without a physical form to slow it down. She held on even as a drowning man holds his last breath. Each second was torture and each second brought the possibility of failure. Still, she learned to fight the demon, and most nights were spent locked in psychic combat as the two battled for control of her body. On those occasions when Drakonskyr seized control of the body, it terrorized the city. Otherwise they battled over every action and agreed on almost nothing.

Drakonskyr gradually ceased torturing mere individuals, instead preferring acts of mass carnage. The demon arranged the fall of Ur to the Elamites to hurt Lantla and convince her to let it go. Even with her city in flames and her people slain, however, Lantla held Drakonskyr, though she could do little to stop the destruction.

Lantla/Drakonskyr joined the Babylonians when they came to the city years later, and the Babylonians worshipped Drakonskyr as a goddess. The Babylonians already had a goddess of chaos, darkness and evil, and Drakonskyr capitalized upon this by claiming that Lantla was Tiamat, the goddess of the underworld and of the primordial chaos on which the world was built.

Tiamat became her new name. She was now known even among the undead as a terrible creature capable of anything. Under the demon's guidance, she built gardens of blood where fresh victims were brought to be slowly drained over long periods. Some of them lingered for many nights; their soft, helpless moans drove Lantla to the brink of madness.

Indeed, it was a wonder she remained sane, for she never went completely mad. Some vestige of reason still lurked in her mind, tucked away safely in a corner where Drakonskyr couldn't get at it. She called herself only Tiamat in her mind; Lantla, the name of her youth, was long forgotten. When thinking of Drakonskyr she thought only of "it." She would sometimes imagine that it was she who was committing these terrible acts, not Drakonskyr.

Drakonskyr despaired when it saw how deranged Tiamat had become. It realized that it could never get her to let it go now. Tiamat was not bothered by the demon's crimes. Drakonskyr could use her hands to slay hundreds of children and she would not even twitch. It realized that there was no way out of her body, for she was not going to allow it.

Being an adaptable creature, Drakonskyr decided that it wanted to hurt mankind as a whole, not just harm a few individuals. So it began to search for ways to cause pain on a massive scale.

By 900 B.C., Mesopotamia was controlled by the Assyrians, a draconian military state. Drakonskyr did what it could to encourage the Assyrians' military nature. Under Drakonskyr's aegis, the Assyrians conquered many lands, bringing back slaves from pillaged kingdoms. The Jyhad continued and Drakonskyr participated, using Tiamat to incite further anarchy and hatred among vampires and thus make their wars even more violent and destructive.

Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, fell in 612 B.C. and Assyria fell into chaos with it. Drakonskyr loved this time, for it could do as it pleased — kill, maim and cripple without restraint. Indeed, the humans' despair over their lost kingdom intensified their personal pain. Drakonskyr fed well upon their anguish.

When the Persians came, Tiamat joined the many other vampires manipulating events behind the scenes, and their conspiracies continued against a backdrop of unprecedented military expansion. What was left of Lantla died; now there was only Tiamat.

Like other empires before them, the Persians came and went. Drakonskyr realized, when the Persians lost to the Greeks, that there were other empires to control. There were other places where ordinary people lived out their lives in ordinary ways, safe and happy. Drakonskyr could not allow this to continue, so Tiamat moved west to the Greek cities.

The undead factions were too numerous for Drakonskyr to have much impact. The Greek city-states were filled with warring Kindred. No matter how many leaders Tiamat

married and tried to control, none could gain enough power over a single city-state, let alone the Greek people, for Drakonskyr to cause suffering on any scale.

When Alexander the Great came, however, Drakonskyr was there, hoping to turn the unification to its advantage. When Macedonia was born, Drakonskyr began to look for ways to turn the realm's entire bureaucracy to evil and hatred. When Alexander died, anarchy again descended. Though Drakonskyr had not been able to turn all of the Macedonian government to evil, it realized the virtue of having a great leader and then killing that great leader — anarchy was sure to follow.

For a while Drakonskyr returned to its petty ways of torture and murder, hunting village families in the night. It took great joy in hunting a single family, including cousins, nieces and nephews, and slaying its members over a period of a month or more until the entire family was slain and gone from the world.

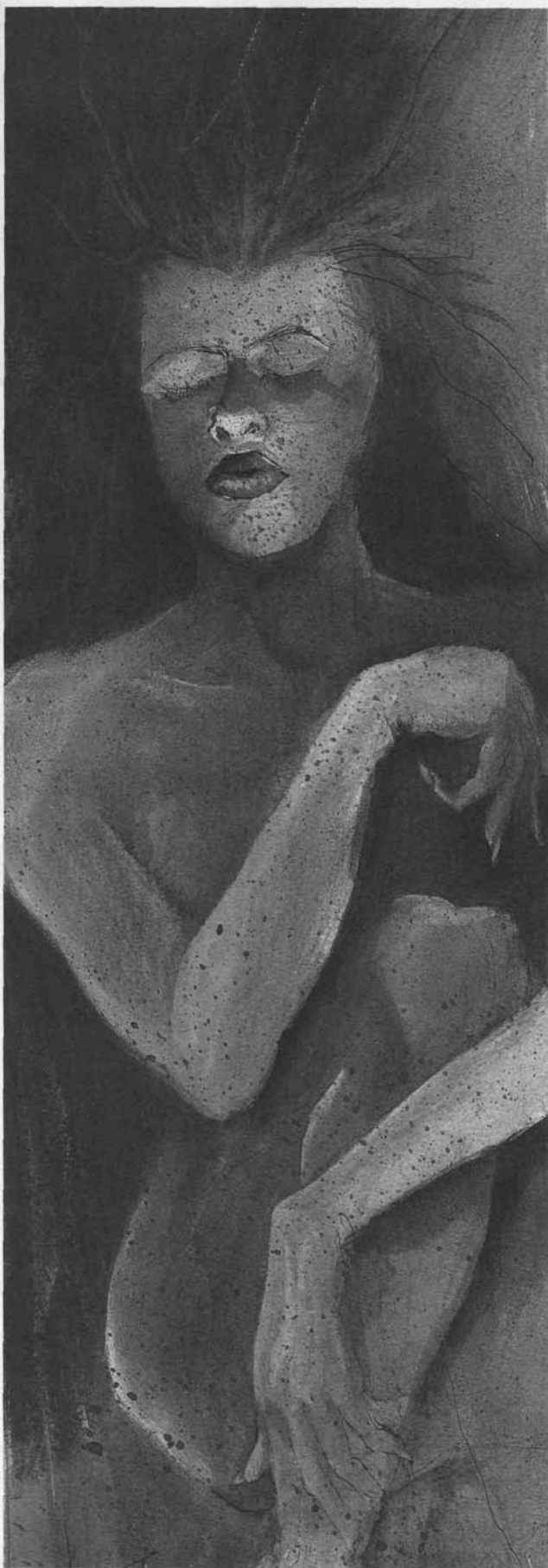
The Horror of Rome

Then, around 220 B.C., Romans began to patrol the Macedonian coast for pirates. Drakonskyr realized that there was a wide world full of fresh, green pastures to be defiled. Thus Tiamat emigrated to Italy. All this time she who had once been Lantla traveled, a passenger in her own body. Each night was a battle to keep Drakonskyr inside her body, though she no longer fully remembered why she did it.

Drakonskyr continually pressed her mind, keeping her from reason, for she threatened to return to sanity on occasion. Drakonskyr hoped that if she went insane enough, she would no longer see a purpose in holding onto its spirit and thus free it. Tiamat's position in Kindred and mortal society no longer allowed the demon to take Tiamat on wanton killing sprees; such acts would be dangerous and suicidal. Drakonskyr had no desire to discover what would happen to it if Tiamat died and their spirits were still intertwined.

During all of this time, Tiamat did not sleep. She had never slept all the years the demon had been with her. Even when the sun was high in the sky and her instincts tried to drag her down to slumber, she would remain awake, for Drakonskyr would not let her sleep. In sleep she found peace, and Drakonskyr did not want her to find peace; better that she know constant terror and want to rid herself of it.

Drakonskyr hoped to destroy the young Roman Republic through war. The demon slowly manipulated the Romans, already a warlike people. Other vampires helped, some knowingly and others unaware of what they did and for whose purpose. The Romans, however, were stronger than Drakonskyr had known. They were victorious in all their battles. After the destruction of Carthage, Drakonskyr realized its intervention had only strengthened these people and not destroyed them as it had wished.



Now the Republic was strong on its borders, but it slowly weakened on the inside. The Roman Senate proved unable to manage the growing empire. Civil war followed civil war and through it all Drakonskyr chuckled. Tiamat grew number still, hardly noticing what went on outside her own body. When Caesar came to power, guided by the vampires who hoped to manipulate him further, Drakonskyr helped arrange his murder, hoping to throw all of Rome into civil war.

Augustus, however, destroyed the demon's hopes. Augustus was no fool, and he did not flaunt his power in front of the Senate. Instead, he always asked the senators' permission, though their assent was a foregone conclusion. The empire strengthened and Drakonskyr's anger grew. In order to manipulate Rome further, Drakonskyr had Tiamat, in the guise of Livia (a Roman matron whom Tiamat had slain and replaced via *Obfuscate*), marry Augustus.

Drakonskyr's power allowed Tiamat to remain in the sun for limited periods, though it still burned her body and she was often pale where her skin peeled away. Drakonskyr began to manipulate the royal family. Slowly the Julio-Claudians began to degenerate until finally, during the reign of Caligula, it appeared that the entire Roman Empire might collapse.

Caligula's excesses were infamous and his sanity suspect. As soon as it was evident that he would follow Tiberius as emperor, Drakonskyr had Tiamat fake her own death and retire to watch the destruction — and to avoid the anger of the many Cainites who did not appreciate Tiamat's interference in Kindred and kine politics.

The Roman Empire persisted and Drakonskyr grew impatient for the end to come. Nero became emperor after Claudius, who had followed Caligula. Nero was the last of the Julio-Claudians and, despite the terrible intra-Kindred war that ended with the great fire of Rome (which many erroneously blamed on Nero), the Empire did not collapse. Drakonskyr pushed and prodded where it could to speed the end, but other vampires were now watching for Tiamat and no moves were safe.

The demon's frustrations grew until, centuries later, the barbarians came and Rome was sacked several times. Finally, in A.D. 476, Rome fell for the final time and Drakonskyr cheered what appeared to be the fall of humanity. Drakonskyr was certain that the resulting carnage would destroy humanity as a species. While it reveled in its apparent victory, Tiamat awoke. Drakonskyr no longer pressed upon her mind and her reason slowly returned. She realized that she must destroy Drakonskyr as an act of vengeance for humanity.

She could see no way to do it, however — and she was so very tired. After holding the spirit of a demon inside her for more than 2,000 years, through countless generations and across several empires, Tiamat no longer had any

strength left. Soon Drakonskyr would gain strength from the human suffering it had caused and now, so weak and tired, Tiamat would no longer be able to hold it.

Fear of the impending crisis filled Tiamat with horror, which in turn gave her the strength to resist. For the first time since she had thrown the Sword of Nul into the Tigris, Tiamat took control of her body from Drakonskyr and made the demon a prisoner. Surprised by her sudden power, Drakonskyr lost all command of its borrowed body. Though it raged in her mind, it could do nothing to stop her.

Tiamat left the ruins of Rome and journeyed north through the Alps and into Germany. Here Drakonskyr almost regained control as Tiamat grew tired from the journey. Lupines hunted her and the German tribes did not welcome strangers from Rome. Bloody and beaten, she found her way to Gaul and then to the English Channel. Here she befriended a fishing tribe. After feeding well from them and their children, she stole a boat and crossed the channel.

She was only halfway across when the sun rose. She was forced to capsize the boat and hide under it to avoid the harsh rays of sunlight. Drakonskyr no longer protected her from the sun; it was willing to take its chances with her death. After the sun set, Tiamat resumed her journey and arrived on the shores of Britain.



The legions had long ago evacuated Britain to defend Italy. The island was in chaos without Roman law and order, on which its inhabitants had depended for the last 400 years. Tiamat found it very easy to find blood here, and she slew many as she readied herself for the final leg of her journey. She passed from Londinium to the north and, after crossing Hadrian's Wall, left the civilized world far behind.

When she had traveled as far north as she could, she found a small tribe. After slaying their chief and abusing the men of the community, she demanded that they build for her a great barrow — a tomb where the dead could rest. She instructed them on how to build many traps and tricks to protect the barrow from intruders. She had brought Roman gold with her to give them incentive and to allow them to gather materials very quickly.

Once the barrow was complete, she attacked the tribe and killed every member down to the smallest child, drinking deeply of the women's blood to prepare herself for the sleep. There was no crime too great that was not justified by her quest to put Drakonskyr to sleep forever. After looking upon the world for the final time, she entered her tomb and sealed the door behind herself. She and the demon that she carried within her breast were locked away forever — or so she hoped.

Sire: Arakur

Clan: Ventrue

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Bravo

Generation: 4th

Embrace: Before 3,000 B.C.

Apparent Age: 17

Physical: Strength 6, Dexterity 7, Stamina 7

Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 6, Intelligence 6, Wits 7

Talents: Alertness 5, Athletics 4, Brawl 7, Dodge 5, Leadership 4

Skills: Melee 5, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Ancient History 7, Linguistics 9, Politics 6

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Celerity 6, Dominate 5, Enchantment 5, Fortitude 6, Obfuscate 3, Potence 4, Presence 5, Protean 4, Serpents 2, Thaumaturgy 4 (Lure of Flames 4, Movement of the Mind 3)

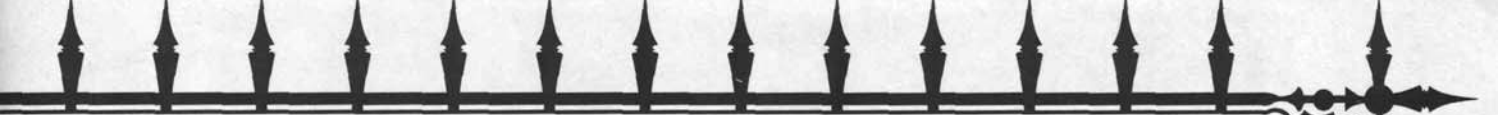
Backgrounds: None at present

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 4, Courage 6

Humanity: 1

Willpower: 10

Notes: Tiamat's Enchantment Discipline is wholly unlike Tremere magic. It allows her to enchant objects and create the magical traps that protect her barrow. All such spells are performed out of combat and are left to the Storyteller's imagination and dramatic needs.



Tiamat's Traits would normally be much higher, but they have suffered from the time in torpor. Should she have a few years to recover, she would be far stronger.

When Drakonskyr was in control, Tiamat could feed from anything (this is how she managed to drink her sire's vitæ). However, in "normal" circumstances, Tiamat may only feed from females.

Image: Tiamat is no longer human. She has experienced more than most vampires could ever withstand, and she is nothing like the young girl who was taken by her lord. The tomb has not improved her alien-looking Sumerian

features. Vampires do not groom while in torpor. Dust covers her body, cobwebs veil her face and fill her mouth, and her clothes have nearly rotted away.

Roleplaying Hints: Howl and fight! You are beyond controlled action. Though you have a high Self-Control, this is meant to represent your discipline, not your restraint. You want only to sleep — nothing else. Sleep is the only way you can escape Drakonskyr and you hate all those who interfere with your sleep. Only an exceptional effort on the part of the characters will cause you to communicate with them — and you know no English.





Chapter Three: The Evil Beckons

Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

— Lord Acton, *Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton*

In the darkness of the tomb, Drakonskyr dreams fitfully inside Tiamat. The demon beckons to its ancient blade, the Sword of Nul, ordering the blade to bring those who can free Drakonskyr from its millennium-old prison. The sword has passed from one owner to another through the ages, for its power brings death to its user. It destroys all it touches, as befits a weapon forged by a demon.

Now this blade falls into the hands of the characters, carried to their city by the tide of the Jyhada. Many would seek to take the sword's power from a coterie of would-be Diabolists.

Tale of a Sword

After Tiamat threw the Sword of Nul into the Tigris, it rested in the river until A.D. 806, when an Islamic warrior of the Abbasid Caliphate retrieved it. He bore it into battle when civil war broke out that same year.

Despite his wondrous blade, the young Arab was slain in battle and the blade was later found by a beggar looting the bodies of the dead. He sold it to the Bayt al-Himah — “The House of Wisdom.” For a few weeks, the sword was the talk of the university. From where had the blade come, and who had forged it? The scholars had little concept of archaeology and assumed that because the blade still had an edge, it must have been made recently in some unknown and distant land.

When no answers were forthcoming, the blade was forgotten, though it still remained on display. Within two years, it was moved to a shelf in an odd little corner of the library, where it remained until it was finally moved to a back room and stored away for years. The blade was taken in 1098 by a supposed witch and heretic who was, in fact, a Brujah. Down on his luck and on the run from the Prince of Baghdad, the Brujah stole the blade during a mad dash for escape.

Nowhere in the Muslim world was safe from the undead hand of the Prince of Baghdad, and so the Brujah sought to flee to Europe. He hoped to use the sword as a bargaining tool to join the Christian warriors in Palestine and thus escape his political problems.

It took him nearly a year of travel to reach Jerusalem. His enemies hounded him the entire way, and in those days a vampire did not travel fast for fear of the sun. He reached Jerusalem on July 1, 1099. Two weeks later, the crusaders stormed the city and killed everybody within reach. The Brujah was slain and the sword was taken as spoils of war.

Little enough was thought of it, as it was not decorated with gold and jewels, nor did it have any religious significance to Christians, Muslims or Jews. It finally fell into the hands of one poor knight, Sir Burder of the Holy Roman Empire, as part of his booty.



The Sword of Nul

It looks innocent enough. It is short, straight and made of bronze. It has no ornamentation save a crude skull carved in the middle of the hilt. The handle was once wrapped in leather or cloth, but the wrapper has rotted away, leaving only the bare metal. The entire weapon is turning slightly green with age despite its power. The blade is still sharp — extremely sharp. It is much sharper than any bronze weapon could ever be — sharper than the finest steel.

The weapon has a difficulty of 5 to hit and does Strength + 5 damage in aggravated wounds. Furthermore, the weapon adds one automatic success to all attack rolls. The blade may have many other powers, though it would take time and magic to unlock these powers, and they are unlikely to enter into this story. The Storyteller may invent more powers if she likes, but those listed above should be quite sufficient for now.

The blade then passed from father to son for many generations. Even though almost all of the valuables taken during the Crusades were sold to maintain a failing fief, the sword remained and became a family heirloom. As the years passed, the fief worsened, and son after son was corrupted by the blade. Most were slain in battle, though it must be said that the family's enemies suffered far worse at the hands of the Rhineland warriors and their strange sword.

In the mid-15th century, the plagues and famines sweeping across Europe decimated the Burder fief. The family line was wiped out by the plague that swept through the castle. Most of the family's possessions were claimed by the crown, but some were taken by family and friends. One of these "friends" was in fact a servant of one of the seven Tremere who make up the clan's ruling council. The Tremere kept the blade for centuries and studied it, but never used it.

The Tremere hold Austria in a stranglehold from which no breath of freedom may spring. Still, one anarch has managed to elude them. Antoine, a Malkavian and an anarch, sneaked into the clan's secret chambers and found the blade, though not on purpose. He was looking for information that he could use against the Tremere and when he was discovered, he seized the blade and used it on the guards.

Once he had taken the blade, his escape was assured. Many guards fell before Antoine was able to escape. Those capable of defeating him were either not present or unwilling to face the sword.

Antoine fled from Austria, uncertain of what he had taken. He named the blade Soulrazor for the terror that it had caused the Tremere. From Austria, he fled to England and from there to the safest place in the world for anarchists — America, and into a dark and brooding city....

Involving the Characters

There are many ways to involve the characters in the hunt for Tiamat's vitæ. What follows is merely one example. Most Diabolists need little temptation. For them, the chance for such luscious blood is quite enough. The best method for involving the characters depends largely on their clans and the chronicle. While anarchists may run off at a moment's notice to drink from a Methuselah and gain power, those who support the Camarilla may not be so eager.

In such a case, the Storyteller can introduce a threat that requires a great deal of power to defeat — far more power than the characters have. This would encourage them to start searching for ways to gain power, and would eventually lead them to diablerie. At first they will be tempted by mere elders, but should the threat be significant enough, they must seek a Cainite of true power.

Many vampires have heard of Tiamat. Her atrocities among the Kindred have become legendary, and the characters may know of the events described in Chapter Two. Tiamat was active in mortal and Kindred politics; there are still some Kindred who knew her and who can attest to the truth of the legends.

Thus the Kindred may start to follow a series of rumors and in the process begin to discover facts. What happened to Tiamat after she masqueraded as Livia is unclear, but it is unlikely that she died. The truth of her eternal struggle against the demon Drakonskyr is completely unknown to any Kindred. There are no rumors, for Tiamat never had the opportunity to tell anyone and all possible witnesses were slain or are long dead. The truth can only be discovered in the final chamber of Tiamat's barrow.

Rumors and eyewitness accounts notwithstanding, little can be learned of Tiamat's actual location, only that she is out there somewhere and is probably asleep or in torpor. Any who knew her feel sure she could not have been slain — her power was too great. By the same token, she must be inactive, for if she were still fighting in the Jyhad, there would at least be rumors of her plots and schemes. If the characters wish to find Tiamat, they must hope for a lucky break.

A Lucky Break

A Malkavian stumbles into the characters' city. He is Antoine, from the story of the Sword of Nul, and now the characters are part of that story as well. He is on the run, though the Tremere of Vienna have made no serious attempt to get the sword back. After all, why not watch this fool and learn about the sword from his exploits?



However, others have heard news of the blade. Before fleeing Austria, Antoine foolishly told his coterie where he was going and that he had stolen a magical sword of great power. His coterie heard rumors of what had happened when the Tremere had tried to stop Antoine, and began to crave the blade. Its members talked among themselves of the powers it must hold. Each vampire began to think that it would make his most impossible dreams possible. Some seek power, others seek peace and all think that the sword could help them obtain those goals.

Also seeking the blade is one of the Tremere present when Antoine made his miraculous escape. He seeks the blade not for the clan, but for his own purposes. The Tremere leaders know this, of course, and once he obtains the blade, they will probably take it from him. If he dies in the attempt, so much the better; he was growing untrustworthy anyway.

Antoine is growing weary of pursuit and is looking for allies. He will approach the characters and ask for their help. The blade will also act on its own. If the characters do not force it from Antoine, the sword will kill him, animating in his hand when he is alone and running him through. Once another character picks up the blade, the sword begins to communicate with him telepathically. It tells him where Tiamat is buried and promises to lead the character to her if the character will in return promise to destroy her. The sword will not hold a conversation but will make this offer and leave the characters to decide what to do.

Antoine's death appears to be a suicide, a hypothesis made more likely by the stress he was under and the fact that he was a Malkavian. The sword knew that Antoine lacked the strength to penetrate Tiamat's barrow, just as it knew its mortal wielders were too weak. The Tremere had known better than to use the weapon and so it could never tempt them. Now it at last has a chance to save its master from eternal sleep.

Antoine has a map of England hidden in his coat. The map has many "Xs" on it, many of which have been crossed out or scribbled over. One "X" in Scotland has been circled several times. The blade has communicated with Antoine through dreams, and Antoine has been researching the images it has transmitted to him. Now whoever carries the blade will start to have similar dreams. The latest dream is about a hillside with a door hidden under a few feet of earth.

To Britain

There are many ways vampires from the Americas can journey to the United Kingdom. The fastest method is by plane, but few, if any, trans-Atlantic flights start and end in darkness. The characters could try shipping themselves, but customs officials often use dogs to check for contraband, and a dog would become very excited at the smell of a vampire.

Boats are usually the safest method of travel. Many cruise ships have interior cabins that do not have windows.

The passengers are numerous and varied enough to make for a week of good eating, even for five or six vampires.

A cruise ship is also a wonderful setting for roleplaying, as it has many innate dramatic advantages. It provides a setting big enough for hiding, but not big enough to escape enemies. Additionally, cruise ships are slow, and dramatic tension can be built over long periods. A cruise ship is also a very beautiful place, covered with lights, ice sculptures, fine wooden bars and cool, blue swimming pools.

Although cruise ships do travel to Scotland, the only cruises running during the time frame of this story go to London instead. If the characters wish to travel by boat, they will have to disembark in London.

Of course, not all coterie will reside in North America. *Methods of travel from other lands are at the Storyteller's discretion.*

Coterie Tactics

Antoine's former coterie does not have a large information network and its resources are limited. Its members fear that they have limited time, and they will go to any effort to acquire the sword. They catch up with Antoine the night after he meets with the characters.

At this point, Antoine will already be dead, killed by his own sword. Hoping that the characters are unaware of the sword's power, the coterie approaches them. Its members explain that they were friends of Antoine, and that they would like the sword returned.

Should this fail (as it should), the coterie will try to follow the characters back to their havens. They will break and enter the following evening and search for the sword. If a vampire happens to be in her haven, they will not attempt to kill her, though they will attack her if she gets in the way. Should this fail, they may attempt to abduct some of the characters and force them to disclose the location of the sword.

If the coterie does not work its way through all of these plans before the characters head for England, the coterie will attempt to follow by booking passage on the same boat, plane or whatever. Its members then approach the characters in public places and try to convince them to give up the sword. They will threaten them with violence, offer promises of power or favors, or attempt seduction. They may even offer a share in the blade's power should they become desperate enough and a particular character appears to waver.

They will continue to pursue the sword in this fashion until they are convinced that they cannot succeed. Also, a convincing threat, backed up with a little physical violence, might scare this group off. Its members are weak in fighting skills and they know it. Against a group of dangerous and powerful Diabolists they don't have much of a chance. If two of them are killed, the rest will give up and return to Austria.

Tremere Tactics

Frank Weissshadel, unlike the coterie, has an extensive intelligence network from which to draw. The Tremere network, however, works both ways. The informants tell important Tremere what they want to know, but they also tell their superiors what important Tremere wanted to know. Weissshadel must use it sparingly lest the Council of Seven discover his little “freelance business.” Therefore, he watches carefully and waits patiently for his time to strike for the blade. He must follow it from a distance to avoid arousing suspicion, especially from his own intelligence network.

If the vampires take a boat, Weissshadel will also book passage, taking his three ghouls with him. Because he is not exactly certain which character has the blade, he will wait and watch. He may even make friends with one of the characters, hoping to gain information. He will pretend to be mortal for as long as he can, perhaps even hoping a hungry vampire will take him to a private place to feed from him. Then he will strike, Dominating the vampire and finding out who has the sword. If the characters have powers rendering such deception ineffective (Aura Perception, for example), Weissshadel will admit his nature and offer to help the vampires against Antoine’s coterie.

Weissshadel hopes to incite a large battle that will decimate both sides and allow him to steal or take the sword. With only three ghouls, he lacks the firepower of either of the other two vampire groups on board, and he knows it.

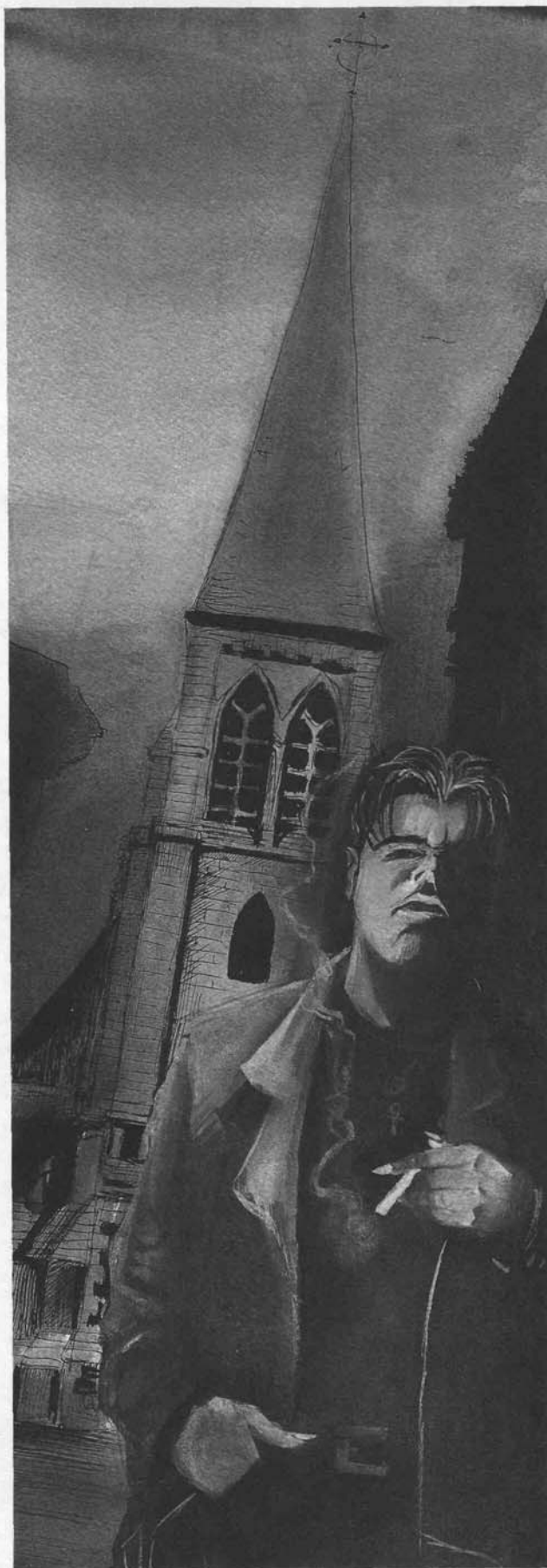
If all else fails, he may try an ambush with his ghouls on the entire Diabolist group and hope for the best, but this is not his first choice. If the Diabolists look powerful and/or well armed, he may not try this tactic at all. While he wants the blade, he is willing to wait for many years if necessary.

Once the blade is taken, he will change cabins (by Dominating the other guests) and wait for the trip to end. He cannot swim and will avoid the water at all costs, even to the point of giving up the blade rather than being thrown overboard. He has no desire to go into torpor at the bottom of the Atlantic.

Once in London

Once the characters arrive in London, the sword telepathically informs them that they have neared their prey. Perhaps this is true in terms of distance, but many Kindred still seek to block their progress. In fact, Tiamat is located not far from Edinburgh in Scotland. First, however, the characters must get there. After all of the trouble they had getting to the British Isles, they may need to rest (remember that any aggravated wounds take time to heal) and hunt.

Hunting in London is dangerous if the characters do not know their way around. Most Kindred don’t like others cruising on their turf. If the characters do not Present themselves to the prince of the city, they may also have troubles, as such negligence violates the Traditions (not



that most Diabolists take those too seriously). The Storyteller should feel free to add whatever complications she desires.

Archon Spy

Hafsa, described in Chapter One, is also in London, looking for violations of the Traditions. Most princes do not appreciate Archons in their domains, and an especially delicate touch is required in such a large city with a powerful prince. The larger cities must be watched by the Archons, for they are the most likely places for criminal behavior, but it is most dangerous to send an Archon to a big city.

This is certainly the case with London. The Prince of London was mysteriously killed in a German bombing raid during World War II, though his body was never recovered. Lady Anne is currently in control, though she clings to power by the skin of her teeth. She is a nervous prince. Uncertain that her power base is stable, she is reactionary and prone to destroy those whom she cannot trust.

In light of this, only very subtle Archons are sent to London, and Hafsa is very subtle. If the characters stay in the city a night or two, Hafsa will approach them and try to find out what they are doing here. If she sees the Sword of Nul, she will make a mental note and describe it in detail over the phone to her Justicar. Madame Guil will then check her books and discover its origin. From here, the Justicar can guess that the characters are up to no good. Guil will not be certain that diablerie is involved, but she will instruct Hafsa to watch the characters.

Hafsa is currently disguised as an anarch. She knows most of the anarch hideouts in the city and she can show the characters the safe places to hunt. She will try to get the characters to tell her why they are here and she may even confide all of her "crimes," like the time she committed diablerie and how much fun it is to break the Masquerade just to see the look on a mortal's face. The crimes are all fictitious, of course. Hafsa is only trying to find out how prone these neonates are to committing crimes against the Traditions.

If the characters divulge the reason they are in London or if she sees the Sword of Nul, Hafsa will go immediately to Lady Anne and inform her of the presence of a group of anarchists. She will stress their unknown purpose and the fact that they did not Present themselves to her, if this is the case. Needless to say, the Diabolists will be called on the carpet.

The Prince

If the characters Present themselves to Lady Anne when they arrive in London (as custom dictates) or if they are called before her when they are discovered in the city, they will have some explaining to do. If Hafsa has discovered the characters' plans, Lady Anne orders the Diabolists to leave the country at once. Failure to do so brings her severe displeasure.

If Lady Anne is uncertain as to the motives of these anarchists, she demands an explanation for their presence. If they hesitate at all, or they change their stories at any time, she demands that they leave the country. If the answer they give is possible, but unlikely, Lady Anne will have them carefully watched. If they deviate in any way from what they said they were doing, she will have them warned, perhaps by having one of them killed.

Lady Anne needs to show the Kindred of London that she is in control. If necessary, she will call a Blood Hunt on these anarchists, but she is very afraid to test her power in this way. What if she calls the Hunt and nobody listens? Then she would surely die. Better to let them go on their way. Only if Lady Anne knows they intend to disturb Tiamat (a frightening concept to most vampires) will she risk a Blood Hunt to destroy them. Tiamat stalking through her domain would be far more risky than calling the Hunt.

Ancient Enemies

Fortunately, the vampires have an ally in this unfriendly city. Gotsdam, an ancient German vampire, now resides in London. He is believed to be an eccentric old Ventrue. He is little noticed and taken even less seriously. Many think he has gone mad over the years or that he always was mad. He stays quiet, and nobody realizes exactly who he is or what is wrong with him.

Gotsdam is quite eager to help the characters and seeks them out if they get into any kind of trouble. He explains that he knew Tiamat after the days of Caligula and tells them that there was always something wrong with her. He explains that something separated her from other Kindred. She was very cruel: a merciless killer who actually enjoyed pain and inflicted it not out of necessity but out of joy. Yet, sometimes, she would look very sad and would cry tears of blood. "Beware of her," he warns, "she has two faces. Do not trust the sad face, for it is nothing compared to the angry one."

Once Gotsdam has given his advice, he will sneak the characters out of the city via a secret tunnel. Once they are away from the city, they can go to a train station in the country and make their way to Edinburgh. From there they can scour the countryside, looking for Tiamat's resting place. Edinburgh is controlled by the Toreador and is open to anarchists, so the Diabolists will have no more Kindred entanglements once they leave London.

The Coterie

Antoine's coterie is not powerful, nor are its members particularly clever. They are, however, about as lucky as vampires get. Its members have survived for several years while carrying out guerrilla warfare against the Tremere. They were lucky to get together in the group they did, for their skills complemented each other's. They were also lucky that they never hit too big a target. Though the coterie

always thought its actions were wounding the Tremere terribly, the Tremere hardly noticed the rebellion in their land.

Antoine – The Lost

Born in the late 19th century, Antoine never learned to be a good boy, and grew worse when his aunt took him in after the deaths of his parents. By the time he was 10, she had given up on him and sent him away to an exceptionally strict boarding school. The change did not agree with him.

Antoine's aunt came to see him when Antoine turned 16 (her third visit in six years). Instead of the sweet little boy she had hoped to find, she found a hulking, surly teenager. Horrified, she chastised the dean, threatening him with every legal recourse imaginable. After she left, the dean, a Malkavian's ghoul, told his master. The Malkavian then Embraced Antoine and gave the neonate a one-way ticket home.

Antoine's first frenzy took care of his aunt, leaving her throat ripped open and every ounce of blood drained from her body. After that, Antoine began to run, first to Europe and then all over the world.

He made few friends wherever he went, but found it easy to join anarchy gangs. Eventually, he found his way to Austria, where he felt his talents for rebellion were desper-

ately needed. Now he seeks help from whomever will offer it, be it elder or anarch, for the needs of survival have risen above those of philosophy.

Sire: Morel

Clan: Malkavian

Nature: Rebel

Demeanor: Loner

Generation: 9th

Embrace: 1892

Apparent Age: 16

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 5, Streetwise 3

Skills: Demolitions 2, Firearms 2, Melee 4, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Computer 2, Linguistics 4

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 2, Dominate 2, Obfuscate 4

Backgrounds: Contacts 2

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 1, Courage 3

Humanity: 3

Willpower: 6

Image: Antoine is a fat, soft-looking individual. He was a fat little boy and, years later, a loud and fat young man. He is generally sloppy and unkempt, having little care for his personal appearance.

Roleplaying Hints: You have become quite a frightened little animal. Your eyes dart nervously around the room and you shift from one foot to another. You rarely make eye contact, except when you are asking for help. In this case you are exceptionally earnest and will always look directly into your benefactors' faces.

Randel – The Cowardly Leader

For years Randel took the easy road, the road beaten by the tread of thousands of feet. When he reached the age of 40, he looked around at his safe, comfortable life and was pleased. Then the Sabbat came and Embraced Randel as a foot soldier in yet another of the sect's senseless wars. Randel should have been destroyed in no time, but in some quiet chests lurk great hearts waiting for an opportunity to reveal themselves. Randel had such a heart.

Though Randel rose from the grave a monster, he did not stay that way. His pack's actions revolted him, and when the opportunity came to betray it, he did. Anarchs cut down his packmates and made him one of their own. When the gang's leaders were destroyed, he was thrust into the vacuum. Now he has his own gang — and all the worries that brings.

Randel is a wonderful planner and can formulate a solution to almost any problem — if he has enough time. However, Randel is not very good at being a vampire. He is still able to eat food (and quite enjoys it) but has trouble procuring human blood. Those from whom he attempted to





feed used to beat him up, and he has learned to identify and feed upon the weakest and most helpless vessels. He has no stomach for violence and though his powers would allow him to overcome any mortal, he does not like to use them. Randel has also worked to shed his Path of Enlightenment and restore his Humanity. Amazingly enough, he has begun to succeed.

Sire: Salondra

Clan: *Ventrue antitribu*

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Judge

Generation: 10th

Embrace: 1935

Apparent Age: Early 40s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 1, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 2, Leadership 3, Masquerade 3, Subterfuge 1

Skills: Drive 2, Etiquette 2, Firearms 2, Melee 2, Repair 2, Security 1, Stealth 1

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 4, Camarilla Lore 2, Computer 3, Finance 2, Investigation 3, Law 2, Military Science 3, Politics 2

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Dominate 2, Fortitude 3, Obtenebration 2, Potence 1, Presence 1

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Resources 2, Status 1

Virtues: Conscience 5, Self-Control 4, Courage 2

Humanity: 1

Willpower: 5

Image: Randel is a middle-aged, pudgy man with thinning hair. His clothes are simple and unimaginative. He looks like hundreds of other ordinary men who live out their lives in middle management.

Roleplaying Hints: Randel is at least a little crazy and extremely contradictory. Revolted by the Sabbat, he has run from his vampiric nature. He still adheres to the remnants of his old life. He solves his new problems with the same calm that he would solve problems at his old job. He is also a very bad vampire when it comes to doing anything "vampiric."

Basir - Street Assassin

Many gangs run in the streets of Ankara, Turkey. Basir, an orphan, joined young and learned violence at an early age. He made his money by stealing and doing odd jobs for people. He even became an enforcer for a crimelord. Basir attracted the notice of the Assamite clan when he stopped a Giovanni ghoul and destroyed a zombie sent to kill his boss.



Taking a new clan member from the streets has certain advantages, but true Assamite assassins rarely come from such stock. Still, street toughs have their uses. Basir joined the Assamites willingly, having few better prospects in his life.

Few people from his neighborhood expected to live past the age of 20 anyway, so Basir hardly feels that he has taken any great chances. He revels in his new status and enjoys drinking from the mortals. He also enjoys killing, and as an Assamite, the excuses are endless.

Despite his enthusiasm, Basir lacks the talent and discipline to become a "true" Assamite assassin. He handles minor assignments and has been working with Randel's anarchs for several years now. He hopes that possession of the Sword of Nul will gain him some respect from his clan.

Sire: Alu

Clan: Assamite

Nature: Rebel

Demeanor: Bravo

Generation: 13th

Embrace: 1981

Apparent Age: 18

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 1, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Talents: Acting 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 2, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 4

Skills: Drive 1, Firearms 3, Melee 4, Repair 2, Security 2, Stealth 2, Survival 1

Knowledges: Investigation 1, Linguistics 2, Medicine 1

Disciplines: Celerity 1, Obfuscate 1, Protean 1, Quietus 2

Backgrounds: Contacts 1, Mentor 1, Resources 1

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 3, Courage 4

Humanity: 5

Willpower: 5

Image: Basir is dark-haired and has a swarthy complexion. He dresses in black leather whenever possible and does his best to emulate the American media's image of a biker.

Roleplaying Hints: When talking or acting, be loud, brash and arrogant. Challenge others and use physical violence to escape situations where you might come out on the losing end. Your self-esteem is low, so make up for it with lots of noise and big talk.

Ransam - The Old One

The period after Francois Villon regained control of Paris was an exciting one for the Toreador. French armies crossed the continent, seized art from around the world and sent it to the museums of France. Toreador followed on their heels, making sure that they took the best before the rest could be seen by the kine.



Ransam, still little more than a neonate, came with the French armies to Austria, establishing himself in a little castle on confiscated land. He strove to make himself the center of attention, and decorated his castle with some of Austria's greatest masterpieces. His narcissism steadily grew; though he claimed to be a patron of the arts, he loved more than anything his own life and his own self-created world. He loved his friends because they belonged to him. He loved his castle because it was his own castle. He loved himself so much that everything that belonged to him became an extension of himself.

When Austria regained its lost territory, the Tremere clan decided to solidify its control of the land. Ransam was chosen as an example. Ransam barely survived the eviction, and that only with the help of more powerful Toreador.

Ransam was crushed. He had been defeated quickly, easily and painlessly by his attackers. He was humiliated and from his narcissism arose passionate hatred. Now he runs with an anarch gang and uses his influence to strike back at the Tremere. He will do anything for vengeance upon those who destroyed his love for himself.

Sire: Juliette Dulai

Clan: Toreador

Nature: Judge

Demeanor: Fanatic

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 1769

Apparent Age: Early 30s
Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3
Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 4
Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 2
Talents: Acting 4, Alertness 2, Artistic Expression 3, Dodge 4, Intimidation 2, Leadership 2, Subterfuge 4
Skills: Dance 3, Etiquette 4, Firearms 4, Melee 5, Music 3, Stealth 1
Knowledges: Art Critic 5, Finance 3, Law 1, Linguistics 5, Politics 3
Backgrounds: Resources 4, Retainers 1
Disciplines: Auspex 3, Celerity 4, Dominate 3, Fortitude 2, Presence 4
Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 4, Courage 3
Humanity: 6
Willpower: 7

Image: Ransom has a strong jaw and blond hair, and is very handsome. He has a Bruce Willis smile and can be quite a charmer when he tries. He always keeps up with the latest fashions, though he often finds obscure and bizarre "in" fashions just to be different. He usually hides a bladed weapon or a stake somewhere on his person.

Roleplaying Hints: Smile a lot. Do your best to charm the socks off of anyone who gets near you. Don't take "no" for an answer. You hate all Tremere. Do not deal with any of them — none of them are trustworthy. They are killers and destroyers. Little matters beyond destroying the Tremere.

Kalila - The Firebug

Kalila lived in Germany with her immigrant parents. Often alone, lacking playmates who could speak her language, Kalila found her only friends in the fires she set. She especially loved how much attention she received when she lit one. As she grew older, her pyromania continued unabated.

Finally, one of her fires burned out of control. Because she was too old for a child's punishment, the authorities sent her to a women's prison to serve a 10-year term. Kalila, desperately in need of psychological attention, suffered and languished in jail. She became rebellious and was transferred to a high-security facility, where she eventually met her sire.

She still does not know who he was. He slipped into her cell and took her while she slept. All she remembers is awaking in great ecstasy, then feeling pain, and then feeling power flood into her. She made good her escape that night.

After a few near-fatal run-ins with the Powers That Be, she hooked up with Randel's gang. She can understand its members and their motivations. She also imagines that the enemies of her unknown sire are after her as well. She hopes that the Sword of Nul will give her enough power to strike back at her enemies, both real and imagined.

Sire: ?

Clan: Malkavian

Nature: Child
Demeanor: Survivor
Generation: 11th
Embrace: 1987
Apparent Age: Late teens
Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3
Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3
Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 2
Talents: Acting 1, Alertness 3, Brawl 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 2
Skills: Arson 4, Drive 2, Firearms 2, Security 2
Knowledges: Linguistics 1
Disciplines: Auspex 1, Obfuscate 4
Backgrounds: None
Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 4, Courage 4
Humanity: 5
Willpower: 4

Image: Kalila has fine Arabic features, with a strong nose and short, black hair. She has a rather rakish look to her, as though she might do anything without provocation. She always dresses in loose clothing that does not become her figure, but facilitates free movement.

Roleplaying Hints: Smile in a childlike way. Light things on fire. Do anything for attention. You especially enjoy attention from authority figures (who represent your



parents). Suck up to the leaders of the group. Indeed, it is possible that your rebellious activities toward the Tremere are nothing more than a bid for attention.

The Tremere

Frank Weissshadel – Would-Be Sorcerer

Frank's father was a wizard. Few can make such a claim, but in this case it was true. His father had been a powerful mage, though he did not realize Frank knew it. For years Frank dreamed of becoming a wizard like his father. He knew that there were underground sorcerers everywhere. He knew that the world contained many wonders unknown to the common run of mortals.

Always wishing to emulate his father, Frank studied in secret, certain that his father would take him as an apprentice once he was old enough. Yet time dragged on and Frank's father did not approach him. Finally, when Frank was 17, he demanded that his father teach him magick. His father refused.

Papa Weissshadel was in big trouble. He had meddled with powers best left alone and he had gained powerful enemies among his own peers. He did not wish to pass along his own mistakes. He knew the temptations of power and the evils it could bring on even the most innocent heart. He tried explaining all of this to Frank.

Frank did not understand; he felt that wizardry was his birthright. Nobody could take that away from him. He was certain that he had the power just as his father did and that he could master powerful spells. Then he would stand tall among a secret community that ruled the world with invisible puppet strings.

Frank was wrong. He did not have the power, though he would not learn this easily.

He left home in a rage and traveled the world. By the time he was 23, he had discovered as much as a mortal could know about mages, vampires, wraiths, werewolves and other mythical creatures. When he returned home, only to argue bitterly with his father, he went to the vampires of Clan Tremere, demanding that they make him a wizard. They instead agreed to make him a vampire. They knew he did not have the proper commitment to become a true wizard, but he was young, strong and stupid enough to be loyal to them.

They made him into a Kindred and used him for dirty jobs all across Europe. Despair overtook Frank's world. When he showed his father what a glorious creature he had become, his father was not so understanding. Papa Weissshadel tried to destroy his own son, but could not bring himself to do it. Nonetheless, his efforts drove Frank into an uncontrollable frenzy, and the vampire murdered his own father.

Now Frank has realized that the Tremere have no intention of using him for anything but an errand boy. He seeks the Sword of Nul to become a powerful wizard and claim his birthright among the mages of the world.

Sire: O'Meara

Clan: Tremere

Nature: Bravo

Demeanor: Curmudgeon

Generation: 10th

Embrace: 1970

Apparent Age: Mid-20s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Acting 1, Alertness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Intimidation 2, Leadership 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Drive 2, Firearms 3, Melee 3, Security 2, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Investigation 2, Occult 4, Politics 1

Disciplines: Auspex 1, Dominate 2, Potence 2, Thaumaturgy 2 (The Lure of Flames 1)

Backgrounds: Contacts 4, Resources 3, Retainers 3, Status 1

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 4, Courage 4

Humanity: 6

Willpower: 6

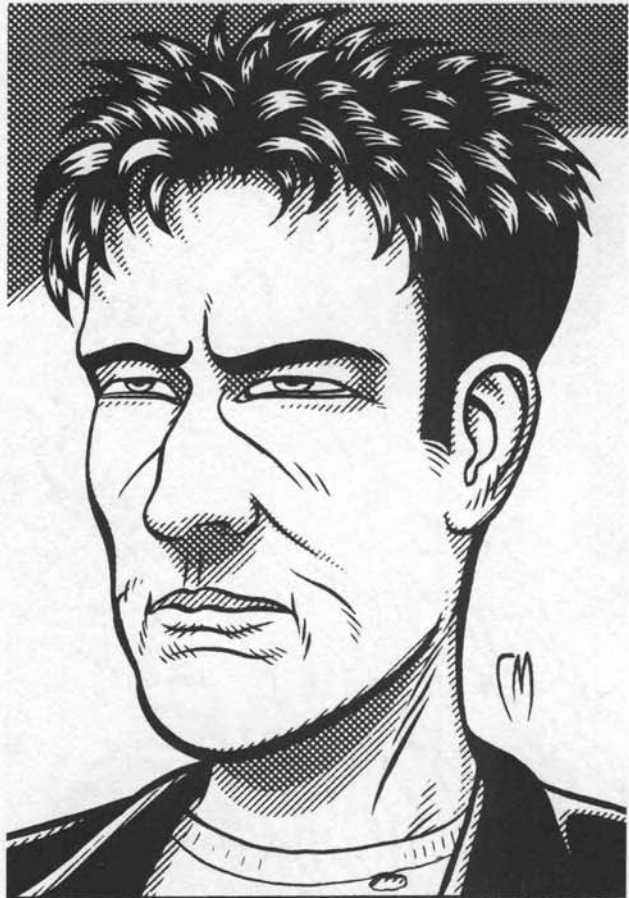


Image: A tall, thin youth with thick black hair and brown eyes, Frank cares not at all for his personal appearance. When not in the presence of important Tremere, he often wears clothes with holes and stains on them. When in the presence of important Tremere, he wears a tacky, out-of-date suit.

Roleplaying Hints: Your driving ambition has been so long denied that you are obsessed with magical power. You do not respect others who possess such power; rather, you hate them. No price is too small for this power and you will kill to get it if you must.

The Tired Warrior

Gotsdam

Gotsdam is a mysterious figure, and should stay that way throughout the story. His own tale is full of tragedy and horror, dating back to the days when the Roman legions took him as a hostage. He became a slave to Tiamat, who took his blood in scores of cruel ways and Embraced him when she needed a pawn to use against her enemies.

When she no longer needed Gotsdam, she abandoned him. Knowing little of what it was to be a Kindred, what he could do and what he could not, he fled from Rome and



spent the next several hundred years along the Rhine, hiding in a cave and feeding from animals and the occasional tribesman.

He feared the Lupines who ruled the woods, and learned both how to fight them and, more importantly, how to hide from them. When civilization eventually encroached on the wilderness, Gotsdam was forced to live the life of a true Ventrue and joined the world of the Kindred. Now he seeks Golconda, and is in London on a quest of his own.

He has tried to avoid the games of the Jyhad, for he saw the damage it caused to Rome. He used the pretext of madness, a tactic he sometimes used to dissuade the Lupines when things got out of hand. Now the Ventrue leave him alone.

Now Gotsdam has learned, to his delight, that there is a group of anarchs who would dare to hunt his sire Tiamat. He will not come with the characters, for he fears that an act of diablerie would ruin his chances for Golconda. He is, however, quite willing to help them along their way. Of course, if the characters try to commit diablerie upon him, Gotsdam is also quite willing to wipe up the floor with them.

Sire: Tiamat

Clan: Ventrue

Nature: Rebel

Demeanor: Jester

Generation: 5th

Embrace: 87 A.D.

Apparent Age: Mid-20s

Physical: Strength 7, Dexterity 7, Stamina 8

Social: Charisma 6, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 7, Intelligence 5, Wits 7

Talents: Acting 5, Alertness 7, Athletics 5, Brawl 6, Dodge 8, Intimidation 3, Leadership 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 5

Skills: Animal Ken 5, Etiquette 2, Firearms 1, Melee 7, Stealth 8, Survival 6

Knowledges: Linguistics 7, Occult 6, Politics 4

Disciplines: Animalism 5, Auspex 5, Celerity 4, Dominate 6, Fortitude 8, Obfuscate 4, Potence 4, Presence 6, Protean 3, Thaumaturgy 4 (Weather Control 4, Movement of the Mind 3)

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Status 3

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 4, Courage 5

Humanity: 9

Willpower: 8

Notes: Gotsdam's sixth level of Dominate allows him to convince his victim that she has any one Derangement of Gotsdam's choosing. His sixth level of Presence causes all in the vicinity to leave Gotsdam alone.

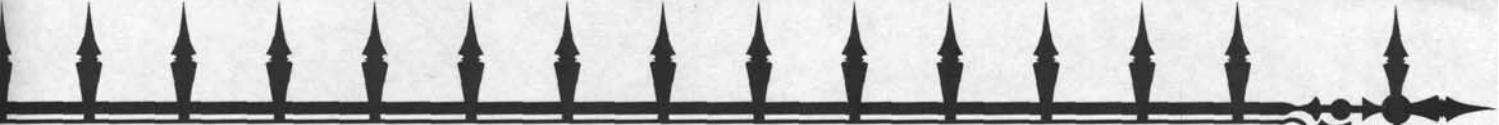


Image: Gotsdam is a tall, blond barbarian, complete with beard and uncut hair. He looks like an extremely pale Viking. He is powerful and grim. He is a little behind the times and likes top hats and canes, a bizarre contrast to his long hair and thick beard.

Roleplaying Hints: You have played at being insane for so long that you really are starting to go a little mad. Talk to imaginary friends (maybe even convince the characters that these friends exist), howl for no reason, and generally act like a loon. For the most part, you try to appear more stupid than you are. Play dumb, but maneuver others in the directions you want.





Chapter Four: The Barrow

*Nor to slumber, nor to die,
Shall be in thy destiny;
Though thy death shall still seem near
To thy wish, but as a fear.*

— Lord Byron, *Manfred*

During Britain's Dark Ages, after the Romans abandoned the island, tribe warred with tribe until it seemed to the Britons that the world would crack. Some tribes buried their kings in great burial mounds that were as large as hills. Sometimes a king was buried with his gold and jewels, but always with his weapons. It was a time of little belief, for who could have faith in a god that created such a mad world?

It was to this land of cold and fog that Tiamat fled. Here, in this isolated land, she hoped other Kindred would never follow. She never dreamed of the empire that would rise and fall right over her head centuries later. Now she sleeps in the darkness of the earth, oblivious to the Diabolists who seek to disturb her.

Finding the Barrow

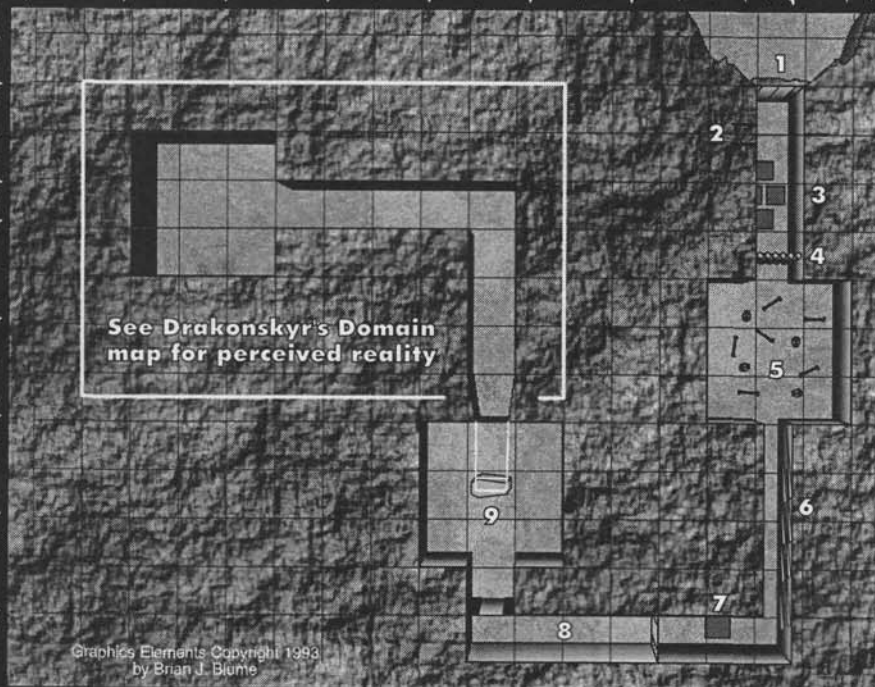
It is fortunate that the characters have Antoine's map and Tiamat's sword to guide their way, for the barrow is well hidden among other hills. It is so overgrown and covered with trees that it looks like a natural hill. The entrance is on the north side of the hill. Centuries of erosion have caused the earth to slide down the hill, covering the door with two feet of earth. Bushes and shrubbery thrive in this fertile spot and the door is now indistinguishable from the rest of the countryside.

The vampire who has been carrying the Sword of Nul will be able to recognize from his dreams the part of the hill that contains the barrow entrance. If no vampire is carrying the Sword personally, the blade will contact the vampire with the lowest Willpower.

If the Diabolists have brought proper digging tools, the entrance to the barrow can be unearthed in a few hours. If they do not have the proper tools, the Diabolists must spend at least 20 man-hours unearthing the door (thus, five Diabolists could do the job in four hours). Remember that the Diabolists have spent time traveling to the barrow, and when the sun rises, they will either sleep or burn, depending on their location.

The Nature of the Barrow

Wooden braces support this earthen barrow. The first part of the barrow contains the various traps and tricks the Britons installed at the direction and design of Tiamat. All of the mechanical traps are maintained by Tiamat's powerful magic, causing them to age very slowly. While even very simple traps would keep mortals out of her tomb, Tiamat was much more concerned about Cainites who would seek her for the power of her blood. As a result, she made many of her



The Barrow

1. The Entrance
2. The Spear Trap
3. Pit Traps
4. Primitive Napalm Trap
5. The Wolf
6. Hall of Razors
7. Pit of the Sun
8. Hall of Fire
9. Fool's Gold



10 Feet

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traps magical in nature to dissuade the more determined. In those days, before the rise of the Tremere, a vampire with knowledge of magic was an exceptionally powerful creature.

The contents of the barrow have also been affected by centuries of exposure to the mind of Drakonskyr. Ordinarily, this demon's wishes and imagination would be magically imposed on the world as it wished. Demons often work magic subconsciously, and only Drakonskyr's confinement to Tiamat's body has kept it from doing as it pleased. However, the demon's long existence within the barrow has allowed some of its psyche to spill out into reality, changing the very physics that bind the world together.

The rooms and corridors created by Drakonskyr's mind are not completely real. In fact, the entire second section of the barrow, which is its creation, is contained in the long corridor that connects the false tomb of Tiamat to the real tomb (sections 9 and H, respectively). When Tiamat built the barrow, it was a simple tunnel. However, under the strange influences of Drakonskyr's sleeping mind, the tunnel has become a nightmare reality that is only partially physical. For the most part, those who enter the corridor will be journeying through the terrible, horrific mind of a demon.

This area does not follow ordinary physical laws. A map to this area is included, but it is important to understand that there are no set spatial relationships among the various chambers and corridors. When characters leave a particular

chamber, there is no guarantee that they can return to that chamber. Turning around makes no difference. They are traveling through a demon's mind, and such a mind has no set direction. Thus, forward is just as good as backward, and they may encounter any chamber in any relation to any other chamber.

Rather than follow our map, it might be a good idea for the Storyteller to draw her own maps and, whenever the vampires come to a chamber, decide what lies within that chamber. That way, the vampires don't have to miss a single encounter. They can have all the "fun" of every encounter and not have to worry about missing something if they go in the wrong direction.

The Encounters

The encounters represented by numbers delineate those areas created by Tiamat and the British tribe she used for her manual labor. The areas represented by letters indicate those areas that have been affected by Drakonskyr's mind. Physically, all of the lettered events take place in the final corridor between the false tomb and the real tomb.

1. The Entrance

Buried under two feet of earth, these five-foot-tall double doors (each is four feet wide) block the entrance to the barrow. They are made of wood, and are sealed with lead clamps; these must be pried away (Strength Feat of 7

required, or 5 with a good crowbar) or melted off. The doors themselves weigh nearly 500 pounds apiece and have Latin text scrawled across them. The text reads (should anyone take the time to attempt to decipher the dull and worn carving), "Let sleeping sleepers lie if the wakers do not wish to die."

There are also hundreds of runes and glyphs carved all over the doors. A successful Intelligence + Occult roll (difficulty 7) indicates that all or most of the runes are wards of protection against evil, spirits, curses, etc. A vampire who scores three successes on this roll realizes that the glyphs have no real power.

On the inside of the door is a large rune shaped like a sun with a crescent moon inside it. This symbol does have some power over evil, as an Intelligence + Occult roll (difficulty 8) will ascertain. The fact that it is pointed inward means that the evil is expected to approach the door from the inside. It is not designed to affect vampires, however, and it is not powerful enough to keep the demon in the barrow should it escape Tiamat.

2. The Spear Trap

This was designed by Tiamat to kill humans and weaken vampires before they got deep inside the barrow. It was originally designed to fire three sets of iron-tipped spears from the walls when a tripwire was pulled. The wire is

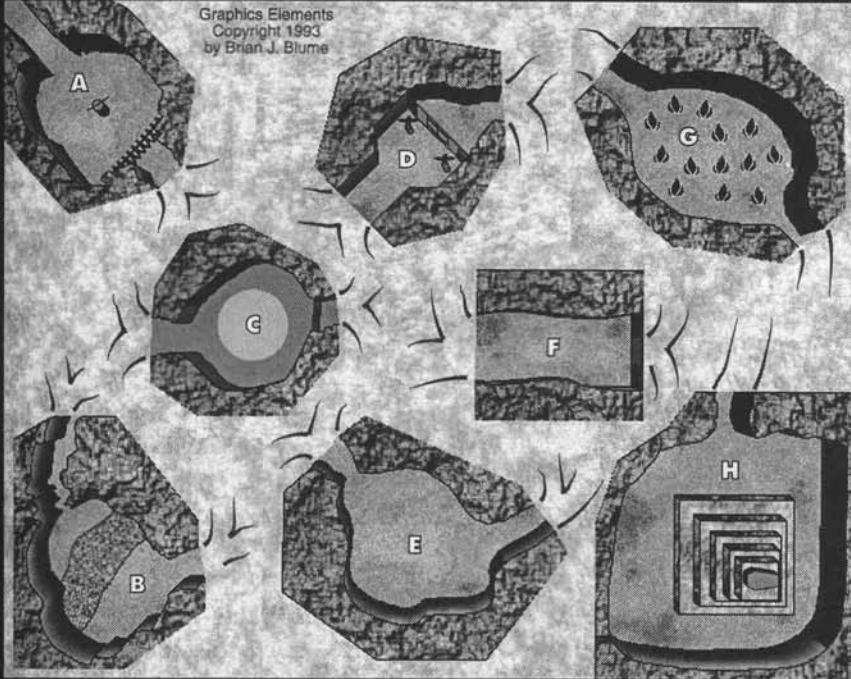
difficult to spot in the darkness [Wits + Alertness (difficulty 8)]. Have each player make the roll when his character approaches the wire.

The spears are connected by a single bar to give the weapons (seven spears in each group) stability. Two sets of spears fire from the left wall and, between those two, one set of spears fires from the right wall. Each set is about five feet from the next set.

All of the spear sets are controlled by counterweights set deep in the walls, and the spears on the left wall have lost a great deal of speed because their pulleys have rusted. Thus, these two sets of spears will not spring fast enough to inflict any real damage; however, they may trap vampires between them. The character who tripped them must make a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 8) or be trapped when the spears imbed themselves into the earthen walls.

The third set of spears (the one on the right wall) still works, but its triggering mechanism is a little rusty and it will take an extra three turns for it to activate. The characters should be concerned with freeing their comrades trapped between the spears. Each time the characters pass the right spear trap, it may go off (at the Storyteller's discretion) and it will definitely go off if anybody touches the tripwire again (which crosses the passage right below the unsprung spear trap).

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Drakonskyr's Domain

- A. Web of Bodies
- B. Vision of Hell
- C. Test of Patience
- D. Gargoyles
- E. Room of Silent Screams
- F. Portal of the Future
- G. The Black Flames
- H. The Ziggurat

The spears will hit the character(s) who set it off unless that character can score three successes on a Wits + Alertness roll (difficulty 8) and then three more on a Dexterity + Dodge roll (difficulty 9). The spears inflict seven dice of damage upon anyone hit. The Storyteller should roll one die for each character hit by the spears; on a roll of a one, that character has been impaled through the heart by the wooden shaft.

3. Pit Traps

Each of the numbers indicates an area where the floor gives way, rotating on a central axle and dumping whoever steps on either end into a 30-foot pit. In addition, the floor will rotate around to reseal the pit, making it difficult to rescue a character inside and making it impossible for a character to free himself. The traps are impossible to spot, and the characters will only spot them by probing the floor ahead of them or by falling in.

The bottom of the pits are covered with two-foot wooden spikes. The fall will inflict four Health Levels of falling damage, which may be soaked (difficulty 8), and the spikes cause an additional four dice of damage. In addition, on a roll of 1 or 2, one of the wooden spikes has impaled the vampire through the heart, immobilizing her.

Once the characters have located all the pits, they may maneuver around them by making a successful Dexterity +

Athletics roll (difficulty 8). Failure means a character cannot get past the pits, while a botch means she falls into one.

4. Primitive Napalm

Several wooden poles block the passage here. Each is an inch thick, and they form bars no more than four inches apart. Removing the bars triggers a trap door in the ceiling, from which tar will pour upon all those standing underneath. Originally, flint and steel were included in the trap, to light the tar on fire and cause the person underneath to ignite like a Roman candle.

Like many of Tiamat's traps, the years have done their damage (despite Tiamat's spells to protect them) and the flint and steel no longer work. Thus, the character(s) will only be covered in sticky, smelly tar. However, if a vampire so attacked just happens to be carrying a fire source or is later hit with flames, he will ignite, taking three Health Levels a turn. These may be soaked with Fortitude only (difficulty 5). The tar may be scraped off, but this will take at least 10 rounds and a vampire immersed in burning tar is likely to go into frenzy.

Vampires seeing their comrade in flames must roll their Courage (difficulty 5) to avoid Röttschreck. Only an exceptional Courage roll (four or more successes) will allow a vampire to attempt to scrape burning tar from a friend. The



Storyteller should set a target number based on the characters' friendship (or lack thereof) for one another. Good friends will have a much easier time helping one another.

It is possible that several vampires are examining the bars when the trap is triggered. If any of them is holding a flame source, the whole group should catch fire.

The tar itself will cover the entire width of the hallway five feet before the door. Even if the characters somehow avoid being drenched in the foul stuff, they may still have to walk through it to get to the next room.

5. The Wolf

This chamber is filled with bones of all kinds. Horse, dog, rodent and human bones lie everywhere. In the center of the room the bones are mostly those of small rodents and are only a few inches deep, but in the corners the piles reach four feet or more in height.

Hiding among the bones, waiting in ambush, is a large Lupine skeleton animated by Tiamat before her long rest. It will only emerge once the characters have entered the room. Once inside, the creature will arise and attack the characters. It cannot pass beyond the entrance to the barrow, though it is free to move within the confines of the barrow. It knows how to avoid the pit traps in the first corridor.

The skeleton does not have sentience as such. It is no more than an automaton, a large bone robot, and it can only do what it was magically programmed to do. It is in wolfman form and cannot shapeshift. Furthermore, its attacks are limited in their creativity and, given the same tactical situation, it will do the same thing over and over again, no matter what the consequences.

After four rounds of hand-to-hand combat with the skeleton (if anyone can last that long), the characters may make Wits + Brawl rolls (difficulty 9, but the difficulty decreases by one for each extra round the fight continues) to see if they notice a pattern in the creature's movements and attacks. A character who makes this roll gains an additional die in her Dice Pool for each success scored on the roll. After very prolonged combat (10 rounds at least), the Storyteller may rule that particularly fast or skilled vampires have memorized the pattern of the skeleton's attack, enabling them to avoid all attacks.

Attributes: Strength 7, Dexterity 7, Stamina 7

Attacks: Claws — six-dice attack (seven dice aggravated damage), Teeth — six-dice attack (nine dice aggravated damage).

Health Levels: OK/OK/-1/-1/-2/-2/-5/Incapacitated

The skeleton begins each turn with the equivalent of three initiative successes and can make one claw attack and one bite attack each turn. It uses its Stamina to soak damage, aggravated or not, but cannot regenerate. All missile weapons have their difficulties to hit increased by one, and

bullets do only one die of damage (they only chip bones), though shotguns do two dice. Silver bullets and melee weapons do normal damage to the skeleton.

If the skeleton is somehow lit on fire, its bones will crack and become brittle. This will reduce its Physical Attributes to 3. However, it takes at least 10 minutes for the fire to have this effect. In addition, the skeleton continues to attack even if immolated, only now it will light vampires on fire if it hits them. An ordinary torch waved in its face has no effect.

6. Hall of Razors

This long corridor is very narrow, only about three feet wide. The entire length of the corridor is covered with long, thin razors on the ceiling and both walls. Each razor extends for a foot into the corridor. The blades are magically enchanted by Tiamat to remain extremely sharp and free of rust despite years of neglect. They are also extremely difficult to break (Strength Feat of 6 to make any progress down the corridor at all), and even then the broken razors will still be sharp and jagged.

A character wishing to traverse the corridor by breaking razors in front of him must move very slowly in order to break all the razors in his path. Because there are many razors (each is 10 to 20 feet long and runs horizontally down the corridor), and because each razor immediately follows the last one, this can be very slow, taking at least four hours.

For every 10 feet of corridor a character travels, he will take three dice of damage. This may be resisted in the usual way. If a vampire tries to run through the razors, he will take five dice of damage per 10-foot distance. If a character has broken the razors; he may make a Dexterity + Dodge roll (difficulty 7) every 10 feet to avoid taking any damage.

A Courage roll (difficulty 7) is required simply to enter the corridor. The Storyteller may wish to require Courage rolls for every 10 feet traveled. If a character fails the roll, she simply stops from the pain and refuses to move.

Being cut by paper-thin razors is a very painful experience and can easily cause a vampire to frenzy. For every two Health Levels a character suffers, he must make a Self-Control roll (difficulty 5) to avoid frenzy. Should a vampire frenzy amid the razors, he will take five dice of damage per turn until he is free of the hall. Most frenzied vampires will attempt to move backward, because this is the last place that they were safe. If the exit is clearly visible, a frenzied vampire may move forward. Of course, there may be other vampires following a character when he frenzies, and this could have unfortunate consequences.

Doing anything unusual (like stopping a frenzied vampire or fighting a skeletal Lupine) in the Hall of Razors can be extremely painful. The Storyteller may want to award extra damage for special actions, though few things will inflict any more than five dice of damage and most extra actions should probably inflict one or two dice of damage.



The easiest way to cross through the razors without high levels of Protean would be to walk sideways, but this requires the character to make a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 8) or take the normal damage. A character could also wrap herself in a thick leather hide or similar armor. If the hide is thick enough, the character might not take any damage at all. This is how the barrow's builders used to pass through this area. Note that the fear of being cut by the terrible blades may be enough to cause a frenzy roll, even if a vampire is so protected (at the Storyteller's discretion).

7. Pit of the Sun

This ingenious little trap is designed solely to kill vampires. Like the other pits, this one is covered by a revolving trap door that rotates on a single axle halfway across the pit. Those who fall in cannot see the corridor. This pit is 30 feet deep, like the others, and vampires who fall in will take the usual falling damage.

The pit's walls are covered with flat sheets of mica, a common and reflective rock. There are also several baseball-sized holes in the walls. If a character looks deep inside one of these holes, she will be able to see moonlight or perhaps a plant or two. In fact, she is not looking directly at these things. These holes lead to complex passageways going all the way to the surface. They also have mirrors inside of them, and these reflect light into the pit. Naturally, this is extremely dangerous should any vampires be down here when the sun rises. The reflective mica walls will permeate the room with sunlight, frying any vampires unfortunate enough to be trapped here.

Fortunately, many of the holes and mirrors designed to bring light into this pit have been blocked by rubbish and are no longer working. Thus, sunlight will not enter the pit until at least 10 a.m., and the sunlight is considered indirect (difficulty 3 to soak, though characters must have Fortitude to attempt a soak roll). It causes three Health Levels of damage.

This should not be too bad, but remember that this damage occurs every turn, not once in a while. Vampires may have to rush to escape from the sunlight because eventually they are going to botch a roll, no matter how tough they are.

8. Hall of Fire

This long hall is magically kept warm — very warm — by Tiamat's power. Originally, the hall was full of roaring flames. Now, after centuries of sleep, Tiamat's spell has grown weak and the room is simply very hot. The temperature is about 350 degrees Fahrenheit and it will remain at that temperature no matter what the characters do.

All vampires traversing this corridor must make three Stamina + Fortitude soak rolls (difficulty 6) to avoid taking damage from the heat. The base damage is three Health

Levels. If the Diabolists wrap themselves in wet blankets or something similar, they may make it through this corridor with little or no damage.

9. Fool's Gold

Here is the false tomb of Tiamat, set up to deter any grave robbers who might have gotten this far or any vampires who might be distracted by wealth. A large, gold-plated sarcophagus rests in the center of the room, while scattered all around are hundreds of items of immense value to collectors and antiquarians. Golden plates, cups, tapestries, weapons and many other artifacts from the glorious days of Rome lie about, all well preserved and in good condition. It is an archaeologist's dream come true.

Inside the sarcophagus is a vampire — a villager Tiamat Embraced and forced into torpor. The vampire is a Ventrue, but she is only of fifth generation. The Ritual of the Bitter Rose will not work on her because her generation is a little too high, though she is still a target for diablerie in the normal way. She is old and withered, and she looks virtually dead.

If, for some strange reason, the characters give her blood, she will awaken from torpor and, using broken Latin, plead for help from the Diabolists. She will not recognize the

characters' dress and will thus assume they must be Romans, as Romans always wore strange clothing.

Most vampires will simply drink from her, which will allow one of them to lower her generation in the usual manner. Thinking their quest finished, the Kindred may simply take the Roman artifacts and leave. This is just what Tiamat hopes, of course.

In fact, underneath the sarcophagus is a stairwell leading down and into the final corridor — and Drakonskyr's domain. The sarcophagus can be moved (Strength Feat of 6, or 5 if the vampire is removed).

If the vampires have the proper contacts for such things, the artifacts can be sold for a great deal of money. If they have contacts in this area, they could sell the goods for several million dollars; if not, they might be able to sell them to a museum for at least a few hundred thousand. Of course, if the characters are feeling very generous, they might simply give the artifacts away to a poor museum that never could afford to purchase such things.

The golden goods are the results of one of Tiamat's spells. If the Storyteller does not want this much loot in the characters' hands, she may declare that the treasure reverts to clay pots and wooden plates when the characters leave the tomb.



Domain of the Demon

As discussed previously, this entire section is physically located in the tunnel that connects the false tomb with Tiamat's real tomb. The areas are ordered by letters so there will be no confusion with Tiamat's traps. As stated before, these rooms can appear in any order that the Storyteller likes, except for the final encounter (H), which should be saved for last.

The Rules of Drakonskyr's Halls

As befits an area constructed by the crazed imagination of a trapped demon, Drakonskyr's domain operates according to its own unique laws. Generally this has the effect of making the characters more emotional or prone to internal conflicts of all sorts (or anything else the Storyteller desires).

Specifically, the Storyteller should increase by two the difficulties of all frenzy rolls. This represents the anxiety inspired by this place. Courage rolls are often required as well, and these are included in the text, though the Storyteller may require any more that she likes. Once a character has seen something truly terrible, it is possible that something simple may frighten him terribly even if there is no danger. When the Storyteller believes that the characters should be scared, have them make Courage rolls. Failed Courage rolls often result in the character becoming paralyzed with terror, though they can cause a frenzy under certain circumstances.

Once the characters have entered Drakonskyr's halls, there is no escape until Drakonskyr is dead or has fled Tiamat's body. Because physical space has no meaning in Drakonskyr's halls, characters cannot simply turn around and walk out. Instead, they enter another section of the demon's psyche.

Because this area is illusory, however, characters who take enough damage to meet their Final Deaths herein are not destroyed. Should the other characters succeed in slaying Tiamat, they will find the characters in the corridor (which will revert to its normal state). The damaged characters will be in torpor, and they will have neither Willpower nor Blood Points, having spent them trying to heal nonexistent damage. They remain in torpor for as long as their Humanity dictates.

Betrayal

Drakonskyr has always been obsessed with betrayal, and this obsession has grown over the years. The demon feels that it was betrayed by Tiamat when she refused to release its spirit after it had finished helping her with her

problems. Betrayal should become a serious problem for the Diabolists, a group that has probably never been trustworthy in the first place. When the characters enter Drakonskyr's domain, the Storyteller needs to encourage them to betray one another.

This can be done by breeding distrust among the players. Write notes back and forth between them and instruct players to write notes to you, even if they have nothing to say. Limited blood can also cause distrust among the vampires, as can jealousy. Storytellers can add small treasures throughout the corridors, and allow the characters to bicker over them. The items are not real, of course, but vampires may become jealous of each other's treasures, sowing the seeds of distrust and suspicion.

The Corridors

Note that the corridors of Drakonskyr's area of the barrow vary widely in appearance. Returning along a previously traveled corridor does not guarantee that the passage will have the same appearance. You, as the Storyteller, may decide what each corridor looks like. Below are a few suggestions to inspire your own ideas of what the various passageways and paths through the mind of a demon might look like. These are not the areas described on the map; those come later.

A. The corridor appears to be the inside of a living creature. The soft, pink walls undulate gently. The air is humid and the walls are moist. Perhaps muscles, bones or organs are visible. The interior does not need to be anatomically correct for any known organism.

A twist to this theme is to make the interior of the body dead. The walls of the esophagus (or whatever) have turned gray and cold and the stench of death fills the air. Perhaps the walls are ruptured in places and bones can be seen showing through. Little spiders and worms scuttle and wriggle across the floor feeding on the decaying matter.

B. The corridor is filled with primitive torture devices, many of which Drakonskyr has invented. They are all hard iron things, covered in spikes and rust. Perhaps there are dead victims in the various instruments, or perhaps the victims are still alive and they froth and beg silently as the characters pass by.

C. The corridor is filled with countless bits of personal junk, glasses, clothing, wallets, loose change and watches. All of the items are broken or torn to shreds and some have blood on them. The items come from all time periods — some wallets are made of synthetic leather and some are pouches of fine felt that might have been worn on the belt of an 18th-century noble. The demon draws any anachronistic items (i.e., items from a period after Tiamat entered torpor) from the memories of the characters.

D. The walls and floors look like they are made of skin and the skin has several fresh gashes located here and there. If anybody touches the wounds, faraway moans are heard.

E. The walls are black and crumbly like volcanic rock. Gasses spurt from fissures, making the air reek of sulfur and other poisonous gasses. All along the walls are the shapes of humans, their mouths open as if to scream and their hands reaching out toward the middle of the corridor as though they had been covered in lava where they stood. If a statue is broken, no human corpse will be discovered inside — only black stone.

F. The corridor is made of cool marble and the walls are covered in exotic decorations. Statues and gargoyles adorn the hall in classic Gothic style. Suits of armor, complete with weapons, decorate the walls. Candles hang along each wall, and perhaps a candelabra can be dimly seen dancing down the corridor ahead of the characters.

G. The corridor changes into a pathway through the woods or another outdoor location. In order to stay in the true tunnel, one must stay on the path. Should the characters stray from the path, they must find their way back to it before they can enter another chamber and continue with their search for the resting place of Tiamat.

Who knows what terrible creatures or strange events the Storyteller might conjure up to drive them from the path? Perhaps a group of mounted knights suddenly appears and rides down the path, expecting the vampires (obviously peasants) to step aside. When the knights are confronted, the knights refuse to talk; if they are forced to open a visor, the characters realize that the knights have no skin.

The trick to all of these corridor ideas is to keep them creepy, not just gross or disgusting. Keep the players off balance — when they think things are starting to make sense, throw them a curve that makes no sense whatsoever. Perhaps coming down the other end of the path opposite the knights (from idea “G” above) is an M1A1 main battle tank. The tank is a figment of Drakonskyr’s imagination, so the Storyteller doesn’t need to explain it. Drakonskyr can sense the Diabolists entering the tomb through the murk of its sleep. Their fear feeds the demon’s mind and its mind instinctively provides the terror to enhance their fear.

The Damned

Many people roam the halls of Drakonskyr’s imagination. None of the people are real, for all have been reinvented from Drakonskyr’s memories. The demon tortures and slays them in its own version of hell, but because the victims are not real, they never die. These characters can appear anywhere — simply add them as desired or make a random roll to determine whether one is encountered.

1. Cleopatra walks the halls in all of her Egyptian finery. An asp clamps each of her breasts and her skin peels away as she slowly rots. Needless to say, such terror is enough to drive anyone screaming and moaning to the brink of insanity. She believes that she is still beautiful and she will throw herself at male vampires in hopes of getting their attention.

2. Augustus Caesar is also in a degenerate state. He is forced to crawl around on his hands and knees with a chain around his neck. He is led about by a small, perfect little child not more than eight years old. Every now and then the child stops and orders Augustus to do something pointless and demeaning; Augustus grudgingly obeys.

3. A beautiful woman and a handsome man are chained to the wall opposite one another. Each screams and watches as the other is eaten alive by snakes and beetles. The chains are made of a hard, cold iron and are unbreakable. The two cannot be killed, though they will show the effects of wounds.

4. Socrates has his tongue cut out and lies in a pool of simmering fat. He is pierced with many spears and has wounds all over his body. Not very imaginative of Drakonskyr, but his hatred of Socrates runs deep, as Socrates made a fool of Tiamat (and thus the demon) in public once.

5. A fat Roman man (Nero) runs around in circles, screaming and gibbering hysterically as his entire body burns. This is a bit of a joke on Drakonskyr’s part; Nero was often blamed for a major fire in Rome that did great damage to the Kindred and kine of that city.

6. Tiamat appears many times in a variety of terrible places. Drakonskyr cuts, burns, bleeds, maims, slices and dices Tiamat in hundreds of different ways. The Diabolists may be surprised when they face Tiamat at the end of the adventure and realize she is the woman they have seen so often in Drakonskyr’s cursed halls.

The Zombies

As explained above, many of the “Damned” roam through Drakonskyr’s domain. Most of the time these creatures will not be aggressive, but under certain circumstances the vampires may wish to attack them. In this case, the dead have the following stats: Physical 4, Social 0, Mental 1. The zombies also have a Brawling Talent and a Melee Skill of 2. For the most part, the zombies will not attack the characters, but will defend themselves if necessary. They have no Blood Points, though they may appear to bleed.

The Mouth Doors

Doors shaped like mouths are common among Drakonskyr’s halls. Sometimes they are made of stone; other times they are made of flesh and blood. These mouths may bite, doing five or six dice of damage, depending on what the Storyteller prefers at that point. They may be avoided by a successful dive through the doors using Dexterity and either Acrobatics or Dodge (difficulty is variable, but should be at least 7). These doors appear whenever you like. If the door is made of stone, it may be slower (making the test to jump through easier), but it may inflict more damage.



The Rooms

A. Web of Bodies

This chamber contains approximately 50 human bodies blocking the large (30-foot-wide) exit on the other side of the room. The bodies are held together like paper dolls; each body's arm and leg are grafted to the arm and leg of his companion to either side. They are joined to the walls of the exit by extra limbs that grow directly into the wall. The humans are all nude and barely conscious. They stare straight ahead without saying a word.

In the center of the room is a large, black scimitar on a stone pedestal. The only way to get past the human wall is to cut a way through. Once all of the characters are in the chamber, the doors through which they entered close (or snap shut) with a crunch, prohibiting any escape.

The bodies are too close together for any but the smallest person to squeeze through and the ceiling to the exit is extremely low, making it impossible to crawl or vault over them. The only option is to heft the heavy sword and cut through while blood spurts everywhere and the human paper dolls scream and wail in agony. Blood Points can be gained from these bodies if any vampire has the guts to feed from these abominations.

If the characters opt to cut their way through, the humans will cry piteously as they are sliced by the blade. Unless the vampires have Humanity scores of three or lower, they must succeed in Conscience checks (difficulty 6) to avoid losing Humanity. Several limbs must be hewn to clear a path to the exit, as the bodies are arranged several rows deep.

B. Vision of Hell

This room contains terrible images of hell straight from the mind of Drakonskyr. A 25-foot-wide river of boiling blood flows across the path. All sorts of people stand in this river. Some are in the shallows while others are up to their necks in the hot, thick blood. All are howling in pain, to a greater or lesser degree depending on how deep in the river they stand. They are, of course, all naked so they can properly feel the pain.

It is unlikely that the characters will recognize any but a few of those being punished. All are murders and killers. The amount of killing they did (or ordered done) determines how deep in the river they are. Sulla, Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great and Brutus are all here, along with countless other killers who committed their own private murders up to the time when Tiamat went to sleep.

The characters are also present here. Duplicates of the characters can be found in the river in proportion to the number of people they have killed. Because the vampires

have entered the tomb, they have affected this nebulous area of reality and imprinted part of themselves upon it. Any character who has committed diablerie (an act of cannibalism), murder or betrayal, will be in the river at least up to her waist. If a character has been especially brutal, she may not even be fully visible, being immersed over her face.

Vaulting across the river requires a Dexterity + Acrobatics roll (difficulty 7) and at least two successes. Rolling only one success indicates that the character has only gotten halfway across and has managed to grab onto or stand on one of the people in the river. At this point another test (also difficulty 7) can be taken. This time one success is enough to cross the rest of the river. Failure means the character has fallen in.

Any character who falls in takes three Health Levels of damage, which can be soaked normally. The damage is not aggravated because the river is not quite hot enough. Drinking the blood is not a very good idea; it is very hot and will inflict one automatic Health Level of damage (this time aggravated) to any character who drinks it. If the characters collect some blood and wait for it to cool, it will coagulate, making it undrinkable.

C. Test of Patience

Drakonskyr delights in torture and its imagination enjoys pain. This room is obviously made of flesh and it looks like the inside of a human organ. In the middle of the

room, a light diffracts from a membrane overhead. The rest of the room is very dark. There is a very large mouth on the opposite side of the chamber.

As soon as any character steps into the light the mouth speaks: "Cross the light and be destroyed." At this point, pseudo-humanoid creatures made of uncovered muscle will start to emerge from the fleshy walls. They have no real faces or eyes, and seem to be made of living masses of tissue. They begin to attack the characters. The characters inside cannot leave (at least according to the mouth) and those on the outside cannot enter the room.

The fleshy creatures should win. Make sure of that. As long as the characters do not cross the light, they will be killed by the fleshy creatures, while their comrade inside the light watches on, screaming and shouting warnings but unable to do anything about it.

In fact, the entire scene of the characters outside the light being killed is just an illusion. If the one vampire stays inside the light until the end, the light will dim and he will see his friends staring at him strangely — not surprising considering he has spent the last couple of minutes jumping around and shouting warnings to them about things they could not see. If the character did not leave the light until the end of the illusory combat, the mouth on the opposite side of the room will open and the characters can leave by that exit.





If the light is crossed, the illusory combat will suddenly halt, at least from the point of view of the character inside the light. Suddenly, several fleshy creatures will erupt from the walls and begin to attack the party. These creatures are quite real. They have no drinkable blood.

Fleshy Creatures

Physical: Five dice in all Physical Attributes. Other Attributes are unimportant.

Attacks: Claw — five dice to hit and five dice damage.

Health Levels: OK/-1/-1/-2/-2/-5/Incapacitated

D. Gargoyles

This small “chamber” is really only an extension of the corridor, and ends in a large door. The entire area looks like an old Gothic castle, complete with black marble floors and stout wooden doors with iron fittings. Across the room, crouching atop pedestals on either side of the two large double doors, are two huge gargoyles. They have been carved to look like winged demons, with four arms and grimacing faces. Both have large fangs and what look like razor-sharp claws — sharper than any stone ought to be.

As the characters enter, have all of them make Perception + Alertness rolls (difficulty 6), and tell the character with the most successes that he believes he saw one gargoyle’s wing twitch a little bit as the characters entered. The doors are both closed and the characters will have to pass by the gargoyles to reach the doors.

The characters must make Courage rolls (difficulty 8) in order not to feel any fear. Otherwise, they become frightened and quake a little as they stand between the two hulking sculptures. These gargoyles are alive, and they sense fear. In fact, they can sense nothing save the emanations of fear. They can always find someone who is afraid. Thus, the only way to get past the creatures is to feel no fear at all. If the characters feel any fear at all, the gargoyles will animate and attack. Fortunately, the gargoyles are extremely slow, attacking only once every other turn and taking at least a turn to cross the chamber if the characters retreat from them.

Once the characters start moving, they must continue to make Courage rolls (difficulty 9), accumulating three successes to stop fearing the creatures. A Perception + Empathy roll (difficulty 8) will reveal that the gargoyles cannot see in the conventional sense. They do not turn their heads when guns fire at them, nor do they even seem to notice when they are attacked. They do notice shouts of pain, fear or terror. The gargoyles ignore all others in their attempt to destroy the character who is most afraid (either the first one to fail a Courage roll or the one who has scored the fewest successes once the gargoyles have become active).

Any character who realizes this fact, either because she figured it out or because another character tells her, may reduce the difficulties of all subsequent Courage rolls (to 6). However, nothing provokes fear like pain, so each Health Level a character suffers causes her to lose one of her accumulated successes on the Courage roll. Characters can gain negative successes in this way; these they must first remove before they can accumulate the three required successes.

Once all the characters have accumulated three successes, the gargoyles can no longer see any of them and they return their perches. They ignore anything else that happens in the room, either to themselves or to the door.

Gargoyles

Physical: Strength 9, Dexterity 4, Stamina 9

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 5

Attacks: Claws — six dice (nine dice of damage)

Health Levels: OK/OK/-1/-1/-2/-2/-5/Incapacitated

No other stats have any importance. They scowl and hunt for scared vampires. They have no Blood Points. Their claw attacks are not aggravated. The gargoyles are extremely tough and cannot be hurt by firearms. The only practical way to pass them is to notice how they fight and to take courage from it.

E. Room of Silent Screams

This room is filled with approximately 20 people. All of them are covered in terrible wounds, and their mouths are open wide in screams of pure agony. Actually, the characters can only assume the victims are screaming, for the room is as silent as a crypt. When the characters try to speak to one another, they discover that they cannot make a sound. Do not let the players speak aloud to one another and do not let them write notes to one another unless their characters brought pen and paper into the barrow.

Lurking in this room is a terrible creature that looks much like Drakonskyr might look were it corporeal. Big enough to dominate the room, the creature has deep red skin, several arms and a long, barbed tail. Its face is like a man's, only more sinister and pointed. It has a great mane of hair flowing down its back and a sinister goatee on its face. In its hands it carries a great flaming sword, which it uses to deadly effect. Unfortunately, the creature is invisible when the characters enter.

In fact, the creature will never attack unless its assault will only be noticed by one of the characters. Because the room inhibits noise, the characters will not be able to hear it and because it is invisible, they will not be able to see it. The creature usually attacks those in the rear of the group. The creature appears for only a second, strikes and then disappears again.

If a character attempts to communicate with the wounded people, she notices that the wounds are sur-

rounded by burn scars, and that the people are mouthing something (in Latin) between their screams. In fact, what they are saying over and over is, "The thing which will not be seen." This may inform the characters of what is going on, but to decipher the message they must speak Latin, make Perception + Linguistics rolls (difficulty 9) and accumulate three successes. If they spend a lot of time in the room, the Storyteller may want to reduce the difficulty, but characters should not spend too much time here.

In order to keep from getting attacked, the characters may form a ring with each character facing out and then try to cross the room in this fashion. However, this will allow the creature to strike at its choice of targets from inside the ring. The best method is to form a ring facing inward. That way, everybody is always visible to everybody else. The creature will not attack a target being watched by another.

The creature does five dice of aggravated damage with its sword. The creature cannot be harmed by bullets, and because it always gains surprise and first attack on its target, it is not really possible for the characters to kill it. They can keep it back if they wave weapons of some type in front of themselves, but the creature likes to attack from behind anyway. Unless there is a reason it cannot do that, it always strikes from the rear. It appears with a shimmer of light, silently slays its target, and is gone before anyone is the wiser. Indeed, wounded characters may not even be able to get their friends' attention if they are at the rear of the group.

F. Portal of the Future

This large doorway is made of a black, shiny, obsidian-like stone. Nothing but smoke and darkness can be seen through the doorway. "Portal of the Future" is written in English (or whatever language the characters speak) over the doorway. When the Diabolists enter, they see a vision of the future — or so they assume.

The image is very clear and shows Tiamat's ziggurat, located in Room H. Each character sees a different vision, but the theme of each vision is the same. Each character sees himself about to drink from Tiamat. As he stoops to drink, he is attacked from behind by one of his comrades, who mortally wounds him. The attacker then fights the other members of the coterie while the character expires quietly in a corner, the victim of betrayal.

As mentioned earlier, Drakonskyr is obsessed with betrayal. The demon thus encourages the characters to fight one another. If Drakonskyr were fully conscious, it would help them find Tiamat, of course. It yearns to be free and would do anything to further that cause. However, the sleeping demon's cruel subconscious can only hinder others.

When describing the vision (best to tell each player privately or via note), concoct the most likely scenarios. If two characters argue frequently, each should see himself being slain by the other. If one character has threatened the others, those threatened should see themselves being slain

by the first character. Follow the natural conflicts of the party to give these lies a certain amount of possible truth; that way, they will be much easier to believe.

G. The Black Flames

Here is Drakonskyr's final trick. Large, frightening black flames fill this chamber, but they do not radiate any heat. Vampires must make the usual Courage rolls (difficulty 6) to draw near the flames, but even if they put their hands in the fire, they are not burned. The characters can easily walk through the flames to the other side of the room without taking any damage. There is a catch, of course.

Each character who walks through the flames gains power over another, and the character instinctively knows it. As each character walks out of the fire, he sees his hands burn with the black flame and he knows that, if he wishes, he can use this flame on another character to kill her. The flame will work on only one character — a character named by the Storyteller. It will automatically destroy that character — no attack roll is needed and no soak will save the victim. The Storyteller should name characters who are already suspicious of one another, usually the ones seen in the "Portal of the Future" encounter above.

H. The Ziggurat

Here is Tiamat's resting place. The room looks like a large black cavern, complete with stalactites and bats. The chamber is very large (at least in Drakonskyr's mind) and contains at its center a small ziggurat with five tiers, each five feet high. Resting atop the final tier is a plain stone sarcophagus with no ornamentation or inscription. The ziggurat looks very old and very worn. It is, in fact, an exact copy of a ziggurat in Ur where Tiamat spent a great deal of time and that Drakonskyr remembers well.

The lid to the sarcophagus is very difficult to open (Strength Feat of 6 to move it). Once this is done, a grinding and cracking can be heard from the ceiling. Suddenly a torrent of dark liquid floods down over the now-open sarcophagus and douses Tiamat's withered body in fresh, warm blood. Vampires who are on the ziggurat may drink from the blood and regain up to four Blood Points. While this is happening, however, Tiamat will awaken, gaining 20 Blood Points from the magically stored blood that just flooded from the ceiling.

Tiamat shows no mercy. She knows only that her eternal battle with Drakonskyr has turned for the worse and that the demon has gained powerful allies in these Diabolists. She has struggled so long and has come so far that she does not dare to negotiate. Only combat can win her war with Drakonskyr now, and the Diabolists must die. Even were they to flee, she would have to pursue them in order to ensure that they do not tell others of her barrow.

In combat, Tiamat uses all of her Disciplines to best effect, trying to conserve both her Blood Points and her Willpower. However, she must also conserve her Willpower

for another reason. Each turn she must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 9). Failure indicates that Drakonskyr gains control of her body, though for that turn only.

If or when Drakonskyr gains control, it will completely drop Tiamat's guard, making her as vulnerable as possible. The characters will see Tiamat's face twist with emotion as she desperately tries to maintain control of her own body. Unfortunately, Tiamat also subconsciously wants to lose. It is said that older Cainites cannot truly be slain unless they allow it to happen. Tiamat is so tired of her battle that she hardly wants to live. She wishes for oblivion and, with the Diabolists disturbing her sleep, she has realized that she will never truly have oblivion. There will always be those who would violate her sleep and take her blood. Worse, they would release Drakonskyr on the world, something she has dedicated her life to preventing. She grows very tired of holding the demon, and even her sleep is tiring. There is no true rest for her and she secretly yearns for death.

If Tiamat dies, Drakonskyr is freed. Its first action is to possess the body of one of the Diabolists, enabling it to learn how the world has changed during the last 15 centuries. Once this is done, Drakonskyr will leave the Diabolist and escape to work what evil it can on the world. The Diabolists can perform the Ritual of the Bitter Rose (if they know it) or can have one of them drink the blood of Tiamat and go home.


Once Drakonskyr has left Tiamat's body, it will take the sword, simply teleporting it away from the characters and retrieving the blade later at its convenience. Without Tiamat to restrain it, the demon has great power, though somewhat diminished by centuries of inactivity.

Aftermath

If the Diabolists get lucky, they may survive the barrow and flee with Tiamat's power. In this case, the Storyteller will have a powerful demon loose in her chronicle. If she does not want Drakonskyr there, there are several things she can do.

For instance, Drakonskyr has the power to destroy itself. Thus, if Tiamat's last Health Level is taken by the Sword of Nul, perhaps Drakonskyr's reign of terror ends with her. The Sword, forged by the demon's own hand, can banish its spirit back to the plane from where it came.

On the other hand, Drakonskyr can make an interesting addition to any chronicle. Whenever anything terrible happens around the world, the Kindred might wonder if the creature that possessed one of them is responsible. Because possession is a very intimate experience, the Diabolist who was possessed by Drakonskyr will know a great deal about the demon. He will know what Drakonskyr was and how long the demon was held by Tiamat. He will also understand who Tiamat was and what she was trying to do by holding onto Drakonskyr.

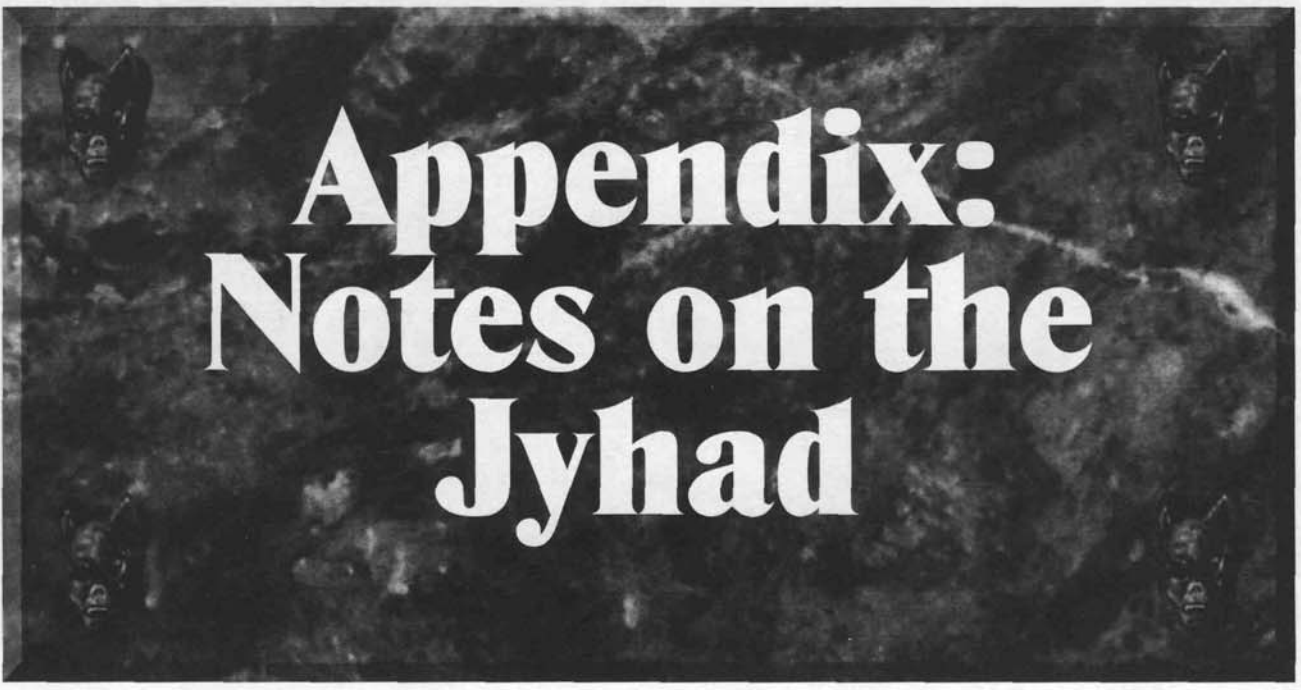


Drakonskyr can show up later in your chronicle or the characters could make it their mission to hunt the demon down, thereby cleansing themselves of their sin (and regaining some Humanity, but what do Diabolists care about that?). It is entirely their fault that it is free, and they may feel responsible for it.

How such a being can be killed is up to the Storyteller; perhaps the only solution is to trick it into possessing one of the characters. The character then holds onto its spirit,

much as Tiamat did, and thereby keeps Drakonskyr from running wild. Perhaps a vampire so possessed might return to Tiamat's barrow and sleep away eternity, in a living prison for the most terrible criminal the world has ever known. Only a great hero could hope to accomplish this and Diabolists are not known for their heroism. The only other option is to let Drakonskyr go free, and wait to see when it will turn up next.





Appendix: Notes on the Jyhad

When the lamb opened the seventh seal, silence covered the sky.
— Enigma, “A.D. MCMXC”

All Kindred fear Gehenna, the time when the Antediluvians shall awaken from their centuries of sleep. None are sure when this will happen, or even if it ever will. Many Kindred have made conjectures, voiced opinions and even performed scholarly research on the subject. Below are the notes of Clan Tremere’s Doctor Mortius concerning Gehenna, and a translation of a text known as *Das Buch von der Grabkrieg*, which was written in the early Middle Ages. It is included here for the Diabolist, for Diabolists often study the Antediluvians and the Methuselahs. Hunting such creatures in ignorance is a sure recipe for destruction.

This text is not commonly available to Licks, for the Tremere have tried to restrict access to it. Several copies have been secretly circulated among the Kindred, however, and the text has gained a following among many anarchs, who find the text fascinating. Most elders dismiss the writing as the ravings of a madman. Still, some read it and wonder.

Dr. Mortius himself was Embraced in 1566, several centuries after the book was written, and he wrote this current translation in the middle of this century. He is

currently on assignment for Clan Tremere and his whereabouts are unknown.

Translator’s Notes

Loosely translated, *Das Buch von der Grabkrieg* means “The Book of the Grave-War.” It was written by a Malkavian in the 12th or 13th century A.D. The author’s name has been lost to the ages, and he does not mention his sire except to refer to him (not her; the gender is masculine) as a “vampire-father.” Little else is known about this writer. The writer refers to his clan as Malkavian, or so it would seem. He uses a variety of invented symbols to denote the various clans; certain symbols do not seem to relate to any particular clan extant today. It is possible that they refer to minor bloodlines.

He occasionally writes in an archaic Greek dialect that disappeared from use 3,000 years ago. Otherwise, nothing else is known. It is this translator’s opinion that our anonymous Malkavian was more disturbed than most of his ilk, to say the least. The text is almost unintelligible in its structure and style, no matter how many languages one speaks. The writer also obsesses upon several points and repeats them for



pages, sometimes repeating the same paragraph or stanza (some of the book is written in verse) several times, word for word.

Most of the text is written in a combination of German and an apparent dialect of Linear A, which neither Kindred nor kine has ever been able to translate. Fortunately, the Linear A is confined to the middle portions of the text. The author of the work does not split sentences between Linear A and German, though paragraphs are sometimes split and some pages alternate between both languages.

Physically, it is an unremarkable book, appearing to be an illuminated manuscript of poor quality, and was probably made in a monastery. The cover bears no title but the first page displays it in the scribbling German hand that can be found throughout the work. The style of the hand does not change, which has convinced many that the book is the product of one author and not several (as the poor organization would suggest).

Das Buch von der Grabkrieg is divided into seven cantos. Each canto varies wildly in length and structure, and some are entirely in verse form. Other cantos are part poem and part prose, while others are entirely prose. Because of the difficulties of rhyming in English, I have translated the sections below only in prose, preserving the stanza structure when it was used by the author himself. I have also done little to cleanse the disorganized style from the text out of fear of sacrificing meaning for clarity.

Each canto covers an age in the history of the world and describes the Jyhad during that period. The author places himself in the fourth age of history, with only three ages to follow. Many attribute this to his own egocentric madness, which dictates that he stand in the middle of all.

The following passages are pulled from many parts of the book and I have placed them in as logical an order as possible. In some cases I have rearranged the text in chronological order. The third canto is almost unintelligible (much of it is written in Linear A) and I have taken what I could from later cantos to give some ideas of the events this canto was meant to describe.

Das Buch von der Grabkrieg

So we are told in the *Book of Nod* that Caine made but three and we are also told that these were slain during the first war where Caine's grandchilder arose and made war upon their parents. Thus were the first and second ages of the world of the grave. These grandchildren knew not the word of God. They divided themselves from the tribes and they knew not his word, for all they knew was death. Such was their madness as it was the madness of my grave-father¹

It was during this great warring [of the second age] that the three children of Caine were slain, or so it was believed, but I fear that they shall reawaken in the last age of the Kindred and surprise all, the greatest masters of the Jyhad.

¹ Here the author goes into one of his many tangents about madness and hatred. The text continues two pages later when the author returns to the description of the first two ages.

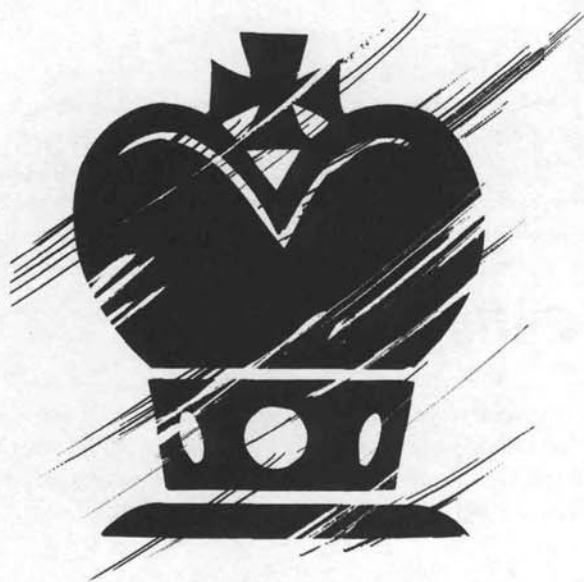
What they shall do I cannot say. The voice² does not tell me. Yet we may wonder. They obeyed Caine first and made no more childer. It was not until Caine had left them that they disobeyed him and produced the grandchilder. What they shall do I cannot say. Perhaps it will not be something terrible.

It was during the great warring that the tribes were scattered and the Kindred³ came into their own. Here many of the tribes were born, but this is all spoken of in the *Book of Nod* and my voice tells me that is not my purpose, for I will tell of things to come, not things that have been and are known to the many sleepers who rest under the earth.⁴

After the warring, there was a third age of the grave-war. Known as “the sleeping,” this was a time of peace for many. Such a peace as is possible for those who drink from life. Here many slept, scattering all over the world to avoid the black Diabolist who would drink from their power. They could be found everywhere, for their power was considerable. As they rested, they gathered their power and manipulated those whom they had bred to do their bidding. Rather than a time of peace it was truly a time of preparation; it was peaceful only because the sword had grown dull and the lance was broken. Once reforged it would begin again.

The eaten one⁵ had come and so with him the fourth age of the grave, the time of gathering. Now that the old ones sleep, they fight and duel with one another, yet they still gather strength and wait for the real battle to begin. The death has come and soon new clans will be formed — clans that would wish to destroy the world and make it all as the grave. From their birth shall come other ages.

There will be a time when the mortals grow to be strong. They will no longer be children but they will grow until they can hunt us. They will discover us and hunt us to the final death. This will happen when we grow careless and allow them to discover us, not realizing the danger they will present. The black ones will also be born at the beginning of this fifth age, the age of discovery. The black ones will be the eternal enemies of all the clans that exist. They are unnatural and terrible and should not be allowed to walk the earth. They are just pawns in the great game. Created by an ancient Kindred, perhaps even one of Caine’s first children, they would turn the earth into eternal night.⁶



In the sixth age of the world there will come a time when the children will not listen to their elders. When this happens look to see the end, for it is nigh. The children will gather in great numbers. Their elders’ long centuries of uncontrolled Embracing will have made many, and many will not have wisely bestowed the living-death. These childer will run through the streets of great cities and they will not listen to reason. They will break the laws time and time again.

There will be many vampires in each city, so many vampires that blood will become scarce and the kine will dream of us in their sleep and know in their hearts that we are there though we may still hide from them, deceiving them in the dark. Rebellion will be common. The black ones will gain control of the greatest city on the earth and the ruler of a mighty city will fall, slain by his own madness. A mighty prince will be rescued from death by childer and a great city will be consumed in flames. The Lupines will helplessly rage against us. The humans will discover a

² The author often speaks of a voice that tells him how to write and what to say. I should translate it as “Muse” but poetry seems to have little to do with this voice’s purpose.

³ For the word Kindred or vampire, the author consistently uses the symbol of an ankh.

⁴ “Sleepers” probably refers to Kindred in torpor, not the dead. Despite his comments here, the author goes on to talk a great deal about the *Book of Nod* and many events of human history.

⁵ The “eaten” one does not appear elsewhere in the text though there is reference to “one without blood.”

⁶ “The discovery” seems to refer to the Inquisition, which occurred 300 years after this text was written. The “black ones” are doubt the Sabbat, who also did not exist at the time this was written — at least, not in any numbers.

terrible fire which we will keep safe by giving it to all so that any who use it will be burned. Thus will the world fall into chaos.⁷

The last age of the world will last but for one year. The old ones, the Antediluvians, will awaken and they will drink the blood of their childer to gain strength, for the strength of mortals no longer quenches them and they need the blood of many Kindred to survive and grow in power. Strengthened by this blood, the Kindred will do battle with one another until only one remains. Thus will the Kindred be destroyed for none shall survive that year save the one.

Epilogue

This is where *Das Buch von der Grabkrieg* ends. There are several more pages that appear to be a kind of epilogue, the author's notes or perhaps some of both. Most of it is nonsense or unreadable; however, two passages stand out from all of the others. They are translated below.

Verse I

*Hunt the shadow-sleepers
Think not on fear or hate
Hunt them for blood
for Kindred's sake*

Verse II

*They must not awaken
Slay the one
and there shall not be a one
when the sun sets*

Finale

The voice will tell me nothing more. I plead, I beg for more so that we may know what is to come after and so we

shall not live in despair of Gehenna. The voice may not speak to any others and then this would all be lost. Still the voice will not speak of after. There is no after for us, and yet there is an after if kine survive. Yet the voice will not speak. Silence. Silence.

Storytellers' Notes

Storytellers should feel free to use this in any way they desire. The first three lines of Verse I have been used as a Diabolists' creed, mumbled to give a Diabolist courage. Some Diabolists claim that they hunt the old ones as a sort of first strike against them so that their elders shall not hunt other Kindred when they awaken.

Scholars of Kindred history do not have access to the original text (only a select few of Clan Tremere do). Dr. Mortius's essay is often the only source for information on *Das Buch von der Grabkrieg*. This essay can be found in the hands of some anarchs, who use it to justify their attacks on the elders. They see it as an essay written by an elder, and the translated section of the book does not show the elders in a flattering light. It also foretells the coming of the anarchs, and they use this to justify their existence and activities.

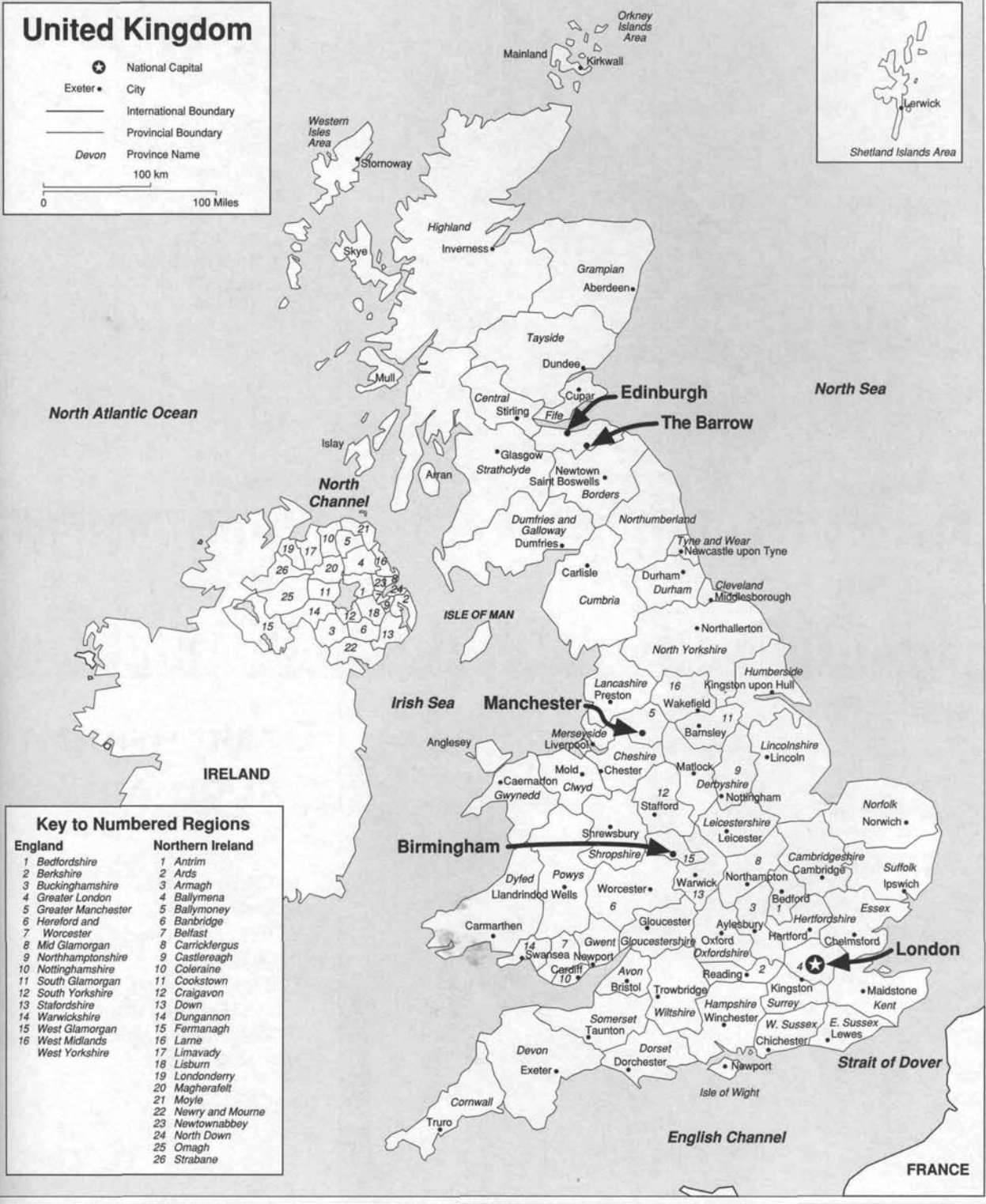
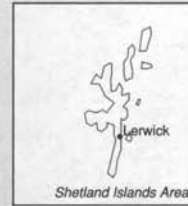
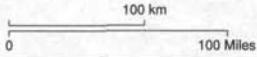
Many elders do not take the text and essay to be other than idle curiosities. The essay has been translated into English, French, German, Spanish, Italian and several Slavic tongues. Any copy the characters are likely to see has undoubtedly been photocopied several times and is hardly legible, or has been scanned or retyped onto a computer.

What use the above holds for the characters is up to them and the Storyteller. Gehenna has been foretold by a number of sources, but the exact date, or if it will come at all, is still a mystery. Storytellers may or may not wish to include Gehenna in their chronicles. The text is there, written by a mad vampire with some vision of things that may come, but whether his final vision is true is up to the Storyteller.

⁷ Some of these prophecies appear to have come true. However, they are sufficiently general to make verification difficult, for no specific cities are named nor are specific Kindred or clans.

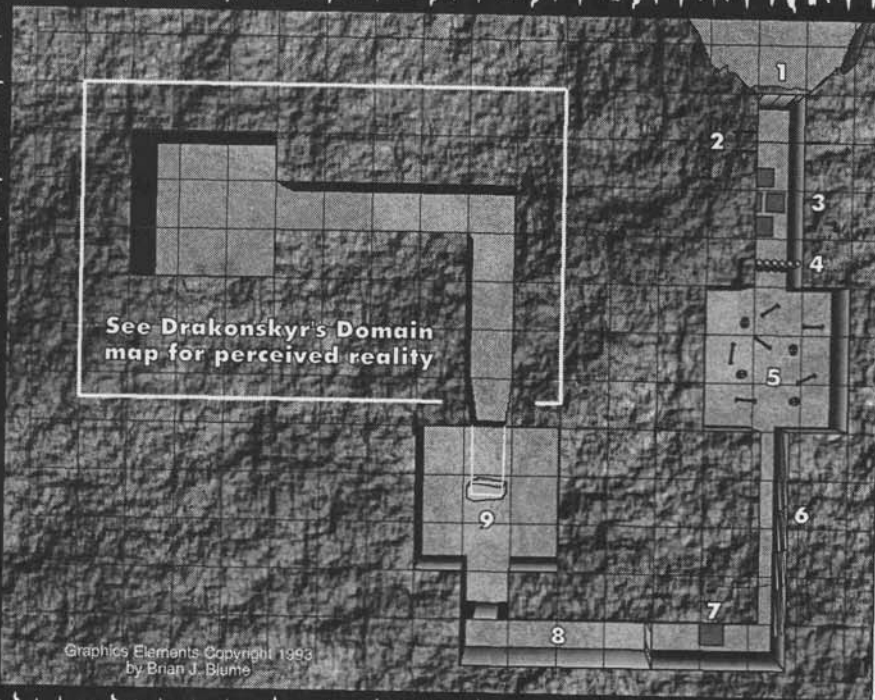
United Kingdom

- National Capital
- City
- International Boundary
- Provincial Boundary
- Devon** Province Name



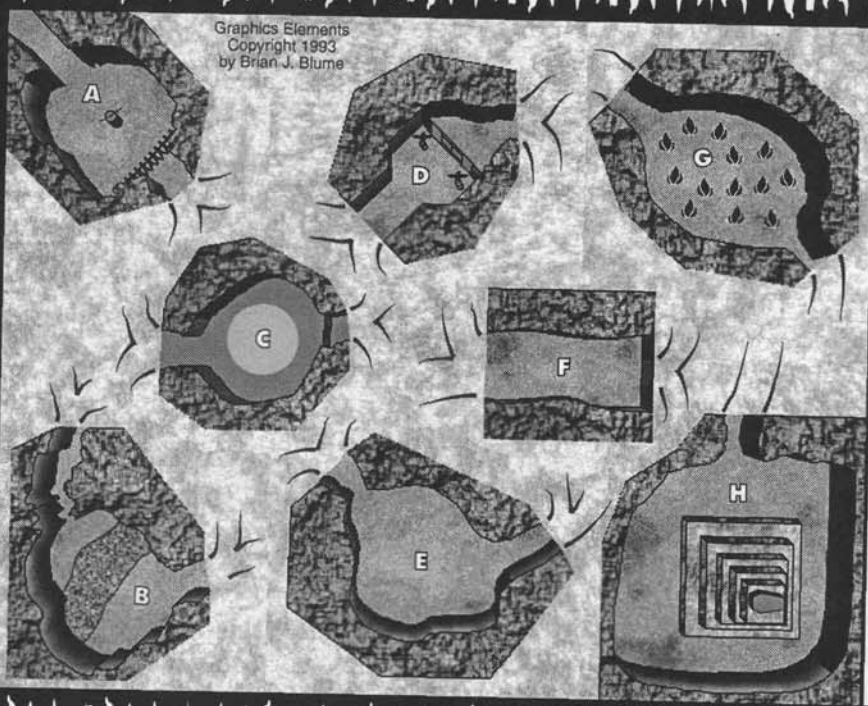
Key to Numbered Regions

England	Northern Ireland
1 Bedfordshire	1 Antrim
2 Berkshire	2 Ards
3 Buckinghamshire	3 Armagh
4 Greater London	4 Ballymena
5 Greater Manchester	5 Ballymoney
6 Hereford and Worcester	6 Banbridge
7 Worcester	7 Belfast
8 Mid Glamorgan	8 Carrickfergus
9 Northamptonshire	9 Castlereagh
10 Nottinghamshire	10 Coleraine
11 South Glamorgan	11 Cookstown
12 South Yorkshire	12 Craigavon
13 Staffordshire	13 Down
14 Warwickshire	14 Dungannon
15 West Glamorgan	15 Fermanagh
16 West Midlands	16 Larne
West Yorkshire	17 Limavady
	18 Lisburn
	19 Londonderry
	20 Magherafelt
	21 Moyle
	22 Newry and Mourne
	23 Newtownabbey
	24 North Down
	25 Omagh
	26 Strabane



The Barrow

1. The Entrance
2. The Spear Trap
3. Pit Traps
4. Primitive Napalm Trap
5. The Wolf
6. Hall of Razors
7. Pit of the Sun
8. Hall of Fire
9. Fool's Gold



Drakonskyr's Domain

- A. Web of Bodies
- B. Vision of Hell
- C. Test of Patience
- D. Gargoyles
- E. Room of Silent Screams
- F. Portal of the Future
- G. The Black Flames
- H. The Ziggurat

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