

# COMPANION



20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY EDITION

VAMPIRE  
THE MASQUERADE



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# COMPANION

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# Introduction

This has been an interesting book to write and develop.

When I started developing for **Vampire: The Dark Ages**, back in 1997, making books was a very different arrangement than it is today, especially with the open development process. I'd have an idea, my manager would approve it, I'd write an outline, the writer would write it, the art director and graphic designer would make it pretty, and it'd end up in your hands.

Now it's very different. As both writer and developer, I have an immediate and always-open link with the people who'll be using the material I'm creating. No more dumping words into my office and coming out, six weeks later, with a book that I hope people like. Now, you and I get to work together every step of the way. That's how we did it for **Vampire: The Masquerade 20th Anniversary Edition** — hereafter, **V20**, because that's just too damned long to say — and that's how we want to do it from here on out.

For example, when I put up the development draft of the titles chapter of the **V20 Companion**, an undeniable volume of feedback questioned the function of the systems attached to titles. Players felt that the systems made the titles too mechanical, that they left

too many questions as to how the systems conferred their benefits, and the metaphysics of suddenly having or losing three dice to a pool because an Archbishop said, "You're not a paladin anymore." Poof! Those dice vanished with the title.

As a result of player feedback, I cut the systems.

A book is a book. It's of finite size and finite content. Of course, I think this is a good book, with plenty of good and fun and Vampire-themed ideas, but at the end of the day, it's about 40,000 words and 60 pages long. With all of the discussion that went into this book, on the White Wolf Blogs, in the comments, in the forums, and across the social networks where we talk about what we're developing, we'd be at about 320,000 words. That's about the size of the **V20** book itself, somewhere near 500 pages.

Where I'm headed with this is that, if you like what's in here, or if you just like to talk about Vampire, join us in the open development process. You get to help me deliver the book you want. I get to work with a creative and insightful group of players who get to know why I make the decisions I do instead of just accepting what the publisher puts in front of them. It's a very good system.



There are so many good ideas that came out of either showing in-development material or just plain talking about the game that I wish I could print them all here. If you're interested in the currency of ideas, having new material to show in your chronicle or new concepts around which to center a character or encounter, share them in open development! Even if they don't see "official" print, you're likely to inspire someone else or to draw inspiration from them. Isn't that what storytelling is about?

## What's In This Book?

Traditionally, the companion books that followed game line core books have been "director's cut" material, stuff that didn't fit in the book but that metaphorically ended up on the cutting-room because of page-count constraints. This time, however, Transmedia Manager and Art Director Richard Thomas specifically didn't want to do that. He didn't want to be bound by how we had done our books in the past or confined by what we had to do in physical print titles now that digital publishing and print-on-demand are our primary delivery methods. In particular, he wanted to put much of the book back in the hands of the players and really take advantage of the open development process.

Rich also wanted the book to include options, permutations, options to tweak the setting and ways for each troupe to make their chronicles their own. The original pitch contained a section on kitbashing the physical Disciplines to better suit individual playstyles, but after consulting with the #v20 Twitter community and the vigorous commenters at the White Wolf Blogs, it became obvious that **Vampire: The Masquerade** players wanted some more juicy setting material to explore in their games.

So I came up with an outline, Rich and Eddy approved it, I wrote about a third of the material, and then we put it up on the web for some feedback. You gave us your input, we put it back through the writing process, and here's an overview of the finished, player-approved material.

**Chapter One:** The community spoke very strongly here, telling me to dump the systems in favor of more numerous and more versatile titles. The result is a cor-

nucopia of titles, from the tried and true staples from 20 years of **Vampire** history to new concepts and titles that explore interesting **Vampire** themes. This chapter also offers a bit of expanded material on the more esoteric sects, the better to frame the understanding of their titles.

**Chapter Two:** This chapter expands the idea of prestation from a Camarilla-only practice to a sort of *comme il faut* that exists beyond the boundaries of sects, allowing the Damned to expect certain things from their colleagues in the other factions — and then revile them when those who have pledged their promises break them. Included is the system of boons and favors that Kindred thrill to trade and the social consequences of employing them.

**Chapter Three:** This chapter on Kindred and Technology was the most challenging to write, for two reasons. First, the topic is so broad as to easily fill a book of its own. Hell, how technology has changed in **Vampire's** 20 years is an enormous enough topic on its own, let alone exploring how the Kindred have reacted to those changes. Second, the chapter needs to play closely enough to the conceits of vampire to provide a foundation — in general, Elders fear and spurn technology while Neonates flock to it to give them an edge. However, those are pretty obvious statements, so the chapter needs to play against type often enough to create some new ideas and turn the Kindred's expectations upon themselves. The result is an unconventionally arrayed chapter that's more of a collection of ideas than a sequential exploration of topics. Plus, the technology chapter is where the Anarchs to pull themselves out of their early-2000s slump.

**Chapter Four:** This is another place where community feedback really shines. My original plan for this chapter was to have almost a "survey" of the World of Darkness: a handful of locations that illustrated Vampire themes and hopefully encouraged players to turn an eye to what lies beyond their home domains. The response was overwhelming, however, in that everyone active in the community seemed to have a cool idea for a location or a request for more information on their own home regions. This chapter swelled to over twice its original proposed size. But so what? The people who are buying the books said what they wanted, and it's my job to give it to them in the way that suits the release schedule best.











# Chapter One: Titles

*To punish me for my contempt for authority,  
fate made me an authority myself.*

— Albert Einstein

The Kindred are a proud and acquisitive race. Regardless of which sect, if any, owns their allegiance, the social contract among vampires demands a pecking order, and the more Cainites who dwell in a domain, the more complex the hierarchy of who's superior to whom and who can demand respect from whom.

In its simplest form, Kindred social structure has one preeminent vampire at the top, who maintains her primacy based on strength, cunning, or zeal. Titles add dimension to this and complexity to the network of Kindred relations. More importantly, for the vampires themselves, they add something a vampire can lord over other vampires: a social recognition of their achievements or a symbol of their commitment to their domain's culture.

Titles are part of the landscape of the vampires' World of Darkness. From the rampaging Sabbat to the Machiavellian Camarilla to the eldritch Tal'Mahe'Ra to the turbulent Anarchs, titles define sectarian causes and illustrate what Kindred collectives find important. Without titles, if the whole of the society of the Damned comprised unrelated Autarkis, the night would be an even more anarchic place. Indeed, to many Kindred, the only thing more important than a sense of superiority in the night is blood itself.

## Observing Titles

New Kindred are often surprised to discover the vast hierarchy of undead society — as well as how rigid that hierarchy can be. To modern Kindred, the elaborate social structure of the Damned is part of the horror of their condition: The rules and offices are downright feudal in their severity, and few domains make provisions for the “rights” of a fledgling. Even those that do carry a burden, in that each Kindred depends on every other Kindred to keep their existence secret.

Elders, of course, may never have known anything other than a closed social structure. Whether their last living days were in the Dark Ages or the Age of Enlightenment, the Blood is far from egalitarian in its potential. While the results of the Embrace may allow for equality among the genders, creeds, and culture of mortal life, there's no greater limit to Kindred power than Generation itself. The power of the Blood dovetails nicely with concepts familiar to elders such as Divine Right and mandated despotism. There's even an element of predestination to it all: If a vampire was intended to make a difference in Kindred society, well,



she'll have the age and power to make it so. Titles are simply the social trappings of this call to destiny.

Ancillae may find themselves straddling the line of these vastly different perspectives in the War of Ages. Certainly, the fact that they're no longer neonates allows ancillae to taste some amount of the power upon which elders can call, and what Kindred can honestly say that she doesn't want more of whatever tastes motivate her. On the other hand, unless those elders die off, ancillae find themselves in the same position as many neonates, locked out of the ability to gather the unlimited wealth, blood, or power that seems to be the Caine-cursed privilege of the most venerable among the Damned.

It is within the dangerous mix of personal domains, local politics, and the War of Ages that titles play such a prominent role. Kindred titles reflect the weight of the Kindred social contract, the timeless, deadly ballet of vampiric cohabitation that has erected the order that Cainite domains require for stability and to thrive. Since time immemorial, since Caine first spoke the Traditions, the rules have existed and have needed someone to be their shepherd. Sects like the Camarilla exist to reinforce the social order while factions like the Sabbat seek to remake these constructs into something that benefits their own outlook. The modern notions and technological acumen of the Anarchs, the transcendental mysticism of the Inconnu, and the bloody gnosticism of the Tal'Mahe'Ra — all of these exist to keep in check the ravages of the Beast and the ego of lesser Kindred. Titles imply rules and rules give order. Anything else is chaos, and irreversible damnation.

From the rankest neonate granted the duties of the Scourge to the most terrible Methuselah Prince, each vampire has a duty to one another, a station above or below one another, and privileges or responsibilities he can expect from the calcified hierarchy of vampiric custom. The society of Kindred is greater than any individual Cainite herself.

At least, so the Damned hope.

## Acquiring a Title

Normally, a Kindred acquires a title over the course of a chronicle's events, either earning the title or being placed unceremoniously in it by a vampire who wishes to see her fail publicly. A title may be a reward or a punishment; it may be an ambition or an obliga-

tion. Whatever the case, a title comes with certain responsibilities and expectations. A Kindred may possess a title as long as she's fulfilling the terms of the title and its social contract with other vampires — or she may be propped up by a mentor (or rival) who sees a little more potential (or humiliation) than the Cainite in question has demonstrated to date.

In game terms, a Kindred wishing to obtain a title must have done something during a chronicle that warrants her consideration for the title. A Storyteller has three options when it comes to granting titles and indeed may employ any of them in a chronicle depending on how he wishes to see the title used in play.

**Bestowment:** The Storyteller may decide that, purely as a result of the chronicle's events, a ranking Kindred bestows a given title on the vampire. This is commonly the case in chronicles in which the players' characters are charged with a task by, say, a Prince or Archbishop, or in which they're drafted by a Sheriff to "bring that Anarch menace to heel," for example. In the case of bestowment, the title lasts so long as the granting Storyteller character allows it to exist or so long as the character is competent or conniving enough to maintain it. Indeed, savvy Kindred may be elevated to titles persist longer than the vampires who granted them. In these cases, story events dictate the term of the title, and the Storyteller may revoke them (with story context, obviously) as the chronicle requires. In certain circumstances, a boon (see [Chapter Two](#)) may be discharged with the bestowment of a title. Such favoritism is rife in Kindred society.

**Character Advancement:** Titles are a bit like the Status Background, and if the Storyteller chooses to allow, may function similarly to that Background (see below). A player may purchase a title with experience points at a rate of one experience point per dot of the title's ranking. This is a perilous undertaking, however, as titles reflect something that another Kindred may declare null at any time. Having the chance to purchase a title must, of course, come as a result of actions taken within a story: Few Kindred are declared Paladins or Primogen "just because." Storytellers should allow Kindred who purchase their titles with experience points a bit more leeway in success or failure in determining whether they may continue to keep their titles. After all, they've paid for the privilege with the character advancement resource, and failure in a title's responsibilities can yield as many storytelling opportunities as success. It is recommended that no character be allowed to begin a chronicle with a title (unless the Storyteller determines otherwise).



**Status Benefit:** A Storyteller may choose to combine the functions of Status and titles. If this is the case, a character with a title doesn't pay anything additional for it, but the Kindred's Status is tied to the title, and if she loses that status, she loses the title as well. Using this option adds a high-stakes political aspect to a chronicle, but also reflects the "what have you done for us lately?" attitude held by many vampires. Some ambitious Kindred is always waiting in the shadows to take advantage of a fallen leader's decline. Naturally, this makes Status a double-edged sword, conferring duty upon esteem, and such meritocracy isn't always appropriate to every domain. After all, some territories are home to much-revered vampires of high Status who don't actually do much to maintain that Status, but instead cling to old glories as symbols of their prominence.

## **Titles as Status Bonuses**

Given that vampire society reveres status and accomplishment, it's not a surprise that those who acquire titles can bring those symbols of accomplishment to bear in the social arena. Provided the Kindred in question doesn't mind name-dropping or laying it on thick, a Kindred can invoke her title for a Status bonus.

**System:** The player spends a Willpower point. For the duration of the scene, the player may add the value of the character's title in addition to the number of dice granted by her Status Background to dice pools that would be modified by the Status Background. Failure on this roll indicates that the character comes across as a sycophant or overbearing. See p. 118 of V20 for more information on using Status in social situations.

## **Creating New Titles**

The Damned are enamored of any social construct that allows them to display their importance to one another. Their elaborate sect and clan structures reflect this, and in addition to the widespread titles widely recognized regardless of geography, any number of localized titles may exist in any given domain. For example, a Sabbat stronghold on the border of a Lupine territory may have a Huntsman title responsible for organizing proactive raids against the rampaging werewolves, while an Anarch might hold a "diplomatic" office responsible for "recruiting" from the more stable Camarilla stronghold up the highway.

As such, Storytellers and players are encouraged to create titles that reflect the unique state of their chronicles and home domains. So long as the result is something that can create a story hook or impress another vampire with its formal recognition, some Kindred somewhere probably calls it her title.

## **Negative Titles**

Some titles are classified as "negative." Such titles are invariably detriments to their holders, whether socially or as indicators of a caste system that marks the individual as a second-class (or worse) Kindred. Negative titles aren't stepped in terms of effect like more positive titles are; they're just bad — and they stay that way so long as the title applies to the Cainite.

A negative title always affects a Kindred, so long as the vampires she's dealing with know her title. If the Kindred is able to hide her negative title, she suffers no drawback from it, though if her title is revealed, she may have more severe consequences than her title carries on its own. For example, if an Outcast in a Camarilla domain claims a privilege that belongs only to recognized Kindred, or if a True Hand Quli disobeys her orders, these vampires may well find themselves banished, imprisoned, or even destroyed.

Should a player wish to confer a negative title on her character, she may do so at her discretion and with the agreement of the Storyteller. Note that, in the context of a chronicle, it may not be possible to simply declare a negative title void. Since a negative title costs nothing to buy (see above), it cannot, similarly, be bought off. While a negative title may provide an excellent opportunity for roleplaying or character background, they should not be taken lightly, as they represent the prejudices and hypocrisies of the deathless, parasitic society of the Damned that spawns them.

**System:** Negative titles inflict a variety of drawbacks upon those Kindred who labor under their stigma. Cainites with negative titles subtract one from social dice pools in actions involving those who know they bear the title.

## **Titles by Sect**

Each of the Cainite sects has a different ideology, and the agenda driven by this philosophy dictates a variety of roles and responsibilities for those who would rise to prominence in their sect.



The V20 core rulebook explored only a few of the titles and offices held by vampires. Indeed, with any number of domains and unique situations that characterize the world of the Kindred, the number of distinct titles is never uniform, nor is their exact function. What follows are some of the more consistent and widespread titles among the dominant sects. These may serve as models for Storytellers to use in their domains, or they may be useful as points of comparison for new titles.

## The Camarilla

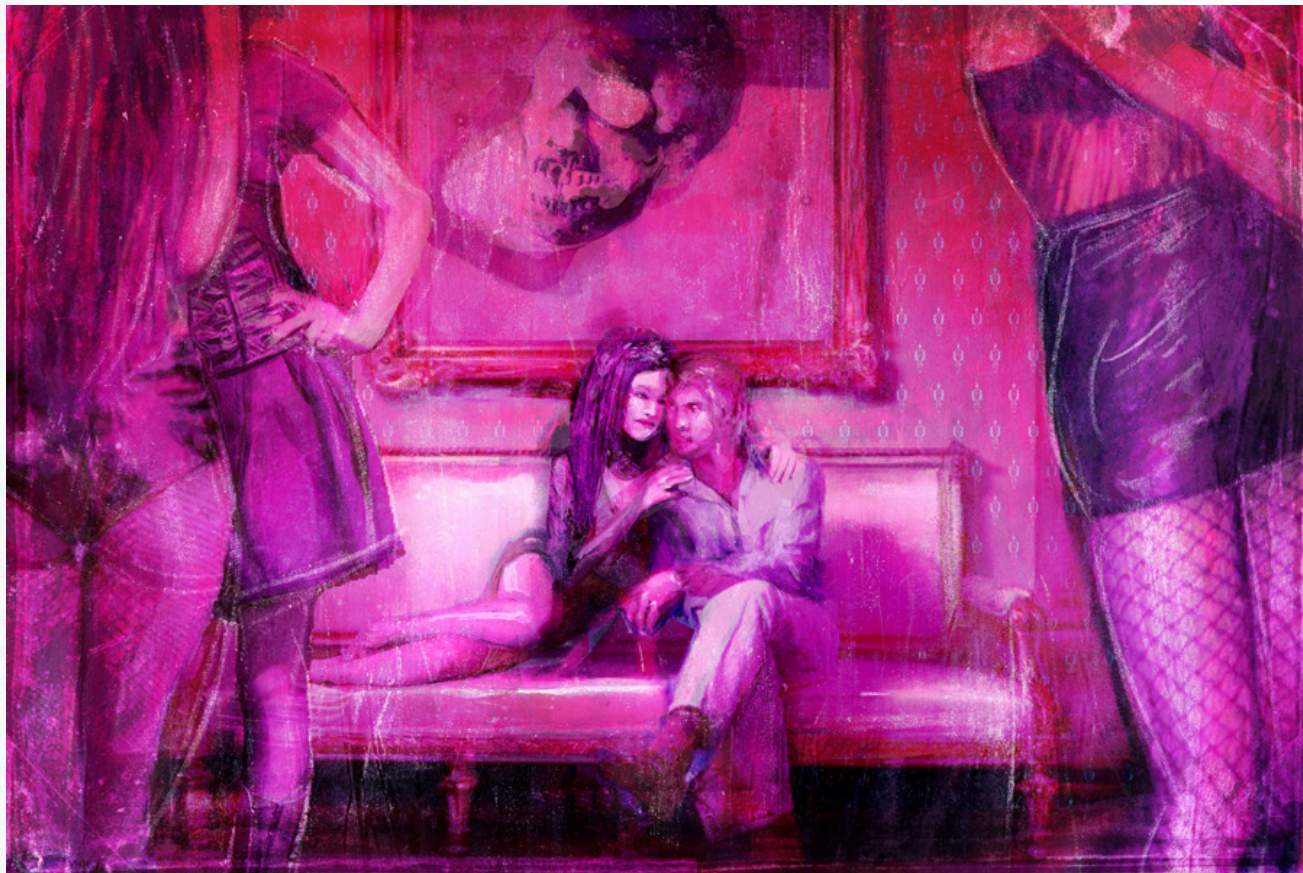
While it is by no means the oldest Kindred sect, the Camarilla is likely the most widespread and certainly the most stable. This is due in large part to the Ivory Tower's laissez-faire attitude toward domains. So long as whoever claims Praxis over the domain enforces the Traditions and respects the customs and primacy of the Inner Council, the domain receives the Camarilla's blessing and support.

The philosophy and hierarchy is unabashedly feudal: Those of high Status in the sect may be said to "rule" those of lesser Status (through setting or at least influencing domain policy and custom), but they also owe them some degree of protection against the

outside world, as represented by the enforcement of the Traditions. The practical reality of the matter varies by domain — some domains are exceedingly formal and do in fact resemble courts of aristocrats, while others are practically frontier territories, standing boldly but precariously against threats from other Kindred, suspicious kine, and the unknown horrors of the World of Darkness.

Thus, to the average Camarilla Kindred, sect rarely factors into nightly unlife — except when it does. Princes and Primogen may have a handful of very strict rules, but for the most part, Camarilla Kindred can do whatever they like, so long as they abide by the Traditions of the domain and heed the pecking order. To this end, the Camarilla typically practices a policy of inclusion, in that it considers all Kindred members of its sect unless they formally exclude themselves from it (such as by pledging allegiance to another sect).

As a result of this inequitable distribution of power and duty, the Camarilla is also probably the sect that has the most infighting. With its disparate members united only under the variable authority of the Prince's title — whose powers vary from domain to domain — the Camarilla has little to bring it together





aside from the charisma of the Prince and the threat of other sects' encroachment. Feuds, vendetta, treachery, and scheming are as ubiquitous among Camarilla Kindred as is the need for blood.

One characteristic of the Camarilla, despite its decentralized power structure among the lower echelons, is an extremely potent and organized top tier. The Inner Council of the Camarilla is universally respected (or feared) by the members of the sect, even if they disagree with its decisions or flout them in their provincial shadows. Powerful agents of this high council, like the Justicars, Archons, and Alastors, command respect wherever they travel, as they are mobile extensions of the will of the Inner Council, who are the most ancient monsters most members of the Ivory Tower can imagine.

Proponents of the Camarilla structure compare it to halcyon days of Rome, which granted citizenship to those it conquered and allowed its citizens to do whatever they wished, so long as the tribute arrived on time. Critics use that same argument, and compare the Inner Council to the most deluded of emperors, playing their violins while the empire collapsed in flames.

More information on the Camarilla may be found on pp. 38-39 of V20.

### **Prince (Camarilla; 5-point Title)**

The Prince enforces and interprets the Traditions; her word is law in her domain, which extends so far as she has the might or influence to back it up. So long as the other Kindred of the domain respect the Prince's authority, the Prince may render a verdict on any matter involving the Traditions, up to and including another Kindred's claim to the Blood. Everything from censure to declaring a Blood Hunt is at the Prince's disposal.

The Prince's duties and privileges are described on pp. 24-25 of V20. The types of Prince who rule domains are many and varied. A wise Prince knows that rule must be just to enjoy continued support, but a tyrant Prince may well rule through fear.

### **Harpy (Camarilla; 2-point Title)**

The Harpy's duties and privileges are described on pp. 25 of V20.

For chronicles using the prestation rules presented in Chapter Two, Harpies may be the arbiters of the validity or satisfaction of a boon. In these situations, if a Harpy declares a boon satisfied or still owed,

such is the case, and any grievance in such a matter held either by the debtor or the debt-holder must be broached with the Harpies themselves.



### **Optional System: Harpies as Status-Mongers**

The approval of a Harpy can make or break a fellow Kindred, and many Harpies are sparing with their praise but liberal with their scorn. A Harpy's favor grants a +2 increase to a Kindred's Status for as long as the Harpy extolls his virtue. Similarly, a Harpy's disapproval reduces a Kindred's Status by 1 (but never below 0), for as long as the Harpy speaks ill of him. A Harpy may generate only a single Status effect at a given time, and the effect lasts until the end of the scene in which the Harpy ends her favor or disfavor.



### **Keeper of Elysium (Camarilla; 1-point Title)**

The Keeper of Elysium's duties and privileges are described on pp. 25 of V20.

The duties and privileges of the Keeper of Elysium begin and end in those hallowed halls. Once outside an area with Elysium status, the Keeper is just another Kindred. In fact, some large domains, or in domains where the Prince decentralizes the power of other Kindred of the court, each Elysium has its own separate Keeper. The ultimate result is the same: The Keeper of Elysium is both host and security in that august place, and she alone has the ability to remove transgressors against civility and personal safety.

Those who fall into this role — for few are those who actively seek to be custodians of hidden demesnes where vampires may revel in the Damned natures — have no common characteristics. Indeed, some Princes even use the title punitively, to teach recalcitrant or presumptuous vampires object lessons about the nature of the Kindred social contract.

### **Scourge (Camarilla; 1-point Title)**

The Scourge's unpleasant responsibilities are described on pp. 25 of V20.



The Scourge's Status is often considered one dot higher for the purposes of social interaction with elders, who appreciate the Scourge's efforts to stave off the Time of Thin Blood.

While the converse isn't necessarily true among lower echelons and younger Kindred of the domain, a Scourge is rarely popular among those whom he may one night find himself responsible for eliminating. Whether or not they have the active hostility of the neonate caste, Scourges are often considered sellout "Uncle Toms" and the lapdogs of the corrupt elder ranks.

### **Sheriff (Camarilla; 2-point Title)**

The Sheriff's duties are described on pp. 25 of V20.

By invoking the authority of the Prince, the Sheriff may, in some domains where stability is more important than the rights of individual Kindred, violate the Traditions themselves. The Sheriff may employ these benefits only so long as the Prince grants her license, but it is sufficiently broad to make for a very versatile trump card, especially when dealing with those who threaten the Kindred order in a domain.

Of course, empowering one's agents to act above the law is the textbook indicator of tyranny, and the sign of a desperate or oppressive Prince. Such Princes may not last long, but they do so at great cost to their reputations (and those of their Sheriffs) in the long term. In such cases, a Storyteller may rule that a Tradition-breaching Sheriff's Title Status is actually only 1 instead of 2.

Needless to say, those Sheriffs who breach the Traditions out of their own political expediency rather than in the Prince's interests may soon find themselves stripped of their titles and starved of blood.

### **Primogen (Camarilla; 3-point Title)**

The Primogen has access to the Prince and counsels her on matters of domain importance. According to the noted scholar of the Kindred condition, Claire Bargo, Primogen "may force a Prince to recognize a vote on a topic of personal significance — though this must typically be done in Elysium or while the Prince's court is in session, unless the Prince is willing to convene a special hearing." Bargo warns that "the result isn't binding, nor does calling the vote require other Primogen to cast their vote, but it does show the popular Kindred opinion of the matter in question... and savvy Princes would do well to heed their Primogen." Bargo's commentary considered, few Princes are thrilled to be forced to consider matters of policy at anyone's behest other than their own, so a

Primogen who finds himself invoking this privilege frequently may well find himself excused from the duties of the Primogen thereafter. A Primogen may call this vote as often as she wishes, but if the vote fails or lacks popular support, the Primogen loses a point of Status for one month. If she fails two subsequent votes, the Status loss is permanent (though she may earn it back through some other method, as is normal for Status).

The Primogen's privileges and responsibilities are described on pp. 25-26 of V20.

### **Justicar (Camarilla; 5-point Title)**

The Justicar may overturn any and all Princely decrees. This is an immense amount of power, but it is balanced by the inability of the Justicar to set policy herself (though some activist Justicars may veto every proclamation with the exception of the ones they "suggest"). Ultimately, the Justicars are answerable to the Inner Council of the Camarilla, and those Justicars who cause more chaos than they instill order risk the ire of that secretive, puissant, and terrifying body of ancient Kindred.

The Justicar's role is described on pp. 26 of V20.

### **Archon (Camarilla; 4-point Title)**

Archons are considered above the law, because they serve the Justicars and the Inner Council; they may not be held accountable for transgressions against the Traditions in domains they visit. This rankles many Princes (especially since the appearance of an Archon is usually the "last chance" before the intervention of a Justicar), but the purpose of this immunity is to enable the Archon to take whatever steps are necessary to put a wayward domain back into a position of stability. As with Justicars, Archons who abuse their privilege may well find themselves answering to the Inner Council, but even so, this convocation of elders is more likely to side with its agent than with a Prince who can't even keep her own territory in order. Nevertheless, it is a foolish Archon who regularly flouts the "common sense" Traditions such as the Masquerade, for then he's undermining the very purpose of his title.

The Archon is described on pp. 26 of V20.

### **Alastor (Camarilla; 2-point Title)**

An Alastor's powers are significant but narrow. Like an Archon, an Alastor is not subject to the declarations of Princes or even the governance of the Justicars, but enjoys this condition only when hunting the Anathema.

The Alastor's duties are described on pp. 26 of V20.





### **Inner Circle (Camarilla; 7-point Title)**

The Inner Circle is described on pp. 26 of V20.

As the governing body that determines policy for the whole of the Camarilla, the Inner Circle has whatever powers it chooses to grant itself. For centuries, the Inner Circle has been an extremely conservative body, making no changes at all to the Traditions or the nature of Kindred relationships for one primary reason: The status quo makes things very comfortable for the Inner Circle. It has the ability to nominate and censure Justicars and Archons, depose Princes with a word, grant or revoke any term of the Traditions, and declare another vampire's right to exist negated. The only balance of power for the Inner Circle are other vampires of her terrifying eminent Status and title. And, indeed, that balance of power is at the center of the Camarilla's Jyhad and War of the Ages.

### **Seneschal (Camarilla; 4-point Title)**

The Seneschal is the Prince's right-hand agent. The title itself is liquid, and has different responsibilities in different domains. In some cases, a Seneschal has little actual power, and is more of an honorific title intended to exalt a peer or grant Status to a trusted

aide. In other cases, the Seneschal wields as much or even more power than the Prince himself, issuing decrees, rendering judgment, and enforcing the Traditions himself. Whether the Prince is unable or unwilling to perform her responsibilities, the Seneschal may handle some or all of these, or may simply wait until the Prince is deposed and claim the title himself.

The Prince decides which of his own duties and privileges belong to the Seneschal. In the case that a Prince is unable to make a declaration of the Seneschal's powers, the Seneschal may claim any Princely privilege until the Prince refutes it (or until a new Prince excuses a Seneschal from her role).

### **Hound (Camarilla; 1-point Title)**

The Sheriff is sometimes granted the ability to appoint Hounds, who serve as his investigators and enforcers. Hounds may be keen-eyed, quick-witted fact-finders, but just as frequently, they're sadistic bullies who take pleasure in their sanctioned brand of corrupt justice.

During an investigation or interrogation, a Hound may breach the Traditions if it becomes necessary to bring a rogue Kindred to heel. Princes generally grant Hounds a good deal of leeway in this regard, but re-



peated or egregious breaches, or violations that compound the crimes of a transgressor may well earn the Hound a censure or worse. See the entry for the Sheriff, above, for more information on treating the Traditions too malleably.

### **Herald (Camarilla; 1-point Title)**

The Herald acts as the Prince's voice, making the Prince's edicts known to the domain. For example, a Herald recites the domain's policies at Elysium, and speaks the results of any formal convocations where a Prince and her court define new laws. As well, a Herald announces the arrival of august and titled Kindred at formal events and at Elysium. This function can be abused, as a Herald may deliberately delay or misspeak the policy in question. Such Heralds rarely hold on to their positions after such treachery, however.

If a Herald hasn't spoken a policy aloud, that policy does not yet affect the Kindred. A Cainite can't be retroactively held accountable for something he didn't know broke the laws of the domain, especially if the policy recently changed or had been decided but not yet communicated.

### **Chancellor (Camarilla; 1-point Title)**

In very formal domains, the Chancellor maintains records of prestation, defining who has pledged what to whom. Not all domains use the services of the Chancellor, while others roll its duties into those of the Harpy (see above). Some sects other than the Camarilla make use of the position (sometimes under a different title) as well. In some of these very conservative domains, the Chancellor reads the roll of domain debts before any official gathering of the city's Kindred, so that the state of Kindred obligations is made known to all.

The Chancellor has final say over the validity or satisfaction of a boon (see the prestation rules in Chapter Two for more information). If a Chancellor declares a boon satisfied or still owed, the debt still exists, and any challenge to that debt held either by the debtor or the debt-holder must be settled with the Chancellor or the Prince.

### **Whip (Camarilla; 2-point Title)**

The whip is a clan title, whose role is being the Kindred in charge of motivating other members of the clan to present a unified face in matters of clan politics. A whip's duties may be invisible to members of other clans, as with internal matters, or may be evident at a Prince's court or other citywide function,

often by the Whip's bullying his clanmates to toe the line on a question of public importance.

Despite being a recognized title, a whip has very little actual authority, relying on force of personality (or dire threats) to cajole his clan-mates. Those Kindred possessing the title of whip usually have impressive Expression- or Intimidation-related dice pools at their disposal when clan politics are at issue.

### **Dux Bellorum (Camarilla; 4-point Title)**

When the Camarilla mobilizes its members as a war-force, it often selects a Dux Bellorum from among the ranks of the Archons, Justicars, or even extremely competent Alastors. The Dux Bellorum is a battle marshal, the master of a Camarilla combat engagement. He may be a front-line warlord, leading a bloody charge into a Sabbat domain, or he may be a scheming tactician, organizing guerilla strikes to destabilize an enemy territory from within.

The wrath or cleverness of the Dux Bellorum motivates the other Kindred. The Dux Bellorum is the field authority in matters of war, so this title's value indicates his narrow but unquestioned rank during assault, sieges, and other periods of open conflict. Even Princes and Justicars defer to the Dux Bellorum (even if they're not always happy about it).

### **Imperator (Camarilla; 6-point Title)**

The modern nights are desperate times, and upon occasion, the Camarilla turns its full attentions to a crisis or a war effort. In these moments of sect-wide gravity, the Ivory Tower appoints a "Justicar of Justicars," a field marshal of terrible potency who serves as the champion for the whole of the Camarilla cause. Even the members of the Inner Circle rally around the Imperator, for the very invocation of the title means the sect sees possible doom in its future. The Imperator may nominate and command from one to three Dux Bellorum title-holders.

The Kindred of the Camarilla will follow the Imperator into hell itself, should the Imperator ask them, and will remain their own masters instead of succumbing to the rage, hunger, or fear stoked by the Beast. As such, Ivory Tower vampires who heed the Imperator's rally can push themselves to ever-greater extremes without descending into Beast-maddened maniacs — for a time. This dominance of reason gives the Imperator's forces the edge necessary to overcome more primal foes.



### **Outcast (Camarilla; Negative Title)**

An Outcast is a Kindred who is considered *persona non grata* by the Prince. An Outcast enjoys none of the rights or privileges granted to all acknowledged Kindred in that domain. An Outcast isn't necessarily banished from the domain, though she may be. Often, the title is conferred upon truculent fledglings or other "inconsequential" vampires a Prince considers below his notice, when the tumult caused by declaring a Blood Hunt upon her is unwarranted. Indeed, once the transgressing Kindred calms down or apologizes, many Princes often rescind the Outcast title. Only a Prince may declare or revoke the title of Outcast, though she may delegate this authority at her discretion.

The Outcast title supersedes all other titles or Status Backgrounds a Kindred may have. Thus, an Outcast adds no Status bonuses to social dice pools; instead he subtracts one from social dice pools in actions involving those who know he's an Outcast.

### **The Sabbat**

The Sabbat considers itself a sect at war: war against the Camarilla, war against the Antediluvians, war against the infernal, and war against anyone who doesn't agree with their unique brand of martial spirituality.

That spirituality is a defining characteristic of the Black Hand. Their wars are holy wars, informed by the Paths of Enlightenment and the philosophical insistence that each Cainite is his own master and not the pawn of slumbering Ancients orchestrating the actions of the Damned from the cold depths of torpor.

To the Black Hand, mortals are materiel: blood bags from which to draw sustenance before plunging themselves hell-bent back into the fight. Sabbat vampires hate the very idea of the Masquerade, but all except the dimmest understand the terms of the secret war and the necessity of hiding their existence — because the mortals have unquestioned numerical superiority.

As such, the titles of the Sabbat are militaristic, predicated on leading the sect into endless conflict against the innumerable enemies who challenge it. They are vicious war-chiefs who would plunge the mortal world into thrall to their undead masters. They are zealous hierophants who must bulwark their fellow Sabbat's souls against the depredations of the Beast within and demonic forces without. They are deathless soldiers who dive fangs-first into the enemy's throat, leaving blood, fire, and ruin in their wake.

Among the lower echelons of the Sabbat, many Cainites are nomadic or dwell in communal havens, the better to remain mobile and to protect themselves in numbers. As one climbs the ranks of the sect, however, the hypocrisy of the Black Hand becomes evident. The sect is led by the same elders against whom Sabbat rhetoric rails, and their grudges are as old and bitter as any Camarilla crony's. While the sect's rhetoric serves to unify it against external rivals, it serves equally to distract fiery young Cainites from the fact that their august leaders are still elders, who are pulling their strings and manipulating them against each other.

Doubtless, the Sabbat is an entity of paradox. It hates the tyranny of elders, but it is a vehicle for wily old fiends to stoke centuries-old rivalries. It despises the power of the Antediluvians, but many of its leaders are the ancients' childer or grandchilder. It espouses spiritual liberation and fierce independence, but it deals in petty atrocity. More than anything else, the Sabbat is a sect of extreme ideology, its adherents finding something in the Black Hand's relentless dogma to give them purpose in the modern nights. There are no such things as casual Sabbat.

For more information on the Sabbat, see p. 40-43 of V20.

### **Archbishop (Sabbat; 5-point Title)**

Like a Prince, the Archbishop makes the rules in a Sabbat domain. This policy is usually based on some interpretation of the Traditions, because while the Sabbat may be chaotic, it's not stupid. Also, unlike most Princes, an Archbishop of a domain is appointed (or at least endorsed) by the Sabbat as a sect. Coups and praxis seizures are relatively rare in Sabbat domains, which places much more value on central authority and the ideology of the sect than does the more egalitarian Camarilla.

The duties and privileges of the Archbishop are described on pp. 25 of V20. Note that in some Sabbat domains, a council of Bishops assumes the authority usually associated with the Archbishop.

An Archbishop is the ultimate authority on any matter brought before him in his domain; as with a Prince, his word is law. Any True Sabbat vampire can petition the Archbishop to hear a grievance she may have and render a verdict. Of course, the Sabbat as a whole has little tolerance for those who can't settle their own disputes. Invoking an Archbishop's judgment is fraught with peril, as it can result in earning that elder's ire (and hostility). At the very least,



hiding behind the Archbishop's robes is a way to lose what respect other Sabbat might have for a Cainite, so the appeal to authority is best use very sparingly if ever.

### **True Sabbat (Sabbat; 0-point Title)**

True Sabbat are those Cainites of the Sabbat who have proven themselves to be worthy of continued existence. In most cases, vampires Embraced into the sect in anything other than wartime are True Sabbat by default, learning the ways of the Black Hand at their sires' instruction. During more desperate times, however, the sect Embraces quickly and in massive amounts, and these conscripts (see *Shovelhead*, on p. 26) don't enjoy the minimal respect that True Sabbat do.

True Sabbat have enough proverbial rope to hang themselves. They're considered full members of the sect, but they're also the lowest "real" members on the political totem pole. A Cainite must be at least True Sabbat before she may begin earning Status in the sect.

### **Ductus (Sabbat; 1-point Title)**

The duties of the Ductus are described on pp. 26 of V20.

In many cases, Ducti find themselves "knighted in the field," having earned the attention or favor of a higher-ranking Sabbat patron. Given the martial orientation of the Sabbat, this isn't surprising, but it doesn't always make for good pack leaders in stable Black Hand domains. Many Ducti find themselves stripped of their titles when wartime subsides, or saddled with more subtle responsibilities that require entirely different approaches than ripping out an enemy's throat. The position of Ductus is perhaps the most frequently granted — and vacated — title in the sect.

### **Pack Priest (Sabbat; 1-point Title)**

The role of the Pack Priest is described on pp. 26-27 of V20.

Priests are the spiritual complement to the more combative role of Ductus in the Sabbat. A Priest may be a paragon of a Path of Enlightenment, or she may simply withstand frenzy or ride the wave better than most. Priests need the instinct to kneel before the Beast when it's appropriate and the higher sense of self to provide spiritual leadership to a pack. It's a wide and varied role that includes blood-soaked maniacs, brooding plotters, and every personality archetype in

between who has demonstrated some ability to "keep his shit together" when things become stressful.

### **Templar (Sabbat; 1-point Title) and Paladin (Sabbat; 1-point Title)**

The Templar is described on pp. 27 of V20. The Paladin performs a similar role, with subtle distinction.

In general, Templars are the assassins, vaunted killers, and proactive gladiators of the Sabbat. Paladins typically serve in more defensive roles, as an honor guard to an august Cainite, or in the retinue of a traveling Priscus. The finer details are largely a matter of ceremony: Paladins and Templars are the Sabbat vampires who have distinguished themselves in the method and quantity of horrific violence they can inflict upon others. For a sect that prides itself for its nigh-constant state of warfare, that's saying something.

### **Inquisitor (Sabbat; 3-point Title)**

The Sabbat has a problem that the other sects see very little of by comparison: infernalism. Those that would sell their souls to greater evils are rampant in the sect, and their influence is such that the Sabbat empowers a certain class of Cainite to deal with them. Inquisitors are greatly feared and respected by the Damned of the Sword of Caine, both by those who have cause to fear them and those who may be caught in the wake of their zealotry. Inquisitors take literally the Biblical admonition against suffering a witch to live, and occasionally make sure there's no room for error by castigating those who might eventually become infernalists, who might aid the infernalists, or who might not have done enough to stop infernalists once they had heard of their activity. Inquisitors have great leeway to stamp out such heresies, and with the Sabbat so readily able to Embrace new Cainites when needs demand it, the sect doesn't mind a little "collateral damage" if it allows the rest of them to remain sovereign over their souls.

### **Bishop (Sabbat; 3-point Title)**

The duties and privileges of the Bishop are described on pp. 27 of V20.

A Bishop typically has sway over one particular facet of Cainite influence in her domain. In matters relating to that sphere, a Bishop often cultivates both Influence and Status. It is not uncommon, for example, to have a Sabbat domain administrated by a Bishop of Industry, a Bishop of Mortal Chattel, and a





Bishop of the Occult, all of whom have sworn the sect fealty to the Archbishop.

### **Priscus (Sabbat; 3-point Title)**

The duties and privileges of the Priscus are described on pp. 27 of V20.

“As the Prisci rise from among the rabble of the Sabbat according to no set standards, it is difficult to describe them in universal terms,” the Kindred Leighton Borland once noted in an epistle to a curious Prince. “They are cagey, however,” Borland continues, “and have a knack for seeing the behind-the-scenes movements and motives of other vampires, which helps them achieve their own prominence.” A Priscus is served first and foremost by no specific expertise, but by commanding Subterfuge, Politics, and Investigation-related acumen.

### **Cardinal (Sabbat; 5-point Title)**

The Cardinal’s role is described on pp. 27 of V20.

The Cardinal oversees a vast geographical territory, yet must be able to comprehend the impact of the events happening at any point inside it. Surprisingly, for a sect driven by dogma and crusade, the Sabbat’s Cardinals play a very political game, often at odds with each other over territory and policy as much as they are with the other sects and the threat of the Antediluvians. Critics of the Black Hand point to this politics-as-usual at the top as one of the greatest hindrances of the Sabbat — that its leaders are willing to nurse petty grudges and play the violin while their empire burns from within.

### **Regent (Sabbat; 7-point Title)**

The Regent is described on pp. 27 of V20.

The Regent wields power over the Sabbat in a manner similar to that of the Inner Circle over the Camarilla, with one important difference: Whereas the Inner Circle is a council, the Regent answers to no one and is held in check by no one. This autocracy makes the Sabbat far more nimble than the Camarilla, but is obviously much more susceptible to tyranny and hubris. In effect, the Regent declares policy, which trickles down to those who support and practice it; when it comes to the sect, the Regent of the Sabbat makes the rules.

### **Shovelhead (Sabbat; Negative Title)**

Shovelheads are the recipients of the Sabbat mass Embrace, often created to be shock troops or cannon fodder during an incursion of other aggressive Black



Hand action. No one expects Shovelheads to survive very long, so when they outlive their usefulness, fully fledged Sabbat Cainites often find them problematic. Indeed, Shovelheads must defer to all ranking Sabbat, and those who don't may find themselves snuffed by supposed sectmates. It's also possible for Shovelheads to prove their worth and thus become True Sabbat.

Being a Shovelhead precludes the Kindred from being able to obtain all other titles or Status Backgrounds with the exception of True Sabbat (see p. 24), which he must earn before anything else.

## The Anarch Movement

The Anarch Movement hates being a “movement,” though that name for the sect sees most common use among members of other sects (and a few Anarch prigs). To the Anarchs, the Anarchs are just the Anarchs, and anyone who wants to say otherwise can shove it up their ass sideways. Not all Anarchs are so contentious about— well, yes, they are. That's why they're Anarchs.

The ideology uniting the Anarch Movement is one of self-made sufficiency. They have no need for Princes or Priests because, what the fuck, this isn't the Dark Ages. The Camarilla represents a centuries-outdated system of inherited privilege, which the Anarchs revile as plutocracy or oligarchy. The Sabbat is a pack of batshit-crazy devil-worshippers who set each other on fire and fuck nuns to upset or thrill their sires. No one has ever seen anyone from this Talladega-Mahatma-Ra-Ra-Ra nonsense and the Inconnu are a bunch of hippies who pretend they're not vampires, but what do they do, drink nectar from flowers? The whole convention of sects is set up so that these vampires over here have an excuse to pretend that they're better than those vampires over there.

If you can't beat them, though, join them. Thus, the “Anarch Movement” is an extremely loose sect of like-minded Kindred who refute the social contract with the elders that other vampires blindly accept. Little holds the Anarchs together outside a unity against the oppressive War of Ages, which is what many non-Anarchs fail to grasp. An Anarch doesn't necessarily hate a Ventrue because she's a Ventrue, but may hate her because she's the Primogen's child and “just gets” access to all the privilege that her sire gifts her. If a Ventrue Anarch becomes Baron because she has brass balls and can tell the Prince next door

to go fuck a doorknob, well, that's a Baron worth supporting, Ventrue or no.

It's worth noting that the Camarilla considers the Anarch Movement a faction under its own purview, stemming from the ages-ago events that resulted in the creation of both Camarilla and the formally-recognized Anarchs... as well as drawing the attention of the Church Inquisition that Kindred fear to this night. Of course, most Anarchs resent this imperialistic patronage, “because it's a flaming pile of goddamn elder bullshit,” in the words of the Anarch Smiling Jack.

Anarch titles tend to be driven by accomplishment, potentially even becoming the nickname of the Kindred who bears it. Most reflect a degree of bravado, and most are built around the prowess, will, or endurance necessary to stand up to the scions of corrupt societies. Anarch titles also represent the willingness of the Movement to stand together when the chips are down or the sect next door is on a crusade. After all, the Anarchs without each other are little more than Autarkis.

For more information on the Anarchs, see p. 44-45 of V20.

## Baron (Anarch; 4-point Title)

The Baron's duties and privileges are similar to those of a Prince, but the Kindred who dwell in a Baron's domain don't necessarily want the same sort of dominating, overweening would-be dictator who calls the shots in a Camarilla domain. As a result, the Baron's powers are more limited than a Prince's, as the Anarchs trade some amount of authority and security for their freedom. The Baron is discussed more on pp. 25 of V20.

Like a Prince, a Baron interprets the Traditions in her domain. Unlike a Prince, a Baron doesn't have the same amount of undeniable authority that a Prince does, and she runs her domain as much through reason, populism, and force of personality as the gravity of her title. Her word is law, but it's a law established by a social contract with the other Anarchs. A Baron may render a verdict on any matter involving the Traditions of the Masquerade and Domain, but in Anarch domains, the other Traditions are up to the free Kindred themselves to resolve. An Anarch may make an appeal to a Baron to solve such an issue, but ultimately, even the Baron's input on these matters is advice, not policy. A Baron surely has earned status and respect that might inflect such counsel, but counsel is what it remains.



### **Reeve (Anarch; 1-point Title)**

The Anarch Reeve is a seeming paradox, a keeper of order in Anarch domains that typically spurn such order and authority. Still, few are the Barons who are so foolish as to allow pure anarchy in their domains, because all it takes is one shitbird Lick to blow the Masquerade and bring holy (mortal) hell down on everyone else's heads. Only the most foolish of Anarchs puts blind faith in others of his sect, and most at least reluctantly acknowledge the sometime necessity of a sanctioned asskicker to keep the less-principled in line. A Reeve is similar to a Sheriff (see above and p. 25 of V20), but often has even less accountability. Many bullies end up in the role, but brutish would-be Reeves should take heed: In an Anarch domain, a Baron may end up siding with the Kindred who decide that enough is enough and it's time to physically effect a change in the Reeve's attitude. The Baron usually declares a Reeve, but popular opinion among the Damned of the domain can just as quickly ruin him.

In practice, the Reeve is much like the Sheriff, but the role's lack of formal support in the form of the Baron reduces its Status by a point. The difference in Status implies the lack of esteem that many Anarchs hold for authority figures.

### **Warlord (Anarch; 3-point Title)**

A wise Baron knows that most Anarch domains are built on the blood and muscle of those willing to fight against more oppressive sectarian rule. Thus, a wise Baron respects his Warlords. Warlords are those Anarchs who are so charismatic or violent that they can incite a group of shiftless rabble into a fighting insurgency. Warlords may be gang leaders, cult priests, political ideologues, or bat-swinging union bosses — whatever the case, they represent the motivational leadership of fighting factions in Anarch domains. Unless the Anarch Movement manages to put together a nonviolent coup, it's probably going to need the assistance of a Warlord or three to assemble its armies, and those Warlords will continue to be influential even after the revolt succeeds or fails. Ultimately, Warlords inspire their followers, whatever form their organization takes.

### **Coyote (Anarch; 1-point Title)**

The Coyote specializes in getting Kindred in or out of domains. In most cases, the Coyote smuggles Anarch defectors into Anarch domains and out of their Camarilla or Sabbat territories. In some cases, though,

the Coyote is happy to earn a buck or a boon and doesn't ask too many questions about his "cargo" or her destination. After all, one of the benefits of being an Anarch is being able to choose your own creed. To hear a Kindred known as Joe Sousa tell it, "A savvy Coyote knows how to smooth talk and grease the wheels of the system, and knows how to talk his way out of a situation... or avoid them to begin with." And since Sousa's been smuggling vampires across domain lines all across the Anarch Free State and the other sects' outposts in the region for over a decade, he knows what he's talking about.

### **Sweeper (Anarch; 2-point Title)**

Anarchs tend to rankle when the idea of someone else keeping track of them comes to the fore. As such, the Sweeper of an Anarch domain tends to be an unpopular Kindred. It's the Sweeper's responsibility to know — to one degree or another — who's in the domain. For most Barons, the Sweeper simply provides enough information to prevent any unpleasant surprises. If the Baron thinks the domain is home to only a dozen rugged individual Cainites, but in reality, 40 hungry vampires are out there prowling the Rack, that's a Baron who's going to find himself spending a lot of time and effort cleaning far more messes than he thought he had on his hands. The more tyrannical Barons use the Sweeper to not only keep track of how many Kindred are in the domain, but who they are and what they're up to — and that's the sort of abuse of power that incites the Anarchs to slaughter the Sweeper and stake the Baron.

Thus, the role of the Sweeper is one that lends itself to being received with suspicion, even if the Anarchs reluctantly acknowledge its necessity.

## **The Tal'Mahe'Ra**

The other Sects are largely unable to fathom the goals and methods of the Tal'Mahe'Ra, which lends an air of mystery and suspicion to the True Black Hand. This suits the Sect's tastes, however, for the fewer Kindred that are wise to its aims, the fewer Kindred who can oppose them, at least consciously.

In truth, many members of the Tal'mahe'Ra do not themselves understand the ways of their most venerable leaders. Unlike the Camarilla, the True Black Hand does work toward a purpose, however occulted that purpose may be. Unlike the Sabbat, the True Black Hand often eschews the violent overthrow of mortal institutions and Cainite tradition, preferring



instead to work through subtlety, misdirection, and the employment of supernatural secrets. The Tal'Mahe'Ra lacks the worldly ambitions of the Anarch Movement, the existential curiosity of the Inconnu, and the parochial interests of the Independent clans.

What the Tal'Mahe'Ra does pursue is a position of vampiric supremacy. They see themselves as the shepherds of mortals, who exist to sustain them on their quest to re-establish the point of vampiric genesis in the form of the First City. The True Black Hand's stronghold in the Underworld is in fact believed to be the mystical resonance of the Kindred's First City, and through extended supernal manipulations of the death-energies inherent to the vampiric form (and even a few outside those of the Damned condition), the Tal'Mahe'Ra desires to either bring down the veil between the worlds of the living and the dead, or to push the First City back through that veil. Until that time, they serve as warders of ancient Kindred secrets, some of which reside in the form of torpid Ancients — perhaps even counting among their number some of the progenitor Antediluvians. Members of the True Black Hand see vampirism as a cursed but exalted state, and mortals, who make possible the existence of the Damned, must be cultivated and even protected in order that the Kindred may continue to exist. Of course, the fragility of mortal lives and minds means they must often be protected, both from things they were not meant to know and those callous Kindred who would prey on them without restraint. The True Black Hand is patient, understanding the inexorability that comes with the flawed immortality of the Damned. It is highly structured, its formality occasionally appearing to outsiders as a rigid politeness — or a dispassionate cruelty.

The Tal'Mahe'Ra counts as its greatest enemy an undefinable force or collective consciousness that exists beyond the boundaries of most vampires' perception. These mind-searing monstrosities, call Souleaters, can take many forms and manipulate many pawns. Members of other Sects may well be under the sway of the Souleaters, as might any number of other denizens of the night. Werewolves, mortal mages, and the occasional inchoate nightmare-creature that finds its way into the world might be in league with these dark powers, knowingly or, more likely, completely obliviously. This war against the Souleaters is known as the Shadow Crusade among the devoted of the Tal'Mahe'Ra.

With that said, the mindset of the True Black Hand is nearly incomprehensible to many modern Kindred. The Tal'Mahe'Ra is part death cult, part archaeological society, part witches' coven, and part conspiracy of secret masters. "Protecting" mortals may take the form of absconding with them, conditioning them, exsanguinating them, or binding them into deathless oubliettes to protect or rebuild shattered minds and broken bodies. The Tal'Mahe'Ra has seen firsthand some of the most earthshaking horrors the World of Darkness has to offer, and in some cases accidentally unearthed it. Elements of their philosophy are wholly alien to the Kindred of the more prevalent and accessible sects, making coexisting with other sects extremely complicated at times. The True Black Hand realizes this and tries to move as invisibly as possible in order to keep their secrets hidden.

Those who hold titles in the Tal'Mahe'Ra know their place and their responsibilities. Theirs is a stratified society, with some amount of meritocratic Status mobility among its field operatives, but with an elaborate body of chthonic mandates and occult predestinations among its aristocratic ranks. Its members are often devoted to the point of fanaticism, and even though a strong case could be made for True Black Hand members having greater opportunities for comfort or peace if they left the sect, they remain steadfast. Although their ways are horrifying, and the Beast lies perpetually near to the surface, the Tal'Mahe'Ra are true believers.

### **Del'Roh (Tal'Mahe'Ra; 5-point Title)**

Shrouded in secrecy, the ultimate authority of the True Black Hand directs her shadowy sect from the faction's stronghold far beyond the veil of life and death. Indeed, inscrutable vampires who claim this august title rarely see the physical world; the mystic affairs of the sect keep them rooted firmly in the underworld, where most of their resources and challenges lie.

The Del'Roh makes all of the policy decisions for the Tal'Mahe'Ra, and all members of this sect defer to her judgment. The sect's concerns have little in common with the more terrestrial affairs of the Camarilla, Sabbat, Anarchs, and Independents, being instead focused on the movements of the dead and certain awful relics believed to be warded by agents of the sect deep within the realm of death and shadow.

So long as the Del'Roh remains in the Underworld, she has access to the thralls who serve the sect, giving her effectively infinite vitae while in the sect's shadow redoubt.



### **Seraph (Tal'Mahe'Ra; 4-point Title)**

With much of the Del'Roh's attention turned to what lies beyond the shroud of death, the Seraphs serve as the leaders of the Tal'Mahe'Ra in the physical world. The Seraphim's duties are to watch Kindred events, reporting back to the sect and guiding its temporal efforts. About half of the Seraphim are deep-cover agents at any given time, working from positions within the Camarilla and Sabbat (and, rarely, the Anarchs). The other half belong to the Eastern branch of the Black Hand. All are secretive and powerful, coordinating their sect's efforts from behind numerous aliases and shadow identities.

Seraphim answer only to the Del'Roh in terms of sect authority. In addition, the Tal'Mahe'Ra takes great pains to conceal the identities of its field generals. Wise Seraphim cultivate an Alternate Identity Background or three (which may prove additionally useful if the vampire leaves her duties as Seraph under disgrace or duress...).

### **Lich (Tal'Mahe'Ra; 4-point Title)**

The Liches of the True Black Hand are what remains of puissant and evil mortal mages who have sworn themselves to the Tal'Mahe'Ra's cause and employed soul-excoriating rituals in order to preserve themselves the a state of hellish immortality conferred by vampirism. Although the Embrace extinguishes the spark of cosmic enlightenment that allows true mages to impose their wills on the world, it doesn't destroy the knowledge that these wicked creatures accumulated before joining the ranks of the Damned.

Three Kindred possess the title of Lich at any given time. These monstrous individuals are greatly respected and feared within the Tal'Mahe'Ra and the Del'Roh herself considers their expertise and counsel. They almost never concern themselves with the affairs of the physical world, devoting their time and attentions to the city beyond the wall of death... and farther realms.

### **Dominion (Tal'Mahe'Ra; 3-point Title)**

If the Seraphim are the field generals, the Dominions of the True Black Hand are its captains. Each Dominion has a specialty in which capacity he operates for the Tal'Mahe'Ra, whether it be enslaving mortals to be trained as ghoulish thralls, engaging in political sabotage, seducing members of other sects into the True Hand, or mastering the occult mysteries. Ac-





knowledgeable experts in their chosen fields, Dominions have great competency that offsets the obscure and comparatively minor influence of their sect.

### **Shakar (Tal'Mahe'Ra; 1-point Title)**

Fanatical killers for the Tal'Mahe'Ra, the *shakari* have only one ambition: to elevate themselves in the esteem of their sect by slaying its enemies. Whether they are blade-wielding assassins who strike from the shadows or blood-chilling warlords who crush their foes with brute force, the *shakari* seek no quarter and kill without question. They are feared by those few members of other sects who know of them, though their dogmatic outlook and blind faith in their orders earns them little respect outside their own sect.

### **Qadi (Tal'Mahe'Ra; 3-point title)**

The judges and tribunal-leaders of the Tal'Mahe'Ra, the Qadis interpret and adjudicate the millennia-old, impenetrably complex, and wholly alien body of True Black Hand policy. What informs the reasons they construct and apply rules may not be visible or even comprehensible to outsiders or lesser True Black Hand members, and their outlook is often colored by the religious principles of the sect as much as it is by the material needs or historical traditions of the faction. A great deal of politicking happens behind the scenes among the Qadi, who are old and terrible monsters who have the ability to rebuild the dogma of the sect in their own image, one aspect at a time.

### **Rawi (Tal'Mahe'Ra; 2-point title)**

As “Keepers of the Lore,” the Rawis are a quasi-monastic tradition of the Tal'Mahe'Ra. Theirs is the responsibility of protecting and preserving the *Guarded Rubrics*, an incomplete but ancient doctrine concerning the origins of the Damned. The *Guarded Rubrics* in some cases openly conflict with or contradict the *Book of Nod* while in others they have almost perfect parity. Rawis may be caretakers of these priceless scripts in their Underworld libraries, or they may venture into the physical world in search of writings to fill gaps in their documents.

### **Quli (Tal'Mahe'Ra; Negative Title)**

The bizarre, otherworldly stronghold the Tal'Mahe'Ra maintains beyond the veil of death requires a cadre of dedicated servants to support the cultic sect's habits. Most of these chores are the responsibility of a long-suffering army of ghouls, but no few vampires occupy the ranks of the laborers that belong like chattel to the True Hand. Qulis are the worst off

of these Kindred, for they still retain their will, personality, and all of the bloody capabilities and weaknesses of vampires. Unfortunately, constant fear of vampiric superiors and deathless torment have rendered them fearful, skittish, and often insane. Within the walls of the True Black Hand stronghold, Qulis slavishly follow orders, though they may hate them. Outside their desperate circumstances at the Tal'Mahe'Ra redoubt, it is often impossible to predict how a Quli might behave. The work the True Black Hand sends Qulis to perform, especially in the physical world, is generally cruel and vile, including kidnapping, murder, and the collection of slaves or gruesome artifacts.

## **The Inconnu**

As imperfectly as the Inconnu is understood as a sect, its roles and titles are even more arcane to outside observers. Indeed, Kindred of the Inconnu do not seem to congregate, and even learning that an Inconnu is present in a domain is often a feat. Those who do make themselves known or are otherwise revealed do not lend themselves to much overt action, at least in the terms with which most vampires are familiar. The way other Kindred see it, Inconnu do little more than watch the affairs of other sects and vampires unfold. Thus, the only truly reliable Inconnu title, “Monitor,” reflects the perceptions of the other sects. The Inconnu themselves haven't given any indication of their true structure, role, or intent.

What little Kindred outside the sect know about the Inconnu is that its members are very rare — it's hard to find a Cainite who could even name a domain claimed under Inconnu Praxis — and that they seem to seek the solace offered by the possibly heretical myth of Golconda. Still, when a member of this evasive sect reveals herself to a domain, the results are always significant — but rarely predictable. An Inconnu may herald upheaval in a domain, she may seduce pensive childer from their sires' sides, or she may vanish before the assembled eyes of a Prince's court or from the midst of a Sabbat Inquisition trial. For this reason, the leaders of the sects that claim Praxis in a given territory often look askance on a self-styled Inconnu, because their appearance causes chaos and turbulence.

### **Monitor (Inconnu; 3-point Title)**

In a sect as broadly mysterious as the Inconnu, the titles that constitute the faction's pecking order are rarely even known, let alone understood. The Monitor is perhaps the loftiest title of the Inconnu, as the sect is so decentralized that it has no dominant sovereign or





governing body. A Monitor seems to do just what the title implies: He watches, distant and observant, the actions of the other vampires in the domain. Monitors often rise to power and become the most prominent, if not powerful, figures in their cities. But to what end are they watching, to whom do they report, and how do they govern in the domains where they claim praxis? None outside the sect have an adequate answer, and the Inconnu themselves answer only with wary silence.

Monitors are experts at hiding their presence in a city. Indeed, Monitors are so good at hiding themselves that cagey Kindred wonder what the Monitors of cities who allow their presence to be known are up to....

### **Equite (Inconnu; 1-point Title)**

Some Inconnu resign themselves to nomadic unlife, wandering from domain to domain in an unending search for answers to the questions that every Kindred asks sooner or later. These Inconnu face the perils of travel and the vagaries of innumerable hostile domains, but along the way they may find acolytes or confidants, or simply impart a bit of wisdom that balm a Kindred soul in despair. Unlike a Monitor, who establishes herself in a domain and observes, the Equite takes her transcendent philosophy and shares it from domain to domain with anyone who will listen.

Their name is a curious one, recalling a Roman patrician class that was able to field its own horses in times of battle. Whether this term for these mendicant seekers of Golconda is an ironic appellation applied by derisive other vampires, or whether it truly has a tie to the nights of a Classical age long past is unknown, but savvy Kindred note that few itinerant seekers of the Inconnu try to claim the title.

### **Clan-Specific Titles**

Titles may emerge among clans as well as sects. The titles to which each clan accords Status reflect the interests and agendas of those clans, rewarding both the individual Kindred and the clan itself (if the titled Kindred is doing her job properly).

Independent clans are the most frequent users of unique, clan-specific titles because these clans are essentially self-contained sects. Still, every clan, in having its own unique identity, has certain functions or characteristics it reveres above others.

### **New Titles**

Not every title needs to necessarily draw its esteem from the sect or clan that honors it. Some Kindred



rise to prominence outside the sectarian model, while the practices of others are considered noteworthy whether a Prince or Archbishop claims the domain. The following examples can fit well into many different chronicle styles, and may also be used as models for players to consider their own merit- or expertise-based Kindred titles.

### **Mystic (1-point Title)**

The Mystic Kindred is known by many appellations: sage, spiritualist, sorcerer, witch. The vampires who earn the title of Mystic (or its local equivalent) are acknowledged as skilled in the secret ways of the occult, “the black arts,” witchcraft, or even infernalism (see the Inquisitor, above). Tremere and Tzimisce often hate Mystics, whom they regard as either threats to their own power or bloody pretenders.

Few seek to rouse the ire of a known mystic, because those who bargain their souls or their standing for otherworldly power make heinous foes. Of course, a Mystic may well be a charlatan, with little more than trickery or clever Discipline use supporting this title and reputation.

### **Warden (2-point Title)**

Kindred society occasionally gives rise to Wardens, particularly in contested or tenuously-held domains. Wardens exist in some form or another in all the sects. The duty of the Warden is to beat the boundaries and patrol the borders of the domain so that “they” don’t get in, whoever “they” may be. Sabbat, Anarchs, conniving Camarilla — so long as someone’s trying to take the territory away from the vampires who hold sway there, a Warden has people to turn back... or destroy.

To hear the powers that be tell it, the Warden is an ugly responsibility, but someone has to do it. The Warden has the right to attack and kill unidentified or foreign Kindred in an established domain. Of course, if the Warden is overzealous and finds out that he’s just killed someone granted the Prince’s privilege or recognition by the archbishop, he’d better have a good alibi or a clueless patsy. In some domains, Wardens are compensated because their work is so unpleasant: Princely decree or ecumenical favor can grant an additional point of Resources, Herd, or Influence so long as the Warden remains faithful in her duties.

### **Eschatologist (1-point Title)**

The undead have no end of prophecies that inspire them to ever-greater acts of terror, fiendishness, and desperation. Eschatologists study these portents of the end times and consult with their local leaders on how best

to approach them. Part soothsayer, part doomsayer, and part esoteric scholar, the eschatologist may find himself an advisor of last resort or may be the first Kindred to whom concerned elders speak. Whatever the case, the eschatologist rarely has good news for local vampires. When an eschatologist speaks, it’s generally with advice about some dire method for staving off the End Times.

### **Transcendant (3-point Title)**

Those who seek the state of Golconda seek to transcend the curse of Caine. A Transcendant is one who is known — or believed — to have achieved that lofty state.

A true Transcendant is one who has in fact achieved Golconda. A false claimant to the Transcendant’s title still enjoys the Status benefits of the title... until he’s found out for the pretender he is. A false Transcendant pays only half the normal cost to acquire this title. Note, too, that among vampires who hold Golconda in low esteem, such as followers of certain Paths, the standard Status benefit may be nonexistent.

### **Consul (3-point Title)**

The title of Consul has many variations, but the primary responsibility is to act as a cultural diplomat between sects, clans, or any other Kindred factions. For example, two neighboring domains, one Camarilla and one Sabbat, might each have a resident Consul in the other sect’s city to act as liaison and advisor. When a member of the home domain has a question about the organization to which the Consul belongs, she may approach and ask the Consul.

Needless to say, the duties of the Consul sometimes place her in very difficult political situations, many of which can escalate into violence, especially if the relationship between the two Kindred factions is hostile. Thus, Consul is often a title granted to either very powerful Kindred or those whom the home domain wants to simply disappear.

The honesty and respect of the Consul is paramount. When a domain doesn’t trust its visiting Consul, that Consul had better head quickly home, or he may well find himself banished, staked, or even burned in protest. If the Consul’s home domain believes he’s more of a liability than an asset, the home authority may revoke his diplomatic status, effectively stranding the erstwhile Consul in a hostile domain.

A Consul may apply Status accumulated in her home domain as well as the Status reflected by her title to social dice pools while in her diplomatic domain. (For other Kindred, Status in one sect is unrec-





ognized by other sects, at least formally; see V20, p. 118.) Note that this Status benefit ceases to exist in times of open war between the two factions.

### **Headhunter (2-point Title)**

Those vampires who devote themselves to war with the non-Kindred dwellers in the night occasionally earn the title of Headhunter. Those brazen Cainites who take on the savage Lupines and claim trophy over the shape-shifters claim this title at times, but so do those who engage with hostile mages or even slay one of the incomprehensible Good Folk. Headhunters often make names for themselves at meetings of the Kindred in the local domain, where they show off their grisly trophies and boast before their fellow Damned.

Only lucky Headhunters manage to slay their prey without preparation. Any Headhunter worth her Blood knows much about what she's hunting, and spends significant effort learning the lore and behavior of the supernaturals she has devoted herself to stalking.

### **Rat-Catcher (Negative Title)**

Not every Kindred chooses to quell the Beast with the blood of the kine. Some choose to slake their

thirsts with the vitae of lesser creatures. Especially among young Kindred, an initial reaction to the horror of becoming a vampire and the need to feed on the blood of what they once were proves too much to bear. They forsake mortal blood, subsisting on that of rats, bats, birds, dogs, cats — anything they can catch that won't plead or reason with them. Rat-Catchers have a stigma among older or "better-adjusted" Kindred, who see little purpose in denying what they have become.

### **Caitiff (Negative Title)**

The word Caitiff has two connotations. The first means that a Kindred is a member of flawed or unknown lineage, or perhaps that she has been disowned but not extinguished by her sire. It implies that the Kindred is a mistake, not even worthy of being a vampire. "Caitiff" in this context is an imprecise and arbitrarily used title — it may colloquially refer to an Outcast (see above, p. 23), or it may be used as a denigration of one's Embrace by one's blood-siblings or sire.

In another context (see the following two-page spread), a Caitiff is a Kindred who has no distinguishing clan characteristics, a vampire who hasn't been "imprinted" with the legacy of her sire's bloodline.



# Caitiff



Unwanted and abandoned, the Caitiff have swelled the ranks of Kindred society in the past few decades. They are the results of mistakes, regrets, frenzies, and poor choices. Many are lucky to have even a vague recollection of their sire and the Embrace, while most stumble around with no understanding of what they are. Those that find a way to survive are the exception instead of the rule, and some of these Trash grow to become notorious Kindred in their own right.

The only thing that the Caitiff have in common is what they lack — the marks that identify a vampire as being part of a particular clan. Kindred scholars speculate that some sort of connection between sire and childe occurs after the Embrace, an “imprinting” that gives a Brujah his rage, a Nosferatu her disfigurement, or a Lasombra his propensity to manipulate shadows. For whatever reason, though, the Caitiff has none of these. They may be angry, ugly, or prefer the darkness, but at best, they’re a pale shadow of their sire’s clan. While this *tabula rasa* keeps them from finding solace in the clan hierarchies of Kindred society, it also means they have no barriers to overcome — learning the intricate nuances of Dominating a mortal mind comes just as easily to a Caitiff as preternatural strength or manipulating insanity.

**Nickname:** Trash

**Sect:** The Camarilla considers the Caitiff to be nothing more than expendable foot soldiers — second-class citizens to throw at their enemies when the time is right. Some Caitiff cling to any sort of protection and acceptance, while others rebel at being treated as disposable and look to the Anarch Movement or even the Sabbat as alternatives. Still others dismiss politics as unimportant, eking out unlife in the fringes of the Ivory Tower or even becoming Autarkis. But it seems like every night more and more clanless vampires are made, and some have even unified as a “clan” within the Sabbat. At some point, they’re going to *make* the Kindred listen to them.



**Appearance:** As befits their checkered origins, a put-upon look often accompanies the Caitiff, who often have to devote much of their attention to simply surviving in a Kindred society that would prefer to sweep them away. Many are visually similar to the Brujah, Gangrel, and other “street clans,” though this is more of an ethnographic characteristic than it is a clan attitude. For those Caitiff who are able to divert attention from their clanlessness, their appearance may well reflect the success or failure of their efforts to make a place for themselves in the world of the Damned.

**Haven:** As with their Appearance, Caitiff havens are diverse; many Caitiff have to make do with whatever haven they can find, or with whatever haven they can cajole another Kindred into letting them occupy. Few Caitiff are able to maintain anything more than a minor domain, and many Caitiff are transient or simply do without havens.

**Background:** Caitiff can come from any background, most of which reflect as much about their absentee sires as it does about themselves. Indeed, when among the more formal societies of the sects, some Trash take great pains to obscure the details of their backgrounds.

**Character Creation:** Any of the three Attribute categories are appropriate for Caitiff to choose as primary, according to their background or what their sire saw in them. Talents are often primary Abilities, reflecting what the Caitiff has to do to protect herself. Few Caitiff have much in the way of Backgrounds, preferring the immediate, practical value of bolstering Willpower or having picked up a smattering of low-level Disciplines.

**Clan Disciplines:** Caitiff are able to purchase any Discipline at character creation, pending Storyteller approval. However, the cost to increase all Disciplines with experience points is six times the current rating, rather than the usual five for in-Clan Disciplines or seven for out-of-Clan Disciplines.

**Weaknesses:** Because of their social stigma, Caitiff are unable to take the Status Background at character creation. In addition to being a “clan,” Caitiff is also a negative title (see p. 33). Until the Caitiff establishes herself in a domain or social group, she is at +2 difficulty on all Social rolls with non-Caitiff vampires. When Caitiff Embrace, their childer are also Caitiff.

**Organization:** None to speak of. In some domains, Caitiff who fall through the cracks may establish themselves as the lords of broods of their own illicit

## Stereotypes

**Assamite:** They normally leave us alone. Something about “dirty blood.” No argument from me.

**Brujah:** Common enemies don’t make us friends.

**Followers of Set:** The Kindred equivalent of driving a white van with “Free Candy!” spray-painted on the side.

**Gangrel:** If you can convince them not to gut you on sight, they can be pretty tolerant.

**Giovanni:** Never heard of it.

**Lasombra:** Meet the new fucking asshole, same as the old fucking asshole.

**Malkavian:** They’ve either got a sickness or they see every secret. Problem is, you can’t tell one kind from the other.

**Nosferatu:** Misery loves company. Especially company it can blackmail.

**Ravnos:** They seem to want us to trust them, and that raises my hackles.

**Toreador:** They’re usually the first ones to take us to task for not having been asked if we wanted to be vampires. As if they’re such a great bunch of Licks.

**Tremere:** I gotta get back to my haven to, uh, turn off the oven or something.

**Tzimisce:** The bats have left the bell tower. The victims have been bled. Undead, undead, undead.

**Ventrue:** Occupy Elysium! I am the 99 percent!

**Camarilla:** Fuck you, milord.

**Sabbat:** Fuck you, Dracula.

**Anarchs:** Fine, why not?

Embrace. It’s no surprise that these unbound rogues continue to give the rest of their ill-sired ilk a bad name.

*Quote: Stop treating me like shit.  
I didn’t ask for this!*







# Chapter Two: Prestation

*Oh! what a tangled web we weave.*

— Sir Walter Scott, *Marmion*

While power over one's fellow undead may be the truest currency of the Damned, boons and favors also enjoy a healthy trade. The process of trading, repaying, and incurring favors, known as prestation, is the cornerstone of the vampiric social structure. Put simply, a clever Kindred grants favors, while a foolish one incurs them — and becomes a servant to his promises and his debts. A vampire who calls in as-yet unearned favors from other Kindred too often soon finds his entire existence dictated by the obligations he has incurred. In exchange for whatever tokens of help he requested, he becomes a puppet of those who came to his aid.

Kindred society is a Byzantine knot of favors owed, loyalties sworn, debts repaid, and promises broken. From the highest Prince to the lowliest fledgling, the coin of the Kindred realm — after blood, of course — is the boon.

All sects and all Kindred practice prestation, whether they admit to it or not. Granted, some play loosely with the custom while others observe it strictly. In some domains, a titled vampire keeps track of what boon is owed to whom and by whom (see “Chancellor,” p. 22) while in others, the social pecking order is a less-structured mire of precarious trust.

That is perhaps the greatest irony of prestation: that it's built upon the trust of one blood-drenched monster for another. In the world of the undead, trust is a rare and priceless commodity. Yet the whole of the Kindred social contract, whether owed by elder to neonate or even across the lines of sects, balances upon these promises.

## Boons

One Kindred's promise to another is known as a boon. Boons come in a variety of significance, from a trivial boon to a life boon. In some domains, boons operate like credit, in that a vampire must owe a boon for another vampire to extend him a boon; other Kindred must see the individual vampire as trustworthy. In other domains, the opposite is true — the more debts a Kindred owes, the less capable of repaying those boons she is assumed to be. The one universal truth among all domains, however, is that a boon is a boon and there's no way to get out of it other than to satisfy it or to have it excused by individual to whom it's owed.



Critics and observers of Kindred society hasten to point out that the terms of boons scale with the capacities of the vampire owing the debt. It might be a minor boon for a Prince to pardon a transgressor of the Traditions but a life boon for a fledgling to perjure himself before the Archbishop in order to excuse a straying Priscus. Unfortunately for the debtor, the “exchange rate” doesn’t always favor them, so the Priscus pledging a life boon to the neonate is truly undertaking a significant debt, particularly if that neonate quickly works his way up the ranks of the Sabbat and finds his own definition of “life boon” appreciating.

Boons also transcend sect and even the authority of any local luminary or leader. The old adage of guilt by association applies here, too, making for some troublesome relationships. If a Kindred owes a life boon to another, and that other Kindred is declared the subject of a Blood Hunt, it doesn’t erase the boon. So what is a vampire to do? He’s damned if he honors the boon (aiding the subject of a Blood Hunt) and he’s damned if he doesn’t (forsaking a sworn promise). Some Princes and Archbishops allow forgiveness of boons in these cases, but the controversy of the special circumstances tends to follow those who receive special dispensation to excuse them from their promises. Cainites are, of course, a fickle group.

Of course, these complexities illustrate why the systems of boons and promises are so tangled.

## Weaving the Web

The process of establishing a prestation debt is simple. A Kindred either asks another of her kind for assistance in a matter, in return for a favor of some sort at a later date, or a Cainite assists another in a time of misfortune — with the understanding that the favor will be repaid later. The wisest among the Kindred keep very close records of favors owed, and take great care not to mire themselves in more debts than they can afford to satisfy at any given time. Among the more formal sects, including both the Camarilla and the Sabbat, prestation debts can be called in at literally any time, so it’s wise policy to make sure that one has the capacity to honor a boon, regardless of circumstance.

Not all boons are accrued voluntarily, however. Elders are proven masters at maneuvering younger Kindred into positions where they have no choice but to ask for help, placing themselves in an elder’s thrall. The nature of relationships among the Damned plays an exceptionally large role in this social dynamic, of

course. Indeed, one Kindred’s Mentor may well be another’s master. For example, a holding company manipulated by the elder Meshenko Kovich might purchase the building in which a promising neonate has established a nightclub, and immediately start harassing her with breaches of contract, “proactive” health code inspections, zoning bureaucracy, and lease increases. Eventually the neonate has little choice but to seek protection, which leads her to the Kovich’s doorstep. The elder extends the favor, and the neonate has made her first foray into the Damned’s spiderweb of prestation. If it sounds a bit like a neighborhood protection racket or the quasi-feudalism of organized crime, well, it is.

Veterans of the deathless, harrowing chronicle of Kindred obligation also favor maneuvering potential debtors into perilous situations and then rescuing them dramatically, thus placing the hapless victims in their debt. One such tactic involves letting knowledge of a vampire’s haven slip to a rival or even a hunter, then swooping in as the enemy makes his move. From the rescue it’s only a short step to granting the neonate some amount of privilege in her own territory (“Yours is clearly unsafe”), and, slowly, night by night, vessel by vessel, favor by favor, the victim owes her entire ability to exist to the graces of the not-entirely-altruistic benefactor. On the other side of the coin, some Kindred adopt the tactic of swearing as many boons as possible as a form of protection, operating on the theory that their manifold creditors will want to keep them in one piece in order to collect. This tends to work better in Camarilla domains than it does in Anarch or Sabbat territories, and few among the Tal’Mahe’Ra would tolerate such nonsense.

## Types of Boons

In general, the society of the Damned recognizes four classifications of boons.

**Trivial Boon:** These are the easiest boons both to acquire and to satisfy. A trivial boon might consist of aiding a hungry Kindred in the finding of blood, talking a hostile vampire down from a potential frenzy, getting a neonate past the bouncer at the hottest club in the Rack, or offering crash space for a blood-drunk acquaintance who stayed out too close to sunrise. Trivial boons are easy to perform and usually have very little downside other than the effort required to execute them. Still, the Kindred observe their passage and exchange. After all, no one knows when a fellow might suddenly turn truculent and need to be



reminded of the myriad little things others among the Damned do for her sake.

**Minor Boon:** Minor boons require a Kindred to go out of her way to perform or pay off. They may have a small but permanent downside associated with them, or they may involve some amount of risk. This risk needn't be physical. In fact, for many Kindred, the risk of social embarrassment or loss of an academic resource might be more distressing than physical harm. Examples of minor boons include casting a vote in favor of another Kindred during a convocation of elders, providing a vessel in a desperate hour, or hiding a Kindred (no questions asked) from a revenge-crazed Malkavian howling for her blood.

**Major Boon:** A major boon can alter the flow of Kindred affairs in a domain, directly or indirectly. Boons like these invariably invite some amount of personal risk or a significant investment of effort. Again, risks taken need not be physical — a cagey Toreador might bankroll a wild pack of Caitiff to run amok in a hated Tremere's domain, risking exposure and loss of her own status and income. (Then again, once the Caitiff stake and dispose of the Tremere, the Toreador will be able to swoop in and take the Tremere's holdings... until the Caitiff tire of her and beg another boon to erase their debt to her or cover up their involvement in her unfortunate disappearance.) Major boons don't often take place on the spur of the moment, instead representing a steady investment of time or resources with an expected long-term outcome. That said, a Cainite desperate enough for a favor may well pledge a major boon for a quick but momentous action. Examples of major boons include having a vampire declared the subject of a clan-wide vendetta, convincing a Prince to rescind a grant of hunting grounds, providing another vampire's police Allies information on the illicit activities of a Kindred gang, or casting the opposite of an expected vote in a policy council with the other Bishops.

**Life Boon:** The life boon is the rarest and most valuable of the boons observed by the Damned. Ironically, these are usually the boons most often promised or called in on a moment's notice, despite their gravity. As their name intimates, these boons are often all that stands between a Cainite and Final Death. They don't have to arise under those circumstances — a contentious Anarch may promise a life boon to a rival pack of Anarchs in the interests of taking down a mutually despised Baron in exchange for honoring her own claim after the deed is done — but the majority of life boons are dire and sworn under great and

imminent duress. Some Kindred relish the additional irony of the boon's title: Given that vampires are undead, it's a delicious *schadenfreude* to determine just what another Kindred would give up life to obtain. Examples of life boons include the obvious salvation of a Kindred from peril, but may also involve hiding a grievous secret, protecting a mortal lover, or offering an alibi without knowing what sort of horrific crime the boon-pledging Cainite is trying to hide. Some honor-bound vampires will even die to fulfill a life boon, so great is their sense of duty or their debt. Of course, such Kindred are rare in the World of Darkness.

## The Foundation

Most young Kindred learn the art of prestation (if they're lucky) as the art of giving and granting favors. Modern Kindred often define it as "you scratch my back, I scratch yours." Unfortunately, many neonates learn of prestation only through being taken advantage of by skilled elders, cruel sires, or backhanded Mentors, giving them no chance to learn under beneficial conditions. Should one expect any less of the Damned?

Many an inexperienced or desperate Kindred (fledgling and ancilla alike) has found himself in horrendous debt due to his ignorance of the various strata of prestation. This is not entirely through his own error. No few Cainites of august Status brokering deals have assisted the matter by choosing not to inform a Kindred about his potential mistake or by deliberate misinformation when it suited them. This, of course, gives them the opportunity to help the unfortunate by extending another debt to ameliorate the first one.

The sanctity of the prestation system is very important to any Kindred who benefits from the existence of hierarchy and the status quo, particularly those elders who have spent centuries cultivating vast networks of debts. If it suddenly becomes acceptable to break one's promise, then suddenly the whole of Kindred society — the entire, centuries-spanning temple of obligation and the formality of favors — becomes worthless. Needless to say, few elders of any sect intend to allow that to happen. Those investments in favors are major resources in the mini-Jyhads every Kindred plays. As such, every vampire, regardless of sect or clan, whether debtor or indebted, has a vested interest in keeping the formality of the prestation system intact. Anything less represents the complete breakdown of Kindred society: the lawless id of the Beast.



## Discharging Boons

While a given domain may have rigorous conventions in place for recording and observing who has sworn boons to whom, the completion of a boon is comparatively simple. Once the Kindred who holds the boon declares it satisfied, that's it; it's done.

That said, some account housekeeping may be necessary. In domains where the Harpies (or another title; see "Chancellor," p. 22) track prestation, the satisfied Cainite may need to report the completion of a boon. In very formal domains, a boon may have to be discharged (or established) at Elysium or another gathering of the domain's vampires.

## Cheating

Of course, given the nature of the Kindred, such a simple social contract provides its own potential mire. If the Nosferatu Primogen tells a Gangrel ancilla that her boon is discharged but then "forgets" that she declared the boon satisfied, what option does the Gangrel have? Who's going to believe some filthy Outlander? In fact, if the Nosferatu plays hardball, who's even going to believe that a Primogen was in such dire straits as to need the help of a Barrens-prowling upstart?

A Cainite is only as good as her word, and if this Nosferatu Primogen just keeps having these ancillae claiming she's abused the social contract, well, maybe there's something to the accusation. Even across sect lines, a vampire willing to fuck over another Kindred so obviously and gracelessly for personal gain deserves whatever comes to them. It's not so much that Cainite society wants to protect the poor, disillusioned Gangrel ancilla, it's that they don't want to get fucked themselves, and if they can hamstring a potential rival who's playing quick and dirty on the route to power, well, so much the better. In fact, the Prince might be interested in knocking the backstabbing Nosferatu Primogen down a peg, and if it keeps a too-ambitious Gangrel ancilla in his place, well, that's two for the price of one. If power were so easy to seize, every shit-heel fledgling with a lying tongue would be his own Prince.

To this end, some heavy-handed domains ensure complicity with the rules of prestation by creating their own safeguards. Several uses of Dominate can ascertain whether a given boon has been honorably satisfied. The Tremere have rituals that can wring lies from a forked tongue, and certain Sabbat *ritae* and Tal'Mahe'Ra witchcraft have similar effects. Even among the Anarch Movement, good old-fashioned





torture can extract a confession of a defaulted promise (though with greater margin for error).

While the Kindred who attempts to sneak out on a debt has it bad, the one who kills his boon-holder to avoid paying suffers infinitely worse treatment (if his treacheries come to light). In most cases, the elders of a domain hold most of the boons, so they would be the most likely targets for “debt relief” if murder was easy absolution from a sworn boon. To deter desperate Kindred, elders and other opinion leaders among the Damned tend to come down *hard* on those who kill to escape honoring their obligations. For any Kindred who chooses Final Death instead of repayment, the best he can expect is likely the Lextalionis or being placed on tap at the next Blood Feast. The worst may well be unspeakable — but the Kindred rumor mill certainly circulates endless dire stories to discourage other would-be oath-slayers.

Obviously, the powers that be in a given domain tend to look unfavorably upon oathbreakers. Whether a Prince or Seraph is the ultimate authority in a city, it comes down to the matter of trust. A Kindred who breaks a promise demonstrates that she places her own interests above those of others. And when the survival of the Kindred relies on keeping the existence of the Damned a secret from the mortal world, a vampire who can't be trusted to keep a promise can't be trusted to keep a secret. Most Cainite leaders reason that bloody, final satisfaction is often the safest course. A treacherous Kindred will betray again, so remove him from the domain. It's better to be safe than staked and sunburnt.

### **Inter-Sect Prestation**

It is for this very reason that the vampires of all sects observe (to some degree, at least) the conventions of prestation. Trading favors across sect lines allows access to resources and tactics that aren't always available to those who don't want to look past their own ideology. If the Archbishop doesn't want this duplicitous Giovanni in her domain, why on earth would a Prince want him? Vampires of other sects are still vampires, and a rogue who backs out on a promise tonight may back out on a promise *to you* tomorrow night. Enlightened self-interest is the motive behind all of the Traditions, after all, whether it's a Prince or Monitor enforcing them.

This isn't to say that all is well and good when Cainites from different factions pledge prestation to one another. Hardliners of every sect may take an “us-versus-everyone-else” position, calling into question

the boon-swearer's loyalty. A Kindred who appears to benefit too greatly from working “outside the rules” of her own sect may lose Status or be stripped of titles. They may have to tithe vitae, accept blood bonds, or resort to operating behind the sect's back. Then again, in more liberal domains, no one may raise an eyebrow — indeed, they may pave the way for others to expand their interests as well.

The most difficult relationships of inter-sect prestation are, unsurprisingly, between the Camarilla and the Sabbat, given that the philosophies of the two are diametrically opposed. However, boons granted between members of the Camarilla and the Anarch Movement are also often scrutinized, as the success of one sect is frequently the hindrance of the other. How can a staunchly conservative Prince trust a subject who openly deals with a pack of terrorists that oppose everything his title represents?

At times, clan unity becomes more important than sect loyalty, and members of the thirteen great families of Kindred (and, as frequently, members of marginalized bloodlines) can close ranks against outside influence. Particularly among Clans Nosferatu, Gangrel, Malkavian, and Brujah, a promise to one's own Blood carries more weight than the sometimes *de facto* allegiance to one's ideology. Note that most of these clan loyalties belong to those clans that are typically disenfranchised or otherwise less than fanatical about the artificial construct of sects. When the powers that be push clan identity to the side, those who are undermined take solace in what's being suppressed. The Nosferatu are certainly the most active in this regard, and the vast information network that connects the Sewer Rats does so without regard for ideology or geography. A secret is a secret, and the value of information is greater than any Ventrue or Lasombra would-be tyrant may suggest.

As ever, Kindred politics makes strange bedfellows. Those with entrepreneurial minds or unorthodox approaches may well find their greatest adversaries amid their own supposed ideological peers. Small minds make for vicious controversy.

### **Boons As Commodities**

Like a slatternly Blood Doll, prestation debts circulate through the ranks of the undead. As banks trade assets, boons move constantly among Kindred, being retrieved, dangled, held in promissory escrow, and otherwise shunted around so that it becomes dizzying to keep track of who owes what to whom. Few



domains have any formal system for trading favors. Such arrangements operate more along the lines of, “Katherine the Toreador owes me some consideration, so I’ll tell her to grant you an audience if you send word to Pavel the Nosferatu that I could use the help of a few loose tongues to turn some attention toward Carlos the Tremere’s deal with the Prince’s dogsboddy.” All but the most informal domains do observe some sort of protocol, however. The Lick whose debt moves from one debtor to another must learn about the transfer, otherwise she runs the risk of denying a perfectly valid settlement for what she thinks is a perfectly valid reason, causing the whole network of prestation to collapse.

As an added benefit, letting an inferior know that the Kindred passing the boon didn’t even feel his debt was worth maintaining is a pillar of the Kindred social order. Moving promises from one Cainite to another is as much a function of prestation as swearing them in the first place.

### Optional System: Buying Boons

Normally, boons are acquired as a result of gameplay and problem-solving on the part of the players’ characters. However, at the Storyteller’s discretion, a player may invest experience points in a boon, representing something happening “off camera” or in downtime for which another Kindred owes her. A player may purchase a boon only from a Storyteller character, and the Storyteller should work with the player to determine the details of the character’s transaction with the other vampire.

Note that it’s not possible to purchase a life boon in this manner. Such a “get out of jail free” promise is outside the scope of experience point expenditures.

Boon	Experience point cost
Trivial boon	3
Minor boon	7
Major boon	20
Life boon	—

### Optional System: Liar, Liar

A character may choose to falsify the condition of a boon, declaring it either absolved or still intact, whichever is the opposite of the truth. At the Storyteller’s discretion, some clue as to the actual state of the boon may circulate among the gossip networks and private conversations of the Damned.

The Storyteller rolls a dice pool equal to the character’s Wits or Manipulation (whichever is higher) plus the character’s Subterfuge or Investigation (whichever is higher) minus the character’s Status (the more well-known the character is, the harder it is to falsify the boon). If the roll achieves any successes, the character has covered her tracks for one period of time (scene, night, etc.) as determined by the Storyteller. If the roll fails, evidence revealing the character’s falsification of the boon surfaces. In this case, the character’s Status drops by one point for each step of the boon’s gravity (–1 for a trivial boon, –2 for a minor boon, etc., to a minimum of 0) for one month. On a botch, something much more problematic happens — the Prince decides to make an example of her, the Inquisitor connects the false boon with an Infernalism cover-up, etc.

A player may spend Willpower to automatically succeed on this roll, but Willpower spent in this manner *cannot be regained* until the scandal blows over (see below). Points spent in this manner are cumulative, so it’s possible to be restricted from regaining multiple points of Willpower.

The unit of time for this roll is up to the Storyteller’s judgment. Sometimes Kindred news travels quickly, and the roll represents a single scene, such as a contentious convocation at Elysium or the Palla Grande. Other times, something else occupies the attentions of the Damned, so a roll may represent a period of downtime such as a month. Once the roll succeeds a number of times equal to five plus one for each step of the boon’s gravity (+1 for a trivial boon, +2 for a minor boon, etc.), the scandal or suspicion has passed and the character is no longer at risk for discovery .

Note that the purpose of this system is to abstract the Kindred rumor mill, Nosferatu secret-brokers, gossip at vampire functions, etc. If a Cainite or coterie actively pursues rumors of another vampire’s falsification of boon results, the Storyteller should handle that with appropriate rolls, perhaps even making an entire story out of the search. In this case, even having accumulated a certain number of successes on the abstracted roll won’t protect the vampire. If someone manages to turn up damning evidence, they should certainly be able to expose the treacherous Kindred. No skeleton in the closet disappears completely just because the character acquired successes as described above.

It is up to the boon-cheating player and Storyteller to devise the benefits of the Kindred falsifying the



condition of the boon. Few vampires of any Status, regardless of sect, look favorably upon the false satisfaction of boons. It undermines the whole social contract among vampires, and it's better, these luminaries often reason, to snuff out a single transgressor than to topple the whole precarious structure. In these modern nights, when promises can be recorded on digital devices and distributed to every Cainite in the domain at the click of a button, maintaining the stability of the domain is worth spilling a little extra blood.

## The Practice of Prestation

It is not in a vampire's best interest to cash in the favors she has acquired immediately. After all, a Kindred known to owe another a boon is likely to come under suspicion if the boon-holder disappears (see "Cheating," p. 40), with potentially fatal consequences. As a result, Kindred in most prestation arrangements are as safe as can be expected from any of her debtors.

Enlightened self-protection isn't the only reason to maintain a favor. As long as one of the Kindred has a debt hanging over him, he must always be aware

of the possibility of having his marker called in. He can't act as freely as he might otherwise, for fear of being called on to repay his debt. You can't out the Toreador Harpy at Elysium for engaging in a deal with a Tzimisce from across the river if the Harpy's Ventrue coterie-mate knows that you have a dalliance with the sheriff's mortal lover, for example. Holding a debt over a vampire and insinuating that repayment might come due at any moment is an effective method of paralyzing a Kindred, quelling his ambition, and forcing him to reserve some of his resources against the possibility. This game of move and counter-move takes on the characteristics of the sect in whose domain it is practiced. Bloody vendetta characterizes Anarch domains, social brinksmanship is the way of the Camarilla, and the Sabbat practices fervent bullying (with a side of fire and zealotry).

Furthermore, a Kindred who owes another a debt is perceived as being inferior to the vampire to whom she owes it. This perception only applies to those who know about a debt, and many Kindred who dig up dirt on a powerful peer let the whole domain know about it as quickly as possible. If the Cainite performs this sequence effectively, the creditor gains prestige while the debtor loses it. Even better, the longer the debt can be sustained, the more prestige accrues to the





creditor. It is in the interest of the vampire holding the favor to hang onto it as long as possible, though most creditors take care to avoid pulling their debtors' leashes too hard or too often. Once the boon is discharged, most sects look the other way when an abused debtor takes vengeance on a harsh creditor.

## Assuaging Social Debt

Few Kindred like the idea of having lingering debts. It's socially embarrassing, financially painful, and potentially hazardous. As a result, most Cainites seek to pay off their prestation debts as soon as they can safely do so. Those who have extended the favors have a vested interest in prolonging those debts, so the result can be a game of cat and mouse, with the debtors frantically attempting to do their creditors favors and the creditors dodging anything that might conceivably be construed as a satisfaction from their debtors.

Debts among the Kindred rarely take specific shape. Few vampires request a detailed service. Rather, debts are vague and amorphous, assumed to fall into a category the favor-granting Kindred considers her expertise, or something that puts the indebted Kindred at a greater but delayed disadvantage. "I'll simply ask for your help with something down the road." This ambiguity works both for and against the creditor. The indistinct nature of the debt helps keeps those on the owing of prestation deferential, as they work to abate their debt with flattery or obsequiousness.

Along those lines, since the nature of most Cainite debt is undefined, it is common among the Kindred to grant some sort of lesser consideration to their creditors in hopes of canceling the boon. Particularly energetic or devious vampires may be able to maneuver their creditors into situations wherein they can appear on the scene and render assistance, thus wiping out the imbalance. Such attempts should be made very carefully, though — if they backfire or are found out, the instigator just sinks deeper into debt and becomes a target of derision as well (assuming he's not eliminated as some sort of collateral damage if things truly go off the rails). The mouse who pulls the thorn from the lion's paw is still a mouse, no matter how clever she may believe herself to be.

What form payback takes depends on the size and type of debt incurred. It is considered bad form to ask for excessive repayment of minor debts. In such cases,

depending on the sect in which the boon exists, the debtor may laugh off the request (potentially even canceling it in observation of the absurd entitlement that accompanied the attempted discharge) or even demand some sort of martial satisfaction. More often than not, those who would parlay their boons into disproportionate fortunes find themselves socially bankrupt. Kindred society hasn't remained static for five centuries by letting the indebted gain the upper hand.

On the other hand, few Kindred choose to abate a debt by asking for too little. Doing so is a sure path to being made a target by the Harpies, in addition to canceling any status gain made by acquiring the debt in the first place. It is for this reason that the less "sophisticated" clans rarely choose to engage in prestation with those perceived to be more quick-witted than they. It's bad enough to get fucked on a deal, but being exposed as a fool afterward only makes getting fucked more difficult to bear.

In truth, the actual repayment of the debt is almost incidental to the process of prestation. It is the boon itself that matters — the artistry of the creation, the dispersal of the obligation, and the webs of allegiance strung by favors owed. Actually paying off whatever is demanded is somehow anticlimactic in all but the most dire circumstances.

When a debt is finally repaid, however, more often than not it is done so publicly. Sample forms of payments include privileges (especially that of creation, if a Prince or Priscus is the debtor), favorite ghouls or mortal pawns, assistance in financial or martial arenas, tutoring in Disciplines, or even the performance of publicly humiliating acts. Favors often involve one Kindred lobbying another on a third vampire's behalf, usually in matters of Embrace or interference in the mortal world. Asking for a service that is overly hazardous or demanding that one's debtor break the Traditions is forbidden by long custom, even across sect lines. (If nothing else, getting one's debtor killed ensures that you can't use him again.) On the other hand, a sufficiently subtle vampire can blur the edges of these restrictions, and prestation has been used to eliminate any number of incautious Kindred. The Harpies and other opinion leaders of the various sects usually end up being the ultimate arbiters of whether the repayment is suitable, though in most domains they hold no official capacity in this matter.





## Sects and Boons

Every sect observes boons in some capacity, and honors the concept of the boon across sect lines. The fact that, on the whole, vampires are willing to acknowledge their social obligations before their factional allegiance speaks to a long and ingrained — perhaps even physiological — need to make good on a statement. The superstition that one must ask a vampire into her home before he can cross the threshold may have its origin in the gravity with which the Damned regard their promises.

### The Camarilla

It comes as no surprise that the Jonsonian wit and ingrained traditionalism of the Camarilla provides a home for the formalities of prestation. In fact, some suspect that the very roots of prestation lie in the rigid will of the Ventrue and the elaborate rituals of *comme il faut* upheld by the Toreador. This isn't precisely true — several extant Kindred communications dating back to the Dark Ages make guarantees of promises among Kindred — but the eminent powers

of the Ivory Tower, the Rose Clan and the Clan of Kings certainly know how to make use of prestation. Other Camarilla clans often see the established rules of prestation as convenient tools and pragmatic investments.

The Brujah and Gangrel tend to play very loosely with prestation, but many have their own ideas of honor and duty that observing prestation allows them to display in front of others. They often like to flaunt this at Elysium and other sect gatherings, showing that — despite their comparatively low social status — at least they're not lying hypocrites like the Camarilla's leadership.

The Tremere codify their network of mentorship duties along the same lines as prestation, offering training to other Warlocks in exchange for mystic secrets, access to occult resources, or standard favors represented by the custom.

Malkavian observation of prestation is unreliable, but the Clan of the Moon has no vested interest in subverting the tradition, unless they're calling into question the entirety of Kindred social contract. Indeed, prestation often gives a grounding in reality to



the more crippling fractured Lunatics, reminding them of what they promised to do and providing context for other Kindred activities.

The Nosferatu frequently find themselves trafficking in “black market” prestation, keeping their boons “off the books” in exchange for secrets and leads on what might provide more interesting information in the future. Most often, the Sewer Rats don’t hide behind lofty ideals like honor or value. They simply want to have as many of the “beautiful Damned” in their filthy pockets as possible. Nosferatu social debts are quite liberal, and a Nosferatu whose secrets aren’t worth the promises he demands for them quickly falls out of favor among those seeking information.

Of all the sects, the Camarilla is most invested in the pomp and circumstance of prestation, as well as “balancing the books” in public displays of who owes whom. It is certainly the sect most likely to engage the services of a titled Kindred who maintains a roster of such social debts. In some domains, this roll of promises is read at gatherings of the Kindred, as a reminder that the welfare of the Kindred relies on everyone’s honoring promises. It also provides a venue of redress for those who feel their boons have been unsatisfactorily discharged. Some recall the long-ago nights of kings and chamberlains, when the Prince herself was often the adjutant of grievances among the court. Such formal domains often resemble the dangerous aristocratic minefields of Louis XIV’s court or the whims of Henry VIII’s. Indeed, it’s possible to walk away from such an accounting owing someone else a boon for declaring satisfaction on the original boon... but such shifting debts and allegiances are the trademark of the Camarilla.

The Camarilla is unique in that it allows for the open transference of boons among Kindred. So long as all parties agree, a Kindred can name another of the Damned as the recipient of his boon. Alex LeMont, for example, may owe a Toreador a favor while a Malkavian owes *him* a favor, and if everyone is amenable, LeMont may simply pass the Malkavian’s favor to the Toreador, removing himself from the recursive mire of prestation. On the surface this seems simple, but in practice, in a domain with fifty-plus Kindred swapping promises of obligation to one another, the knot of prestation rapidly becomes Gordian. Indeed, those who traffic in favors often prefer these complex webs of duty, the better to occlude their promises and hide behind numerous blinds of favors, the satisfaction of any of which might negate a hundred other

favors across the city. A clever Kindred like LeMont may never have to worry about his favor being called in, as it becomes a liquid prestation asset that’s more valuable in the form of currency than it is in practical satisfaction.

## The Sabbat

By comparison, the Sabbat practices less prestation than the Camarilla, but it definitely exists. Indeed, most Sabbat prestation occurs along the lines of “I owe you one,” or resembles the bonds forged among soldiers at war. It’s less rigidly defined, and definitely recorded far less frequently.

Formal pledges of prestation in the Black Hand happen almost exclusively among the higher tiers of the sect. Many elders of the Sabbat predate its formation, and old habits die hard among vampires used to swearing duty in the petty kingdoms of the Old World.

It’s largely absent at the pack level, who by design watch each other’s backs. Many promises and favors are traded between packs, especially in established or wartime domains where packs have very specific purposes and benefit from diversifying their abilities.

For the Lasombra, debts of duty and honor strike deep chords, owing to the aristocratic history of the clan and their medieval involvement in the canons of the Church. After all, rare are the promises that can’t be fulfilled by ordering one’s faithful minions to handle onerous tasks. Boons pledged and purchased are not unlike the indulgences bought and sold in the nights before the Reformation, and thus carry significant weight among the Keepers. The Lasombra are also the most likely to traffic in boons sworn to non-Sabbat, as they are skilled at cultivating networks of promise and politics.

The Tzimisce consider the formality of prestation far more odious than the Lasombra, following their own ancestral lines. To the Tzimisce mind, when the master of the *dom* chooses to reward his *szlachta* instead of flaying the skin from their bones, he grants privilege with that very act. Suggesting that such boons might be owed or pre-sworn is foreign to their punitive minds, especially as they grow older. The world exists to be bent and shaped like the bones of a disappointing minion, not strung along with the promise of reward or favor. Young Tzimisce seem a little more disposed toward the mutualism of prestation, especially as they rise through the ranks of the Black Hand and can use boons as an edge over their own elders.



Among the *antitribu* and more esoteric bloodlines of the Black Hand, prestation is a necessary evil. The elders do it, the founding clans of the Sabbat do it, so it's best to learn the rules and take advantage when you can. Some clans are better disposed to this than others — the Ventrue *antitribu*, Toreador *antitribu*, and Assamite *antitribu* use prestation adeptly, and the Sabbat Nosferatu in particular make good use of trading favors with members of the Camarilla, Anarchs, and even the occasional Tal'Mahe'Ra. Among the Brujah *antitribu*, Serpents of the Light, and Panders, prestation most frequently takes the form of street-level honor, while the Gangrel and Malkavians of the Black Hand find the practice pointlessly convoluted, difficult to grasp, or asinine — who would make a promise to an unreasoning tool of the Beast?

Unlike the Camarilla, the Sabbat on the whole observes no trading of boons. It's too "soft," and "too much like the Ivory Tower," in the opinions of many Sabbat. The Black Hand's position is that the transference of boons places too much emphasis on who-knows-whom, favoritism, and an incomprehensible network of obligations. Especially at the middle and field tiers of Sabbat activity (which make much show of gaining results and being meritocratic), it's better to burn down a hated elder's haven than to destroy it with mortal bureaucracy. A philosophy of *action now!* is more appropriate to the shovelheads and charismatic ducti. Among the upper echelons of the sect, some favor-trading is inevitable, but it's almost always on the level of comparatively minor boons, and is viewed as a recourse of last resort.

## The Anarch Movement

The Anarchs frequently find themselves torn on the question of prestation. On the one hand, a formal system of obligations is a useful thing, and good organization is often what gives the opposition an edge over entrenched powers that be. As a given city's Anarch Movement moves from being the rebellion into the authority, however, what was once an effective tool for subversion remains an effective tool for subversion, much to the chagrin of many nascent Barons, who find the transition from fighting oppression to stabilizing a young and angry domain difficult.

Curiously, many technologically-adept Anarchs integrate their observance of prestation into social media and personal data devices. Using code words, hashtags, and other methods of preserving the integrity of the Masquerade, the Anarchs have created a





reliable record of boons, provided one knows where to look and how to interpret the information. Thus, the Anarchs tend not to use vampiric offices and titles to maintain the social contract of obligations — that’s archaic, anyway — and instead claim and discharge their boons where other online Damned can track their reputation and make their own decisions. Much in the way online auction sites display their users’ integrity or social media systems estimate their users’ amplification and influence, Anarch prestation is a readily available piece of data that fellow Anarchs can take into account (or entrenched elders can intercept...).

Currently fashionable among the Anarchs is the practice of swearing blood oaths when committing to boons. It adds an air of formality, of *useful* traditionalism, to what otherwise might be an empty promise.

## The Tal’Mahe’Ra

In a general sense, the True Black Hand has higher concerns than worrying about whether promises made among the monsters of their sect are fulfilled to every party’s satisfaction. As it plumbs the harrowing mysteries of the realm of the dead and pursues the esoteric knowledge that looms outside most Kindred’s realm of perception, the brinksmanship and petty power-mongering usually associated with a complicated system of boons is a secondary matter at best for the vampires of the Tal’Mahe’Ra.

This isn’t to say that the sect is unconcerned with status. Quite the opposite, actually — members of the True Black Hand simply acquire their status by unearthing secrets, puzzling out cryptic mysteries, or collecting exotic artifacts more than they do making grand shows of magnificence at frivolous parties. In this sense, the Tal’Mahe’Ra has a complex system of fealties, oaths, cults, and apprenticeships that take the place of the web of promises the other sects foster. The True Black Hand places more value on circles of mystery and internal secret societies than it does on promises sworn in desperate circumstances. With the innumerable secret wars taking place constantly around it, the Tal’Mahe’Ra often simply assumes its members will help each other when necessary because such behavior is in the interests of the oft-fanatical sect.

Deep-cover agents of the sect frequently cultivate prestation as part of their pretense of belonging to the other sects, however. Indeed, for all the absence of

“traditional” prestation inside the Tal’Mahe’Ra, the sect regards the obligations it has established outside the faction seriously, the better to keep prying eyes and unwanted attention from the rest of the darkling agenda.

## The Inconnu

What can be said, reliably, of those who hide themselves in shrouds of secrets, and whether or not they fulfill a promise that may or may not have been made? Indeed, simply finding a Kindred who has engaged in the commerce of prestation with the Inconnu is like seeking fragments of the Book of Nod at a strip-mall bookstore.

The only example Kindred society has of the Inconnu’s prestation practices can be traced to a written document found sealed in a jar in a burned church on the outskirts of Genoa. Notably, the boon exists in written form and specifically invokes that “the power of Christ shall strike me dead should I stray in this faith.” Whether this is simply florid phrasing or an expected outcome eludes confirmation. However the recipient of the boon, a Kindred named in the boon as “Dondinni,” still exists, according to rumor. Did the debtor satisfy the boon? One must find Dondinni to ascertain the answer, assuming such an ancient and eminent vampire would choose to share the truth.

## Independents

For the clans that remain outside the sect structures of other Kindred, prestation is a double-edged sword. It compromises some amount of their independence to play by the same rules as the sects, effectively acknowledging the prominence of the other Kindred factions. However, the elders of these clans are so familiar with boons and prestation that playing the system comes as second nature to them. Given that prestation operates across sectarian divisions, they don’t have to buy into any single sect’s policy or ideology. Observing prestation also allows the independents to have a Kindred resource of common value — beyond blood, that is.

The Assamites rarely work in terms of prestation. Instead, most of them negotiate their contracts in terms of hard cash and precious vitae they can turn to their holy cause. Still, on occasion, Assamites will use prestation to buy into the social strata of a given domain, especially if the Assassins seek to establish a long-term presence there. Growing intimacy be-





tween the Assamites and the Camarilla power structure make this increasingly frequent in Ivory Tower domains.

By contrast, the Giovanni have little trouble buying into the prestation system. Indeed, some Giovanni even offer “exchange rates” for boons, buying favors (from the sects that observe prestation transference) in exchange for more liquid resources, both monetary and sanguinary. While the Giovanni are too few to have a huge impact on the global state of Kindred prestation in this regard, no few elders and keen ancillae balk at the notion of the Necromancers cornering the market on the shadow economy of promises among the undead.

Clans Ravnos and Setite have a bit more difficulty invoking and earning prestation. Even when they can convince someone to accept a promise from them, they often find themselves on the receiving end of screw-jobs. After all, even if someone does think that the Toreador Harpy granted a favor to a Follower of Set, whose interests would it serve to take the Setite’s side? Especially in the domains of the other sects, Ravnos and Setite vampires find themselves second-class citizen when prestation comes into question. Among themselves, the Ravnos observe casual (and unreliable) conventions of honor that confound outsiders. The Setites, on the whole, would rather exact payment on their own terms, and potentially secured through mastery of the Blood.







# Chapter Three: Kindred and Technology

*You don't understand: the Masquerade will be outdated within thirty years. Technology has advanced to the point that nearly anyone who cares to spend the cash can identify Kindred. The Canaille possess the means to destroy us now! What will they have in five years? Ten? Twenty? Adapt, die, or get the hell out of the way.*

*— A letter from Margali, Ravnos Methuselah, to the Camarilla Inner Circle, 1994*

For hundreds and potentially even thousands of years, the world belonged to the Kindred. In a world lit only by fire, where information moved only as quickly as physical transportation, secrets likewise moved slowly, and even the sloppiest of Kindred could repair a Masquerade breach before the larger world had any inkling that something fiendish had happened in the night.

Even among Kindred society, the scarcity and glacial pace of information proved a valuable tool. It was comparatively easy to hide a domain transgression or to undermine a rival while she spent three months crossing the sea from the Old World.

This is, inarguably, no longer the case. Digital footage of Masquerade breaches hits the web before the Kindred even knows someone was recording him. News of the Anarch Movement in the United States reaches and incites European Anarchs almost as it's happening. A Cainite in Montreal can be by her sire's side in Buenos Aires in under 24 hours. The World of Darkness is no longer populated by superstitious peasants huddled around meager fires.

Of course, when information moves so quickly, so does the noise that obscures the message. That Masquerade breach on the video sharing site is potentially an enormous hazard to the Kindred, but it's also easily swept away underneath a tide of pornographic, racist, off-topic, and plainly moronic comments. And even if those vanish, another thousand will label the video as "OMG THAT IS SO FAEK LOL" and "shopped. i can see the pixels." European Anarchs might experience data blackouts on the devices feeding them information on their American sect-mates. The flight from Montreal to Buenos Aires might be grounded for suspicion of terrorist activity in Atlanta, where agents of an unnamed Methuselah drag a hooded and staked "suspect" off the plane in shackles. The triumph of information's ready availability and instant communication balances precariously on the razor's edge of the fundamental vulgar behavior of mankind when protected by anonymity and digital distance.

But there's more to the question of Kindred and technology than just spamming enough "LOL" on social networking sites to cover one's ass when pictures



of an ill-considered feeding with the CEO's wife turn up on the gossip sites. From infrared cameras to biotechnology to medical science and the almost infinite changes to the daily routine of modern life, how do Kindred interact with technology? This chapter explores some of the answers and hopefully asks a few questions that can inspire a few stories worth telling.

## Style

The Embrace does odd things to people. Irreversible things. The most obvious of Embrace consequences, of course, are the thirst for blood and the presence of the Beast. What most of the Damned don't immediately notice, however, is the stasis that accompanies the Kindred condition. Unless the vampire makes a conscious effort to overcome it, the Kindred remains frozen in time, with attitudes and habits appropriate to the night she became one of the Damned. In nights long past, this didn't matter much, as decades or even centuries might pass without much changing in the cultural landscape. Tonight, however, information travels too quickly to leave any but the remotest Kindred communities untouched. Consider how anachronistic a Cainite "greaser" might seem with his pompadour — is a "grunge" Kindred any less conspicuous in his appearance? Five years ago might as well be 50, which might as well be 500 in terms of the pace of modern culture.

Fortunately for many Kindred, gothic-industrial culture is tied more to an emotional state than a particular period in time, so rivets, lace, and black leather remain perennially stylish in the World of Darkness. In these postmodern times, even an over-the-top affectation of Victorian style doesn't draw undue attention. Fashion in the World of Darkness works exactly as the Kindred intend, with the most extreme manifestations of dark couture turning heads only when the wearer wants it to. Dresses made of knives, jackets constructed of barbed wire, and PVC garments that cater to the wildest fetish have their place at every Elysium, side-by-side with the traditional finery of the Damned.

More than ever before, a modern Kindred's physical presentation reflects the state of technology in the world. Mobile phones, laptop computers, tablets, and music players are as much fashion accessories as they are functional devices. A Kindred wielding a cheap ceramic pistol or a telescoping baton sends a message of menace as much as a Cainite swinging a motorcy-

cle chain once did. In certain Kindred circles, carrying last year's smartphone is a *faux pas*, and God help the vampire who doesn't even *have* a smartphone. In other Cainite subcultures, any mobile phone at all is a shackle, a way for the Powers That Be to know where a vampire is at any given point, and a tool of those whose unlives are tied to the success of privileged mortals. To these Kindred, a smartphone might as well be the ubiquitous briefcase of business cultures past.

## Havens

As with clothing, where a Kindred calls home and how she gets there is as much an affectation of choice as her clothing. Young Kindred especially avail themselves of modern conveniences such as WiFi, on-demand television options, and security systems to protect their goods and their blood-drinking predilections. Among every social stratum, the undead have options for dwelling that offer protection that havens of prior centuries simply couldn't, as well as access to precious vessels. Converted loft spaces in areas of urban reclamation, sky-high penthouses that seem to nestle in the arms of angels, chambers secreted in the halls of high-tech schools and even highly classified apartments among the most top-secret of military installations all have been home to Kindred and will be again.

Even the domains of the wretched have a technological edge that Kindred of years gone by could only dream of. Hives of Nosferatu that tap directly into mortal data infrastructures lie beneath most modern cities. Gangrel territories of cable and wire are modern urban jungles, providing precious light in the night — and casting long shadows where their feral masters prefer darkness. Brujah revolutionaries may make their havens in defunct foundries with still-functioning equipment or even on forgotten floors of office buildings, left unoccupied during times of economic downturn but still wired for ready access to every modern convenience.

One of the difficulties modern Kindred face is the ability to activate modern accessibility. Elders and ancillae have an edge here, as they can work through mortal thralls when such arrangements are necessary, but what does a fledgling Tremere do when establishing an Internet repository of secret knowledge? Tell the cable guy, "Come by after dark; I work all day?" It takes creative thinking, favor-trafficking (see the Prestation chapter), or a judicious application of persuasive Disciplines to make modern technological bureaucracy work in one's favor.





## Unlife Online

Without a doubt, the single greatest threat to the Masquerade and the single greatest weapon in the technologically-savvy Kindred's arsenal is communication. Security systems, medical breakthroughs, weapons advancements and numerous other technologies all pose certain hazards or benefits to the Damned, but often only in very specific circumstances. The most significant change to Kindred society wrought by technology is communication.

Indeed, the effect of communication on undead society has raised the question as to what constitutes a domain. With the ability of a Kindred in London to set into effect a virtual chain of events that culminates in an Anarch uprising in New York, does domain have the same meaning tonight? Can the Prince of New York redress a grievance with the London Kindred for meddling in her domain? Or must she observe ancient protocols and petition the Prince of London? What about actions between virtual domains across the boundaries of sects?

These questions complicate the historical understanding of the Traditions. With Kindred no longer necessarily even physically present in a domain, how can a Prince or Archbishop enforce the laws of the domain upon an individual vampire? Should she? And with the authority figures equally as able (potentially, if not in reality) to follow transgressors across the vast network of virtual space and digital devices, how can the culprit hide? In nights when the Prince of Paris can exact vengeance against a Black Hand pack in Mexico City, does the venerable Kindred concept of domain even mean anything anymore? When a Prince claims Praxis, is the claim over physical territory, or does the Prince's claim extend over the virtual wellbeing of her subjects as well? Does punishment for transgression lie in the responsibility of the "meat-space" location of the transgressor, or does a digital crime warrant digital justice at the hands of a Prince able to enforce it? What if the Prince of the physical domain and the virtual territory disagree? What if they're at war, or of different sects? And what of Kindred who are stalwart sect members of physical locations but self-styled Autarkis in digital domains?



It's a heady, complicated topic, and one discussed in no few opulent salons and filthy hideouts. And the answers, to date, aren't forthcoming. The ramifications change as quickly as does the face of the technology raising the question.

## Personal Networking

Young Kindred have quickly seen the opportunities afforded by networking sites and services.

Kindred are able to keep constant ambient awareness of what their Contacts, Allies, and Retainers are up to, as well as the activities of their coterie-mates and even rivals. Personal networking sites appeal to the vanity of vampires as much as they do to mortals', and rare is the young Kindred with a social networking site profile who can turn down the opportunity to boast about what he's up to or what he's done, even if he treads carefully with his wording.

Kindred can coordinate events far across geographical and even cultural boundaries. This might be something as positive as a neonates' discussion group for maintaining Humanity, or it might be something wholly diabolical, like an international smuggling ring for slave vessels.

To hear some Kindred tell it, certain mysteries of the Kindred condition can even communicate across these networks, such as Tremere rituals with digitally networked participants contributing their aspects of the ritual via broadband or 4G. The truth of these matters — or the potential truth, as technology continues to advance — cannot be verified. Tonight's impossibility might be tomorrow night's next breakthrough. Clever young Kindred are already able to implant an undeniable mental compulsion over the phone, and a Kindred known as Bio Adam earned kudos from the city's elders for locating an Obfuscated enemy by using a laptop and a "Find My Phone" app to pinpoint the hidden rival's location.

## Digital Footprint

Nothing anyone ever puts online disappears forever, whether it's a blog entry or a yield spreadsheet of one's hidden Resources. Many modern breaches of the Traditions, if transacted online, can't ever be completely repaired. With that in mind, it's only a matter of time until something indelibly ruinous for the Kindred transpires online. Until then, those who would safeguard the invisibility of the Damned must do so by destroying as much data as they can, and by

leveraging the inherent cynicism of an increasingly louche global culture when they can't. No few videos of vampires feeding have been defused by careful application of such vulgar responses as, "It was hard, but I was able to fap" or "You can always trust the blacks to turn on one another when they get too excited."

Physical media likewise has transformed over the decades since the interests of a Ventrue magnate were recorded on reels of magnetic tape or a stack of floppy disks. Even the CD is now outmoded storage. Tonight, physically moving sensitive data is likely performed on removable flash drives, but how long until some other vehicle becomes commonplace (assuming, of course, that physically moving data doesn't become completely obsolete)? With cloud storage and easy data torrent seeding and duplication, "We need that CD! It's the only copy of the Primogen's records!" is a crisis of the past.

## Troubleshooting

Coteries of Kindred who specialize in an emergent digital Masquerade have the ability to chase down and destroy troublesome data. Through a variety of methods including database hacking, password manipulation, server integrity attacks, and even physical destruction of hardware, these Kindred maintain the secrecy of the Curse of Caine. As it becomes both easier and more common for Cainites to leave (intentional or accidental) traces of their passing — videos on sharing sites, check-ins at suspicious locations, social media describing illicit activity — these online troubleshooters are rapidly becoming more and more valuable in their home domains, regardless of sect. The Inner Circle of the Camarilla is suspected of sponsoring an experimental cadre of unknown Justicars whose purview is Tradition-based data, and whispers of a few young Inconnu who extend their secrecy into the online world have made their way into the Kindred rumor mills.

## New Media

The media influence of the previous century has become radically redefined in the past several years, with no signs of slowing its progress in the future. In the past, the Influence of well-connected elders could be counted upon to keep stories out of the newspapers or off the nightly news. Tonight, who watches the news on television? Certainly not young Kindred or the people whose lives may be affected by the depredations of a sloppy Sabbat pack. And newspapers



might as well be clay tablets — even the alternative print weeklies that once kept vital the countercultural stirrings of passionate Brujah and trend-seeking Toreador.

The Media Influence of the modern nights moves at the same breakneck speed as other communication, and less and less reflects the ability to bury a story on page eight of the Metro section. Modern media manipulation is more along the lines of reverse search engine optimization, keeping hot topics from trending by hiding them beneath tides of digital nonsense and crackpot bloggery. In a world where content is king and information is instantaneous, those Kindred who command a cult of personality that spans blogs, podcasts, and the incessant digital firehose of status updates is the one who can push a story to prominence or consign it to the infinite pile of Internet dross. Needless to say, the Nosferatu excel at this, but a surprising number of online Toreador Harpies and Setite vice-followers have equal sway and acumen.



### The Ancestors' Archive

As a family interest, the Giovanni have been migrating certain of their genealogical resources to a closed-network database on par with that of the Church of Latter Day Saints. One part of this is the ancestor-worship and family veneration that occurs in the cultic familial structure of the clan. The other part is that, as a digital “book of the dead” for the Giovanni, an archive of the departed and undead is a valuable necromantic resource. The archive lists not only known dead, but their projected status in the Underworld, ability to effect change in the physical world, and contribution to the Endless Night effort.



## Finance

Certain Kindred and clans have massive financial investments, like the Ventrue, Giovanni, some Toreador and Lasombra, and no few savvy Nosferatu. Of these, the wisest have been quick to take advantage of technological advancements that enable them to react quickly to financial stimuli. This includes everything from smartphone and mobile device apps that

allow them to move assets to computers with software suites that watch the stock markets and analyze them for optimal returns on investment over very short periods of time.

## Logistics

Moving things between places may seem both unglamorous and antithetical to most Kindred habits, given that vampires tend to settle in a single domain. However, the ability to move materials between domains can be a tremendous boon to the undead. If a Kindred has a need for rare vitae, a priceless artifact, or a bizarre thaumaturgical component, it's best if the shipper knows exactly how special her goods are. With quick routing and always-on navigation tracking, it's also easy for a Kindred with logistical Contacts to ship herself out of a domain if things are getting too hot to handle — or to see if anyone else is trying to sneak into or out of a territory. Even assassination-by-parcel isn't out of the question, given the Kindred vulnerability to things like firebombs that *somehow* made it through the shipper's hazard screening.

In this manner, logistics provide a wealth of cover and investment opportunities for the Kindred. It's easy for less-affluent Kindred to earn an income as the night deliveryman or the warehouse foreman of the graveyard shift, and just as easy for a Kindred who has access to shipping transit to specialize in contraband. Some Kindred do this on their own and grow wealthy (like the Coyote; see p. 27) while others extend the services of mortal interests into the shadow world of the Damned.

## Gambling

Some of the Damned see parallels in the global stock market and the casino businesses — they're both effectively games of chance, and the more ability individual Kindred have to dictate the outcomes of either, the more money they generate. To this end, many Kindred look for legitimate or strong-arm entries into the world of legalized gambling. Some appropriate a share of a casino, some buy into purveyors of games of chance, and even a few more look to Disciplines or even the esoteric magics of the willworkers in order to control probabilities. Bookmakers, too, are popular, whether for a Kindred to exploit, or, more profitably, to adjust the stakes via technological price-fixing.

## Military and Armament

In the modern nights, as borders shrink, ideas travel at the speed of thought, and tyranny takes on many



guises, mankind's capacity for violence thrives. The world will never want for ingenious new ways by which people can inflict grievous harm upon one another, nor will it want for people willing to pay top dollar for these martial technologies.

As to the Kindred role in man's inhumanity to man, few vampires bother overmuch with weapons or armaments. Vampiric Disciplines and the inherent strength and durability of the Cainite form still provide an efficiency and mobility that advancements in weapons and defense technology have yet to overcome. Guns — and, indeed, many modern weapons — simply don't have much effect on Kindred bodies.

That's not to say that the Damned have no interest in combat technologies, just that their involvement is different from that of mortals. For vampires, most weapons technologies fall into one of three categories: sources of income, guerrilla resources, or advanced technologies that will have unforeseen effect upon the undead.

### **Making Money**

It's no secret that mortals love to blow holes in each other and carve each other to pieces. To that end, no few Kindred have made their money, Contacts, and Allies in various conflicts around the globe.

From anti-governmental rebel forces to private security firms to collectors, the world has a massive market for weaponry, both legal and otherwise. The Kindred — with their penchant for secrecy and their many advantages in keeping themselves and their property hidden — are well suited to transactions of this ilk, selling forbidden armaments to those who want them. Kindred of any clan or creed may have arms dealing as a component of their Resources. Small-scale or large, from a Gangrel hooligan selling a single unmarked pistol to a desperate street thug or a well-connected Toreador having a large stake in this decade's international arms-sales scandal, vampires make money selling weapons to the people who want them. It's worth noting that few of the weapons thus sold by Kindred purveyors will do much to stop an angry vampire. Thus, while the Kindred can destabilize the world, turning its various ugly corners into violent hellholes where they may feed and maraud with relative impunity, they're not giving mortals any great advantage over the undead. "Let them tear one another apart so that the streets run red," says one prominent Nosferatu arms dealer, "and I can take a double-payment in cash and vitae." Access to the newest and

deadliest weapons with the highest rates of fire and best armor penetration is one of the priorities of doing business for these Kindred.

It's also worth noting that there are no prohibitions against trafficking in arms in most Kindred Traditions or domains laws. It's a matter of mortal law, so among the undead, just owning a "weapon of mass destruction" isn't inherently punishable, except in the strictest of domains.

### **Boots On the Ground**

For those Kindred whose traffic runs parallel to mortal interests, such as Brujah rebel chiefs whose Allies might be armed insurrectionists, Old World Tremere and Tzimisce lords who still maintain private armies on their estates, Gangrel gang-lords who own the inner cities, and even demented Malkavian Autarkis who have connections to international mercenary companies, access to efficient weapons equals success in their violent avenues of business. In the World of Darkness, killing off the competition is more often literal than it is figurative. For these Kindred, high technology can often be ameliorated by quantities of lower-quality weapons. Point enough antiquated but cheap Kalashnikov barrels at a rival and he'll back down as quickly as he would if it were a newer model with better quality and range. Some Kindred see themselves as modern incarnations of Dracula, with their loyal armies of ghoulish *boyars* willing to fight and die for the master's favor.

### **Better Mousetraps**

The most rare and noteworthy of the Kindred involved with weapons technology are those whose fortunes are tied to innovation in the field. Traditional ballistic firearms might not mean much against a vampiric target, but if a shooter can put enough lead in the air, the hail of fire can shred even the most stalwart Kindred. Weapons that focus on non-ballistic delivery systems can not only wreak havoc on the Kindred, the Kindred may actually be funders or test cases of their development. Surely, few Kindred are involved actively in development of such technologies, but who knows how much Ventrue or Lasombra money flows through the research laboratories, or how many shovelheads or Caitiff may find themselves looking down the barrel of some unknown device, only to have the results detailed in an "anomalous integrity damage sustained by cryptid entities" report.

Biological agents, for example, may not harm a Kindred directly, but the Kindred may, through slop-



py feeding or exposure to tainted blood, pass on the results of biological weapons in a manner similar to transmitting disease. See V20, p. 295 for more information on disease.

Non-ballistic weapons such as LRADs, Tasers, directed energy weapons, pulsed energy projectiles, and other implements of nearly science-fiction reality have full effect on Kindred. Even unsophisticated weaponry like flamethrowers and the dreaded “Dragonsbreath round” can still ruin a heedless vampire. Needless to say, these weapons are extremely hard to procure, especially for individuals without military, law enforcement, or corporate connections to the organizations that buy or manufacture them. Of course, for vampires, where there’s a will, there’s a way, and these weapons occasionally end up in the hands of the Kindred, to the detriment of local Kindred society (and often anyone in the vicinity of the individual).

### **Mass Destruction**

Kindred thrive where strife holds sway in the mortal world. All but the most ancient of Kindred is susceptible to the raw destructive power of large-scale explosives and other strategic weapons. From conventional explosives to dirty nukes to in-development weapons like the experimental hafnium bomb, a Kindred might as well be a mortal in all but the most extenuating cases.

That doesn’t mean that the Kindred aren’t interested in the financial or military uses of such things. Some of the most radical among the Sabbat would gladly see the world plunged into global chaos, the better to exert their will over mortal cattle, and they would gladly hasten it with large-scale weapons of destruction. Petty Kindred dictators and revolutionaries, especially in remote or war-torn domains may resort to employing devices of mass destruction to keep mortals or even Cainites in their domain cowed and terrified. And, of course, there’s big money in munitions, both above and below the table as described above, and Kindred like the Brujah renegades fleeing Baba Yaga’s terrifying reign in Russia with unknown quantities of contraband uranium suddenly find themselves very popular among terrorists, anarchists, and ambitious governments (both Kindred and Kine) who would command such destructive power.

For those Cainites truly divorced from their Humanity, certain combinations of Kindred craft and destructive technology exist. Guerrilla Tremere in war-torn domains have been known to build explosive





devices into their homunculi or even wholly autonomous bomb-golems. Tzimisce terrorists have knotted weapons and bombs into the flesh of their servitor-ghouls. And there's no arguing that a ghoul or even mortal thrall of any clan, Conditioned or suitably blood bonded and wearing twenty pounds of plastic explosive, might make the ultimate sacrifice for his beloved mistress.

Of course, such weapons of mass destruction are better handled as plot devices than as inventory items in most **Vampire** chronicles.

### **Killers for Hire**

The Clan of Assassins has long had a formula for success that relies upon their own unique skills and proprietary Discipline more so than it does on tools and implements. Even in the modern nights, an Assamite wielding an ancestral *kukri* is a far more terrifying sight than any private security force soldier with a cutting-edge submachine gun. More than any other independent clan, the Assamites have actually demonstrated a keen ability to subvert or disrupt existing technologies, particularly defensive ones. Even the most expensive security system won't stop the functions of Quietus, if the Assamite has a chance to employ them — and how well can that private security force defend a haven if its agents never hear the Assamites coming?

Among the viziers and sorcerers of the clan, technology is no substitute for the time-tested resources that contain mystic research. These jealously-guarded secrets are much safer, the *amr* reason, in physical books that an individual can protect than on easily copied or smuggled digital media.

## **Transportation**

Another modern convenience that separates modern Kindred from their historical peers is the ability to go places upon a split second's decision. In many cases, the transportation options the Kindred employ are those same that are available to their mortal prey: city buses, light rail, commercial airlines, subways, cabs, and any number of for-hire services. While these are sometimes stigmatized as common or low-rent, they still represent an immense advantage over modes of travel only two centuries prior. Tonight, when a Kindred ruins his opportunities in his home domain, he has only to book a flight or steal a motorcycle to

leave it all behind him. In nights now gone, travel even 25 miles distant was all but unheard of, and the spaces between civilized domain were the demesnes of desperate bandits, the hateful, savage Gangrel, and things even less understood.

In these times of affordable and available personal transportation, the choice of transportation says much about the Kindred who employs it. High-Status Kindred almost certainly have luxury vehicles at their command, and they may well have an airplane or helicopter in addition to their limousine or entourage-attended SUV.

Certain Kindred have a love for the act of travel itself, and choose to spend a great deal of time with their vehicles. Classic cars, vintage bikes, campers that do double duty as mobile haven fortresses — all of these and more might belong to a brood of Ravnos, or even a nomadic mortal family that just happens to have an itinerant Malkavian at its center. Some Gangrel would even risk their unlives rather than leave "Ol' Bess" behind. Then again, it's just as likely that they can call upon the assistance of an entire motorcycle club of ghouls to take vengeance on the god-damn bloodsucker who put a Brujah's favorite 1949 Panhead Harley-Davidson in a ditch.

Many Kindred among the modern mobile caste, regardless of sect, don't place an enormous value on convenience or comfort. The most common piece of "advanced" technological equipment among the nomadic undead is probably some sort of GPS device. The second most common is probably a stolen or pre-paid mobile phone or a Saturday night special. Indeed, among Clan Ravnos, too much dependency on gimmicks and gewgaws can lead to a loss of Status in the clan and the ill regard of one's fellow Deceivers. Whether or not an individual cares much about the regard of her fellow Deceivers is a different matter, of course.

Even more curious modes of transportation do as much to define their owners as they do to aid his capabilities. A custom of sea piracy still exists among the Lasombra, who have carried on the tradition since the Age of Exploration. And though it seems archaic tonight, the apocryphal armed railroad convoy conducted by a secret Camarilla warlord represents more firepower and destructive capability than an entire kingdom's worth of mounted knights from the era of venerable elders.





## The War of Ages

Too often, reckless neonates and ancillae dismiss elders as hoary old bats, unable to work technology and fearful of the very concept. While it's certainly true that elders either eschew technology themselves or look down their nose at it in others, only the most foolish young vampire discounts the ability of elders to actually learn to take advantage of technology. In fact, keeping oneself updated is one of the most fearsome tactics in an elder's arsenal: Given that many elders cultivate Resources and other Backgrounds to levels unattainable by fledglings, combining these advantages with modern advancements makes for a potent mixture. Consider the following examples:

- A Brujah elder establishes a network of communication designed to foment rebellion throughout the region. She turns most of her efforts toward empowering mortal guerrilla groups to resist privileged government — but at the speed of an internet post, she's able to muster an armed insurrection ready and willing to fight alongside her cause.

- The Tremere alchemist David Witz seeks the secrets of eternal life without the burdens of vampirism. Using computers to map key points of individual personalities and combining them with thaumaturgical constructs, Witz is able to create “clones,” alchemical homunculi programmed with simulations of vampiric individuality, complete with memory-data. Would such a creature have a soul? And what if it ran afoul of the Kindred from which its original memories were unwillingly drawn?

- A Tzimisce biologist combines the latest in medical technology with the horrific methods of flesh- and bonecrafting. The result is a biotechnological *szlachta*, only with none of the flaws or dependencies of “lesser” ghouls and the ability to heal or even replicate itself.

Any number of scenarios spring to mind by which a technologically savvy elder could maintain an edge in the War of Ages... or invest in a technology or scheme that goes tragically awry.

The psychology of elders is frequently one of denial and hubris — the mistaken belief that the treachery and craftiness of great age is sufficient to overcome the gizmo-fetishization of the youngest Generations. Such is folly, and wise elders know either to master the Disciplines required to overmatch modern technology or to turn it to their own advantage. Many el-




ders have met a fiery end due to reluctance to spend their time on the “fads” and alienating amenities of the modern nights. Those who at least know what the modern world can bring to bear against them (to say nothing of co-opting those technologies themselves) are those who are forewarned and forearmed against the depredations of jealous neonates and ancillae.

Again, Resources play a great role in collecting and learning about technologies and turning them against jealous fledglings. Expensive security suites, bullet-proof limousines, and even experimental tracking devices that follow their targets by techno-mystic pattern analysis aren't the bailiwick of Kindred who don't have two coins to rub together. The cutting edge of technology — the bleeding edge — belongs to those vampires who have not only the insight and ambition to use it, but who have the money to subsidize the pioneers of the various emerging and harrowing fields.

## The Disenfranchised

For those Kindred of decentralized clans, those of more modest means, or those whose clan abstains from sectarian endeavors, the use of technology falls much more along the lines of age than it does philosophy. That is, elders of the less affluent or adept clans are often behind the curve of technology while the younger members are more willing to learn and use new devices, services, or equipment. As with all Kindred, even neonates lag a bit behind mortals in terms of awareness and adoption of new technology. No small amount of this comes directly as a result of the Kindred condition: Even the youngest Kindred, at the moment of his Embrace, becomes a static icon of that time. The Damned forever face a stasis that puts them directly at odds with the inexorable advance of technology.

For the underprivileged, most of the clans have a distinct specialty, something that no other clan does with the capacity that they do. The Kindred find it in their nature to trust in their own abilities more than external tools. Aside from simple communication, what use would a Tremere thaumaturge have for a smartphone while he's summoning the spirit guardian of a rural ley line? What purpose would a Setite high priest have for broadband wifi while she plumbs the buried secrets of the Middle Kingdom? What does a Pander care for 1080p, other than its street value?




### Vitality Hack (Level-Two Thaumtaurgical Ritual)

This ritual was reportedly developed by a mentally-diseased Tremere who made her haven in the morgue of a county hospital, where she also preyed upon the downtrodden patients. The Tremere in question used this ritual to hide in plain sight among the doctors, nurses, and patients, who thought her nothing more than a homeless vagabond whose rough life sent her frequently to the emergency room.

Vitality Hack allows the Kindred to briefly display all of the vital “signs of life: breathing, blood movement, temperature, brain activity, etc. However, these vital signs appear only medical equipment such as EKG meters, CAT scans, stethoscopes, and thermometers. The ritual does not create any physical effects such as a pulse or bleeding, but simply causes a standard result to be displayed by the medical device in question. The signs displayed are uniform, showing no variance or excited activity (which may cause some suspicion in and of itself).

**System:** This ritual requires one hour to cast. The ritual remains in effect for the duration of the scene, fooling any and all medical devices in that time. As a separate invocation of the ritual, the effect may be cast upon a talisman — any physical object — that confers this ritual's effect on any single Kindred carrying or in contact with the talisman. Casting the ritual on an item in this manner requires an additional hour. In either case, the ritual requires an ounce of blood from a living relative of the Kindred performing the ritual.





## The Inconnu

With characteristic mystery, the Inconnu don't have a collective position on technology. Those Kindred who have dealt with the Inconnu suggest that the secretive vampires of the sect have no great love for technology, preferring instead to trust in their own abilities and exercise their supernal acumen rather than use the "crutch" of tools developed by and for mortals. To their reasoning, the Kindred have long maintained their edge because of their unique relationship with the Curse of Caine: Disciplines.

As with anything involving the Inconnu, the position is a nuanced and seemingly contradictory one. Although these vampires consider themselves to have transcended to baser evils of the Kindred condition, few trust technology to the degree that they wish to stake their existence on it. Much of it they don't understand, and find themselves bewildered by a contacts database stored in an unknown cloud server or a security system that, run by a computer, lacks a reasoning being's ability to distinguish between ally and enemy.

To an extent, the Inconnu position relies greatly on the perceived connection between the sect and nights long past. Even in the modern nights, many august Inconnu maintain havens of classical grandeur or simplicity. On a terraced portico or deep within the hand-carved grottoes of Inconnu havens, what would be more vulgar or intrusive than a blinking laptop screen?

As with many of the concerns facing the Inconnu, the sect's answer, insofar as it has a coherent one, is to place itself as far outside of the reach of technology

as possible. He who doesn't trust an outsider with a secret never has to defend that secret's spread.

## The Anarchs

Toward the end of the 20th century, the Anarch Free State seemed to be on the ropes, but in recent years the Anarchs have managed to dust themselves off and bring the fight back to the interlopers who believed the decentralized sect would make for easy pickings. If the Anarchs are united in anything, it is the desire to send the carpetbaggers packing after seeing their domains stolen out from under them.

More so than any other sect, the Anarchs are defined by their guerrilla mindset. In the modern nights, one of the greatest resources available to the Damned is an unprecedented ability to affect the world. Whether by easily portable implements of violence, the ability to summon information as never before possible, or the ability to get to or away from trouble quickly, the Anarch Movement is poised to make modern, technological capability its *raison d'etre*.

Quite simply, the Anarchs not only *get* technology, they *want* to get technology. Tonight, tools are the great equalizer. While the other sects may dabble in various technologies or might have recognized experts in certain technological fields, they all remain tied to various ideologies that are, by Anarch perspective, 500 years out of date at best. With that in mind, the desire to succeed in the modern idiom belongs to the Anarchs. Let the other sects have their holy wars and their feudal vendettas. The modern nights may well prove to be the era of the Anarchs, so ready, able, and knowledgeable is the sect to effect its agenda.







# Chapter Four: A World of Darkness

*What powerful but unrecorded race*

*Once dwelt in that annihilated place.*

— Horace Smith, “Ozymandias”

Vampire players have always enjoyed the sense of completeness reflected in the World of Darkness — the idea that, as wheels turn within wheels, something they do in their home domain might have repercussions as far away as Venice, Mexico City, or even in the Underworld home of the True Black Hand. The setting truly is a *world* of darkness, with clans, sects, and mysterious groups and individuals plying their private agendas under moonlit skies. Even when a coterie solved a mystery, something else was always out there, hungrier and bigger than they; that idea is one of the horror elements that still characterizes the world of the Kindred and the more inscrutable things with which they share the darkness. Here, then, are several notable locations of particular significance to the Race of Caine.

## **The Cathedral of Flesh (location unknown)**

The original Cathedral of Flesh spawned from the apotheosis sought by the zealous Yorak, a Tzimisce charged by the clan progenitor with the guardianship of a germ of the Antediluvian’s consciousness. To protect the Antediluvian, Yorak constructed the Ca-

thedral of Flesh, a harrowing church-fortress sculpted from the flesh of peasants, slaves, rivals, beasts, and any number of other victims who were built into the pulsing, suppurating walls of the structure. The walls, buttresses, floors, and spires of the building were crafted from the bones and skin of Yorak’s victims, which made the Cathedral a living (or perhaps undead) vessel of mad collective consciousness — one that eventually devoured its creator.

The Cathedral of Flesh was originally constructed in Yorak’s domain in the Old World, somewhere in the Tzimisce-haunted land beyond the forest supposedly near the Carpathian mountains. Tales of the Cathedral’s moving have plagued the Kindred for centuries, however, and have given horrific gravitas to both the Jihad and the approach of Gehenna.

Tonight, none knows where the Cathedral of Flesh is located, though stories of its survival persist. Indeed, those who know the ways of the Tzimisce suggest that multiples of the Cathedral may have spawned in parthenogenesis from the original. Others argue that the Cathedral is now the body of the Antediluvian itself: an enormous, unholy church that slakes its thirst on those who foolishly or defiantly brave its halls.



## **Hunedoara Castle (Transylvania, Romania)**

For many Kindred, the idea of Golconda is one of redemption and of transcendence beyond the Curse of Caine. Golconda occasionally takes on a darker cast, however, for those who seek it (or deride it...) claiming that vampires “elevated” by Golconda are no gentle-spirited saints.

The Kindred of Hunedoara Castle — rumored to be a stronghold of the Inconnu — have many different views on their own claimed states of Golconda. Some seem to take the aspect of shepherds, with a philosophy seemingly leading from the mire and sorrow of the Kindred condition, but others are veritable Biblical terrors, asserting that transcendence of the vampiric state certainly doesn’t arise from denying it. Behind the craggy castle walls and its guardian gargoyles, the true monsters dwell, a dozen in number.

Whatever the truth of Golconda, Castle Hunedoara, hidden deep within the ancestral lands of the Tzimisce, provides a haven for these deathless gurus of the Golconda philosophy. The hoary halls of the castle are no sanctuary, and any place Cainites congregate, sanguinary rivalries and clashing peccadilloes are sure to color the landscape.

Indeed, among those outsiders who know of the castle, its reputation as a den of heresy and bloody debauchery competes with that of its sanctity. Certainly, the truth lies somewhere amid the extremity of rumors it engenders. But how do these Kindred stave off the ennui and madness of their flawed immortality if they never venture beyond the stony walls of the castle?

## **The Vampire Club (San Francisco, California)**

Built into the grounded hull of a bankrupt millionaire’s yacht, the Vampire Club is one of the Anarch Free State’s prized possessions. Indeed, Kindred of all factions consider the Vampire Club to be Elysium (in whatever terms their particular sect or origin understands the concept). Even the ghouls, retainers, and hangers-on of Kindred retinues may enjoy themselves, though non-vampires are restricted to the environs of the Alexandrian Club, specially built above the mired club-ship.

With the patronage of once-Prince Vannevar Thomas and managed by an eccentric Toreador socialite named Sebastian Melmoth, the Vampire Club

has, for almost a century, been the toast of the town, where Anarch Warlords may indulge their Kindred pleasures side-by-side with Sabbat Bishops and prominent Camarilla Primogen. Practically all vampires who visit San Francisco make it a point to visit the Vampire Club, even if they’re on the run or lying low. This is a place where a vampire may be a vampire, regardless of politics or recriminations. The club has weathered the tumult of the Anarch Movement, the invasion of the Kindred of the East, and the ruin of its patron Prince — no turbulence has been able to dampen the epicurean spirit of the club.

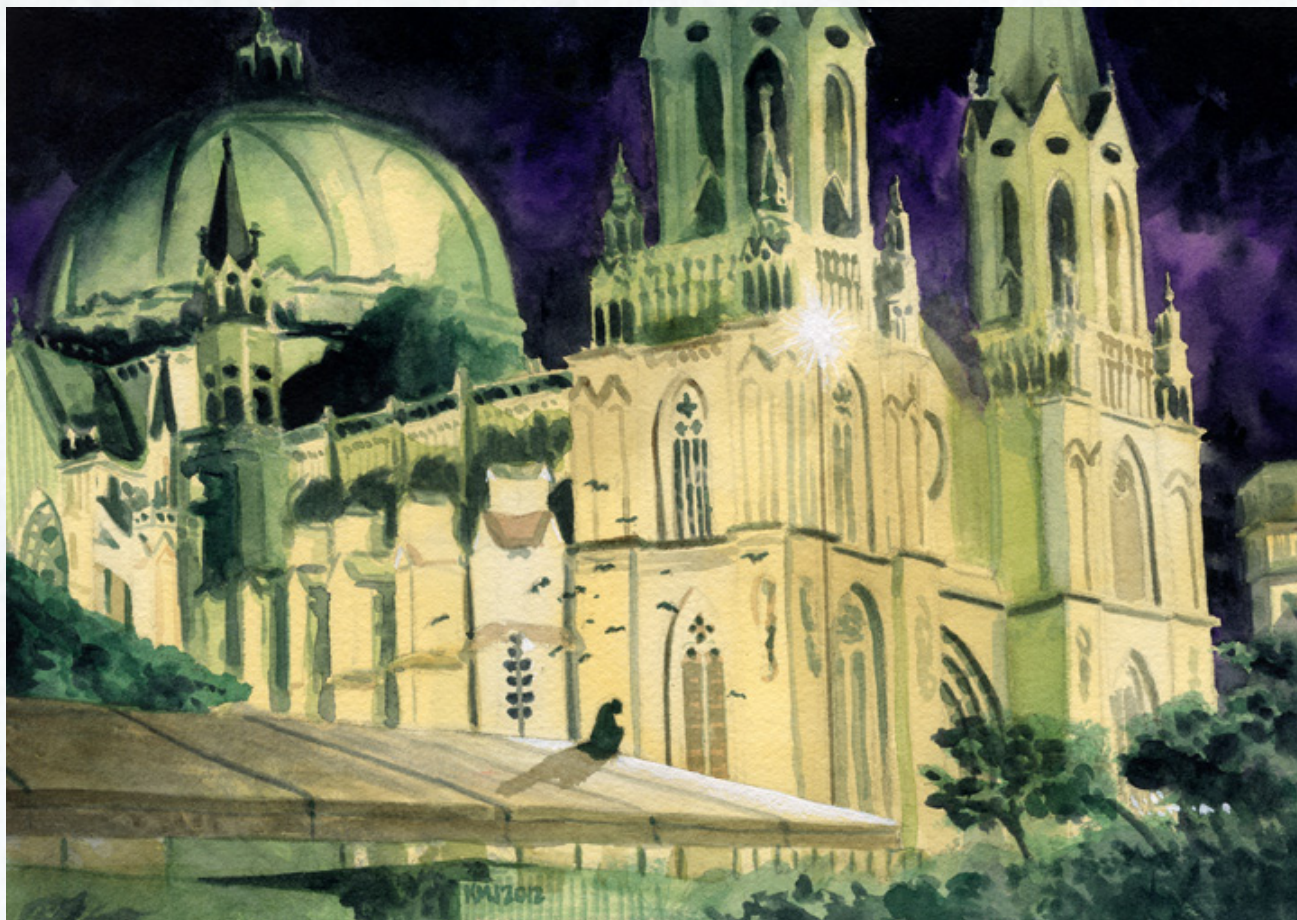
One particular milestone looms large for the Vampire Club: its hundredth anniversary. Sebastian Melmoth has already begun planning an enormous celebration, and no few august patrons of the club from across the world have poured money into his coffers with the intent of being recognized for their largesse at what might well become known as the biggest and most debauched party in Kindred history.

## **Catedral da Sé (São Paulo, Brazil)**

The Sabbat does much to earn its reputation as a bloodthirsty sect of fanatical vampire supremacists, but the actual philosophy of the sect is much more sophisticated. The sect has a long history of association with Catholic rite and culture, and one of the great philosophical centers of the Black Hand is São Paulo, in particular the São Paulo See Metropolitan Cathedral. The church itself is a symbol of the city, and few of the 40 million mortal inhabitants of the city realize that such an important Cainite institution exists beneath their home. Second only to the seat of the Regent in Mexico City, São Paulo is emerging as the spiritual center of the sect.

An ecumenical council for the Black Hand meets annually in the crypts beneath the Catedral da Sé, where it observes and codifies all of the Sabbat’s *autoritas ritae*. Archbishops, Bishops, Prisci, and other leaders of the sect attend this council by invitation only, and being asked to attend is both an enormous sect honor and a chance to shape the Black Hand’s religious policy. The Archbishop of São Paulo also hosts numerous deliberative diets, where Bishops and luminary Pack Priests can share and propose new *ritae* as well as study and debate matters directly related to Sabbat theology. These diets host no small amount of discussion regarding the Paths of Enlightenment in addition to codified sacrament.





The presence of such an important religious institution for the Sabbat rankles some of the Old World elders of the sect, who believe that the Black Hand's religious center should remain closer to the Vatican, or at least in Europe as the historical stronghold of Catholicism. This issue has yet to truly form a divide among the spiritual leaders of the Black Hand, but as sect outlook grows more dire and the End Times loom, the potential for a full-fledged schism among the priests of the sect becomes an increasing possibility.

### **Red Sisters Midnight (location varies)**

In the Old World domains of inhospitable Princes, a great trade in Kindred contraband thrives. Whether a Cainite seeks relics of undead saints, *verboden* Thaumaturgical reagents, a brace of mute Sarmatian slaves, or even a fragment of the *Book of Nod*, someone has it for sale. In the gimlet light of a winter moon, one may find whatever he seeks in the stalls and wagons of the Red Sisters Midnight. Whether one seeks these rare treasures or would liquidate one's own wonders, the Red Sisters Midnight act as brokers for items that may well have no worldly price.

Ravnos Kindred of the Phuri Dae bloodline curate this midnight market, turning their outcast status into a profitable arrangement. Prospective sellers leave their troubling wares with the witch-sisters of the clan, who handle all of the details of protecting the contraband, brokering the sale, and delivering the payment — in whatever terms the seller specifies, be it blood, cash, or more esoteric currency. The Red Sisters Midnight move these wonders through the domains of Europe, where their names are spoken in hushed tones, and the value of the hoard they peddle protects them from the ire of hostile Kindred. None would dare to steal the wares of these Ravnos, for one who stooped so low would expose himself not only to the curse-craft of their eldritch blood, but also the thousandfold vengeance of those who rely on the artifacts the sisters sell.

Who knows what blackness or thirst for redemption lies in the Kindred soul? Or what balms or banes these Ravnos witches have listed in their manifests that might quiet or enrage them? This nomadic trove rarely stays in the same domain for more than a week at a time. It communicates via whispers borne on the



wings of crows to those who have earned its trust, entreating them to buy or sell with the Deceivers. Even the most vicious of Princes grants the Red Sisters Midnight a wide berth, when they know who they are and what they do. The insatiable Kindred lust for secrets causes Princes and Bishops alike to grant them protection — that and the flicker of hope that something among the grotesqueries on the wagon shelves will be just what they need on this particular night....

### **Kaymakli (Cappadocia, Turkey)**

An underground city carved into the stone walls of the mountains of Anatolia, Kaymakli played an important role in the history of the clan overthrown by the Giovanni in their bid for immortality. As a hiding place for early Christians, the tunnels of Kaymakli also hid fugitive vampires of the Clan of Death, who fed from the persecuted Christians and studied their forbidden necromancies.

By the time the Giovanni had betrayed their parent clan, Kaymakli had become a footnote in clan history. The remains of the broken clan once again took refuge in Kaymakli, however, shutting themselves away from the outside world until they could rebuild their strength and plot against their wayward childer. For most, however, Kaymakli proved to be a deathtrap. Ancient wards prevent those Kindred who enter from leaving, making investigations into the tomb-city a one-way proposition to all but the most powerful of vampires — or those who can circumvent the ward by slipping past the veil of the living and the dead.

Tonight, Kaymakli is a dangerous place, where unknown numbers of sleeping elders lie torpid and the treasures of their necromantic troves lie undiscovered. Of those who have risen from their ageless slumber, many have joined the Sabbat in an effort to claim vengeance over the Giovanni. Others have made eldritch pacts with the Tal'Mahe'Ra, however, and that sect considers Kaymakli a "golgotha" — a Kindred stronghold where the barrier between the worlds of the living and the dead is weak. These converts to the True Black Hand use Kaymakli as a portal between the sect's Underworld domains and the physical world, and command a host of ancient spirits whose epochal anger they may quickly fan to fury.

### **Highgate Cemetery (London, England)**

In the mid-19th century, the city of London undertook an effort to open a number of cemeteries around

what was then the outer circle of London. The inner-city cemeteries and church graveyards that had until then served as the last resting places of the deceased had become a danger to public health, so perilously overpopulated were they.

A beautiful wonder that captivated the Romantic sentiments of the time, Highgate Cemetery is arranged like a sprawling garden or park, with cedar trees and animal havens. Visitors to the cemetery — mortal visitors, that is — may see the grounds only as part of a tour group.

Highgate Cemetery has always had a relationship with the supernatural, however. In the 1970s and 1980s, speculation that the "Vampire of Highgate" haunted the graves, and a century before, in Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula*, the character Lucy Westenra skulked among the headstones, preying on children. Burned and headless corpses have been found there, and covens of self-professed Satanists have prowled the grounds during their craven rites.

Lost Prince Mithras had declared Highgate Cemetery Elysium for all Kindred of London and the Baronies of Avalon, a status which exists unchallenged to this night. Indeed, some say that Mithras extended the terms of Elysium to include denizens of the World of Darkness beyond the Kindred themselves. More than one London Kindred has admitted to traffic with those of the Mages' orders in Highgate, and the setting is an unsurprising haven to any number of restless ghosts. A few vampires have seen what they describe as "demons" prowling the grounds as well, and whether these statements are true has yet to be determined. Certainly, something has encouraged the Damned and other supernatural entities to visit, but who (or what) is it, and to what end?

### **Palacio de Lecumberri (Mexico City, Mexico)**

Starvation, torture, psychological domination, physical abuse, and even death awaited those who found themselves condemned to Mexico City's "Black Palace," a prison that incarcerated both criminals and the political enemies of the Institutional Revolutionary Party. Constructed as a panopticon, the prison had no place for prisoners to hide, as the prison director (and sometimes his Cainite "guests") could see every movement of every inmate from the overview atop the building.

Needless to say, this notorious prison drew the attention of many of Mexico City's Sabbat, who used



the institution both as a political tool of influence and as a stable for a Herd that they could make disappear at any time. No few Camarilla spies (and presumably those troublesome members of other sects who found themselves in hostile territory) met their end in the Black Palace as well. The weapon of a terrifying and bloody period of sect history (even by Sabbat standards), the penitentiary represented a death sentence for anyone placed into its custody.

In 1980, the decommissioned prison became the headquarters of the Mexican National Archives. That hasn't changed its status as a valuable tool of influential Sabbat Elders, however, whose minions have infiltrated the archives at every level. The Elders who hold power over the national archives make no secret of their ability to summon forth and even create information with a wave of their hand. Some trade favors for access to the archive, and openly do so across sect boundaries, so long as the recipient offers a Boon of appropriate value. Of course, many young Sabbat see this as a symbol of Elder corruption... but they can be made to disappear, too.

### **Gaslamp (San Diego, California)**

Perhaps no domain has suffered as much as the self-styled Anarch Free State along the West Coast of the United States. Comprising several former Camarilla domains, a domain that sold out and rejoined the Camarilla, a domain overthrown in an invasion of the mysterious Kindred of the East, and any number of rogue domains that may or may not pledge any fealty to any specific sect, the Anarch Free State is a very loose confederation of Kindred territories that prize independence over the domineering influence of any outside vampire organization.

Depending on whom an inquiring Kindred asks, the Anarch Free State might not even exist, instead being a geographical collection of Baronies with no other commonality. This is the position of many actual Anarchs, in particular, the regretful and beleaguered Prince of San Diego, Tara. When Tara sold out her Anarch supporters and became Prince of the domain, she had no idea what a shitstorm she'd touched off.

Understandably, the Anarchs rioted, focusing their ire on the clean and tourist-friendly Gaslamp District, which they knew a Masquerade-fearing, Camarilla-bound Prince would be hard-pressed to protect from their rages. The Anarchs, though, didn't count on the Sabbat from Tijuana seizing upon the same opportunity to strike at a tender domain newly converted to the

protections of the Ivory Tower. The result is a completely unstable nightmare of promises half-honored by Camarilla luminaries, defiant Anarchs still nursing the pains of betrayal, and opportunistic packs of the Black Hand who enjoy nothing more than sneaking up unto Cali for a long weekend of terrorizing tourists and playing the two sides against one another. While the chaos certainly spills over from the Gaslamp into the surrounding neighborhoods, Gaslamp has emerged as a bit of a "freeport," where Kindred of any sect can go and bash each other's fangs out or debate a cease-fire. No Prince or power holds true sway in the ungovernable Gaslamp, and that probably won't change any time soon.

### **Lodin's Boardroom (Chicago, United States)**

As the Lupine rampage that gutted the Kindred population of Chicago raged across that city in the mid-1990s, its then-Prince, having declared a Blood Hunt against the werewolves, met his end at the claws of the feral savages. Half of Chicago's Kindred died with him during that horrific pogrom. Among the belongings rumored to have been abandoned in Lodin's boardroom haven are:

A mystic Kindred "Domesday Book," the Roll of the Damned, which is believed to list every Kindred to have existed since the origin of the Curse of Caine.

A Kabbalistic amulet, believed to date back to the 13th century, bearing the True Name of the Brujah Methuselah Menele.

A letter of succession, granting the Brujah Maxwell first right of Praxis in the event of Lodin's untimely end or overthrow.

Whether these Kindred artifacts actually reside in the heavily fortified boardroom has yet to be verified, and no few skeptical Kindred suspect that "lost relics" are just the sorts of rumors that spread in the wake of any Kindred tragedy. Other believe the rumors are bait, tools of the Jyhad placed by one of the ancient Kindred suspected of dwelling in the city (especially one granting the domain to Maxwell...). Regardless of their source, the items' potential value is too great to go uninvestigated by enterprising vampires.

### **The Pyre of Moloch (Tunisia, Northern Africa)**

When the Romans sacked Carthage during the Punic wars, they brought back tales of human sacrifice, bloody idolatry, and squalling infants thrown into



flaming braziers as offerings to foul gods. While Kindred scholars regard the Punic Wars as a time when the Masquerade was stretched thin, when open Jyhad between the Ventrue and the Brujah led them to point their pawns at each other in open conflict, few argue the presence of something unholy taking place in the hidden temples and among the desperate families of the Carthaginians.

Tonight, the ruins of Carthage are a UNESCO World Heritage Site, but one particular location among the ruins has avoided the scrutiny of the archaeologists. A timeless evil issues forth by night from this unhallowed temple. A great brazier, having lain cold for millennia, surrounded by tiny bones and streaked with the now-black stains of boiling blood, buzzes with flies and crawls with sightless maggots swarming about the grisly offerings left therein. This ghastly place is a spawning pit, and from it emerge vampires — though the “Kindred” are loath to share this appellation with them — devoted to the incomprehensible wills of their vile, forgotten god. These monstrous undead know the songs of Pazuzu and still speak the tongue of Moloch, birthing nightmares and leaving only desecration in their wake.

### **The Tomb of the Patriarch (Istanbul, Turkey)**

The “Dream” — a Cainite utopia of enlightenment and learning shepherded by a cabal of long-lost Methuselahs — took root in Byzantium over a millennium ago. As is ever the case with the Kindred, though, spurned loves and malicious treacheries conspired to lay low the Dream, and the ultimate betrayal came when its primary caretaker fell to foul diablerie during the Crusades. Since then, the ragged banner of the Dream has persisted in one form or another in the hands of would-be successors, but none with the glory of its original champion, the Patriarch.

The focal point of Byzantium’s Dream, the Hagia Sophia, remains a monument to both the ambition and perfidy of the Kindred condition. According to Kindred historians, a replica of the medieval basilica of Constantinople’s Hagia Sophia exists *beneath* the “true” Hagia Sophia, standing silent testament to the Patriarch’s ambition for the Dream. Some Byzantine elders still regard the Tomb of the Patriarch as a great spiritual landmark, and Kindred of all clans have safeguarded its legacy since the fall of its progenitor. Indeed, scholarly Kindred regard the Tomb of the Patriarch as a treasure of the Damned on the order of the

Library of Alexandria, holding both verifiable history and clues to the prophesied fate of the Damned. The academic riches of this ancient haven are difficult to access, however, as feuding factions of Kindred still war over the right to its legacy. The Tomb tragically lies at the forbidden center of a hostile entente, with vampires of the mutually suspicious factions choosing to keep the Tomb inaccessible rather than share its intellectual and spiritual bounty among outsiders and the godless. Thus, the Dream is all but broken in the modern nights....

### **The Succubus Club (location varies)**

The original Succubus Club appeared in Chicago in the early 1990s, where the local Kindred preyed on mortals enamored of the vampiric lifestyle. Tonight, the Succubus Club seems to have little connecting it to its first incarnation, as now it’s a nomadic party that travels from town to town across North America like a carnival, bringing with it those debased Kindred who have no more ambition in unlife than to go where the next sensation takes them. With a rotating lineup of promoters, musical acts, DJs, performers, and road crew, the Succubus Club never provides the same experience twice. The club rarely stays in any given city for more than a single night, but when it opens its doors, the Kindred indulge themselves in wildness and debauchery not seen since the nights of fabled Carthage.

Paranoid Elders often see the Succubus Club as a potential Masquerade threat or other challenge to the Traditions, but that’s rarely enough to stop them from attending, since the spectacle and thrill provides them with a momentary diversion from their centuries of bloody intrigue.

Most recently, the Succubus Club had become dominated by Anarchs, who use its nomadic nature as a pulpit for the Anarch cause. At the same time, a known Tal’Mahe’Ra assassin was also using the Succubus Club as cover for her own contracts, killing for her shadowy overlords wherever the club opened shop for the night. Sabbat cities are always interesting venues for the Succubus Club, and various *ritae* frequently find their way into the scheduled “performances” of the evening. Even the vampires of the Ivory Tower find occasion to relax their propriety and let their hair down. With this in mind, many wonder if the Succubus Club is a mobile instrument of the Jyhad, providing a neutral and lawless location for various





Kindred schemes to come together, status to be raised, and grudges to be settled. Whatever the case, it's a king-hell good time, and it's fortunate for the Kindred that the undead don't suffer hangovers.

### **Prime Chantry (Vienna, Austria)**

For those steeped in the lore of the Kindred, the city of Vienna is synonymous with the Tremere for a key reason: The most advanced chantry house of Clan Tremere is here. The Prime Chantry serves as the inarguable bastion of Tremere authority and activity, politically and Thaumaturgically. The phrase "called back to Vienna" instills dread in even the most stalwart of the Warlocks, for the Pyramid is not a loving institution.

The Tremere are of course very secretive about specifics regarding their ultimate redoubt, but no end of rumors circulate about the strength and extent of the great chantry. Some claim it is the oldest surviving structure in Vienna and the rest of the city was built upon it at the secret direction of the Tremere. Some say it sprawls as widely as the city, with vast geomantic connections between its various annexes under the Danube, atop the Millennium Tower, among the

foreboding towers of St. Rupert's Church, and in the service hallways of the Hundertwasserhaus.

In truth, the Tremere's Prime Chantry cannot be adequately described, as the Warlocks expend a great deal of effort using their Thaumaturgy to change the nature of the stronghold, sometimes as frequently as weekly. Gargoyle thralls shuttle alchemical tools and ancient thaumaturgical accouterments back and forth among the ever-changing laboratories of their Warlock masters while the Tremere themselves jockey for position in a rigid hierarchy that is much more resistant to change than the headquarters of their clan. Still more terrifying is the fact that the Tremere control the flow of information among their members as efficiently as they do the pyramidal ambitions of the clan. Grimgroth's library resided at the Schloss Schonbrunn last night, but tonight it's housed beneath the statue of Athena in front of the Parliament Building and somehow all the Tremere *just know* that the change has taken effect. What other information evolves so quickly and communicates so well here in the House of Tremere? And does this influence extend to outsiders — or those whose blood the Tremere have harvested? Even the Malkavians shudder to think.



## Alamut (near Tehran, Iran)

The ancestral home of Clan Assamite perches like a hawk above the shifting sands of venerable Persia, and the bloody zephyrs nightly carry death from it across the world. Although few outside Kindred have divined the locations of the Clan of Assassins' stronghold, paranoia grips the mountain fastness as the Assamites, rife with schism within and beset by enemies without, watch fearfully the movements of their own elders and the sects aligned against their clan.

A stony fortress over a thousand years old, the redoubt itself lies beneath the ruins of a similar stronghold established as long ago by a mortal faction of *hashishin*. Approaching without the knowledge of Assamite sentries is all but impossible, though the government of Iran has made recent efforts to turn the historical site into a tourist destination.

Alamut is the ancient stronghold where the assassins train and the clan sorcerers archive their arcane knowledge. Beneath the mountain, from which the enigmatic "Old Man" directs the affairs of the clan, lie any number of Assamite secrets. Some suspect that the clan has discovered its Antediluvian progenitor, which it guards jealously. Others perceive shifts in

clan demeanor and suspect that rival Methuselaha vie for power in the blackest depths of the stronghold. Still others fear what they see as growing Assamite consolidation, and recent pilgrimages by Assassins of all ages to the seat of clan power do little to assuage their fears. It is an image the Assamites cultivate, turning the perceived weakness of their factionalism into a radicalized strength.

## Catacombes de Paris (Paris, France)

Beneath the city of Paris sprawls a vast ossuary dating back to the 19th century, in which more than six million of the deceased take their final rest. Partially open to the public, the catacomb is a labyrinth of twisting tunnels, hidden vestibules, and secret chambers. Indeed, the catacombs that the Kindred frequent span more than 300 kilometers, while those made available to the public consist of only two kilometers' length. Unsurprisingly, the ossuary is popular among local and visiting Kindred, much to the chagrin of Paris' undead elite, who see the cemetery and its ostentatious *ars moriendi* as affected and obvious.

Hauteur notwithstanding, the catacombs provide the backdrop for many Kindred affairs, from secret deals to midnight performances in the Grand Guignol





style to elaborate masquerade fêtes. Prince Francois Villon considers the catacombs both Elysium and one of the City of Lights' most arresting locations, and even the Anarchs who despise the Prince and his iron-fisted Ivory Tower policies respect the catacombs.

The problem is that something dwells in the catacombs that doesn't seem to care much for either mortal intrusion or Kindred pretensions to control of the subterranean tomb. A recent closure of the ossuary due to vandalism actually covered up a joint police and Kindred investigation of the grisly discovery of an entire tourist group exsanguinated and arranged in horrific poses in one of the more remote mausoleums, in obvious reference to the courts and habits of the Kindred. A tragedy for the city and an embarrassment to Villon's court, the gruesome mystery has yet to be solved, but its elaborate staging suggests an intelligent, malevolent enemy of both mortals and the Damned.

### **Dr. Netchurch's Laboratory (Lowell, Massachusetts)**

Those who would understand the scientific realities of the Kindred condition have somewhat of a figurehead in the Malkavian bioeschatologist Dr. Douglas Netchurch. At the leading edge of "the posthumous sciences," Netchurch is a keen observer of how vampires respond to the various stimuli with which modern vampires might interact, and what it means for the so-called "Damned" in the Information Age.

Of late, Dr. Netchurch has been silent, though his research facility in a quiet New England city has still been receiving its shipments of supplies. It continues to receive its steady stream of "volunteers" — often Caitiff, and often recruited or, in more desperate times, kidnapped from the nearby domains of Boston, Manchester, New York, and surrounding territories. The lab itself is located in an unassuming business park on the outskirts of Lowell, though the doctor's business sense isn't as keen as his scientific mind: He's squatting in an unleased office space.

Even in the best of times, Netchurch's facility is a sterile and despairing place, where fledglings lured with the promise of understanding themselves learn the clinical and empty reality of those promises. During the times of Dr. Netchurch's absences, the laboratory is little more than a bleak Purgatory, with starving, skeletal Cainites ever on the edge of frenzy because the doctor may have distractedly neglected to provide them blood. No matter; the persistent anomalies of the undead state will preserve them even in the ab-

sence of precious blood. Indeed, being able to observe this state may well answer some of Dr. Netchurch's lingering questions.

### **Utgård (Vesterøy, Norway)**

The harrowing northern reaches of Scandinavia give rise to dire philosophies when the Kindred who dwell there rise from months-long torpor or maraud in months-long stretches with precious little daylight. So it is with Utgård, the "outyards" in Old Norse and the realm of devious giants. Those who make their havens there believe that Ragnarök has come and gone, with only their remote island having survived the apocalypse.

Isolated on a remote island off the coast of Norway, Utgård is a domain that may be close to the potential terror of the First City. The Kindred hold sway here openly and defiantly, and their few mortal thralls exist only to serve and feed their vampiric domitors. Perhaps 300 wretched mortals live here, laboring under the whims of some 45-plus vampire lords. For their part, the Kindred are jaded and debased, leading un-lives of savagery not far removed from those of Dark Ages jarls. By terrorizing their mortal thralls, these vampires fear no escape, for who would believe the tales of a "vampire island" with orgiastic blood-rites and deathless giants? Believing that the end of the world has already passed, the mortals know that nothing else is out there, and have reverted to a superstitious semi-barbarism.

The Damned of Utgård swear no fealty to clan or sect, holding only their ghastly fiefdoms as sovereign and their brutal hierarchy as authority. Kindred of many clans dwell here, but most are Gangrel, Nosferatu, Ventrue, or Tzimisce. The island is rife with feuds among the deathless lords, and the mortal vessels are treated as chattel, though valuable chattel, given the difficulty and conditioning required to keep the modern peasants in their place.

### **The Abbey of the Sacred Crown (Hampshire, England)**

When the nascent Camarilla brought the Anarch Revolt and the Assamite menace to heel, they did so in a convocation at the Abbey of the Sacred Crown, an unassuming monastery near the village of Thorns. There, the Anarch rebellion officially concluded and the Assamites submitted to the Thaumaturgical curse that reined in their wanton diablerie. What followed



was a period of Camarilla dominance in Kindred politics that has lasted almost until the modern nights. Only the recent turbulence of what some claim are the Final Nights has shaken the Camarilla's power — but naysayers note that with the recent rise of the Anarchs and the Assamite subversion of the Tremere curse, that the symbolic significance of the Convention of Thorns has been broken.

A coterie of Anarchs who visited the ruins of the abbey “on a pilgrimage” came back with grave tales of their own, however, which are now circulating among the ranks of their fellows. According to these Anarchs, they discovered the torpid forms of seven Kindred in a surprisingly ostentatious mausoleum beneath the ruins of the monastery. One of their number diablerized one of the slumbering vampires and was consumed by the power of the victim's heartsblood, raving into the night and subdued by his fellows after a night of terror gripped nearby Silchester. To date, the Anarchs have no idea who the six remaining Kindred are, and it's only a matter of time before the story makes its way beyond Anarch circles.

### **Gamla Stan (Stockholm, Sweden)**

For too long, the Ventrue and Toreador Princes of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden ignored the Anarch threat, attributing the rising violence to refugee Kindred fleeing from the Baba Yaga in Russia and the incomprehensible Finns. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the eminent Kindred of the region hoped the troublesome Anarchs would just go away so that they could resume their nights of bloody luxury. Sweden, in particular had, in the words of a Sabbat provocateur, “an Anarch problem.”

The Anarch presence in Stockholm doubled during the late 1990s and then doubled again within another 10 years. Stockholm — with a population only large enough to sustain perhaps 20 vampires in comparatively safe Masquerade — swelled its Kindred ranks to over a hundred.

Eventually, the Scandinavian Anarchs realized what power they had in numbers and threw down the Prince's Praxis. For over a year, the Anarch Movement held sway in Stockholm, deposing the Prince claiming the old town of Gamla Stan as its center of resistance against elder oppression.

The Camarilla quietly nursed its wounds after the embarrassing loss. Ivory Tower Kindred stole into the secret tombs of the elder Ventrue beneath Riddar-

holm Church, waiting for the right moment to topple the nascent Anarch caucus. Promising forgiveness for past transgressions, the Camarilla also offered a “fresh start” in Stockholm for Kindred exiled from other domains, provided they upheld the Traditions and rooted out the Anarchs. A contingent of Brunhilde's valkyries even approached the city, though they broke off negotiations with the besieged Anarchs, rather than plunge the city into Masquerade-threatening bloodshed. It worked, to an extent.

Tonight, Praxis lies in a dangerous detente between Camarilla stalwarts and the relentless Anarchs. Compounding issues is the worry that the Anarchs have granted an amnesty to the Methuselah Louhi, an ancient terror from Finland whose knowledge of Thaumaturgy challenges Tremere supremacy in that Discipline. If the Scandinavian Anarchs truly have such a potent ally hidden among them, something dire is surely in the domain's future.

### **Poveglia (Venice, Italy)**

Lying off the oily swamp-peninsula of Venice, the island of Poveglia is home to a wretched, semi-abandoned warren of Nosferatu. Once of the clan's vastest spawning pits, Poveglia served as haven to nearly enough Nosferatu to contend with the “Devil Kindred” of Clan Giovanni. Poveglia had long been a dumping point for the mentally and physically ill — it had housed, by turns, a lazaretto, a mental hospital, the refuge of a mad doctor, and any number of plague rookeries — which, combined with its isolation, made for a perfect domain for the Sewer Rats.

Across the swamp, the Camarilla's Inner Council meets in Venice every 13 years, with each Councilor maintaining apartments in the “Queen of the Adriatic.” Of course, the Giovanni's seat of power is also located in Venice, with the clan's ancestral mausoleum practically within sight of Poveglia. The fragile detente takes the form of a dread ballet of formalities, with each side underestimating the other. The Camarilla certainly has numerical superiority in Europe, but the Ivory Tower concedes much of the city to the Necromancers, not wanting to strain the Masquerade. For their part, the Giovanni find it inconceivable that any Kindred could dwell in the city without their knowledge, and turn a blind eye when unsanctioned, non-Nosferatu vampires “pass through” Venice.

In the late 1980s, however, the Nosferatu hastily fled Poveglia for mainland Venice or other domains.





Tonight, the Nosferatu remain characteristically silent about what they regard as a blemish on the clan's holdings. Some whisper that a black secret from the clan's history lies entombed beneath the crumbling island asylum, and that the Nosferatu no longer have the means to contain it. There in the fuliginous depths of an island abandoned by Kindred, kine, and time alike, something claims the lives of the indigents who eke out short lives on the island... and it's not a vampire. At least, not as the Kindred recognize each other.

### **Celestial Park (Dallas, Texas)**

At one point, Celestial Park was a piece of hotly-contested territory among the werewolves and mages of Dallas, being some sort of repository of mystic energy that the two factions of supernatural creatures coveted. The problem for the Kindred wasn't that the Lupines and will-workers were eager to shed each other's blood over the locale. It was that the park was located in a wealthy, secluded neighborhood where the former Prince of Dallas maintained a haven. When the supernatural sparks flew, Prince Charlemagne couldn't help but get involved, because at the very least, he'd have to cover the whole thing up as a Masquerade breach that wasn't even caused by the Kindred.

Visually, Celestial Park is nothing out of the ordinary, simply a cleared and well-tended sward of stone-circled fairway in the center of half-million dollar homes. Marble steps descend into the park, upon which are carved quotations from prose and poetry that revere the heavens. At the center of the green, however, stands a stone plinth that houses a large sundial in which a person functions as the gnomon. It does have a unique characteristic, however. Anyone who stands at its center can hear any conversation happening anywhere in the city just by thinking about it. Once the secret of the plinth made it to the Kindred community, Charlemagne wasted no time in declaring it a Princely asset, hoping to consolidate his power by allowing other vampires to use it in exchange for prestation or fealty. To his surprise, the werewolves and mages already had other designs on the plinth, and adding vampires to the power struggle for its benefits escalated the city to near civil war.

The failed power play broke Charlemagne's power by exposing his naked ambition, as well as earning him the attention of the other supernaturals. He abdicated the Prince's seat and in exchange to the powerful Pri-



mogen for being able to keep his private domains and local interests, he wards the mysterious relic in Celestial Park. It's a thankless and ongoing job, as no few Kindred risk the ire of the Lupines, the witches, and the ex-Prince for the sake of a scrap of spoken secrets. And Charlemagne has been known to "hire" Kindred trespassers to protect the park in exchange for absolving their breaches of the Tradition of Domain.

### **Varosha (Famagusta, Cypress)**

When the Turkish armies invaded Famagusta in 1974, they cordoned off the district of Varosha. The Greek Cypriot armies withdrew to the south, and even after the occupation ended, Turkish forces restricted entry into Varosha to those with adequate military clearance. Overnight, the city was practically abandoned, and it remains both empty and forbidden tonight.

Varosha exists in a moment frozen in time, not unlike the Kindred themselves. Its department stores still have racks draped with clothes no one has touched in four decades. Its restaurants have tables with place settings where no one has sat in 40 years. The only sign of time's passage is the slow but inexorable reclamation of Varosha by nature, as flora and fauna encroach upon the abandoned property developed by mankind.

Under cover of night, however, something else moves amid the streets of Varosha. A small pack of Cainites, by turns either affiliated with the Sabbat or zealous Autarkis, skulks out from the derelict penthouse apartments, seeking blood. These vampires creep southward under cover of night, preying on the still-vital cities of Paralimni and Larnaca before returning to the haunted modern ghost town to sleep off the sunlit hours. None of the sects pays much attention to this rogue pack or its void domain, so the precise size of the enclave remains unknown. Its members certainly haven't come forth to be counted, either by Camarilla interlopers or crusading Sabbat. Whispers have escaped the region, however, that the coterie that dwells there, once supposed to consist of five to seven members, has swollen in size to over 40 Kindred, all of whom have forsworn any authority but their own desires.

### **The Chase Vault (Oistins, Barbados)**

A wealthy family of plantation owners, the Chases of Barbados purchased a churchyard cemetery vault

in the early 19th century to give eternal rest to their departed relatives. The vault had been constructed perhaps a hundred years previously, but used only once before the family purchased it — to inter a lone woman.

The head of the Chase family, Thomas Chase, was greatly reviled in Barbados, having a reputation for cruelty and a contentious relationship with the slaves of his plantation. Unknkown to him, a Baka Kindred of the Samedi bloodline known as Olembe had taken up residence in the slaves' rowhouses, simultaneously preying upon the slaves and acting as to incite them against their master. This vampire made the tomb his haven, and his presence became one of the greatest mysteries of the island.

Each time the Chase family buried its dead, the coffins within the tomb had been moved, though the heavy stone slab used to close the vault hadn't. In truth, Olembe had used a secret passage to enter and exit the tomb, and had planned on animating the lifeless bodies of the Chase family to torment Thomas, but the evidence of his activity in the tomb-haven had a far greater and longer-lasting effect. The hated head of the Clark family was himself buried there not too long after purchasing the vault, having descended into madness and despair at the haunting of his family legacy.

The Chase vault mysteries remain unsolved among mortals, giving the place a haunted reputation among locals and tourists alike. Olembe still dwells in Oistins as the Prince of his one-Kindred town, where he leads a debased unlife, bloating himself on the blood of drunken tourists and fearful locals and pretending that his Disciplines are far more advanced than they truly are.

### **Block Arcade (Melbourne, Australia)**

The larrikin tradition plays strongly amid the Kindred courts of Melbourne, where rebellion is ingrained in the Australian character as a result of British imperialism: Almost a century ago, the Barcade Boys, a youth gang of pimps and drug pushers, infested the Block Arcade. Out of place in the splendid Victorian style of the arcade, the gutter gang nonetheless ran their rackets with seeming impunity.

And impunity they had, as their shadow patron, a Malkavian claiming to be the childe of Sydney's Prince Sarrasine, had brought the proprietors of the





Block Arcade under her sway. At the same time, the Malkavian courted the support of Melbourne's then-Prince Montague Lytton — keeping each of the Princes ignorant of her involvement with the other.

Such a ruse could work for only so long, and when Sarrasine learned that he was being played against Lytton, his ghouls lashed out with a desire to cause a panic in Melbourne and make its Kindred feel Sarrasine's supremacy. In 1891, they stormed the Block Arcade by day, scattering the Barcade Boys, and hopefully breaking the Malkavian's sway over what she had treated as her entitled domain.

The next night, however, the Malkavian had her revenge. She sent a plague of wraiths to settle the score — a trio of ghostly firefighters who had lost their lives

a few years earlier in the Georges department store fire (which had, not coincidentally, also started under bizarre circumstances). Sarrasine's ghoul agents met their end and the Prince of Sydney was rebuffed, in another turn of the Jyhad's events.

Just who this Malkavian childe of a Setite Prince is remains unsolved, however. She claims the Block Arcade as her domain to this night, over a century after its original construction, having survived multiple Princes of Melbourne and the enmity of the Prince of Sydney. And just how is that she was able to manipulate the shades of the departed firefighters? The Kindred of Melbourne, many of whom are Anarchs (despite Prince Taylor's suppression of Brujah other than himself), prefer not to entertain such questions.









# Appendix: What's Cut

The following material was cut from previous development drafts of the **V20 Companion**. It's included here to show you some of the ways that the material developed, based on feedback from the players. It's also here in case you want to use it. The masses have spoken, but maybe you want to take some of this and go your own way.

This isn't all the cut material. Sometimes I just cut a sentence, and without context, a loose sentence wouldn't mean anything to you. Sometimes I got a few hundred words into a concept and trashed it because it either didn't go the directions the book was going... or it just wasn't very good. ("Vampires flying a stolen vintage V2 rocket into the sun to test whether or not the Curse of Caine is greater than the solar system? *I need to stop drinking.*") Sometimes the cuts moved out of the **V20 Companion** and into future books. (But not the sun-rocket vampires, I promise.)

So this is just here as a curiosity. None of this stuff is "official," but if you manage to find a home for it in your chronicle or you want to talk it over in the forums or comments, that's great. Enjoy!

## **Alternate Systems for Physical Disciplines**

It quickly became obvious that players wanted more setting material than systems material, as multiple conversations on Twitter and in the White Wolf Blogs made abundantly clear. This took me by surprise a little bit, because an early series of Internet conversations had indicated that the opposite was true: that more than a few players wanted the ability to customize or fine-tune their Kindred's personal expressions of their Discipline powers. It seemed like a grand slam to me. I put it in the outline and counted it as 5,000 to 10,000 words already in the bank.

Such was not the case, however. You'll see in the cut systems below that people spoke out about too many new mechanics, so before I even started on the new physical Disciplines, I pulled them out of the outline and beefed up the other chapters with the spared word count.



## Understanding Why

I was talking to Shane at the 2011 Grande Masquerade, and we were comparing notes on how players were playing their games and what they were doing in them. He mentioned that the Grande Masquerade had offered a few cultural activities — a wine tasting and a graveyard tour among them — and that players who attended these activities earned special rewards in-game. These weren't huge mechanical effects. No new powers or anything like that, just resources their characters could collect. A refilled blood pool or a Willpower point. Those sorts of one-shot, one-use benefits.

The Masquerade players loved it. The rewards they earned from their culturally-enriching activities gave them a new hook in their chronicles, a way to bring a new story element into the game, and a cool new thing their characters could do because they did something as players.

The Requiem players hated it. The introduction of free resources threw off the balance of their games, they explained, and the existing in-game systems would have suffered because of a metagame benefit to which not every player had an equally fair access.

Over the course of the conversation, it became obvious that the people playing the game were playing to have different experiences. Speaking generally, the Masquerade players were fine with the game's idiosyncratic rules, so long as something interesting happened in the story. Speaking generally, the Requiem players gravitated toward that game because the idiosyncrasies of the rules had been mitigated, and the play itself was more egalitarian.

Now, I don't bring this up to pit the players of the different games against one another. Quite the opposite. I bring it up to explain why I'm doing this book the way I am, that I recognize what the players of this game supplement want and have adjusted the content toward their tastes. If some players want apples and some players want oranges, I'm doing everyone a disservice if I try to convince the apple people that maybe they should give oranges a try.

Certainly, this is all anecdotal, but it should indicate that we're listening to you and trying to observe how you're using the games, in order to continue to give you what you want.

## Systems for Titles

The first draft of the titles chapter contained information for tying mechanical effects to the largely

social system of Kindred responsibility, privilege, and accomplishment. Many players objected to the systems, preferring to let titles have purely social and inter-Kindred effects. It's hard to argue against that — the World of Darkness has always been a storytelling environment in which the setting takes precedence over the mechanics. In that regard, the systems subsection felt shoehorned into place.

However, for those players and Storytellers who like a consistent mechanic underlying some of the social systems their vampires will encounter in play, this is the core system that defined what a Kindred title could accomplish and how it affected the Status of the vampire claiming the title. It's still flexible, having been (loosely) modeled on the open-ended magic system of *Mage: The Ascension*, and set up in modular terms of result.

## Determining Systems for Titles

If the player and Storyteller agree that the bearer of a title should enjoy a certain mechanical benefit from possessing the title, it becomes necessary to define that benefit in terms of the significance of its function among the sect or local society. To do this, measure the function abstractly by counting the number of "steps" of effect granted by the title.

Each "dot" of the title's rank (in terms of considering the title a Background) confers two steps on the effects table, below. When the Storyteller and the player cooperatively determine what effect the title grants, they should spend the number of steps to determine the desired result, and that number divided by two (round up) equals the dot rating of the title.

When creating or determining the effect of a title, consult the following table. So, for example, an effect that has a very specific application (very narrow) that lasts for a month would be treated as a four-dot effect.

The effects created by titles are almost exclusively social in nature. A few guidelines govern what effects titles can create.

Title effects cannot cause direct or indirect physical damage (though they may reduce Willpower temporarily).

Title effects that do create physical effects may affect only the title-bearer.

Title effects cannot force a character to take a course of action or prevent her from taking a course of action. They can certainly make things more difficult, but the option always remains with other Kindred whether to make the attempt or not.



FOR YOUR ENJOYMENT AND EDIFICATION: THE ORIGINAL WORKING CHART JUSTIN THREW TOGETHER THAT WE NEVER FINALIZED SINCE THIS SECTION WAS CUT:

Effect step	Duration	Difficulty or Dice Pool	Frequency	Circumstances
Free	One action	—	Once per title term	Unique
1	One scene	+/-1	Once per year	Very narrow
2	One night	+/-2	Once per month	Uncommon
3	One month	+/-3	Once per night	Frequent
4	One year	+/-4	Once per scene	Very broad
5	Permanently (even after the vampire vacates the title!)	+/-5	At will	Universally

## Clan-Specific Titles

That titles chapter just kept growing and growing. When I finally hit 13,000 words, and not one of them had been spent on clan-specific titles, Eddy and Rich and I talked it over. From a purely mathematical standpoint, doing just one specific title for each clan would have been another 3,000 words. Such a minimal survey would have barely been worth doing, but to add *two* titles per clan would have been another 6,000 words and would have still only scratched the surface.

So we cut it. Rather than do a shoddy partial job, we decided to put clan-specific titles... somewhere else in the release schedule. Wink, wink.

## The Grand Masquerade (New Orleans, Louisiana)

In recent years, Kindred from around the world have taken to descending upon “the vampires’ city” in early fall, availing themselves of both the comforts of these luxury hotels and the reckless abandon of the French Quarter. The Prince of New Orleans reluctantly opens the domain to these guests, which stresses the Masquerade almost to its breaking point as more than a thousand vampires call upon its hospitality, however briefly.

The agenda for this Kindred convocation seems fluid — vampires of every clan and sect attend, with a week-long observation of neutrality from all attendees (at least in open sight of others). Camarilla luminaries

rub elbows with Sabbat icons and True Black Hand agents discourse with Anarch firebrands and Inconnu mystics. The gathering is at once political and apolitical, a chance for the undead to associate without the sanction of their sects... but many contacts are made and relationships are forged in this bizarre crucible “celebrating” the Kindred condition.

A group of enterprising Kindred from many clans and sects plan the event, with an emphasis on some significant point of Kindred interest. Previous years have seen relics up for auction, symposia on eschatology and origin, and even purely social events like clan meetings, high tea, and ironically-attended graveyard tours.

Among the Kindred, whose unlives are harrowed by the horrors they witness nightly, a chance to simply bask in the darkness and set aside the concerns of the Jyhada and the War of Ages is a welcome respite from an eternity of Damnation.

## Why It Was Cut

This one was a hard one to cut, but ultimately, I had to make that decision. Those who have been to the annual White Wolf World of Darkness convention in New Orleans greatly enjoyed seeing the venue among the “Where’s Where” of the Damned, but many also felt that its inclusion was a little too “meta,” a little too skewed toward fan service. I couldn’t argue with this last. I put it in the chapter in the first place to sort of say Thank You to all of the fans who traveled hundreds or even thousands of miles to be a part of the phenomenon. But as a location in the setting, it stretched the credibility of the Tradition of Masquerade a bit too much, and a few other locations served the same purpose. In the end, I’m glad there’s room for it here, so use it if you’d like, but I didn’t want to risk the integrity of the Masquerade for something that amounted to an in-joke with a sly wink to those who knew what to look for.