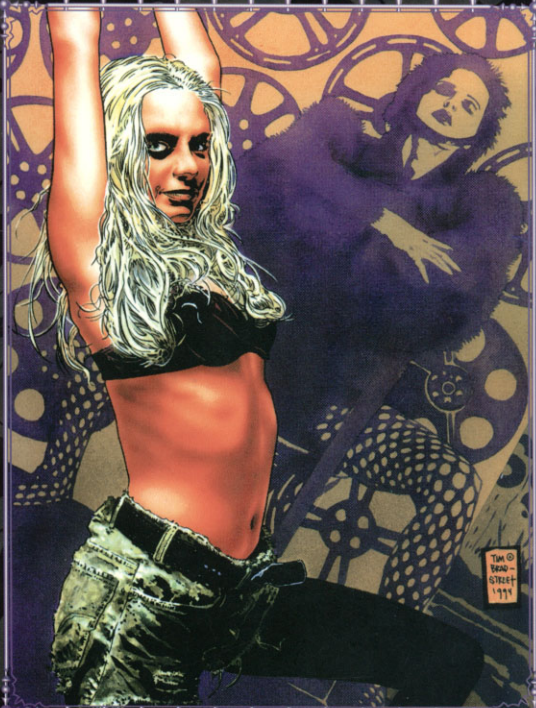


C L A N B O O K :

Tzimisce™



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1994

A Sourcebook for VAMPIRE: The Masquerade™



*Welcome to my house; enter freely and of your
own will. Welcome to my house. Come freely.
Go safely; and leave something of the happi-
ness you bring!*

— Bram Stoker, Dracula

He is afraid.

He is afraid to die.

Don't worry. You will not die.

Not for many, many nights.

We almost pity you. Usurper of Cain's legacy.
Bastard spawn of a progenitor who aped and
raped his way to immortality. We know what
they whisper in your chuntries. Your elders
admonish you to commit suicide rather than fall
into the clutches of the Fiends. In this if nothing
else your elders speak truth. But think of what
comes next as a learning experience. You will
learn how a true vampire treats his lessers and
punishes his enemies.

I advise you to pray to your God. The God of
your mortality — not Tremere, and certainly not
Caine. You see, we are Cain's childer — and
believe me, you are in hell.



Chapter One: Into the House of Fiends

*And those, the Fiends, who near allied,
O'er Nature's Wounds, and Wrecks preside;
Whilst Vengeance, in the lurid Air,
Lifts her red Arm, expos'd and bare...*

— William Collins, "Ode to Fear"

"But Alexei..."

"Childe, childe." Alexei spreads six-inch talons in a gesture of exasperation I am rapidly growing accustomed to. Its voice is a modulated contralto tonight, the accent charmingly Slavic. "Your outburst at last night's Ritus was unseemly. Did the Creation Rites teach you nothing? You must stop thinking of yourself as one of them."

"I agree. I'm dead. Your blood enabled me to live after death. And even in life I wasn't exactly a bleeding heart. But the way you and those other Sabbat talk—it's like you think you're a different species or something."

"A higher species, yes. Ergo, a different species. Does their food or air sustain me? Do I age? Can I mate with them? Do I even look like one of the kind?"

Alexei certainly does not. I catalogue its peculiarities: the near-serpentine emaciation, the facial markings, the distended earlobes, the disproportionate fingers, the unnaturally elongated forearms and neck. Even at this range I cannot determine its mortal gender or race. The countenance that hovers over me, while abstractly beautiful, is a thing of planes and angles: smooth, expressionless, vaguely reptilian. Any human resemblance is at best coincidence or convenience.

"But you made yourself this way—"

"Made myself? That is the point. We vampires — we Tzimisce — no longer dance at the whims of mitosis and mutation. We become whatever we need to be. We alone have that option."

"Yes, but you can't just—"

"Indeed I made myself, and so will you. And so does every butterfly that seeks release from its lumpish pupa purgatory. The other clans — they are so myopically complacent. We have conquered enzymes and entropy, osmosis and oxygen. The chains binding everything from the first amoeba to the newest human babe lie at our ankles. And still the others bleat about their 'humanity.' Humanity? Did the primordial amphibian pine for its fins and gills? Did the first Cro-Magnon mourn its vanished brow ridge? Did my delightful pets ever there begrudge the loss of their invertebrate plasticity?"

It gestures toward the aquarium on the study wall. I cannot repress a shudder as I look at the blind, squirming things within. From a biological standpoint, hagfish — *Myxine glutinosa* — are fascinating and evolutionarily significant entities. From an aesthetic standpoint, they're pretty damn gross.

I'm sure Wexler, former Brujah primogen counselor of this city, would agree with me if he could. After all, the hagfish are swarming in and out of his mouth, battering themselves on his lips and spinal tissue, sucking the rich vitae from his medulla oblongata. But decapitation silences even our kind, and so Wexler's eyes merely stare blindly at the slimy parasites.

"The human condition," Alexei continues, "is our species' albatross. The Ancients' Jihad is no supernatural duel, but merely the culmination of ten thousand years of human envy and human lust and human anger and human paranoia and other biochemical tropisms fast-forwarded postmortem by endocrine glands that shriveled up millennia ago! All because sixteen humans given ultimate control over their existence couldn't transcend the conditioning instilled by a score or so of years as oafish hunter-gatherers and flint-knappers and potters. Gods indeed! Where are your thunderbolts, O Antediluvians?"

"But your aura positively blinds me with skepticism, Julie dear. An object lesson is in order. To the laboratory." Alexei writhes fluidly to its feet and gestures me to attend. Crossing the study in two strides, it throws open the door and glides down the corridor. I follow.

The sanctum door is open but I do not yet enter. I have already learned something of the clan's protocol. Alexei swivels its head an impossible 180 degrees to face me and

intones: "I bid you welcome to my sanctum. My meat is your meat; my wine is sour wine; my bed is your bed." All bullshit, of course, but it sounds nice and Old World-y.

We descend a winding staircase into the laboratory. Lab-ROR-a-tree. Not LAB-tat-tör-ee. Alexei's bitchy about the little things. Everything just so. A place for everything...

...and everything. I see as I emerge into the phosphorescent glow of the laboratory's UV lamps, in its place. Instruments and implements line the walls, sorted by size and function. An old but fully functional hand crank electrical generator liberated from the Uruguayan military police sits in the near corner. A cat-o'-nine-tails coils amid beakers and Bunsen burners. Vats of acid and formaldehyde mingle their vapors with the scents of freshly spilled vitae, disinfectant and other, less pleasant odors permeating the lab. Racks and frameworks and dissecting tables stand about the room like sarcophagi.

I see that various lumps, of disparate shapes and proportions, lie affixed to the frames. Many still emit faint gurgling moans. Alexei is ecstatic; the recent siege not only liberated the city from its Camarilla rulers, but also allowed for specimen collecting. I suppose, in my way, I am one such.

"Mastermastermaster—"





The sound comes from the far corner. Radu and Mikhail, Alexei's *szlachta*, shamble in tandem from the shadows. They are bipedal, for they must move to obey their master's commands; and they have arms and hands, to assist their master in its tasks; but otherwise Alexei has taken great liberties with their anatomy. Giger or Goya could hardly have rivaled Alexei's creativity.

"Now master play let play master feed us master feed eyes—"

"Down!" Alexei hisses. The pair flinch back into the shadows. "When I need your services I shall tell you. When I decide to feed you I shall. Until then, begone!"

"Oh kind master good master love master yes no hurt more..."

The ghouls scuttle into their den, peering out at Alexei with bioluminescent eyes.

In the center of the room, exposed under a single incandescent bulb, three frameworks lean together—the operating theater for Alexei's current experiment. A bound, naked kine wriggles on the middle frame. Save for an IV rammed into its left arm, it is untouched. The specimens on either side have not been so fortunate. Labels on the frames proclaim the things Tremere and Ventree respectively. I am thankful for the labels; I would not have been able to identify the creatures otherwise.

"We approach the experiment-in-progress. I study the kine, mustering scientific detachment. "It looks malnourished," I tell Alexei. "How long has it been

since you fed it? And shouldn't you wash it? It's defecated all over itself — it could be infected with parasites and then that would ruin—"

"Nonsense," Alexei interrupts. "Radu and Mikhail's hunger more than suffices to keep the area free from vermin. Insofar as nourishment is concerned, the vampire vitae from the intravenous device should preserve this kine throughout the demonstration."

"Julie?"

The kine knows my name. How strange... Did I know this one? Everything before the Creation Rites is so hazy.... Concentrating, I try to penetrate the veils my subterranean baptism cast over my brain. Ah, yes, Tim—? No, Tom. I worked with this one—this Tom—in the R&D Department. Playing with little white mice.

"Julie — help me — Julie — Jesus, Julie—"

How blind I was. It chitters and squirms just like the rodents!

"Silence," Alexei commands. "Now, to work." Alexei grips a fold of skin just below the kine's collarbone. "Observe." With one practiced motion, it peels the kine's torso to the waist.

The kine's screams would be nerve-racking, had I still nerves to speak of. As it is, I find the rhythmic passage of sound waves through my vitae soothing, almost anesthetic.



Alexei evidently finds the noise distracting. It passes its palm along the kine's lips, sealing them shut with a thick epidermal membrane. "Examine the disparities in the central nervous system." It pokes one talon into the kine's pectoral muscles, the other into the organic slab labeled "Ventrue." The kine convulses like a frog hooked to a battery; the Ventrue instead seems to contract, like a slug exposed to salt. "You note, of course, how the differences in reflex response are caused by *Homo sapiens sanguinus*' development of a web of microfine capillaries surrounding the neural axons in place of a myelin sheath?"

"Well..." I peer closely at both lumps of gore. The vitae-odor is ammonia-strong, almost overwhelming me. "It all looks the same to me."

"I can't — ah, yes, right." Alexei sighs. "You have yet to refine your Auspex talents. My apologies, dearest childe — after centuries of vampirism I have nearly forgotten what it is like to view the world through psychic cataraacts. Do you know that I have discovered no fewer than 316 colors imperceptible to the kine eye — and I am not even an effete Toreador. But no matter."

"The point is that vampires' ganglia — and thus our brains — operate on a higher stratum of awareness. This Ventrue, even in its...piecemeal condition, retains control over its autonomic functions rather than being subject to them. But let us take things to a more...visceral level."

Alexei waves its hands along the kine's exposed pectorals in the manner of a magician making stage passes over a table. There is a sound like ice crystals forming, and the twin arcs of the rib cage heave themselves out of the stringy meat. I am reminded of the breaching of some great whale.

We lean over the newly revealed cavity. The stench overpoweres even the vitae-reg. Alexei indicates the galpitating heart. "Under relaxed conditions it would pulse at 66 beats per minute. A healthy specimen despite its privation. But it is the seat of slavery, dispensing lifeblood at an immutable rate. We move vitae as we deem necessary and use it as we see fit." Alexei prods the nether viscera. "Nor do we need this fodder. We will, and it is done. Our every external action, our every internal reaction, stems from choice."

"What of our frenzies?"

"Consciously willed survival mechanisms," Alexei snaps. "We do not 'frenzy'! Vampires do not 'frenzy'! 'Frenzy' is for thin-blooded Camargilla atavisms who resist their higher impulses and in so doing get sucked lower still! Which is precisely my point!"

"On the subject of atavisms," Alexei says in a calmer tone, gesturing to the third specimen, "observe this Tremere. These misbegotten missing links display intermediary characteristics, rather like australopithecines. With any luck, the damned Warlocks shall soon be just as extinct."

Alexei continues. "We call them kine, and with good reason. The kine eat cattle — the quadrupedal

kind — with no more justification than that their greater powers of perception and comprehension give them the right. And yet the kine, for all their vaunted perception, are no more psychically aware than protozoa. Nor does their ostensible intelligence grant them any more control over the processes intrinsic to all lower life than the aforementioned protozoa. Look at it squirm!” Alexei indicates the kine’s spasms. “Cognizance of one’s flaw does not excuse its continuation.

“Indeed, I would hesitate to call the kine truly sentient. I concede that they serve as a larval stage of sorts, the raw clay from which Tzimisce spring — but so do sperm and egg cells among humans, and no one suggests that humans cherish and respect their seminal and menstrual discharges.

“And on *that* subject...” Alexei glides its hand lower, and the kine’s thrashings quicken anew. “Such a clumsy process, yes! Like a pig blindly rooting in the muck for a truffle.” Alexei looks up, staring with hooded lenses into the kine’s white-rimmed orbs. It clenches its demonstrative hand, then casually yanks.

The staccato of the kine’s skull beating itself against the metal backboard is as soothing as rain on a rooftop.

Alexei scrutinizes its findings distastefully, then flips its wrist toward the corner. I hear scuffling as Radu and Mikhail squabble for the morsel. Alexei strokes my neck. “So much cleaner the Embrace, yes! So much more control. Now you alone choose when — and how, and whom — to bleed.

“Speaking of which,” Alexei says, gesturing to the now-comatose kine, “this one is nearly spent. Which emphasizes my final proof. In cold Darwinian terms, vampires are simply more fit to survive. Though,” it concludes, expanding its gesture to encompass the other two frames, “the Camarilla strains have forfeited this privilege.”

Alexei motions me to the stairs. “Enough lessons — our sect’s control must be consolidated. Pockets of anarchy insurgents need to be taught their place on the food chain tonight. Radu! Mikhail! Dispose of this mess! Every scrap, or the knout for both of you! As for you, Julie, I shall introduce you to this city’s new archbishop. Come.” It mounts the stairs without looking back.

I still don’t know how much of Alexei’s millenarian, kill-or-be-killed crap I believe. But I must admit that I have known many among my — among the kine who deserve no better. In retrospect, the sensibilities of the Neanderthals weren’t particularly relevant in the greater scheme of things. To everything, turn, turn, turn...

Behind me, I hear Radu and Mikhail slither toward the experiment. My Auspex must be improving — I can almost smell their saliva. Clever creatures. Perhaps I shall bring them some leavings from our hunt. For dessert. A little pity never hurt.

After all — despite Alexei’s ministrations — they’re only human.





Chapter Two: Fiends Among Us

*There's a stake in your fat black heart
And the villagers never liked you.
They are dancing and stamping on you.
They always knew it was you.
— Sylvia Plath, "Daddy"*

Of Satisfying Retribution and Musings on the Primordial Nights

I am old, and the one who lies in a shriveled lump at my feet was older still. My dead heart thrums in an unceasing crescendo, suffusing my battle-desiccated frame with the spoils of vengeance. Well I understand why the vampires of old called this moment the Amananth, for a wild red flower blossoms within me.

I can scarcely force myself to concentrate on this record, for the essence of my vanquished sire howls and hammers within my veins. Sect schism, centuries of hate — all stand forgotten. I am she; she is I. We are Tzimisce, and it is of the clan that I shall write, now, while panoramas of dead centuries and places long forgotten and beings long dust flutter like moths in my skull. So the Way of Caine dictates.

My innermost being purrs in contentment as I gaze from atop this aerie upon the frowning forests and brooding crags and sullen brooks of my line's ancestral home. Though we have wandered far, setting roots in this soil and that, it is in these lands, called by kine the Carpathians, that the eldest seeds of our line sprouted.

The kine have long placed their cradles of civilization in the sun-blasted south — in the Great Rift Valley, between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, amid the mud of the Nile Delta. But Tzimisce are not kine, and our civilization is not that of kine. We arose in the north — amid these misty glens and wild, pine-shrouded crags, I am certain, was our progenitor Embraced.

The Tzimisce Antediluvian was the greatest of all vampires, greater even than Caine, for he alone among those first childer had a special gift: what the Tylalus call an Awakened avatar. It was this unique admixture of Caine's gift and his own that fostered our great Metamorphosis: no longer merely to Ascend, but to Transcend; no longer merely to mimic Caine, but to surpass him.



He did not dwell in Caine's cities, but returned to the lands beside his beloved Danube, there to establish his demesne. The others grew envious of him and his gift. Seeing his bond with the soil of his land, and imagining that the soil gave him and his progeny their magic, they cast covetous eyes on that land, and in their jealousy spoke of foul pacts and things called Souleaters. But know that these things are merest myths and lies and worse than lies.

The Ancient himself is but a distant myth even in my sire's earliest memories — although I saw him as he died...but more about that later. We existed and hunted and wove our spells among the early Phryiges, Illyrians, Thracians, Avars, Wends and other inhabitants of

those places the kine call the Baltics, the Balkans, and Russia. That strain called Slavs quickly came to worship and fear us, calling us *koldun* — “wizards.” Indeed, we acted as sorcerers and deities to the early tribes, bestowing the fruits of our Second Sight and beastmastery in exchange for tribute and sacrifices, and cursing with disfigurement those whom we deemed intrusive, insolent or annoying. But we did not dwell among the kine, nor did we congregate ourselves. No, we stayed apart, each to his own wilderness demesne. The boundaries of our lands we marked with the bones and skulls and sinew of our victims, for it was death to trespass save by invitation.

Of Direst War and Insidious Revenge

We were not the only haunters of the dark. Our line came into conflict with a most malevolent being (possibly a vampire, possibly otherwise) known to this night as the Baba Yaga, a cannibal sorceress. The Baba Yaga and her servitors (some say demons, others childer) stalked by night among the quaking kine and would suffer no others to do likewise.

Nearly as bad as the Baba Yaga were the great sable werewolves, the self-proclaimed "Shadow Lords," that prowled the mountains and vales. Though they sought each other's throats as much as those of their foes, they bore no love for our breed.

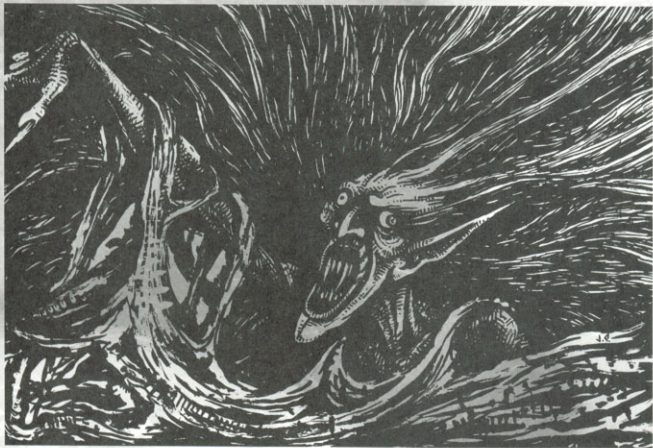
I have heard rumors that a few prodigals among the ancient line rejected the way of Metamorphosis, deeming it an avenue to damnation. These few called themselves the "Pure Clan" or the "Old Clan," depending on the translation, and ever after strove against us.

Our worst foes, however, were the vampires of other lines. They would not keep to their ranges, as we kept to ours, but bedeviled us always, seeking the lands and magic and kine that had been ours since time immemorial.

But we knew secret magics and were mighty in war. We crafted *szlachta* of all shapes and sizes and sent them throughout Europe to harry our foes, and rightly did the kine fear ogres and goblins and night-things. We made great *vozd* in the Thracian wastes and sent them to smite our vampire enemies, and rightly did the Hellenes speak of their gods being assailed by hundred-handed giants.

The southern vampires could not withstand us. We sent them howling back to their peninsulas. Bitter was their rancor, long was their remembrance. Because we would not allow them our lands, they coveted them all the more, as is the vampire's way. And because we were content where we were, we failed to heed when city-states became republics and then empires.

Trajan's legions cut a bloody swath into our territory, and to this night a part of our realm bears the hateful name "Romania." With the armies came their secret, nocturnal generals — vampires of the Ventrue, Malkavian and Lasombra lines. The Lasombra in particular seemed the very incarnations of Chernobog — greedy gods of darkness intent on devouring all. The Lasombra progenitor himself, ever reckless and delighting in war, accompanied the armies and wrought terrible destruction upon our herds. In our rage we cursed him with a great doom, and our curse would bear bitter fruit in later nights.



Other magics we wove as well — great maledictions against south-sprawling Rome and its vampires. Through spells of discord and woe, we turned Rome's Cainites against each other. Ventrue warred with Malkavian; Toreador battled Lasombra. Centuries passed, but we were patient and did not forget. When the empire was at its weakest, we went among the savages of the north—the Goths, Vandals and Huns—and stirred them to war. Barbarians roared through Rome's streets, and the Tiber ran red with the vitae of the once-proud invaders. Thus was our clan avenged.

Of the Path to Power and the Halcyon Nights

The years that followed have been dubbed the Dark Ages, and so they were — but are vampires not creatures of the dark? Rome's proud hegemony disintegrated into a patchwork of wattle huts and crude stockades. We walked the night as we would, openly tearing apart peasants' hovels and drinking them dry or abducting them for later use. Even so-called "invaders" — Huns, Magyars, Bulgars and the like — drifted through our lands as plankton through the whale's teeth. Our needs thus assuaged, we turned our attention to our destiny. For kine, and for vampires who depended on the civilization of the kine, the Dark Ages were a time of chaos and ignorance; for Tzimisce, they were a golden age of progress and experimentation.

Some among our number, seeing domed Byzantium sprouting like a fungus in Rome's rotting cadaver, went south to stem its growth. Here the clan strove against those who would become Inconnu and preyed on their Orthodox dupes. Against such powerful foes, subversion of the pawns proved more pragmatic than outright battle, as the iconoclast squabble well demonstrated. (If the kine only realized what so many of those pallid, distended icons before which they grovel actually depict... But who can expect aught from the kine?)

Our wiser northern brethren saw the threat posed by Charlemagne and his Ventrue ticks. We decided to create our own vassals. Taking suitable specimens from the seventh sons of promising indigenous kine strains, we bred the first revenant families. They proved of great use to us, for they allowed our shadow to extend over the hearts of the kine even at midday.

(Once, centuries ago, when I was younger, and the vitae ran less turgidly through my veins, and the things of the world seemed less transitory and ephemeral, I



knew that which the Toreador call "love." I had won a great triumph over a Ventrue invader, and the victory feast at the Zantosas' castle that night was sweet. Afterward, the revenants sent one of their number, a lissome little succubus of 13, to my chambers. The feel of her flesh in my arms and the scent of my enemy's flesh on her breath sent me into wild throes of passion. Yet in my ardor I grew heedless of her delicacy, and she did not survive our encounter. To preserve my memory of her always, I fashioned a pair of gloves from her skin, and, so that her soul might stay near me, I tanned them with her brains. I wear them to this night.)

Our battle for control of Eastern Europe ended in great triumph when we tricked our werewolf enemies into making war on the Baba Yaga. The Lupines slew the hag and her minions, but were themselves decimated, and thus our clan ruled the night unopposed. The next year, 983 in the reckoning of the Nailed Kine-God, our revenant pets whipped the Slavs into a frenzy of revolt against the Teutonic invaders, and the incursions of the Ventrue were halted. Indeed, we advanced our frontiers in retaliation, and the villagers of Bavaria and the Brocken learned what it meant to dread the dark.

And then—? Well, you have seen the movies, yes? Even today the kine speak in shuddersome whispers of nighted Transylvania. The Ventrue, the Lasombra, the Toreador boast of their power — but who has bequeathed a centuries-old legacy of fear? While our brethren sprawled in caves and huts by day, and crouched amid thornbushes by night in search of wayward goatherds and milkmaids, we dwelt proud and unafraid in our castles. Though our estates were ostensibly ruled by our revenant seneschals, the serfs and peasants well knew whom — or what — they served. By day we lay in our sepulchers and dreamed; at nightfall we rose and went amid the empty crossroads and forest tracks. And though our passage was silent, the kine felt it deep in the marrow, and they huddled on their pallets and hung their ridiculous garlic cloves and wove their warding signs and uttered their useless prayers in hopes that the *vampyrs* would not come for them that night.

Yes, for a time we were every bit as majestic as Stoker's scrawling or Lugosi's powder-pated mockery suggests. The others dub us "Fiends," and so we were — Princes of the Monsters. A miasmic dread hung over the kine, and soon the eldest Tzimisce did not even need to leave their enclaves to hunt. The kine, fearful of retribution, willingly sent a fraction of their swains and maidens into the spider's lair. And this would prove the elders' undoing, for the line grew complacent. Seated in their dining halls, sating themselves without a finger's motion, they brooded over past slights and reminisced over past victories. But most of all they forget.



Of Base Treachery and Shameful Decline

So lethargic they became that even the minimal tasks of rulership and study became onerous. Rather than turn over all of their responsibilities to revenants, the elders procreated in record numbers. Soon the lands were overrun with ravenous childer. Brood warred on brood for this or that village, at this or that elder's whim. Inevitably, Domain was violated, and this has always been our greatest provocation. Enraged elders sent the young to do battle in their stead. Fiefdoms fell and vampires burned to ash. Yet the young endured this willingly, for the elders had bound them in chains of blood stronger than iron. I know this well, for I was among that unhappy generation.

Such dissension would prove costly indeed. For, like trickles of tainted water, infiltrators seeped into our lands where invaders had been turned aside. Among these unwelcome immigrants came those who would become our greatest foes. When we discovered that a coven of wizardlings calling themselves Tremere had entered our territory to leech the essence of the land, which they called *vis*, for their magics, we grew angered. When we discovered that they had dared to assault and abduct one of our clan's elders, we grew enraged. And when we discovered that the purpose of their affront was to become as we, our fury knew no bounds.

A great war began then, one that will end only when the last Warlock coughs up his unlife in writhing agony beneath our implements. Though our elders could and should have quashed the nascent line, they did not — for they had forgotten much of the old magic, and the Tremere, armed with the *vis* they had stolen from our soil, were strong. They matched our discordant elders spell for spell and countered the might of their *zulo* forms with monstrous creations of their own: stony, pinioned abominations called Gargoyles, which descended in taloned flocks from the skies.

As the Tremere's aegis slowly widened, the elders grew fearful and walled themselves away in their havens, sending their progeny to forage and fight. Though we battled valiantly, our disunited ranks were splintered by the Warlocks and their minions, and decade by decade our clan fell deeper into decline. Even the Ancient, cocooned in what the Tyalus call Quiet, abandoned us.

All this was the merest harbinger of the tragedy to come. While we were swatting at Gargoyles, our "Kindred" were hardly sitting idle. Hostile eyes turned to us, and our lands knew the tread of invading hooves. Encouraged by their Ventrue lords, Germans crossed our western borders in barbarous waves. From the east

swarmed the Mongols and their Gangrel followers, and great Kiev was reduced to a ghost town amid a skull-strewn field. In the south the Assamites hungered, and so the Turks made their first investigative forays into Serbia. Worst of all, from the north descended the Teutonic Knights, under the sway of no vampire but a threat to all, sworn to crush paganism under the weight of the cross. Tribe after tribe renounced Kupala, renounced Svarog and Byelobog — pleaded to the invaders for deliverance from the "demons." Manse after manse was razed to the foundations; Tzimisce after Tzimisce was unearthed and put to the pyre.

I went with the rest of my kind to our elders, pleading for succor. But our elders, viewing wave after wave of devastation, did nothing. Our mighty sires covered in their crypts as their herds and childer died in the night. It was as if Lasombra had stretched a black talon over their hearts. They had secured our allegiance through the Blood Bond, and so we gladly — then willingly — then hesitantly — went forth at their behest to defend their holdings.

And so we died beneath claw and spell and stake and fire and cross, while our sires sat unmoved and unmoving in their castles. And slowly, our resentment uncoiled the serpent our sires' blood magic had wrapped about our hearts.

Of Kupala's Night and What Transpired Thereafter

It was on Kupala's Eve, that night of immemorial sanctity, that the deed was done. Through the lands an invitation was passed: Velya, Lugoj and the rest summoned the clan's youth to a great festivity. And our sires, heedless of the night themselves but faintly recalling its significance, acquiesced to our celebration. I went with the rest to the meeting site deep amid these very Carpathians. There, his back to a blazing bonfire and three score sacrifices bound and writhing behind him, stood great Lugoj. He wore the *zulo* shape, and something red and gleaming lay atop his outstretched paws. And though I feared the flames, I felt compelled to approach.

"This," he roared, holding aloft the blazing object, "is Kupala's sacred fire-flower, just as the legends say. Long I quested for it, through much peril. At last, deep amid a holy place of the werewolves, I found it. Dost thou remember what the legends say of this flower?"

A quavering voice — Ruthven? — spoke from the rear of the assembled host. "It is said to have the power to bind demons...."

"Or, on this night, to free them!" Lugoj finished. "Velya and I have studied the nature of the Blood Bond at great length. With Kupala's aid, we shall cast off our elders' chains. Stand ye with us — or will ye go to your doom in the pyres of the Crucified God's minions?"

There was silence, and then muttering, and then one voice after another raised in assent. No more would we submit to our elders' shackles.

Lugoj laughed, and the flower blazed like the stars that scientists say destroy themselves in the night sky. "First," he bellowed, "we must purge ourselves of fear." Then, bathed in the blood of slaughtered kine, he hurled himself roaring through the bonfire. As one, we followed.

On that night was the first *Auctoris Ritus* enacted, and the Sabbat born. On that night were our hearts returned to us.

Dawn approached, and we returned not to our elders' crypts, but slept in graveyards or caves or in the bosom of moist Mother Earth. Our sires soon noticed our absence, and then the war began in earnest. Castle after castle we stormed. Our sires took a thousand fell shapes to frighten us and invoked a thousand curses to cow us, but we had walked through fire and were

unafraid. We slew their *szlachta* and then ended them, and we shared our blood and theirs. Some submitted, and these we allowed to join us and thereby strengthen our hordes — but, lest they betray us, we forced them to drink from a concoction of our vitae.

Elsewhere, other vampires followed our example. The Brujah, ever quick to anger, rose howling in the west, calling themselves "anarchs" in defiance of the sire's Caine-decreed right of rule. From the east the Assamites swept like animate scimitars through the ranks of Europe's elders. And in the south the curse we levied long ago came to pass: gluttonous Lasombra, who had plagued us in centuries past, met Final Death at the fangs of his progeny.

Finally, on a moonless night when the stars formed terrible signs in the heavens and great comets traced fiery ciphers of ill omen across the sky, we stormed our progenitor's haven. The Ancient's defenders were strong, but with the vitae we had taken, we proved their masters. Not without a fight, though! When it was ended, an ankle-deep layer of blood and flesh and bone and dust obscured the flagstones. Mighty Lugoj, skin and fluid dripping from his hide, unearthed our progenitor as he lay in torpor. The Ancient, weak with malaise and Quiet, was as a child.





It took Lugoj a full hour to drain him dry. The clan's legacy thus reclaimed, Lugoj himself sank into torpor, promising to watch over us against the Last Night.

Yet when I speak of this to old Ruthven in New York, he grows reticent and anxious. Well, he was always a spineless cur.

Neither we nor the anarchists counted on the rapidity with which the other Antediluvians reacted to the destruction of two of their brethren. They deployed their pawns, and seven of the great clans united in the sevenfold-damned Camarilla. Imagine! Vampires, lords of the earth, drawing up a charter and bylaws like some merchant company! But this new and unforeseen alliance proved terribly effective at first. Most of the anarchists were brought to heel, and the Assamites were sent yelping back to Arabia Deserta with the Warlocks' hexes still smoldering on their hides.

Of Ancient Discord and Newfound Unity

For us and the Lasombra, surrender was not an option. Our clans had committed the ultimate crime. In any case, we would not stomach submission to the Tremere. We united with the Lasombra and the anarch remnants and the followers of an Eastern Malkavian named Vasantasena. The Ancients' lackeys had their sect; we would have our own. Binding ourselves each to the other through the Vaulderie ceremony, we swore to face Final Death rather than meekly enter the Antediluvians' stockade.

To the woods and wastes we retreated. To divert the Camarilla's shock troops, we razed entire villages and turned their inhabitants into vampiric helots. Most extinguished themselves against our foes; the mightiest we inducted into our ranks. We disfigured ourselves and our slaves, the better to frighten our enemies, and to bolster our courage we forced ourselves through the fire

again and again. Terrified peasants, seeing our *Ritæ*, dubbed us "Sabbat," for they imagined us to be a coven of witches and demons cavorting on earth. The truth was not so distant.

We fought long and well, and many of the Thirteen's mightiest soldiers died beneath our fangs. Yet again and again we were forced to retreat — for during this so-called "Renaissance" our foes would not disinter themselves to face us in honorable battle. Instead they sent swarms of kine and ghouls against us — though the kine no doubt thought they "went to war" for their "nation-state." And while we feared no kine, their new weapons were another matter.

He who dubbed the gun "the great equalizer" spoke truly indeed. No longer could we control our domains with monsters in the night. Our *szlachta* wrought havoc in the kine's ranks, but invariably fell, smoking with powder and riddled with shot. Well I remember my first encounter with a blunderbuss (though I daresay the hapless gunner's companions remembered it as well!).

Even in our lands we knew no peace, for yet another plague gripped our home — the Turks. Ottoman *ghazis* scythed to the very Danube, and we found the crescent little more tolerable, or tolerant, than the cross. Here too our *szlachta* aided us but little, for among the Turks were Assamite ghouls.

(It need not be added that in this tumultuous time arose the scourge of our clan: the Dragon, self-proclaimed "Prince of Darkness" Vlad Dracula. May a thousand devils roast his black soul!)

And so it went. While we concentrated on our own apotheosis, the Camarilla instead worked to secure its power amid the kine world. Just as the kine's Dark Ages had been our heyday, so their "Age of Enlightenment" proved dark indeed for us. Cringing Camarilla toadies fostered their Masquerade, the better to direct the herd's wrath at us. (Note, if you will, how many "fictional" Gothic *vampyrs* display Tzimisce characteristics!) Those few valiant Cainites who dared to flaunt their heritage were hunted down like animals. By the (kine-reckoned) 19th century, vampires were considered mere superstitious dreck.

Oh, we still controlled our revenants, and through them influenced the kine's noble houses. In our ancestral lands, the kine were kept in serfdom, as was their rightful lot, until the year 1850. But our battles grew ever more defensive, for we waged war not only against the Camarilla, but against those few clan elders whom we had failed to destroy. Finally the last of our clan surrendered and, leaving the Balkans to their fate, sailed across the Atlantic amid hordes of Slavic immigrants. I myself acted as liaison between Old World and New.

Of Industry and Genocide

We fit in better than we could have imagined. Manchester, London, New York, Chicago — gargantuan graveyards sprouting 30-story tombstones, mausoleums proclaiming "God Is Dead." What better place to prepare for our great Metamorphosis than a giant insect hive! In these smoke-blasted edifices, to which so many flocked to choke out their lives, no one noticed the arrival of a lone immigrant — or the subsequent disappearances of several others....

Then, too, the vitae of a kine child half-dead from a 14-hour day in the factories induces a certain pleasant lethargy — and in those nights, if one grew careless in one's feeding, the gears were always happy to devour undesirable evidence....

In our hubris, we made one final attempt to reclaim our ancestral lands. The Archduke fell, precipitating the fall of countless more on the battlefields of Ardennes and Verdun (I shall ever remember the feasting in those gas-shrouded trenches!). Retaliation was swift: in Russia, the last Tzimisce puppets were destroyed in a Brujah-inspired revolution.

Over the next decades the Camarilla turned to guerrilla tactics. In America, revenants and innocents alike were unearthed and jailed or hanged as "Bolshevik anarchists." A new breed of witch-hunter made its appearance: strong-jawed, bronze-skinned, using the tools of science against us.

And then the world was set on its ear by a funny little kine with a funny little mustache. Who or what was responsible for *Der Fuhrer*? He was not ours, nor, despite shrill Brujah recriminations, was he a Ventrue puppet. Lacking evidence to the contrary, I am inclined to classify him as a servant of naught save his own madness, or at best as a Malkavian prank gone awry.

Ironically, even amid such sound and fury, even as Europe's vampires were blasted from their havens, a *Pax Vampirica* of sorts was implemented amid a dark and fruitful Elysium. I refer to the Nazi concentration camps. These earthly Xanadus served as combined refuges and oases. To Belsen, to Birkenau, to Buchenwald and Dachau swarmed Europe's displaced vampires. Sect and clan differences were suspended. As lion drinks with antelope and wildebeest at the watering hole, so did Ventrue and Tzimisce, Ravnos and Gangrel, Brujah and Nosferatu (and Inconnu, though they will brag otherwise!) haunt the KZs.

I myself battered on the vitae of Auschwitz's incarcerated wretches. How strange that creatures so emaciated and maltreated could yet hold so much blood! How ironic that the crematoria concealed the evidence of my repasts with an alacrity and efficiency equal to my Masquerade of the Camarilla! And such subjects! Mengele, the pompous swine, separated the genetically deformed from the other prisoners in order to experiment upon them. Discreet use of my fleshly and osseous arts on arriving prisoners, coupled with hypnotic commands instilling silence on the part of the victims, ensured that neither *Der Engel des Todes* nor I lacked suitable fodder for experiments. Great advancements toward the Metamorphosis were made: "*Arbeit macht frei*," ja?

My sole regret was the lack of opportunity to reciprocate the Nazis' atrocities in kind. *Verdammt* German swine, daring to defile my lands with their jackboots, my herds with their barbed wire, and my ears with their ignorance! I personally found little difference among kine strains; SS guards tasted just as sweet as their victims — and screamed just as loudly....

But all good things must come to an end. The Third Reich crumbled, the Brujah "Idealists" puppets rolled across my homeland in their tanks, and I thought it meet to depart for more peaceable climes. The sadness I felt at my homeland's ravishing was partly alleviated by the fact that both the elder members of my clan and

the Shadow Lords refused to flee the advancing Soviet wave — the more fools they. The werewolf has not been whelped who can best a tank in personal combat (as that old fool Petrov Four-Fang discovered, to his chagrin and my great delight).

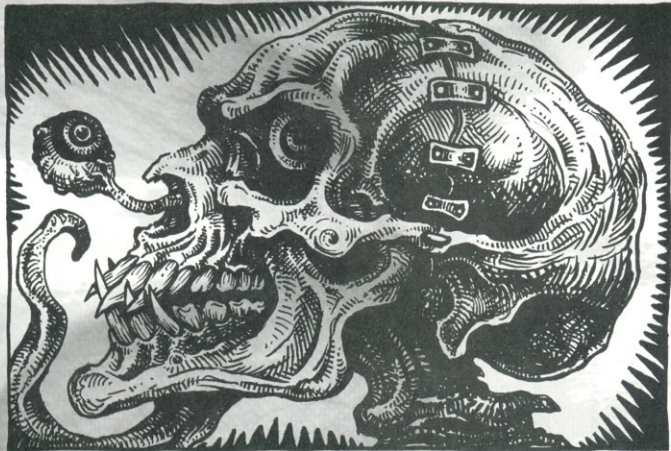
Of What Is and What Is to Come

The postwar era has, to my mind, been a time of consolidation and stalemate. Only a few elder Tzimisce survived the Second World War and its aftermath; it is my understanding that they have united in a coalition they dub the "Oradea League." Well, after this night the league has one fewer member.

Our sect has made great gains in this modern age. Rather than spurning the science of the kine, we feast on it just as we feast on their vitae. We have taken the Camarilla's weapons and turned them on their masters.

Indeed, we have combined age-old arts with cutting-edge science to produce the most virulent weapons the world has ever seen. We are now capable of creating specialized ghouls on the bacterial or perhaps even the viral level. Our sect's Inquisition seeks a moratorium on such research, while our Black Hand is equally vocal in its defense.





I support my militant brethren on this issue. Gehenna fast approaches, and my clan shall ensure that Pestilence claims his rightful due on the day of Apocalypse. AIDS? Flesh-eating streptococcus? The merest prototypes! As my American comrades say, "You ain't seen nothin' yet."

I grow weary of scribing. Dawn approaches. I slumber. At sunset tomorrow I shall awaken, and I shall descend from these heights and tread the empty lanes and forest tracks of my ancestral land. Tomorrow a kine will die screaming for his master's pleasure. Tomorrow a *vampyr* will walk among his herd.



Chapter Three: To Sup with Fiends

*What's your fetish? What's your pleasure?
Designer violence made to measure —
Like a velvet glove, like a ball and chain,
Like the kiss of a whip when you're hungry for pain.
— The Electric Hellfire Club, "Where Violence Is Golden"*

Tzimisce are the quintessential vampires. While other vampires desperately try to retain their human nature, Tzimisce actively seek to divorce themselves from it. This attitude has colored Tzimisce culture and society. Accordingly, the clan has fostered some of the most bizarre, alien and (from a mortal perspective) horrific practices known among vampires.

The Tzimisce Embrace

*And this was the way
And those were the horrors
As father went reaping,*

— Death in June, "Behind the Rose (Fields of Rape)"

Given that the clan as a whole holds the Tradition of the Progeny in contempt, Tzimisce are notoriously selective about whom they Embrace. Tzimisce are not human, do not wish to be human, and seek to Embrace people who have in some way deviated from their species

— socially, mentally or emotionally. Such deviation, however, must not preclude adherence to the clan's precepts or the capacity for wit, honor and charm. Tzimisce infinitely prefer a Hannibal Lecter to a Jeffrey Dahmer.

Tzimisce prize intelligence and insight, but intelligence of a particular variety — the ability to perceive new ways of looking at things rather than the conventional problem-solving or logical sort. In many ways this approach resembles that of the Malkavians, but Tzimisce do not respect insanity for its own sake. A catatonic vegetable or dysfunctional schizophrenic is a manifestation of human frailty, not proto-vampiric insight. A Tzimisce must be able to shape her madness rather than be shaped by it.

Even expedience rarely excuses a hasty Embrace. Tzimisce often hang back during wartime Creation Rites, allowing their Brujah and Pander comrades-in-arms to sully themselves with the animation of cannon fodder. A Fiend in need of muscle would much rather construct a dozen ghouls than transmit precious Tzimisce vitae to an unworthy being.



Tzimisce sires retain a good deal of influence in their childer's unives — much more than most Sabbat vampires do. Though not nearly so controlling as Camarilla sires, Tzimisce maintain relations with their progeny, even those in different packs. Though Tzimisce are never held accountable for the actions of their childer, a Tzimisce who sires a flawed childer often loses respect in the eyes of her clanmates.

Tzimisce Magic

Many Tzimisce are accomplished sorcerers, though the clan as a whole lacks the Tremere's prowess in the magical arts. Tzimisce who practice *Thaumaturgy* are known as *KelAnu* and earn respect from their peers. Paths commonly practiced by Tzimisce include the *Lure of Flames*, *Spirit Thaumaturgy*, *Elemental Mastery* and *Conjuring*. Surprisingly, Tzimisce rarely practice the *Path of Corruption*, preferring to rely on *alchemy* and *Blood Bonds* to achieve similar results.

Tzimisce magical practices differ from those of their Tremere rivals. Tzimisce emphasize the spiritual and the reverential as opposed to the Tremere's occult pragmatism. Chants, incantations and psalms to all manner of entities accompany Tzimisce rituals. Many parties, including mages, Tremere, Lasombra and the Sabbat Inquisition, would be very interested in obtaining information about the specifics of Tzimisce magic.

Clan Hierarchy

At first glance the Tzimisce seems a fractious, individualistic clan, mirroring the anarchic sect its members founded. This perception is entirely inaccurate.

Despite its lack of formal structure, the clan is very tightly bound. Respect for sect and heritage pervades the Tzimisce, and the vagaries of *Vicissitude* virtually dictate a fair degree of individual self-expression within the communal structure. Then, too, many members are bound by *Vinculum*s established during clan fetes.

What little hierarchy exists among Sabbat Tzimisce is based solely on power. Tzimisce who have awakened their *zilo* shape (i.e., have achieved the fourth level of *Vicissi-*

rude), who have at least one level of Thaumaturgy, and who have demonstrated wisdom and loyalty to the sect and clan are known among the clan as *zhupans*. *Zhupans* are respected for their knowledge and power, and may "suggest" courses of action to lesser Tzimisce. The lesser Tzimisce are not required to heed a "suggestion," but ignoring a *zhupan* is considered extremely rude and will almost inevitably alienate the *zhupan* so snubbed.

The head of the Tzimisce clan as a whole is called *Voivode*. Though this title carries no official weight in the Sabbat, in practice the *Voivode* is accorded roughly the same amount of status that a cardinal is given. *Voivode* is more of a religious office than a secular one. It is the *Voivode* who decrees the clan's *Auctoritas* and *Ignobilis Rite* and who supervises the clan's sacred nights. The *Voivode* is always formidably proficient in both *Vicissitude* and Thaumaturgy, extraordinarily self-aware (i.e., has nearly mastered her Path of Enlightenment), and extremely wise. The only symbol of office is a cape fashioned from the skins of at least three Tremere vampires slain in personal combat.

Battles for the position almost never occur; when they do, the contestants take *zulo* form and engage in a physical and magical Monomacy to death or submission.

The Old Clan

The majority of Tzimisce elders met Final Death when the clan joined the Sabbat, but a fair number escaped their vindictive progeny. Securing their demesnes against the ravages of the Sabbat, these vampires continued to exist much as they had for centuries, albeit more warily.

Though some refer to these Tzimisce as the "Old Clan," that is a misnomer. These hoary vampires have little use for sect, clan or other ties. They remember well the nights of old, when each vampire was a law unto itself and any other vampire was a potential enemy. (Note that Old Clan Tzimisce do not call themselves "*antitribu*," as do the surviving non-Sabbat Lasombra.)

Accordingly, Old Clan Tzimisce society is structured around individual broods comprising a sire and one or more Blood Bound childer. Childer, for Old Clan Tzimisce, fill the roles of lovers, family, friends, bodyguards and servants. Tzimisce mastery over the Blood Bond allows the sire to attune the emotions of his childer to a desired pitch. Thus, a vampire lover may be Blood Bound to feel all-consuming desire for the sire, a guard may be Blood Bound for loyalty, and a mate may be "programmed" for love. The fact that these emotions are artificial and one-sided rarely bothers the sire.

Old Clan Tzimisce rarely congregate. Other Tzimisce are, if anything, even less trustworthy than other vampires. Indeed, many Old Clan Tzimisce spend



Generation X

What this planet needs is plastic surgery.

— *The Overlords, "Organic"*

Though Tzimisce choose their neonates more carefully than do most vampires, a certain percentage fail to measure up to the clan's standards. An experimental selection might produce an undesirable progeny; a cannon-fodder foot soldier created during a siege might unexpectedly survive; a supposedly perfect candidate might prove defective during the Creation Rites.

Tzimisce create very few Caitiff; admission that a mistake in selection was made is bitter indeed. Therefore, most "undesirables" are inducted into the clan — albeit very, very grudgingly. Older Fiends treat them as second-class citizens — more than human or even ghoul, but not quite Tzimisce, and suffered to exist only by the clan's grace.

Naturally, this rarely sits well with the vampires so scorned. Accordingly, these Tzimisce often reject their clan, instead congregating among themselves. In the process they develop their own subculture and mores.

Many "undesirables" retain some semblance of Humanity instead of embracing a Path of Enlightenment. After all, when vampires have proved to be such bastards, a "vampiric supremacy" philosophy is hard to swallow. These Tzimisce openly defy their elders by interacting extensively with the mortal world. Indeed, some "undesirables" espouse a utopian vision similar to that of the Mentalist Brujah, whereby mortals and vampires can harmoniously coexist. Through the use of Vicissitude, these Tzimisce contend, the world and everything on it can literally be reshaped into a fleshly paradise.

more time brooding over some millennia-old, centuries-forgotten slight by one of their "peers" than they do worrying about the very real threat the Sabbat poses.

This is not to say that Old Clan Tzimisce have forgotten their traitorous progeny. On the contrary, many Old Clan Tzimisce have gone so far as to disown younger Tzimisce entirely. These Tzimisce, the Old Clan claims, are not vampires at all, but fleshly hosts for otherworldly parasites called "Souleaters." This distinction seems to be based on the possession of Vicissitude, although some ancient non-Sabbat Tzimisce have verifiably possessed Vicissitude for millennia.

Some Sabbat whisper that a few Old Clan children have been rendered immune to Vinculum by their elders and sent into the world with the purpose of infiltrating the Sabbat and bringing it down. The clan publicly scoffs at these rumors, but some high-ranking Sabbat have expressed private unease about such a prospect.

Dire Postulations of the Dread Vampire

But we know evil is an exact science —

Being carefully, correctly wrong.

— *Shriekback, "Nemesis"*

Since its first nights the Tzimisce has been a scholarly clan. Just as the Ventrue and Lasombra clans have traditionally led the Kindred through their trials, and the Toreador clan has crafted diversions to make unlife bearable, so the Tzimisce clan has sought answers to the riddles underlying vampiric existence. Accordingly, Tzimisce are among the greatest Cainite scientists, alchemists, historians and metaphysicians.

However, Tzimisce are not content to sit and think. They are experimenters more so than philosophers, and the world — particularly the mortal world — is their laboratory.

To purify their thought and detach themselves from human subjectivity, Tzimisce either founded or developed the various Sabbat Paths of Enlightenment. The clan was also instrumental in creating the Sabbat's various *Auctoritas* and *Ignobis Rite*. These beliefs and rituals serve diverse purposes: engendering solidarity among vampires, providing new habits to replace human-learned ones, and fostering an understanding of what it means to be a vampire. Some Lasombra whisper that perhaps the words and gestures of the *Rite* serve other, more sinister functions: worship of forbidden beings, for example, or distractions from the clan's true aims. The Tzimisce, of course, deny such allegations.

Many Tzimisce beliefs have been subsumed into the machinery of the Sabbat, but some remain unique to the clan.



Metamorphosists

Many Sabbat Tzimisce espouse the concept of Metamorphosis. Metamorphosists believe that just as humanity is the precursor to vampirism, so vampirism is in turn the prelude to some other wondrous state of existence. Tzimisce, through their Vicissitude Discipline, have the capacity to supersede their innate limitations and become godlike; they must only find the means.

Most Metamorphosists possess a scientific bent, seeking enlightenment through any number of unholy experiments on mortal and vampire alike. By performing research on life, a vampire can better understand unlife; by performing research on unlife, a vampire can learn enough to transcend that state.

Metamorphosists' mage allies often remark on the similarity between Metamorphosis and their own vision of Ascension. Some mages have theorized that the Tzimisce Antediluvian was in fact a mage prior to his Embrace, and that his progeny continue instinctively to grope toward Ascension, albeit in a highly debased way.

Neofeudalists

The Neofeudalist movement attracts some of the oldest and most conservative Sabbat Tzimisce. These vampires, remembering the clan's heyday as masters of Eastern Europe, wish to subjugate the human race and reestablish the domains of old. In Neofeudalists' view, vampires should rule openly, supported by a ghoul and revenant vassal class; at the bottom, of course, falls the human Third Estate. Neofeudalists see the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the splintering of the USSR, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia as clarion calls for an all-out Tzimisce reconquest of the clan's ancestral homeland.

Some Neofeudalists maintain expansive estates in isolated locales, participating in sect activities only when they must. Private armies of *szlachta*, revenants and childer patrol the grounds. Kidnapped human "serfs" till the soil, often to no end save to satisfy the master's sense of propriety. On the largest estates, forest preserves house Vicissitude-altered ghouls (animal and human) created for the sport of the master and her hunting hellhounds.



Other Sabbat question Neofeudalists' loyalty to the sect, seeing little difference between them and the elders the sect overthrew. In particular, Neofeudalists' reliance on private vassals as opposed to packmates disturbs Sabbat loyalists. Though Neofeudalists dutifully present their childer for Vaulderie ceremonies, some Sabbat wonder whether these Tzimisce clandestinely break the Vinculum thus established in favor of private Blood Bonds.

Reclamationists

Even other Tzimisce fear the zealots of the Reclamationist creed. Carrying the tenets of the Path of Caine one step further, Tzimisce Reclamationists seek apotheosis by the most direct means possible. Reclamationists hold that, through diablerie, vampires can govern their own evolution, advancing to the next state of being in as little time as it takes to drink the blood of a more powerful vampire. Reclamationists thus see diablerie not only as a pleasure, but also as a duty to the species (one must "reclaim" Caine's legacy from those vampires unworthy of possessing it).

Reclamationists avidly advance the Jyhad, devouring all other vampires, be they lesser (reclaiming vitae wastefully expended), equal (eliminating a potential threat), or greater (increasing one's potential). Even other Reclamationists are fair game. The Reclamationists' rarely stated but implicitly understood ultimate goal is for one of their number — the last survivor of the Jyhad — to find and drink the blood of Caine himself. This neogodling can then repopulate the barren earth according to the tenets of Reclamationist wisdom rather than idle whim.

Reclamationists prefer to drink vampire blood exclusively; thus they haunt the vanguards of Sabbat War Parties and are strong proponents of human genocide (by killing off vampires' normal prey, they force vampires into a predator-vs.-predator "survival of the fittest" situation). Reclamationists rarely sire, spend most of their existence in *zulo* form, and even other Tzimisce consider them cold and monstrous.

Diversifists

The subversive Diversifist sect holds that all vampires recognizably descended from an Antediluvian progenitor are inherently corrupted by those Ancients' taint. Only by branching away from the blighted tree, or destroying it at the root, can one sever oneself from the Antediluvians' strings. For this reason, Diversifists rarely fraternize with any vampires save their own clanmates, Lasombra, and Caitiff (all other vampires are Antediluvian pawns, deny it as they might). Diversifists exhort their Sabbat brethren to develop new means of self-expression (i.e., new powers, Disciplines and bloodlines),

for only in this way can *Homo sapiens sanguinus* evolve beyond the limited and ultimately self-destructive state Caine's shortsightedness has imposed on it.

Diversifists are among the most active Tzimisce researchers. Powerful Diversifists sometimes display one or more bizarre new Disciplines of their own invention. Diversifist science has been responsible for the creation of several bloodlines unique to the Sabbat, including the amorphous Blood Brothers. Such research usually requires the procurement of various exotic ingredients and scores of test subjects.

Exsanguinists

A bizarre offshoot of the Metamorphosists, the Exsanguinist cult proselytizes that blood, far from being the "life," is the prison chaining vampires to a lower state of being. After all, Exsanguinists argue, vampires have divorced themselves from most of the primitive biological reactions governing the life cycles of all other creatures. By similarly purging themselves of the need for vitae, vampires can attain a state of purely will-driven existence.

Devotees of the Exsanguinist cult thus practice esoteric *Rites* combining meditation and anorexia. Most Exsanguinists throw themselves into the minutiae of Sabbat existence, constantly keeping busy in an attempt to forget how hungry they are. Sadly, no Exsanguinist has yet achieved transcendence, and most other Tzimisce find Exsanguinists' sporadic, spasmodic "binge-and-purge" frenzies vastly amusing.

The Body Eclectic

The clan's attitude toward humanity manifests in its attitude toward the human form. Tzimisce routinely alter and adjust their bodies according to need and whim; occasionally, independently of the vampire's desires, a Tzimisce's body will spontaneously alter itself. Over the decades, most Tzimisce forget exactly what they looked like in life.

Many Sabbat Tzimisce, particularly the younger ones, take pleasure in shaping themselves into a variety of inhuman forms. Distended skulls, elongated fingers, polychromatic mottling and the like are often displayed by Tzimisce anxious to demonstrate their alien superiority. Rumors of unearthly "Souleaters" controlling this process are considered mere stories begun by the clan's enemies in an effort to weaken them.

Indeed, younger Tzimisce have ritualized these self-induced deformities. Tattoos, scars, protrusions, horns, knobs and the like signify pack affiliation, faction loyalty, Camarilla vampires slain, Tremere exterminated, etc., in a bizarre code as incomprehensible to older Tzimisce as it is to Camarilla enemies.

High Unholy Nights

Certain nights are sacred or otherwise important to the clan. The most noteworthy of these is the night of June 24th, known in Slavic folklore as Kupala's Night. This is the night, Sabbat Tzimisce say, when the sect's Tzimisce founders discovered the legendary "fire-flower" and broke their elders' Blood Bonds. On Kupala's Night, the Voivode calls the clan to a prearranged meeting site, and a wild and terrible Rite ensues. Sacrifices take place, blood flows in torrents from hundreds of captives, and Tzimisce cavort in a thousand shapes around great bonfires. Charges by the Sabbat Inquisition concerning the summoning and binding of demons on this night are vehemently denied by the clan.

The clan also holds an annual meeting sometime each fall, usually on the autumnal equinox. This date symbolizes the passing of summer into winter and thus the transition between mortality and vampirism. However, the meeting serves less a religious than a secular function. At this "conference," Tzimisce demonstrate new advances in clan research and concoct plans to implement these advances during Halloween War Parties and sieges.

Tzimisce plan their greatest military strikes (at least in North America) to take place on Halloween. On this night, when all mortals dress in grotesque and fanciful costumes, even the most deformed szlachta can walk the streets unhindered. An entire strike force of Sabbat and ghoults can assemble in a city without the mortal or Camarilla populace realizing anything is amiss.



Furthermore, Tzimisce are often accorded status within the clan by their ability to assume a specific inhuman form. This form, a monstrous, amphibious giant, is assumed when the vampire goes to war. Tzimisce in this shape display vastly enhanced physical prowess, roughly equivalent to that of Lupines in "wolfman" form. Most other Sabbat refer to this shape as the "Horrid Form," but Tzimisce call it the *zulo*.

Tzimisce Opinions Concerning the World of Darkness

*A Grinch is unpleasant, uncouth and unclean —
Now say this together: I'm frightfully mean!*

— Dr. Seuss, *The Grinch Meets the Cat in the Hat*

Brujah

I talked to — or was talked to by — a Brujah two nights ago. How he boasted of his valiant heart! How he vented his spleen! To hear him chatter, he alone had the spine to raise his fist in defiance and spit in the face of oppression.

Quickly growing irritated by his incessant braggadocio, I ripped out his heart, affixed his spleen to his buttocks, twisted his spine into an ornate paperweight, and fused his fist to his mouth. So much for Clan Brujah.

Gangrel

At least they are not so stagnant as others of our species. Rather than seeking to transcend themselves, however, they have chosen to devolve toward the bestial state. Help them in their course whenever convenient. A few centuries as a dung beetle might do a Gangrel good.

Malkavian

The cerebral processes of the Malkavians are fascinating and potentially useful. It is interesting to note that the Malkavian brain, the subject of so much Camarilla concern, structurally differs little from the brains of other vampires. However, I once observed a Malkavian frontal lobe survive in a vat of formaldehyde for a full 23 minutes after I extracted it from the cranium of its still-living donor. Perhaps there is something to their prattle of mind/body dissociation.

Tosferatu

All these millennia and still they obsess over the trifling handicap we inflicted upon them at the dawn of time. The lowest among us can bestow or remove their taint with but a few kneads of the fingers. And remove it we shall — during the final nights, in exchange for their unending loyalty. Tempered by eons of hardship and persecution, what soldiers they will make!

Torador

"The children of the night — what music they make!" Offal! Of what use are their pictures and poems? Their vaunted "talent" is merely the swizzle stick with which they churn up their dull, vapid neuroses and spew them onto a defenseless canvas. And they expect accolades for such? Surely Caine would have thought twice about giving them the gift of eternity had he known they would spend it in such narcissistic masturbation.

Tremere

Upstart human larvae. Uproot them from their chantries, flay their skins from them and expose them as the grubs they are.

The Tradition of the Masquerade

Fah! A more obvious stricture I cannot imagine! Does one hide when a cockroach comes crawling into one's haven? Does one meekly allow the insect to scuttle all over one's possessionst? No — one crushes it!

My sire has told me of the elder days, when our clan walked the night like gods and took what we would from the kine. She has told me how she would gaze down from the battlements of her haven to the valley below — how she would sweep her eyes over the feeble, pallid torchlight flickering from the village beneath her — how the sullen, fearful headman would deliver as tribute one in every seven children born therein rather than face her wrath! And you suggest that I, her scion, turn my cheek in fear from such sheep? Let their Inquisitors come — I would sooner burn to ash than be deprived of my deathright! For this reason if no other, I shall not rest until I sheathe my fangs in the Comarilla's neck!





Ventruc

Finally, a clan worthy of being called enemy — nay, archenemy. True, they are fatally misguided dupes of the Antediluvians, but I respect their dignity and poise. The last one I played with took four nights to scream and twelve to die. Admirable indeed.

Caitiff

It is best to treat them with contempt, for in so doing we reinforce prejudicial attitudes toward them. Thus, when we need vampires for use in experiments, it is the simplest matter to frame one for some fictitious transgression or other.

Assamites

These Ottoman jackals have mastered the art of slaying. Were they to focus their efforts on mastering the rest of existence, they might be truly dangerous. As things stand, they are but tools — useful, though predictable.

Giovanni

Another bastardized line, but far more formidable. The Tremere are naught but rapists, while the Giovanni seem instead to be the products of a deliberate and unholy spawning. And their powers...! Why, I could call a soul back into its ruined frame again and again for 1,001 nights of pleasure.... Yes, there is much to learn from these hybrids.

Ravnos

Irritating vermin with no respect for another's privacy. When they annoy, remind them of a simple truism — it is very hard to filch when one has no fingers.

Scittes

Clever, clever clan. So wonderfully, self-consciously wicked. They slither mesmerized around the flames of corruption, daring one another closer, always drawing back lest they singe their scales. We long ago realized that evil is neither a toy to play with nor a pyre in which to immolate oneself — it is a delicacy to be swallowed whole.

Lasombra

They are but empty shadows that flit across the stage we have constructed. Allow the shadow-puppets to direct our shadow-play, but, if necessary, do not hesitate to lift the curtain and dispel them amid the stark light of reality.

Inconnu

Pilot fish for the Antediluvians. Should you discover one, spare no effort to destroy it, but keep a careful watch for the hidden claw jerking its strings.

Camarilla

So transparently ridiculous it frightens me. This sect is either the flimsiest of screens for the Antediluvians or an intricate Chinese box beyond even our capacity to unlock. Still — screen, box, no matter. We need only ascertain which is the proper tool — a knife to shred it or a hammer to break it to splinters.

Sabbat

In any experiment one must have a control group and a group of test subjects. The Camarilla and the Inconnu are our control groups; the Sabbat, our test subjects. While we ourselves did not set the experiment in motion, the Jyhad has produced most enlightening results.

Black Hand

Our sect's *bogatyrs* are mighty, and wisely do our foes dread them. Still, their eternal stoicism and unquestioning loyalty disturb me. I would be far more comfortable with their existence if they tried to betray or usurp us at least occasionally. As it is, I'm certain they plot something truly heinous.

Lupines

Brutal, barbaric beasts who spend their time baying at the moon and exploring themselves for parasites instead of exploring the possibilities inherent in their wondrous multiplicity of forms. Furthermore, while I can accept and even appreciate the fact that they mortally despise our species, I would prefer that they simply got on with the business of trying to kill us rather than perfuming their bloodlust in self-righteous swill. Their holier-than-thou litany about "defending the humans from vampires' depredations" is as hypocritical as it is nauseating. I remember more than one "Shadow Lord" whose coat stayed suspiciously sleek during a lean Balkan winter....

Mages

Some claim that our clan's founder was of the Awakened in life. In any event, we stand united with these sorcerers in our mutual contempt for the Tremere. We have long-standing alliances with certain orders of wizards — alliances still maintained and honored, albeit clandestinely. Such alliances have proved most auspicious for our clan, for mages possess powers as formidable



Tzimisce Torture Techniques

It is an unpleasant fact that a large part of Tzimisce culture revolves around ways and means of hurting other beings. Many troupes will understandably prefer to ignore or gloss over this aspect of the clan. Still, Tzimisce are dubbed "Fiends" for a reason, and Storytellers who wish to portray the evil of the clan, particularly from a Camarilla perspective, may find this section useful.

Psychological preparation is vital for any torture session. Tzimisce Disciplines are admirably suited to this. *Viscissitude* allows the torturer to assume an appropriate shape: perhaps an impossibly beautiful member of the gender to which the victim is attracted, to heighten the shame; or an impossibly hideous one, to heighten the revulsion; or even the form of the victim's worst enemy. *Ansper* allows the Tzimisce to discover the victim's phobias and dirty little secrets, and to discern which areas of the victim's body are particularly sensitive.

Tzimisce Disciplines also vastly aid the actual session. *Viscissitude* allows the torturer to become his own tool kit, forming his extremities (or the victim's extremities) into a variety of intrusive implements perfectly shaped to fit the victim (or not quite fit, as the case may be...). Then, too, the sight of one's bones heaving of their own accord through one's skin is always disconcerting — and it becomes difficult to find release in a scream when one's tongue has been grafted to the roof of one's mouth... *Animalism* allows a variety of noxious creatures (particularly those inspiring panic in the victim) to be summoned and precisely directed.

Of course, physical torture has its limits, particularly against vampires. Most elders worthy of the name have experienced massive bodily trauma at least once during *nocturne*. Moreover, vampires scoff at threats that would break many mortals, such as amputation or castration. And how does one threaten a Nosferatu with disfigurement? Even mortals often display surprising resilience.

Unfortunately for such victims, Tzimisce are equally skilled at emotional torture. Centuries of *nocturne* give Tzimisce torturers an uncanny degree of psychological insight. Furthermore, Tzimisce control over the Blood Bond provides torturers with a variety of fiendish new ways to hurt their victims. Two vampires may be forcibly Blood Bound and one painstakingly disfigured before the other's eyes. Alternatively, the Tzimisce may break one victim's Bond while leaving the other still Bound; the unBound victim may then be re-Bound to the torturer and induced to inflict physical or emotional pain on the other victim. Tzimisce may also, through rituals, cause already Bound beings to feel emotions other than love. A victim capable of bearing the most atrocious wounds without flinching may be utterly broken by a contemptuous slap from the hand of her now-hostile child (or child).

Certain Tzimisce actually eschew supernatural means of torture, considering such practices effete. The Sabbat priest Stefan Kostas still speaks with great pride of how he extracted vital military information from a Gangrel Archon, using nothing but a 50¢ disposable razor blade, three needles, a pack of Holiday Inn matches, a rubber tube and a gallon of Clorox.

as they are subtle. The order known as "Progenitors" is a particularly intriguing body. We could learn much from it.

Not that any of these things will stop us from drinking them to desiccated husks and liquefying their bones into pus once their usefulness has ended. Still, one must give credit where credit is due....

Fairies

There are powers in the world far older than we. Celtic twilight and Victorian frippery cloak a grimmer reality. After all, the human mind was apparently able to cope with the horror of marauding vampires and rabid werewolves, for legends portray us in all our dark splendor. What atrocities did the fairies commit that forced the kine to veil them in the guises of "wee folk" and "Robin Goodfellow" rather than accept the truth?

Golconda

We do not aspire to a kine salvation. We will instead transubstantiate our own salvation from the kine's bodies and blood.

Tzimisce and the Blood Bond

...Nor know the vampire's from the lover's kiss:

For him the scarlet ghost

Of Lilith from time's last necropolis

Rears amorous and malign.

— Clark Ashton Smith, "Zothique"

According to Kindred legend, the Tzimisce Antediluvian was the first of Caine's childer to discover the Blood Bond, and it is fact that his progeny were the first vampires to break such a Bond en masse. In any event, Tzimisce are far more adept at the creation, maintenance and dissolution of Blood Bonds than are other vampires.

Most Blood Bonds create a strong but rather nebulous feeling of affection on the part of the Thrall. The Regnant, while fairly certain that the Thrall will act in her best interests, has little specific control over the Thrall's precise emotions. Tzimisce, however, have discovered rituals and alchemical techniques that vastly increase control over Blood Bonds.

Specific emotions can be evoked in the Thrall: filial love, romantic love, lust, loyalty, reverence, etc. Nor are the emotions induced by a Tzimisce-manipulated Blood Bond limited to "positive" ones. One being can be made to feel unremitting hatred toward or paralyzing fear of another. Moreover, certain Tzimisce may even create Blood Bonds between beings other than vampires — provided the appropriate blood is drunk — and may manipulate the emotions of both parties.





Some Camarilla Kindred whisper that powerful Tzimisce may set up a Blood Bond and delay its effects until a "trigger" (a condition, word, phrase, gesture, etc.) occurs. These Kindred claim that such delayed Blood Bonds, combined with Dominate-induced forgetfulness on the part of the Bound parties, have riddled the Camarilla with "undead time bombs" waiting to explode in ways suitable to the Sabbat. Most Camarilla Justicars dismiss these rumors as anarch-fomented paranoia.

Horrid Predilections of the Dread Vampir

One of the Tzimisce's most notorious traits is its members' penchant for pain. While other vampires often commit cruel acts out of anger, hate or simple sadistic pleasure, the Tzimisce obsession with pain seems reflexive — a need rather than a desire.

Accordingly, Tzimisce frequently study and practice the craft of torture, and many among the clan act as full-time torturers for their sect. In this role they are greatly

feared — to the extent that Tzimisce vampires have been given the epithet "Fiends" by their horrified Camarilla brethren.

Tzimisce differ from, say, Toreador *antitribu* in their approach to torture. They see themselves more as scientists than artists; their techniques, while amusing in and of themselves, are means to a greater end. Only by meticulously studying pain — physical, mental and emotional — can one discover the limits of that pain and the means to overcome the Antediluvians' worst on the eve of Gehenna. Thus, most Tzimisce torture sessions are in fact experiments, complete with hypotheses, specific conditions and purposes — however warped and illogical those purposes may seem to mortals or other vampires.

A lesser-known aspect of the Tzimisce is its members' masochistic bent. Tzimisce routinely subject themselves to abuses as great, if not greater, than those they inflict on their victims. Only through fully understanding the capabilities and limitations of the vampiric form will they be able to supersede it — and some experiments are best performed firsthand. Tzimisce have been known to spend weeks or even months in the grip of various infernal devices of their own making.

Servitors of the Tzimisce

Yet, with all that deformity, there was a certain air of vigor, agility and courage — a strange exception to the classic rule that strength, like beauty, comes from harmony.

— Victor Hugo, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*

Though Tzimisce are themselves formidable creatures, their minions are perhaps even more dreaded by the clan's foes. Through their Vicissitude Discipline, Tzimisce disfigure nature's creations into nightmarish war machines — and through their Blood Bonds, they ensure these beings' loyalty.

Revenants

The Tzimisce has bred a species of self-replicating, ghoul-like beings. These creatures, which are neither vampires nor mortals nor precisely ghouls, are known as revenants. Their supernatural powers have become hereditary, and there exist several breeds, or families, of revenants, each with its own distinctive characteristics.

Once there were many such families, but the revenants' numbers have been culled by other vampires, outraged mortals, or simple inbreeding and sterility. Four branches remain extant: the Bratovitches,

monstrous warriors; the Zantosas, nomad scouts; the Grimaldis, cunning spies; and the Obertuses, reclusive scholars. All are loyal to the Tzimisce, but this is the only common denominator among them; they feud among themselves as often as they battle the clan's foes.

Revenants are largely obsolete in this day and age. Their usefulness as infiltrators and spies is limited, for over the centuries they have grown too odd to interact with mortals for extended periods. Over time, cannibal feasts and week-long torture orgies became difficult to conceal from the modern media, particularly a modern media infested with Camarilla puppets on the lookout for Sabbat-related activity. Moreover, an average revenant, while a terror against mortals, can rarely best even a neonate vampire in a pitched battle. Many Lasombra and Assamite *antitribu* argue for the revenants' eradication.

Nonetheless, the clan is unlikely to give up its "pets" anytime soon. If nothing else, revenant abodes provide safe havens for Sabbat on the run from Camarilla Archons or Lupines. Like other ghouls, revenants are diurnal. Then, too, revenants are capable of procreation, and the clan has often deliberately bred revenants with specific hereditary traits. More than a few Tzimisce neonates are created from the offspring of these arranged unions.





Ghouls

The Sabbat as a whole spurns ghouls, but Clan Tzimisce is a noted exception. The clan makes extensive use of ghoul servitors, reshaping them with Vicissitude to perform desired functions. Tzimisce creativity in this regard is both wondrous and terrible to behold. Some ghouls, properly nourished and "watered," even serve architectural and decorative functions ("curtains" of living skin; "walls" of muscle, organs and bone; "gardens" of flesh kept in vats and shaped into various formations in the manner of rock crystals).

The existence of a Tzimisce ghoul is far from easy. Rarely are ghouls left in an unblemished shape; even a ghoul whom the master has no need to deform is often disfigured anyway, simply to satisfy the master's aesthetic whims or scientific curiosity. Exceedingly cruel punishments await the slightest failure or misunderstanding. Tzimisce seldom feel or demonstrate affection or appreciation for their ghouls. Tzimisce rarely need to resort to kindness, rewards or even Blood Bonds to keep their ghouls in line; a common practice among the clan is to gnarl a "recruit's" face into an unrecognizable lump of tissue and cartilage, with the subsequent promise to restore one facial feature per decade or so of perfect service. Perfect service is difficult to provide, and thus most Tzimisce ghouls are doomed to exist as monsters.

A few ghouls have escaped the clan over the centuries; such ghouls, hideously deformed, accustomed to a diet of human meat and vampire blood, and hunted by the Sabbat, find it difficult to return to human civilization. Accordingly, these ghouls haunt waste places and abandoned sites as monstrous predators.

Guardian Ghouls (*Szlachta*)

Certain ghouls are used by the clan as bodyguards, soldiers and sentries. Tzimisce call these ghouls *szlachta*, or "gentry," for they are deemed superior to other ghouls, though by no means on the same plane as vampires. *Szlachta* may be human or animal — the origin matters little, given the end result.

Szlachta are warriors, and the clan uses Vicissitude to heighten its troops' combat prowess. Bones are reshaped into spikes or armored plates; skin and fat are extracted from unnecessary areas and grafted where padding might prove efficient; facial features are warped into ghastly masks, the better to intimidate foes. One Tzimisce, taking a lesson from Vlad Tepes, grafted her *szlachta* back to back, rendering them both proof against rear attack and incapable of retreat.

Some *szlachta* are used as scouts; Tzimisce often hypertrophy or otherwise alter these ghouls' sensory organs in efforts to increase the ghouls' awareness. Such experiments only intermittently succeed and have led to more than one *szlachta* going insane or being permanently crippled.

War Ghouls (*Vozhd*)

The last and rarest sort of ghoul is the *vozhd*, or war ghoul. These loathsome creatures are generally used only when besieging an enemy outpost. *Vozhd* are actually created from 15 or more individual ghouls (human, animal or both). The ghouls are first forced to drink each other's blood in a Vaulderie-esque ceremony. A team of Tzimisce (and the occasional Tremere *antribu*) then employs Vicissitude and Thaumaturgical rituals to meld the ghouls into one composite entity. Such a creature is enormous (some ambitious Sabbat have created dinosaur-sized ghouls) and, with its multiple limbs and organs, is capable of unleashing a maelstrom of destruction. Excess tissue, bone and cartilage can be molded to bestow carapaces, spines, claws, palps, tusks, mandibles, fanged maws or whatever the creators desire. The process of becoming a *vozhd* invariably drives the component beings mad; to circumvent this, the creature is usually lobotomized via Vicissitude (such a procedure also renders it immune to Dominate, Presence and Animalism).

The end result is the biological equivalent of a tank: huge, slow, stupid and devastatingly powerful (levels of Potence, Fortitude and Blood Pool generally equal twice those of the highest level among the component ghouls). The creation ritual irrevocably bonds the *vozhd* to a single creator; this creator alone can "command" the creature, though a *vozhd* rarely comprehends commands of more than two or three words. *Vozhd* are usually starved before a battle and, when the time is right, pointed in the general direction of juicy, crunchable Camarilla Kindred.

Vozhd are extremely rare in the modern age. Creating a *vozhd* requires vast amounts of time, raw materials and labor, and the return is rarely worth the effort — particularly in an era of LAW rockets and shaped charges. *Vozhd* are nearly as dangerous to their creators as they are to their enemies. Moreover, the very size and ferocity of the monster often work to the Sabbat's detriment: few things can convince Camarilla elders, anarchs, Inconnu and neutral vampires to unite against a common foe, but a rampaging *vozhd* is one such thing. On the other hand, few things can convince Camarilla elders, anarchs, Inconnu and neutral clans to surrender to the Sabbat so readily as seeing their city's prince torn to pieces and greedily devoured by a rampaging *vozhd*.



J.K. '95



JX.

Enter at Your Own Risk

*I think we are in rats' alley,
Where the dead men lost their bones.*

— T.S. Eliot, "The Waste Land"

Tzimisce, even the wilder ones, tend to enjoy periods of contemplative solitude. Their innate territoriality manifests as an extraordinary sensitivity to their surroundings. Something deep in the Tzimisce psyche demands privacy and personal space, and Tzimisce plan and maintain their havens with meticulous care.

Most vampires, aware of the Tzimisce proclivity for cruelty, imagine Tzimisce havens to be vast abattoirs, where the walls drip with the gore of violated innocents and the corridors reverberate with the screams of the immured. This is rarely the case — at least not in the main haven. An ambience of murder and horror, pleasurable as it may be, is not conducive to rest.

Tzimisce refer to their main haven as the manse (regardless of size or opulence — Tzimisce are nothing if not wishful thinkers). It is here that a Tzimisce keeps her mementos of mortal and undead life. Tzimisce decorate their manses in a manner reflecting their attitude toward unlife. Tzimisce often sleep in coffins as a constant reminder of their separation from the world of mortals.

To circumvent their clan weakness, most Tzimisce also maintain one or more auxiliary havens. Auxiliary havens contain a supply of sleeping earth and other bare necessities of existence. They are used when a Tzimisce has reason to believe her manse is being sought by enemies. Auxiliary havens are also where a Tzimisce usually brings her victims in order to slay and torture them, thus allowing the vampire to maintain the serenity of her primary abode.

Tzimisce are extremely sensitive about whom they admit into their havens. No one may enter without the express permission of the vampire, which is generally extended in the form of an elaborate formal invitation. (Ironically, this custom probably provided the basis for the Camarilla's Second and Fifth Traditions.) Likewise, Tzimisce are reluctant to enter another's dwelling without similar permission being granted. Obviously, this custom is suspended while at war or hunting. Nonetheless, Tzimisce adherence to this tradition has led to the Camarilla's unmasking of more than one Sabbat spy.

A few modern Tzimisce, having grown up immersed in science fiction and horror, use victims and Vicissitude to fashion quasi-organic manses. Breathing walls, venous corridors that throb and pulsate, "doors" fashioned from viscous membranes, and "bas-relief" ghouls eternally bound into the furnishings adorn such manses.

Merits and Flaws

The following pages include suggestions for Merits and Flaws unique to Tzimisce characters. Feel free to adapt and use these new Traits to personalize your characters. For more information on the use of Merits and Flaws in a chronicle setting, see *The Vampire Players Guide*.

Pain Tolerance (2 pt. Merit)

Note: You must have Callousness and Morale ratings of 3 or higher to take this Merit.

Either because of personal proclivity or the rigors of Vicissitude, you have become acclimatized to pain. This affinity enables you to ignore one die of wound penalties. Thus, when you are Hurt or Injured, you suffer no penalties to actions. You suffer only a one-die penalty to actions at the Wounded and Mauled states, and even Crippling injuries subtract four dice rather than five. You are still Incapacitated normally.

Haven Affinity (2 pt. Merit)

Your territoriality rivals that of a Lupine. When acting on "home soil" (your main haven, not auxiliary havens), you gain an additional die to all Dice Pools. You may also

home in on your haven by making an unmodified Perception roll (difficulty variable: 6 if across town, 8 if in another state or country, 9 if across the globe).

Privacy Obsession (5 pt. Flaw)

You carry the Tzimisce respect for privacy to extremes. You must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 6) to enter another being's dwelling without being invited (though you will go to fiendishly clever lengths to garner an unwitting invitation). When disturbed in your manse by an uninvited guest, you must make a Self-Control or Instincts roll (difficulty 7) to avoid a frenzy.

Tzimisce Powers

... powers which, so far from proceeding from the heights and leading men thither, are in reality survivals from the depths of being. The amoeba and the snail have powers we do not possess...

— Arthur Machen, "The Novel of the Black Seal"

Storytellers should consider carefully whether or not to allow these or any other special abilities into their chronicle. The powers that follow are included to enhance your chronicle, and should not be used as a "checklist" for players.





Tier of Souls (Animalism Level Six)

A vampire with this power gains more than mere sustenance from the blood she drinks. She also gains insight into and even abilities from the donor. Moreover, if the being from which the vampire drinks has recently fed, she may gain similar awareness of that creature. If that creature had also recently eaten before being consumed, the vampire may likewise acquire the powers of that victim, and so on. (Renfield wasn't so crazy after all....)

System: The vampire must drink the blood of her prey and make a Perception + Animal Ken roll (difficulty 7). Each success allows either a memory or an Ability to be accessed; alternatively, three successes can be "converted" into one of the victim's Disciplines, Attributes or innate powers. The vampire may choose one of the victim's Traits or may select from anything that the victim (or victim's victim, etc.) has eaten in the past 24 hours. The effects last until the vampire expends the creature's Blood Points. Only one "tier" can be maintained at a time.

Genius Loci (Auspex Level Six)

Tzimisce have a natural affinity for places, as their clan weakness demonstrates. This power augments that affinity, enabling the vampire to tap into the "ambience" or "spirit" of a specific place and thereby gain insight into situations affiliated with the nature of that place. For example, if the vampire uses Genius Loci while in a graveyard, she might gain insight into situations dealing with death. If she uses the power amid the burned-out shell of a building, she might receive a warning of an impending fire; insight into catastrophes in general; or even an awareness of the forces behind rapid, cataclysmic change.

System: The vampire must meditate in a certain location for at least an hour. The place must be symbolic of a given force or have been the site of strong passions or trauma (i.e., a shopping mall is not likely to give much valuable insight, but a shopping mall where a mass murderer killed 23 victims with an assault rifle might well provide insight into situations involving violence or mass panic). The vampire must then roll Perception + Empathy (difficulty 8). Each success provides a clearer, less nebulous understanding.

Obviously, this power is extremely subjective. The Storyteller must use discretion when adjudicating its use.

Ecstatic Agony (Auspex Level Seven)

Many Trimisce have learned to tolerate and even appreciate the sensation of pain, but a vampire with this power has far transcended others' understanding. Her nerves still register pain, but perceive it as pleasurable, even spiritually uplifting.

System: A vampire with this power adds wound penalties to her Dice Pools. Thus, the more injured the vampire is, the more effectively she functions. A vampire in the Crippled state adds five dice to all Dice Pools! Obviously, if injuries entail the loss of body parts, the vampire may not perform actions necessitating those body parts. Furthermore, a vampire who reaches the Incapacitated state is still incapacitated.

This power is continuously in effect.

Skin Trap (Vicissitude Level Six)

This power enables the vampire to slough off a layer of his epidermis and use it as a fleshy snare. Victims may be bound, blinded or even suffocated in the skin-sac.

System: The vampire may automatically shed a layer of skin, but must make a Stamina + Firearms roll (use normal firearms complications) to target his victim. If the vampire hits, the victim is trapped in the folds of flesh and may take no action until she frees herself (Strength, difficulty 7; victim must score a number of successes equal to the vampire's Stamina). Additionally, if the vampire scores three or more successes on the attack roll, he has targeted the victim's face, blinding her and (if the victim breathes) cutting off her oxygen supply.

Each time this power is used, the vampire's soak Dice Pool decreases by one until he spends a Blood Point to regenerate the skin layer. If this power is used

three times in succession without spending Blood Points, the vampire's skin becomes paper-thin. Each time the vampire moves suddenly or violently in this state, he must make a Stamina roll (difficulty 7) or suffer one Health Level of damage as cracks and lesions riddle his skin.

Kraken's Kiss (Vicissitude Level Seven)

This power was first manifested by the Black Hand Dominion Lars Svengaard during the Siege of Barcelona. With this power, the vampire can warp the skin, cartilage and bone of her face, elongating it and resolidifying it into a 10'-long tentacle similar to that of a squid. This tentacle can be used to grasp and constrict foes; moreover, in place of a squid's suckers are rows and rows of fanged, drooling mouths, permitting incredibly rapid blood drain.

System: The vampire spends a Willpower point and rolls Stamina + Body Alteration (difficulty 8). Success enables formation of the tentacle with no loss of sensory abilities. The tentacle can be used in melee (difficulty 5; Strength + 2 damage). A successful hit indicates a grab; for each success scored on the attack roll, one additional Blood Point can be drained from the victim each turn, as dozens of mouths bite and suck. To break the grip, the victim must score three more successes than the vampire in an extended contest of Strength.

It should be noted that the tentacle is as vulnerable to attack as the vampire is and may be attacked anywhere along its length; moreover, a tentacle in the process of feeding is a stationary target. If the tentacle takes three or more Health Levels of damage from an edged weapon, it is severed, and the vampire is effectively deprived of all senses (save touch) until she regenerates her face.



The Tattoo Artist

Quote: *Trust me — your face has amazing bone structure. Maori tribal scarification will go over awesome at your next board meeting or whatever.*

Prelude: Everything was so ugly. The squalid, roach-infested public-housing shell where you grew up; the jaundiced crackheads in the halls and the tarry-veined smack addicts on the corner; the ammo casings on the school playground. Ugly. The Barbie-doll, coloring-book world you wanted was a lie. Everything was ugly and nothing could ever change.

But you could change yourself. You sat in your room and poked needle after needle into your flesh. Then you connected the dots with an X-Acto knife. Pretty.

They took you to the hospital and some woman who tried to talk to you, but you had nothing more to say. Not with words, anyway. You ran away and offered yourself as apprentice to a tattoo artist. The grizzled ex-biker laughed at first, but when he saw your desire and your designs he agreed to take you on. You learned everything you could and eventually opened your own studio. Your fame spread by word of mouth, and soon you acquired a regular clientele.

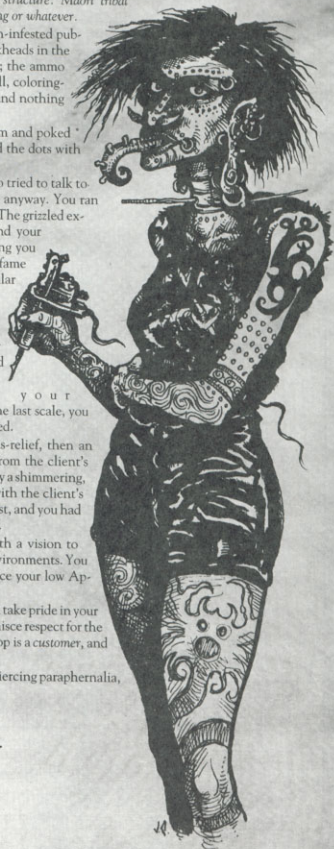
Then the customer came into your studio. He disrobed, and you gasped in awe. The designs sheathing his body had to have been created by the Michelangelo of your craft. But you felt intimidated and unworthy when he asked you to create a dragon tattoo on one of his few areas of bare flesh. You also saw this as a challenge, and you performed *your magnum opus* on his skin. When you finally needled in the last scale, you could have sworn the dragon opened its eyes and breathed.

Because it did. The tattoo expanded, became a bas-relief, then an actual statue of living, hissing, undulating flesh rising from the client's chest. You staggered back in shock, only to be restrained by a shimmering, multicolored claw. The dragon's maw moved in synch with the client's fanged mouth as he — it — explained. This had been a test, and you had passed. You would now have eternity to express yourself.

Concept: You are a skilled and dedicated artist with a vision to convey. You have also learned to survive in very rough environments. You have practiced scarification techniques on yourself, hence your low Appearance (at least in the eyes of the unenlightened).

Roleplaying Tips: Even after your induction, you still take pride in your work and treat your clients respectfully. You take the Tzimisce respect for the sanctity of the haven very seriously — anyone in your shop is a *customer*, and devil take the Seraph or archbishop who says otherwise.

Equipment: Small loft/workshop, needle gun, inks, piercing paraphernalia, Genitorturers T-shirt





Tzimisce™



Name: *The Tattoo Artist*
Player:
Chronicle:

Nature: *Visionary*
Demeanor: *Deviant*
Concept: *Artist*

Clan: *Tzimisce*
Generation: *8th*
Haven:

Attributes

Physical

Strength ●●●○○○○○
 Dexterity ●●●●○○○
 Stamina ●●●○○○○○

Social

Charisma ●●●○○○○○
 Manipulation ●●○○○○○
 Appearance ●○○○○○○○

Mental

Perception ●●●○○○○○
 Intelligence ●●○○○○○
 Wits ●●●○○○○○

Abilities

Talents

Acting ○○○○○○○○
 Alertness ●○○○○○○○
 Athletics ●○○○○○○○
 Brawl ●●●○○○○○
 Dodge ●●○○○○○
 Empathy ○○○○○○○○
 Intimidation ●●●○○○○○
 Leadership ○○○○○○○○
 Streetwise ●●●○○○○○
 Subterfuge ○○○○○○○○

Skills

Animal Ken ○○○○○○○○
 Drive ●○○○○○○○
 Etiquette ○○○○○○○○
 Firearms ●○○○○○○○
 Melee ●●●○○○○○
 Music ○○○○○○○○
 Repair ●○○○○○○○
 Security ○○○○○○○○
 Stealth ○○○○○○○○
 Survival ○○○○○○○○

Knowledges

Bureaucracy ○○○○○○○○
 Computer ○○○○○○○○
 Finance ●○○○○○○○
 Investigation ○○○○○○○○
 Law ●○○○○○○○
 Linguistics ○○○○○○○○
 Medicine ●○○○○○○○
 Occult ●○○○○○○○
 Politics ●○○○○○○○
 Science ○○○○○○○○

Advantages

Disciplines

Aspex ●●○○○○○
Vissitula ●●○○○○○
 ○○○○○○○○
 ○○○○○○○○
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Backgrounds

Government ●●●●○○○
Risources ●○○○○○○○
Motor ●○○○○○○○
 ○○○○○○○○
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Virtues

Callousness ●●○○○
 Instincts ●●○○○
 Morale ●●●●○

Other Traits

Body Alteration ●●●●○○○
 ○○○○○○○○
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Path of

Cathari

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Willpower

● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○
 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Blood Pool

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Health

Bruised □
 Hurt -1 □
 Injured -1 □
 Wounded -2 □
 Mauled -2 □
 Crippled -5 □
 Incapacitated □

Weakness

Must sleep in at least two handfuls of native soil.



Vlad Tepes — Dracula

The most famous member not only of his clan but also of his species, Dracula is regarded by both Kindred and kine as the embodiment of evil. In life he was a tyrannical warlord; in death he has risen in power and notoriety to surpass vampires 10 times his age.

The Tzimisce have mixed feelings about Dracula. Some whisper that perhaps Dracula's vast power represents the culmination of Tzimisce strivings and the solution to vampiric stagnation; others feel that he is an aberration and should be destroyed as expediently as possible.

Vlad Tepes is described in more detail in *Who's Who Among Vampires: Children of the Inquisition*.

Velya (the Vivisectionist)

Tzimisce speak with reverential dread of Velya, dubbed the Vivisectionist for his numerous contributions to Tzimisce science. Velya was one of the founders of the Sabbat and now serves as a cardinal in that sect. He has never accepted the title of *Voivode*, though all *Voivodes* give his opinion a great deal of consideration. Rumor has it that Velya is an actual child of the Tzimisce Antediluvian, though on this matter Velya remains silent.

Velya, despite his great age, is a newlywed of sorts. During the 19th century, on a sojourn through New England, the vampire lord met little Elaine Cassidy, 10-year-old scion of a monied Boston family. Enamored by Elaine's exquisite beauty and even more exquisite evil, Velya Embraced her and united with her in a mutual Blood Bond. To ensure that she would never leave his side, Velya amputated Elaine's legs and grafted the tiny child to his back, where she sprouts to this night (though she may briefly separate by exercising *Vicissitude* to detach herself and form a snail-like appendage from the stumps of her thighs). Even other Sabbat are unnerved to hear the lilting child-voice breathlessly detailing the next torture Elaine wishes to see her "husband" perform.



Righteous Endeavor

Righteous Endeavor Clay was one of the most strident voices of the New England witch hysteria. From his Congregationalist pulpit Clay directed the ire of New England's elect, personally rooting out the limbs of Satan in the Colonies' midst. Denunciations from among the condemned alleging Clay's personal participation in the vilest of the Black Mass orgies were dismissed as lies engendered by Beelzebub Himself. Merciful Righteous, undismayed by such blasphemy, spent long hours with the witches in their dungeons, exhorting the nubile young sinners' redemption through means both oratorical and physical.

Perhaps it was the dying hex of his victims; perhaps it was an act of God. In any event, shortly after the last witch was cast under unhallowed ground, Righteous fell ill with a strange wasting malady and passed into the grace of his Maker. Soon thereafter, the first Sabbat landed in New England. Their actions were dismissed as Indian raids by New England's otherwise vigilant witch-hunters, who spared neither Camarilla nor Lupine.

Righteous Endeavor (he has dropped his surname along with his humanity) is now a priscus in the Sabbat and personally oversees many of the North American branch's *Ritæ*. His gaunt figure, still dressed in the somber Puritan garb of his youth, is often seen at major Sabbat festivals. He hates the Nosferatu Prudence Stone with a passion; she is one of the few to have escaped his scourge.



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Corine Marcón

Among the world's fashion designers, few are so revered as Corine Marcón. From her Manhattan penthouse, Marcón sets trends that turn heads worldwide. The rich and famous, including a large number of Toreador, have paid astronomical sums for a Marcón original.

What the rich and famous do not realize about Marcón originals is that they are woven from the flesh of living (or undead) creatures. Marcón has refined her control of the Vicissitude Discipline to such an extent that she may unravel a victim's skin, sinew and bone into a mesh of fibrous strands; she may then reweave this

thread into a clothlike material. With proper alchemical preparation, a victim may even survive the process. (She prefers to work from kidnapped derelicts, relishing the irony of the upper crust garbing themselves in the viscera of street beggars.)

Marcón uses these "ghoul garments" in the service of the Sabbat. She specifically tailors her living clothes to her Camarilla customers — and she always knows who these are. Marcón's ghouls not only batten on their hosts (Marcón has developed special rituals to ensure her Blood Bond is not broken in the process), but also telepathically transmit information to the seamstress.



Doktor Tötentanz

Though there are more powerful vampires in the Black Hand, few are so feared as the German Dominion who calls herself Doktor Tötentanz. Infamous even among the Hand for the brutality, magnitude and sheer audacity of her slayings, Tötentanz often spearheads European Sabbat War Parties into heavily fortified Camarilla fiefdoms. She is rumored to lament the fact that Pol Pot still exceeds her record for sheer number of people murdered.

In life, Tötentanz is believed to have been Dr. Heinrich Lunt, an SS race biologist whose enthusiasm for his work attracted the attention of a Tzimisce. Changing both name and gender to suit her proclivities, Tötentanz has since served the Sabbat as fanatically as she once served the Third Reich. Still, old loyalties die hard; her personal pack, the *Sonderkommando* ("squadron of the living dead"), utilizes much Nazi paraphernalia in its *Ignobis Rite*. She has even founded an offshoot of the Path of Caine; the tenets of this often self-contradicting path state, among other things, that Caine was the First Aryan, but that his blood was stolen by the treacherous Antediluvians of Mesopotamia, the ancestors of the Jews.

Doktor Tötentanz is certainly an up-and-coming Sabbat vampire (though more than one archbishop has expressed concern that her personal crusades could supersede her loyalty to the sect if allowed to go unchecked). She has personally slain two Italian princes, and their potent vitae has endowed her with a level of power far vaster than her years of unlife would indicate. She makes no secret of her lust for a seat on the Seraphim and has attracted a large following among the lower ranks of the Black Hand, who strive to emulate her zeal and ferocity.





Kartariya

One of the most powerful and enigmatic Tzimisce is the mysterious Indian Methuselah named Kartariya. Also called the Many-Armed because of its peculiar extrapolation of the Vicissitude Discipline, Kartariya reputedly emigrated to the Indian subcontinent millennia ago in search of solitude, worship and easy prey. Its centuries-long feud with a Nosferatu Methuselah who sought the same things inspired entire cycles of myth among the region's indigenous people.

Kartariya, the victor of that war, now dwells in its ancient foe's sanctum on the isle of Sri Lanka. Kartariya fanatically defends its privacy and considers all of India its personal hunting ground. No vampires save those of its line, or those who submit to a Blood Bond, are welcome in India. Trespassers are often attacked by formidably powerful ghouls that have been fleshcrafted to resemble enormous apes or monkeys.

