


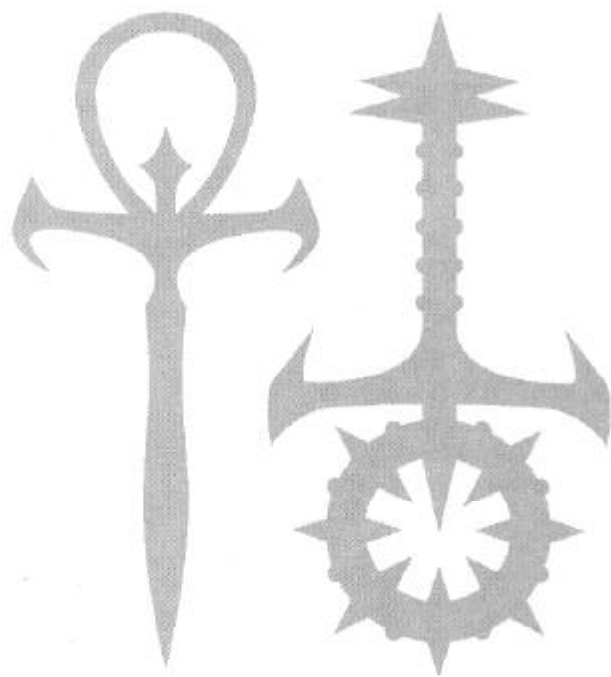
MIDNIGHT SIEGE



A sourcebook of sect conflict for vampire: the masquerade®



MIDNIGHT SIEGE



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SPECIAL THANKS, BEACH HOUSE EDITION
Ben and Dinah Monk, "The Royal Family," for claiming the princely estate at the top of the mansion.

Mike "Sissy" Tinney, for becoming defensive once the explosives threatened his security deposit.

Chad "Monkey Knife Fights" Brown, for instigating monkey knife fights.

Brian "Romper Stomper" Glass, for not leaving Chad at home when he had the chance.

Fred "I Can Make the Pool This Warm, Too" Yelk, for testing the hot tub for fungus and other horrors.

Aaron "Couch Potato" Voss, for watching 144 hours worth of movies in 120 hours.

Josh "Fuck a Bunch of Fred" Timbrook, for the 4 a.m. drunken litany against the guy asleep in the next room.

Justin "El Genius" Achilli, for discovering Nature's Gorilla.

Philip "Puzzled" Boule, for traveling 12 hours to a million-dollar house on the beach while the dolphins swam outside and spending his time doing jigsaw puzzles in the dayroom.

KARATE DEATH!

The guy who owned the house we were supposed to get but didn't winterize, thereby forcing some of us to have a view of Route 12 instead of the Atlantic Ocean.

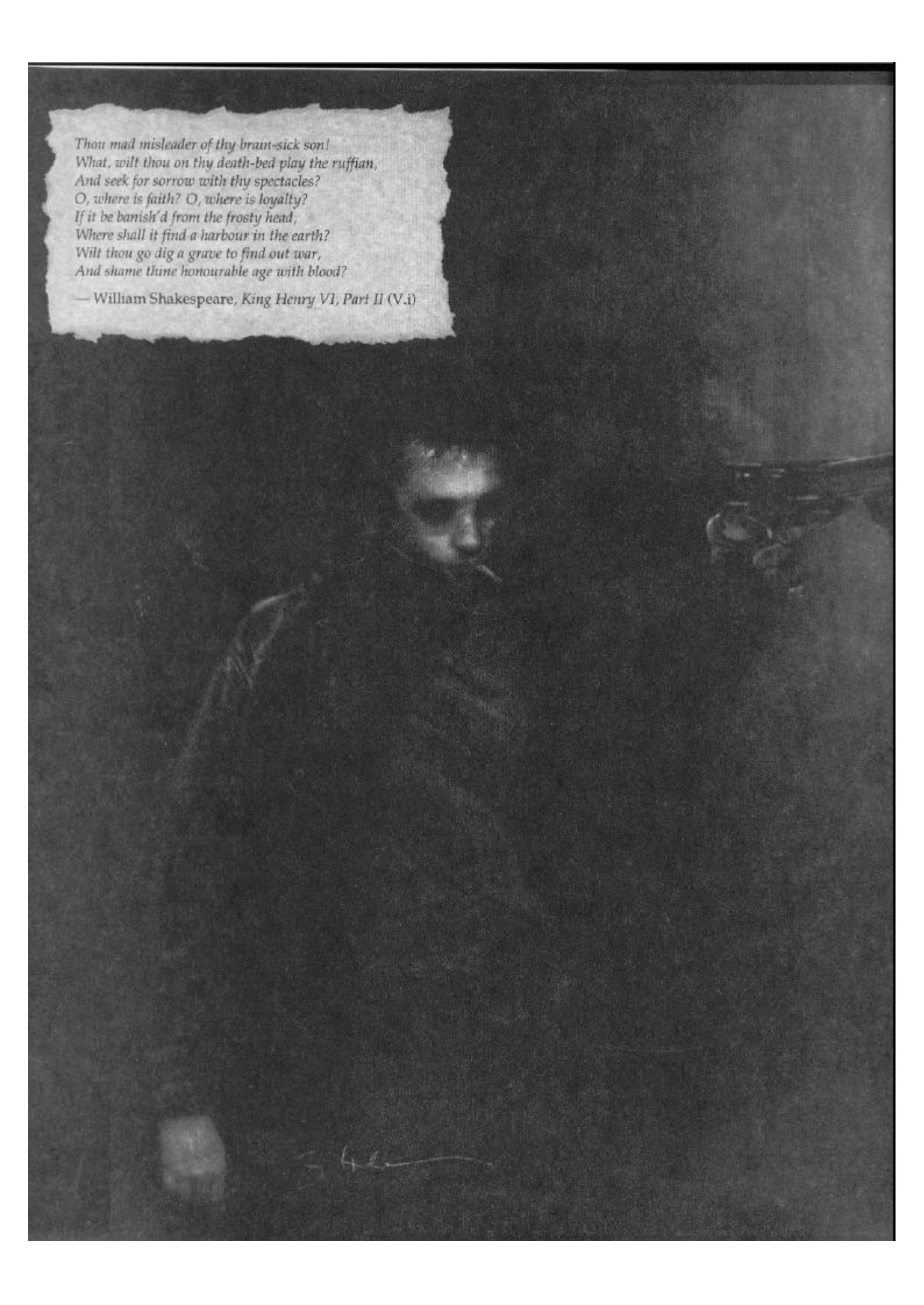


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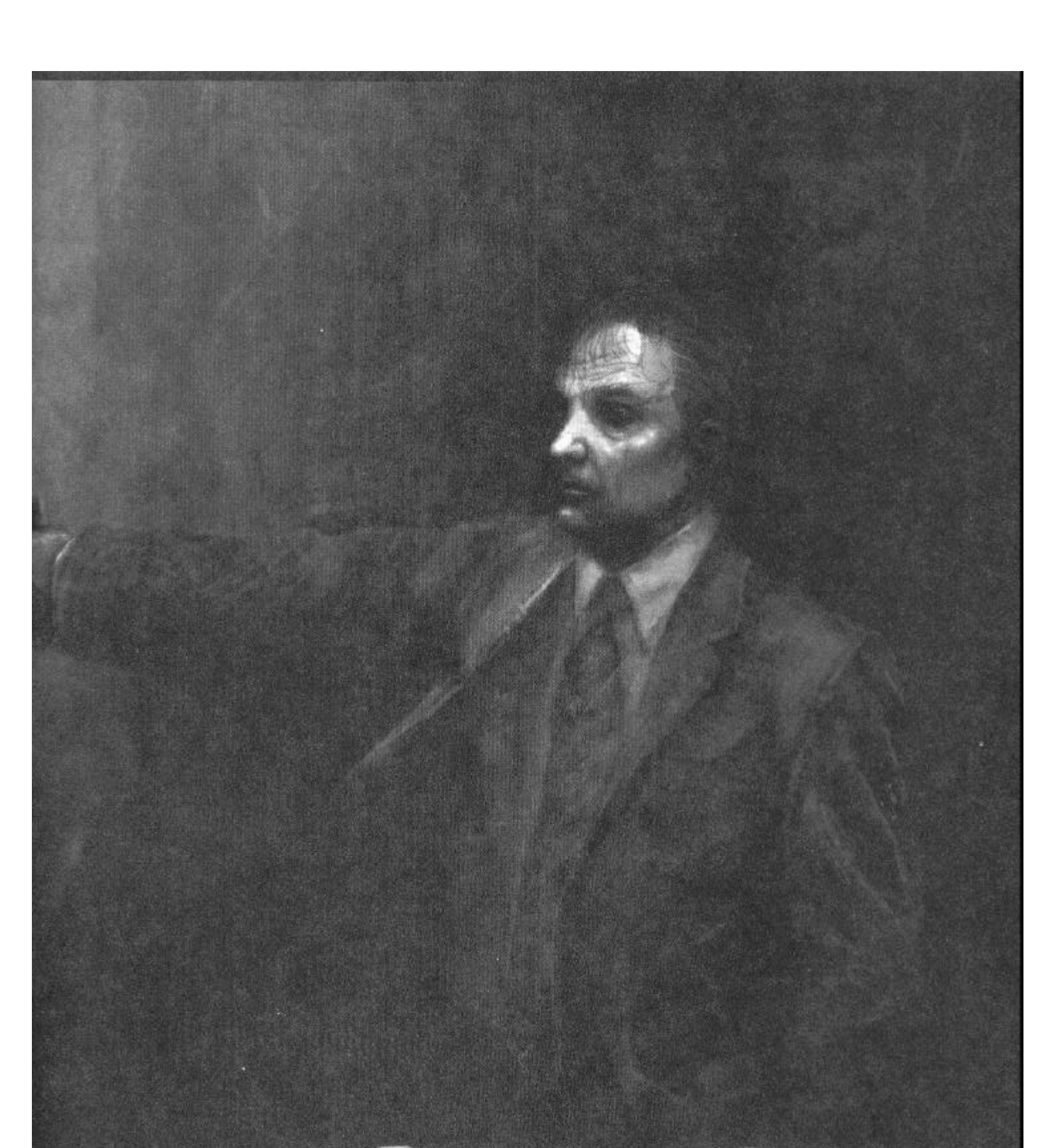
CONTENTS

PRELUDE: REQUIEM FOR THE MONSTER	7
INTRODUCTION: TROUBLED TIMES	11
CHAPTER ONE: THE IVORY TOWER	17
CHAPTER TWO: THE SWORD OF CAINE	55
CHAPTER THREE: STRANGE BEDFELLOWS	85
CHAPTER FOUR: STORYTELLING THE TIDES OF CONFLICT	99
APPENDIX: THE WAR CHEST	109



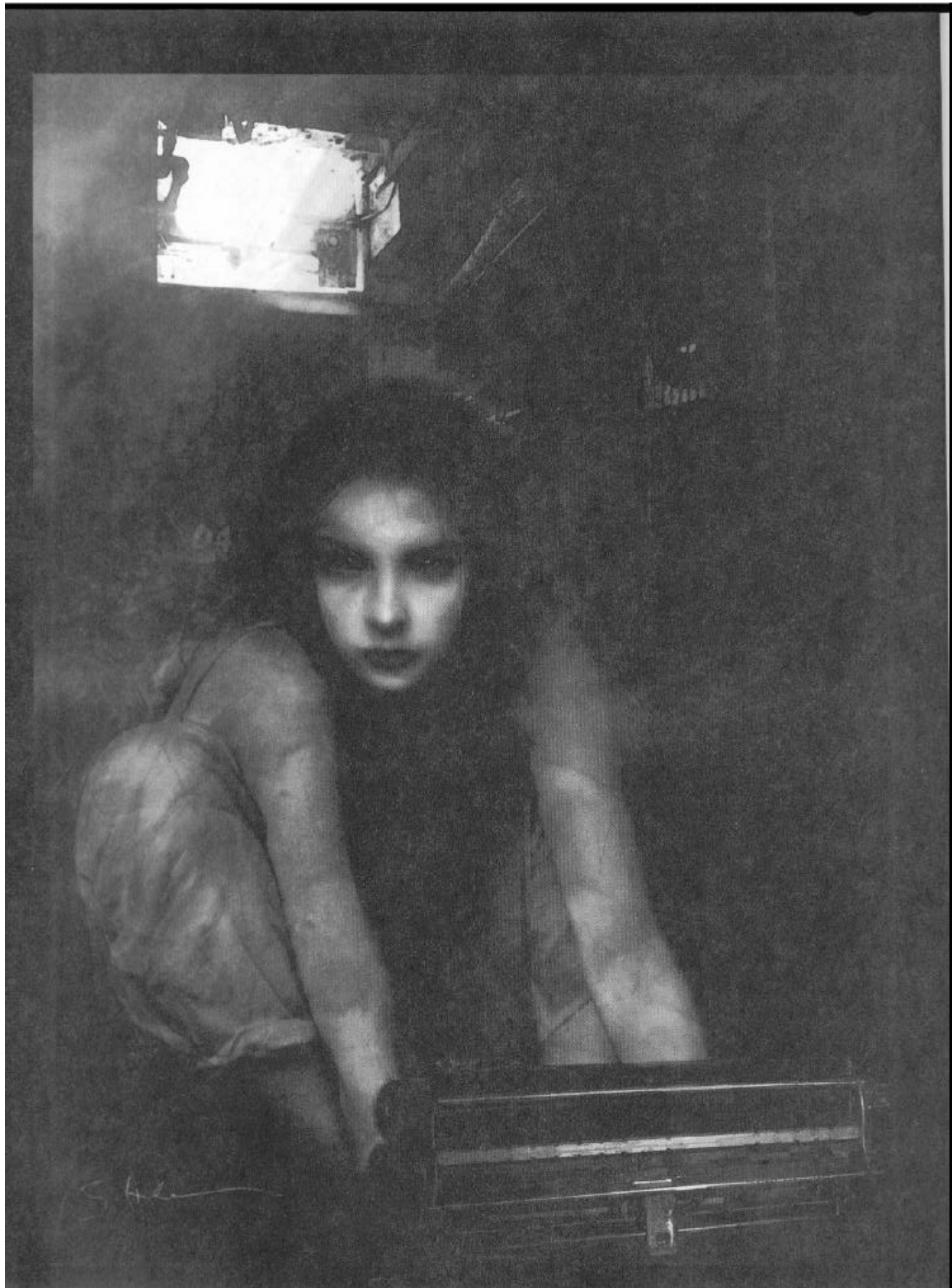
*Thou mad misleader of thy brain-sick son!
What, wilt thou on thy death-bed play the ruffian,
And seek for sorrow with thy spectacles?
O, where is faith? O, where is loyalty?
If it be banish'd from the frosty head,
Where shall it find a harbour in the earth?
Wilt thou go dig a grave to find out war,
And shame thine honourable age with blood?*

— William Shakespeare, *King Henry VI, Part II* (V.i)



In the modern nights, war travels on a wave of vitae. No longer fought on mortal battlefields as it was during the Long Night, the clash between the sects still plays out nightly against the backdrop of the Jyhad. Kindred kills Cainite; clanmate kills clanmate; vendettas come to bloody ends and domains shift as the dawn brings the unives of princes and bishops to fiery ends.

It is an interesting time to be Kindred. It is an exciting time to be undead.





PRELUDE: REQUIEM FOR THE MONSTER

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My Dear Vykos,

It is not without a sense of irony that I find myself writing this letter, and I'm sure that you're not without your own sense of something similar — whatever it is that approximates emotions in your malign little heart — as you read it. You no doubt know by now that my sire, Archbishop Ambrosio Luis Monçada, has met his Final Death. Part of me suspects that you knew before I did. Not only was he a contemporary and sectmate of yours, he was part of that hideous little cabal of monsters who crawled forth from the Long Night and gouged a place for themselves among these modern nights without yielding the tiniest iota of their former habits. For this, despite my hatred for him and my admitted lack of fondness for you, I salute you both. I salute also those fallen in the effort: Mitru and Arnulf, Boukephos and Nova Arpad. I salute even Lord Jurgen von Verden, that bullheaded maverick, and my own sweet Anatole, whose eight centuries of holy madness finally caught up with him. Those of you who died without compromising your Cainite natures deserve a nod for your commitment. Those who survived without compromising — who have reached the letter Z, to be shamelessly modern — I afford you the reverence due to your fiendish selves.

It was no secret that the Archbishop and I had our differences. I am no stranger to the whispered tales of his decadence, and no stranger to the rumors of the carnal knowledge we shared of each other. Quite simply, you know that never to have hap-

pened, but I was there when my sire confessed his sin of lust to Gorchist and was absolved. I am glad he is dead. The very fact that he rose each evening weighed heavily on me, and I knew the only reason that I was given the chance to achieve the great heights that I have was due to the old beast's last impotent and Heaven-denied urge to indulge one last fuck before he went to his place at the devil's right hand. He was a faithful Cainite, and I was the embodiment of his failure. I never wanted to be that; I never asked for it. When he pulled me under the shroud of night, I was a stupid, impetuous girl who accepted the curse of undeath only in an effort to spite my father. I can hear the leathery lines at the corners of your mouth curving right now, Myca - "You two deserved each other," I can hear you croak. You are right, much as it embarrasses me to say it.

I have come to a turning point in my unlife because of this. His Final Death, my understanding of what I meant to him, and a long-dormant sense of that wretched but unavoidable progeny's guilt have stirred the primal fire within me. I have played the dangerous game for almost a millennium. I have taken the side of right (or the side as closest to right) for as long as I have been able. I have divorced myself from the morality of the Damned long enough to hinder the twin evils of the Camarilla and Sabbat. I have studied futile, obsolete arts and devoted myself to killing and later to making amends. I have been a whore for war and a whore for peace. I have been a martyr and cynic, a killer and a saint. I have watched demons poison the earth around them (with your help...) and I have led feints for the Ancients more times than some Cainites have uttered the word "Antediluvian." Our own games of gambit and countergambit, Myca, have colored history, threatened the world with genocide, served as blinds for the true masters of the Jyhad and killed those who may have possibly risen one night to places as leaders of the world. I have watched history occur; I have contributed to the color of cultural advancement with the crimson of my own blood. I have seen miracles, and have been a miracle to many.

I don't want to do it anymore.

Let them drop their jaws in wonder, Myca. Let them curse me for abandoning the fight against Gehenna on their terms. Let them call me a traitor, place me on their absurd Red List, curse me for a coward and a selfish fool. I am sick of playing the game the world has set before me. The time has come for Lucita to do what she should

have done centuries ago. Despite the horror and wonder and fate-shaping I have done and seen, I am still no more than my sire's childe. I must step down from the world's stage. I am no longer a figure; I am one Cainite attending to her own matters.

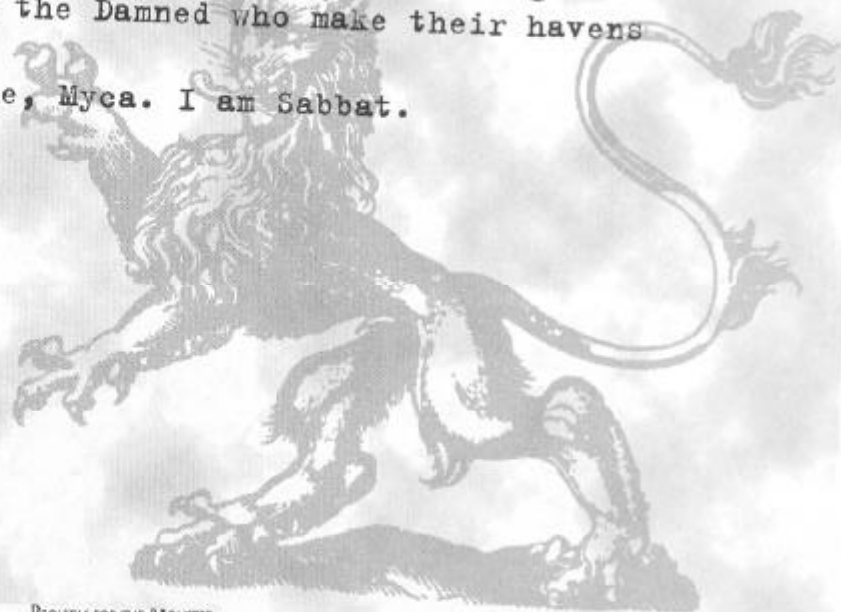
Please allow me to surprise you now, Myca. I mentioned before that I believe you knew of the Archbishop's Final Death before I did. Well, allow me to turn the tables and make your introduction to the Archbishop who will succeed him.

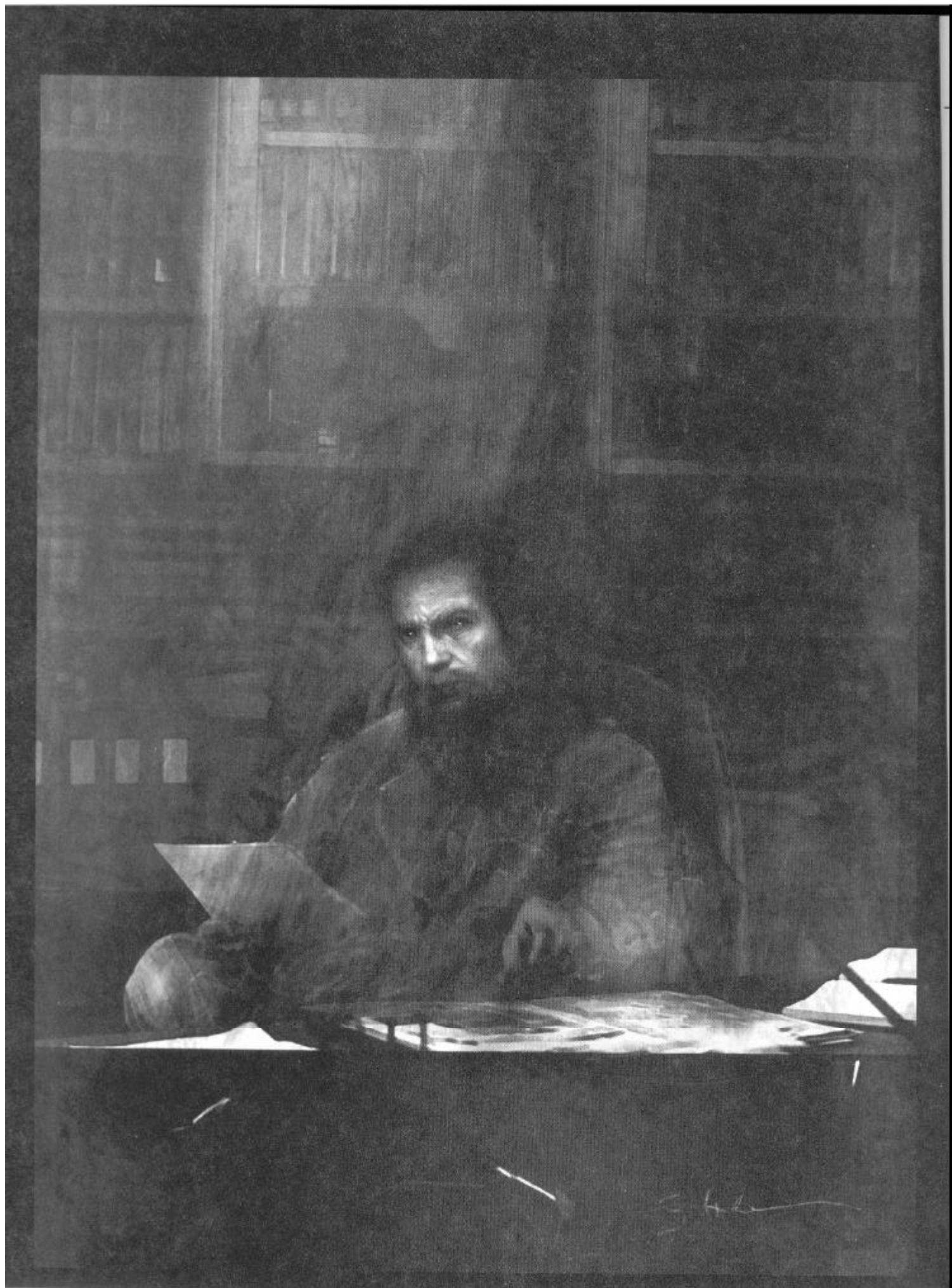
Months ago, I met with the consistory, from which you were conveniently absent. I made it clear that this was a personal decision. I hated Monçada, but that does nothing to erase the debt and obligation I had to him. He was my alpha; I will be his omega. While I make no pretense of "continuing his work," I can no longer argue that his legacy is mine. The consistory smiled like fiends. You would have been proud. Actually, you would have dissented, but their motives would have thrilled your dead soul nonetheless.

I am ceding the Archbishopric of Madrid to a council of bishops who will report directly to me. My own domain will be the new Archbishopric of Aragon, because I want to go home for a while. I have spoken with the Basque Rufus in the Pyrenees and convinced him that my claim to domain will bring an end to the sectarian squabbling that paints Huesca red to these nights. I have explained to him that in the short term, war among the undead will come, but that in the long term it will bring "Monçada's terrible quiet" to the Damned who make their havens there.

Open your arms to welcome me, Myca. I am Sabbat.
Sister to your brother,

Lucita







INTRODUCTION: TROUBLED TIMES

When I was coming up, it was a dangerous world, and you knew exactly who they were. It was us versus them, and it was clear who them was. Today we are not so sure who they are, but we know they're there.

— sic, George W. Bush at Iowa Western Community College, January 21, 2000

If the Damned childer of Caine are infamous for one thing, it is their ancient Jyhad. From the nights of Ur and Jericho, vampires have fought each other for reasons ranging from personal vengeance to the control of nations. Neonates scheme and squabble for respect and precious blood, often at the behest of century-old ancillae, who themselves jockey and snap at one another to curry the favor of antiquated but viperous elders. The elders in turn expend resources, pawns and vitae in the fruition of ancient schemes encompassing everything from the destinies of nations to the pettiest of revenge. And as for those to whose tune the elders dance... well, some secrets are best left unknown.

In the process of this sanguinary conflict, nations have risen and fallen into flaming ruin. The resources of the planet have changed hands or been wrested from

their owners. Countless mortals have given their bodies, souls and blood. Entire cultures and languages have been blotted from the globe.

But how, precisely, do the undead wage Jyhad? It's far too easy to state dismissively that the Ventrue "control" their pawns through "Machiavellian" means, or that the Followers of Set "corrupt" their minions into doing their bidding. Such aphorisms are not only quixotic, but lazy as well. Most princes worth their domains are in power because they acted, and acted with greater skill and purpose than their rivals. How did yours ascend her throne? And how could a more clever claimant — perhaps even a player's character — execute the old monster's strategies one step better to remove her from power?

This book, a guide for players and Storytellers, discusses the ways and means, the struggles and strata-

gems, that comprise Jyhad. The book focuses primarily on the two greatest sects of the modern nights, the Sabbat and Camarilla, and shows how these bodies wage war against each other. Still, the Camarilla-Sabbat struggle is only the canvas of the Jyhad, and many pictures are painted thereon. This book describes how a plethora of other beings, from the wayward Ravnos to the enigmatic Inconnu, to such oddities as ghosts and shapeshifters, deploy themselves on the great chessboard of Jyhad.

Throughout this book, you will be treated (perhaps subjected) to the insights of Ludo Giovanni, Cainite, recorder of things strange, and self-proclaimed expert on the struggles that permeate Kindred unlife. Through Ludo's meticulously recorded examples and incisive commentary, the astute reader will take note of how the abstract concepts of Cainite war manifest in tangible form. Ludo himself is rumored to have met Final Death in 1999, and so his examples may perhaps be taken with the proverbial grain of salt. Still, Ludo was smart right up until he was stupid, as the Giovanni say, and so perhaps some wisdom can be gained from the old Lick's fables.

ON THE WAGING OF JYHAD

A treatise penned by Signore Ludo Giovanni

Jyhad. The great, endlessly turning axle around which revolve the spokes of our incestuous little family—well, I mean the *larger* family, the Damned as a whole. And, as tends to happen with a (supposedly) all-encompassing resource conflict/holy war spanning thousands of years, those along the sidelines are oh-so-eager to clock in with their two cents on how to win the whole thing tomorrow night and take the chips off the table for good. Well, I'm a long way from the oldest Lick in the sarcophagus, as it were, but I've seen enough would-be princes and prisci come and go to form a few tidbits of opinion, if not on what a vampiric powermonger *should* do, then at least on what he most certainly *should not*.

The first thing...the *very first thing* you should understand about Jyhad before you even attempt to stick your childe-ish, spittle-hasn't-yet-dried fangs out of your haven for any purpose except to score your night's repast... is this (and listen well, O my childer):



What a vampire wants out of a conflict does not necessarily — and probably does not — mirror what a kine in a similar position wants from that same conflict.

Sounds self-evident, doesn't it? Well, perhaps; we're the walking dead, a more highly evolved being or maybe a devil incarnate. Of course, our lofty ambitions and foul plots transcend anything the puling kine could possibly understand!

Hmph! To borrow a popular contemporary aphorism with which my mortal great-great-great-great-grandniece dismisses the pettiness of the deluded, "As if." If mere blood and undeath brought with them an equal share of wisdom, can you imagine how different the night would be? But far too many Kindred, when attempting to second-guess the moves and gambits and ploys and counterploys and counter-counterploys of their undead rivals, base their tactics on stereotypes and assumptions from their breathing days instead of educated intuition and cold logic. And then they're dust. No, not even dust, because such fools rarely haunt the night long enough to transcend the rigor mortis stage.

A corollary to the above rule is my own coined phrase, "Stay in the red." In other words, the most important resource, the most crucial consideration for any Lick-based conflict is always — *always* — vitae. Cut off a foe's money? Well, that's very nice, but he still might be able to call in enough old debts to take you down anyway. Ostracize her socially? Fair enough — but for every Kindred power group, another is eager to recruit allies against the first one. Walk up and beat his pallid corpse till he drops into torpor? *Gauche*. Most of the world's princes tend to frown on undead bar brawls in their domains — and if it was that easy, your victim didn't deserve the term "foe" anyway. At best, "minion" — as in "sniveling minion of the true power who's going to reduce you to ash for irritating it."

Ah, but blood? The crux of the matter. A Kindred without victims is... well, a corpse. Figuratively and literally.

Fair enough — but how do my little theorems work out in that vast night through which we all stalk? As illustration, let's take a period of social unrest and political tension here in the States — say, the swinging '60s, the Age of Aquarius, the days of 'Nam and Nixon, peace-and-pot-addled prey. The perfect battleground for Jyhad — but maybe not in the way you'd imagine. Did Kindred feed off the swirling stew of trends and societal glacier shifts that occurred during this misbegotten decade? You bet they did. Did some Kindred profit thereby, while others lost their herds, fortunes and unives? I don't really need to answer that, do I?

So let's examine the American involvement in Vietnam. Now, I'm sure that you've heard a few generalizations about Kindred society, and based on those generalizations you've probably formulated a grand theory about Kindred involvement in the Vietnam conflict. And your grand theory is something to the tune of, "Oh, well, I'm sure it was a Ventrue clan directive to support the war in Vietnam."

To that summation... why?

"Umm... well, because aren't Ventrue, like, the vampire Establishment, and the Establishment supported the war in Vietnam, so the Kindred probably wanted to... well..."

Well, what? Yes, I'm listening. Contain a mortal political system that most sensible elders suspected would wither and vanish within a kine's life span anyway? Establish dominance over the meager resources of a country so far in the purview of the Cathayans that a Western Kindred couldn't safely set foot in it — provided she could weather the perilous journey to the peninsula in the first place? Precisely what reason would "The Ventrue" (assuming such a homogenous Orwellian lump of undead existed in the first place) have to interest themselves in Vietnam at all?

Indeed. Think like a kine, be played like a kine. Think like a Lick. Stay in the red. Why in Caine's name would any Kindred want a generation of prime feeding stock to spill all that delectable vitae on the muddy expanse of a rice paddy halfway around the world, courtesy of an AK-47? As a species, we can take responsibility for our share of horrors and atrocities, but Vietnam happened *in spite of* American Cainites, not because of us. Remember, only a little over a generation ago, panicky American Kindred had been forced to sit at their radios, listening to reports of an entire generation of on-the-hoof, testosterone-seasoned juicebags killing each other at Normandy and Guadalcanal and other places Over There, away from *their* greedy clutches. As it was, during the 1960s, Camarilla Licks of means (or who preyed on those of means) were marshalling as many resources as they could to encourage things like student deferments, cushy National Guard sinecures for the sons of the rich, or simple draft-dodging. Now, granted, a few Kindred dabble in the military-industrial complex for financial reasons, and for those Kindred, Vietnam provided as much of a windfall as any war.

The lesson to be learned in these nights is to know your enemy. Don't guess his actions based on your perception of his clan. Don't guess based on your per-

ception of his sect, or his allies. And always follow the blood. Or you'll guess wrong, and you'll be dead. Again.

Let's try another anthropological exercise from the same period. What else — oh, yes; the kine's tedious civil rights struggle. Okay, in chorus, now: "The Brujah and Nosferatu all supported civil rights because..."

Yes, little grasshopper, enlighten me.

"Well, because the Brujah always sympathize with rebels, and the Nosferatu helped the Freedom Riders because they were outcasts and second-class citizens just like them."

I see. Very clever. So an anarch vampire — who doesn't have the accumulated resources of her elder rivals, and who is thus forced by the Tradition of Domain to mingle with and feed on the disenfranchised and dispossessed — is going to do everything in her power to elevate her sweetmeats, to integrate them into mainstream society, to transform them into middle-class professionals who trust the police, live in gated communities and go home at sundown to tuck their delicious little children safely into bed at 9 p.m.?

Any anarch with more than a few decades under his belt is interested in domain rights, not human rights. They're shrieking against the prince's Evil Tyranny that precludes them from running around ripping the heads off of whomever — poor or rich, black or brown or white — they want. But many Kindred (now ashes, of course) have assumed that the anarch would blow with or against the prevailing mortal political winds. They guessed wrong. They paid for it with their unives.

Now, what else about the '60s can we assume, based on a Kindred's-eye view? Well, for starters, the hippie movement doubtless enjoyed widespread support from just about *all* Cainites, simply because it made feeding so ridiculously easy. (As a note, do *anything* to increase the spread of HIV and watch *all* Kindred — clan or sect be, well, Damned — come down on you like Satan's flames. Myself included.)

What else about the period? Oh. Manson. The naïve Cainite — not you, of course — would pipe up some ludicrous theory that Manson was some jittery pawn of some Malkavian or other — or maybe an anarch who hated the "pigs" and wanted to make a statement against the rich.

Absurd. And the Kindred who advanced such a theory would be the veriest fool. In fact, the Manson murders did a great deal — well, an annoying bit — of damage to anarchs, by hitting them where it mattered most — in the herd. You know, for a while, people were steering clear of sweet hitchhiking flower children with

wide pupils like they were lepers out of the Dark Ages or some such. Enough so to make it tough to find vitae when you've spent the past five years scrabbling around the California underground putting up with the shrieking of Hunter S. Thompson and the Jefferson Airplane to cultivate just such a herd. I'm sure plenty of Free State Kindred would love to get their talons on Charlie's scrawny old carcass, just to pay the bastard back for some lean years.

Ah, you think... but might the Ventrue Prince of Los Angeles — secure in her rarefied feeding habits and disinterested in using the Whisky-a-Go-Go rabble as a buffet table — have somehow encouraged Charlie, Tex, Sadie and company to commit their crimes in order to sow fear and distrust toward the flower children as a whole, thus destabilizing anarchs' herds across California?

Now you're catching on. (This didn't actually happen, by the way. So far as I can tell, Manson was a kook with a power fetish who orchestrated his little psychodrama entirely on his own. But it *could* have happened as I've described. And it would have been... well, ancilla-level clever anyway.)

You see the point. What are some other general trends to watch for? Kindred enjoy the company of the very rich because they tend to go out a lot and alleviate their boredom by spending time in seedy locales with strange people and stranger drugs, and they like the very poor because they tend to be helpless, socially impotent and otherwise easy prey. The \$65K-a-year accountant with the two children who goes to his nice, secure suburban home and family promptly at six — that's sundown in the winter to you — of what possible use is such a kine to a predatory Kindred? Of all the delusional, misguided ideas that...

But I've rambled long enough. Consider this the first of many lessons to come. If you read my chronicles with one thought percolating in that rigor-mortis-locked, cooling brain, ponder this: Up until the time of your Embrace, you probably didn't even know Kindred existed at all. Don't assume, then, that now you exhaustively know the hows and whys and wherefores of that existence.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is intended to be a resource for players and Storytellers alike. Although certain sections of this book are intended solely for the Storyteller, it contains few "great secrets" to be jealously sequestered from players' eyes. After all, anyone can parrot the wisdom of

a Sun Tzu. It takes a special kind of person — or undead — to apply it competently.

Midnight Siege comprises several chapters, as follows:

Chapter One: The Ivory Tower discusses the political, social and military strategies commonly employed by the Kindred of the Camarilla. Centuries-long machinations, ancestral vendettas, the deployment of fortunes and schemes that involve the welfare of nations all play a part in the Camarilla's collective arsenal. How does a prince maintain her power while under the gun from both the Sabbat and the Inner Circle? How does a domain of decadent, backstabbing undead find common cause when harried by fanatical, fire-wielding crusaders? This chapter tells these secrets and more.

Chapter Two: The Sword of Caine turns our attention to the Camarilla's rivals and counterparts, the vampires of the Sabbat. The Sabbat spreads through Cainite society like a cancer; and, like a cancer, it can lie dormant and waiting, slowly corrode away the surrounding body, or spontaneously burst into crippling malignancy.

Chapter Three: Strange Bedfellows covers the unique roles played by a myriad of strange nocturnal

denizens. The role of the anarchists, the scrutiny of the enigmatic Inconnu, and even the turmoil caused by the entry of a werewolf or sorcerer on the great playing field: All this can be found herein.

Chapter Four: Storytelling the Tides of Conflict is intended primarily for the Storyteller, though players will unquestionably find some choice tidbits and wicked machinations for their arsenals as well. It provides insight on how to use a Cainite siege as the backdrop for passion, character development/degeneration and (in)human drama, not merely an excuse for random death-in-the-streets rapscaillonry.

Finally, the **Appendix: The War Chest** provides timetables and "project management" plans along which a Kindred siege might flow. While there is nothing typical about any conflict in which the freakish Kindred participate, certain moves and gambits tend to repeat themselves down the weary years. This chapter details, in broad and sweeping strokes, how a region inhabited by one great sect or the other might conduct itself during the onslaught of a sectarian siege.





CHAPTER ONE: THE IVORY TOWER

If you were to listen to the way the primogen talk, you'd think the battles for the cities took place on downtown rooftops, with sword and subterfuge — honorable Camarilla Kindred battling against the slaving hordes of Sabbat, and then sending the ghouls out to Dominate anyone who might have noticed.

If you were to listen to the primogen, that is. The battles, if such they could be called, infrequently take place downtown. The battles rarely need to be cleaned up afterward, because the violence, when it does happen, happens in the slums, and the outer rings of the city, where no one gives much of a shit what happens. Nothing gets cleaned up, because druggies and welfare moms aren't telegenic, and no one is going to listen to them. Enforcing the Masquerade? Forget it. We don't need to encourage disinterest — no one cares.

And as for the violence? There are no heroic, set-piece battles. No midnight Napoleons. We kill Sabbat on lonely back streets; we harass them, lure them, ambush them and wear away at them until they are good and beaten. Then we stake whomever is left and toss their bodies in the river, to rot away until we need some entertainment, or the Tremere need some experimental subjects."

— Frederick Van Tongeren, Ventrue strategist of the Camarilla, speaking in London, 1998

The old nights are long gone. Once, on Europe's blood-soaked eastern plains, the Cainites actually walked forth by night among the warfare of their herds. But those ancient nights are long gone, and much has changed since then. Gone are the city-states of old. Here are nation states that span whole continents. Gone are the peasant armies pressed into service, or lured by the appeal of loot, plunder or rape. No longer can a vampiric soldier pass unnoticed in the final skirmishes of some brutal, bloody battle. No longer can a Ventrue warlord sate his hunger on the bodies of the dead or the dying in plain sight of his retainers. Such arrogance cost the Kindred dear. Inquisition, plague and, eventually, the shroud of Masquerade ended those.

As the third millennium after Christ dawns, such things are purest history.

But the Cainites still behave as if those old nights still endure, in metaphor at least, if not action. After all, vampires are creatures of habit. While the world has changed, the nature of the violence that stains it has not. So a certain degree of antiquated ornamentation in the discussion of warfare is hardly surprising. They speak of "sieges," "crusades," "warlords," "tribunes," and discuss the nightly flickers of violence and murder in the epic terms of a historian. A casual listener might think of literal armed conflict, fought with swords and fire, generals and armies. But now, such Kindred warfare requires subtlety, not

brute force. Wars between vampires take place in secrecy, beneath the veil of the Masquerade.

DOMINION IN THE NIGHT

In the sunlit world of mortals, true power comes, apparently, from the barrel of a gun. The great institutions of Western civilization are mere trappings. Citizens obey laws because the state always has an unspoken, but always real, jurisdiction over violence. Little is different in the moonlit world of the Children of Caine. The prince of the city holds the right to take unlife. A word here, a command there, and Final Death follows.

The nights of a Kindred prince actually ruling a city as a literal lord are gone as well. But if this is the case, if the obsessions of power and dominion are not an issue, why do the sects war at all? What possible reason does the Camarilla have to spend so much of its precious resources to fight a battle with their Cainite "brethren?" Six billion potential feeding vessels dwell on the planet. What do a few hundred thousand mortals here or there matter?

A first, and most obvious, reason is that the Camarilla has found a most implacable and violent adversary in the Sabbat. Lupines may massacre vampires on occasion; hunters may murder a few undead here and there, but the Sabbat is a far more dangerous threat. They are undead, and the Sabbat's elders are contemporaries of the elders of the Camarilla. If the Camarilla were to abandon cities and feeding grounds to the Sabbat, they would be displaying weakness in the eyes of the enemy, and losing face. The Camarilla fights wars not for the few million dollar's worth of property, which is replaceable, or the few hundred thousand souls in a metropolitan area, which are also, ultimately, replaceable. It fights to maintain a place for Kindred in a post-Inquisition world. The more cities the Sabbat claims, the less important the Camarilla becomes. The less important the Camarilla becomes, the less heed vampires take of it. The less heed the Kindred take, the less heed they take of the Camarilla's laws and its ways. Thus, the Masquerade falls and the witch-hunters' fire ignites again. The overall situation is too dangerously close to that of the nights before the first Anarch Revolt for such a threat to be taken lightly.

A second reason is that the Sabbat kills other vampires. The Sabbat has no problem violating the Camarilla's Sixth Tradition. If the Sabbat takes a city, and Camarilla elders are still present, those elders most likely die at the claws of some Sabbat pack. However, if the Sabbat kills neonates, or Caitiff or other undesir-

ables, then what of it? There are always more where they came from. But the fear of diablerie haunts even the strongest of the elders. These vampires have existed for centuries, fought and intrigued and murdered for centuries, seen companions, lovers and enemies alike grow old and die, and suffered so very much. Even in the cold, ashen heart of the most inhumane elder, that horrific notion of losing her heart's blood to some manic Sabbat punk is a terror, an insult, an atrocity beyond words. It is better to send your beloved child to his Final Death than even consider enduring such a fate. It is better to lose some more of your soul to the Beast than to die increasing the potency of some whelp's Blood.

On a global scale, these reasons mean relatively little. Vampires are few. According to Camarilla estimates, perhaps 60,000 vampires populate the planet. Even allowing for mistakes, misinformation, the vile Cathayans and gross underestimation of the Kindred populations of even the most horrifically overpopulated cities, the figure cannot possibly exceed 100,000 Kindred. That isn't enough souls even to populate a small city. That is hardly sufficient reason to spend resources to ensure any degree of influence over ones' fellows. But young Kindred, those clever enough to know better, suspect that the Camarilla's Inner

DE CORAZON'S GLOBE

From the almanac of Ludo Giovanni

I have heard talk of a presumably apocryphal magical map or a globe, made of human skin and bones, created as a gift by a Tzimisce elder of Hungary to Raphael De Corazon, that shows cities as little clots of black, coagulated blood. This blood stains the map, shading the relief, showing what of the world belongs to the Camarilla. Where the Sabbat, or Cathayans or others hold sway, the skin, even dried and leathery as it is, erupts into faint but noticeable pustules. The story goes that the pustules offend De Corazon so much that he sent even his favorites to their deaths just to ensure the disease did not spread.

This story is probably nothing but rumor, but it underlines the insignificance most Kindred feel when the Sabbat are in the city, killing and kidnapping. Is this part of some Jihad among the elders? The Sabbat claims that the Camarilla is a tool of those elders who arise on Gehenna or some such apocalyptic nonsense. But since there has never been a good reason for this continued obsession with territory, the Sabbat explanation is as good as any.

Circle plays some global game. The Camarilla, in its quiet, stealthy way, wants its talons to encircle the globe, and it brooks no competition.

CAMARILLA STRATEGY

The Camarilla is often seen as a static, reactionary entity. It rarely goes on the offensive. Even when it makes a move, it seems, such movements are always in response to the previous gestures of the Sabbat. The Camarilla never “takes” a city — it only retakes them once the Black Hand has triumphed.

Recent developments in the modern nights have proven this theory wholly untrue. With the fall of New York City into the Camarilla’s clutches, with the double-dealing of the new Prince of Milan, the Camarilla has shown itself to be a wily enemy and an accomplished tactician. The Camarilla knows that it has forever — it is happy to take two steps back for every step forward, so long as it knows it will one night take three more steps forward.

Here, then, are a few examples of how it does just that.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

Despite the trauma of the Final Nights and the constant threat of inter-sect conflict, open violence is comparatively rare. A greater tragedy to the elders of the Camarilla, far beyond the Kindred blood spilled, is the disruption sectarian conflict causes to a city.

In the eyes of the Camarilla, something has gone badly wrong when vampires kill vampires in their havens or the streets. The Camarilla pursues an unofficial policy of “constructive engagement” with the Sabbat. The Camarilla, in its quiet, subtle way, maintains a constant degree of diplomatic contact with its adversaries. This occurs through back channels, through independent parties such as the Giovanni, or by feeding information through known Sabbat pawns. This diplomacy prevents many unfortunate incidents and allows vampires of either sect to look to their own problems. But it is also the Camarilla’s most devious weapon: It exists, not for peace, but rather to erode the Sabbat’s hierarchies and power base. In a time of warfare, the wheels set in motion perhaps decades before turn a little faster. Messages are sent out. Intermediaries deliver promises, gifts or instructions to enemy territory.

The Camarilla examines the targeted city. The planners look carefully at the power structures and learn what can be undone, what can be weakened, and what can be destroyed. True masters of this game are said to

be capable of making the Sabbat weaken their own war effort. Is there someone the Tzimisce Bishop of Lodz wants to see humiliated? Could a prominent London Primogen do a favor for a bishop in Mexico City?

In return, the Camarilla asks a few small favors, such as some scandalous information on the bishop of the host city, or perhaps the names of some disfavored packs. These pieces of information are invariably small — trivial, almost — but they are anything but trivial to Camarilla planners. With even a few scraps of such information, the Camarilla can ferret out Sabbat scouts. If circumstances demand it, the Camarilla can invade a city and break Sabbat defenses at specially selected pressure points.

But peace is a distant, illusionary thing. While the elders of either sect intrigue, the passions of both sects brush against one another, and something almost always gives. Then the sects war.

Mortal military strategists talk of wars occurring on three levels: the “tactical level,” which is the moments of violence on the field and the second-to-second decisions of the commander on the scene; the “strategic level,” command over the battlefield; and the “grand strategic level,” where high-level military and political decisions decide the fate of nations. The Camarilla thinks on the grand strategic level. The sect, as a whole, decides which cities it will support and which Sabbat cities it will undermine. The acts of violence are left to individual princes.

At its most rudimentary level, the Camarilla exists to protect itself and its members from mortals. Nothing more. When the sects war, the Sabbat should, on the face of it, win. Its stratagems, tactics and methods are viciously efficient, displaying a purity of violence and intent that no Camarilla coterie could match. But the Sabbat does not win. Its victories are comparatively rare, and in recent nights, its losses are becoming more frequent.

When it comes down to the wire, the Camarilla does not hesitate to compromise its morality. The Camarilla operates on its own agenda. The sect has absolutely no objections, moral or otherwise, to using the most underhanded tactics to survive. It watches the big picture, thinks in the long term. A decade’s annoyance is worth tolerating in return for a century’s survival.

When the Sabbat crusades against a Camarilla city, the Camarilla can easily support the prince of that city, even though the prince is expected to defend the city by her own devices. This support can come in the form of

A TREMERE STRATAGEM: DUBLIN.

From the almanac of Ludo Giovanni

Dublin fell to the Sabbat in 1999. The Camarilla barely stirred. Some vile and filthy power apparently influenced the Kindred of Dublin. Stories circulated among the salons of Europe: tales of cannibalism, terrible overcrowding of vampires, particularly of the Caitiffs haunting Dublin's outer suburbs and the inner city. Others spoke of the forced Embrace of young urban delinquents for the sole purpose of sacrifice and diablerie. Mentioned frequently was the ancient rivalry with the fief of Ulster. Many times in the past, European archons had to be deployed to Ireland to undo the latest mess caused by the Kindred there.

The Sabbat had been drawn to Ireland for a long time. Its newfound material wealth would be a jewel to possess. Equally, its new populations of refugees from the Balkans and Africa left to rot by an uncaring state and despised by the largely racist population made great prey.

The Sabbat attacked, expecting a fierce fight with the Camarilla. Instead, its war packs found mere neonates, who were easy prey. The Caitiff were destroyed by fire, the few independent vampires living in the city driven out. The Camarilla elders now, it seemed, were refugees left to starve on the rocky shores of Ireland's west coast. A new archbishop was installed, the Parisian Virginie of the Lasombra. The torture parties brutalizing the few Camarilla survivors lasted for weeks.

But then the Sabbat realized that they had been tricked. The Tremere had arranged the removal of the Prince of Dublin, killed his advisors and primogen, then withdrew to their ancient Hermetic holdings on the west coast. Something lay under the city, or some force permeated the city's polluted streets, and now the Tremere sorcerers could observe its nature in comfort. On Dublin's filthy, ill-lit nighttime streets, the French Sabbat slowly go insane, their minds diseased and rotting, as the Tremere, safe in their chantry houses, watch.

Once again, the Camarilla (in this case, the Tremere) allowed the Sabbat's tactics to prevail, removing an internal Camarilla irritant and ensnaring a particularly deadly enemy. By leaving Dublin to Virginie and trapping her there, they effectively neutralized one of the many dangerous figures in the European Sabbat.

Listening to these and other such reports, one might be forgiven for suspecting that the Camarilla allows the Sabbat to exist merely to help solve its own internal problems. This is unlikely, but perhaps the Sword of Caine is less of a threat to the Camarilla than the Sabbat might imagine.

deliveries of weapons or perhaps the recruitment of reinforcements. In extreme circumstances, the Camarilla can even dispatch archons to ensure that the city does not fall. Sabbat crusades are resisted by any means necessary, so long as the Masquerade is maintained.

But the Camarilla also allows Sabbat crusades to happen. Sabbat crusades make for dangerous times, but dangerous times are perfect opportunities to make things happen. Things that would be socially unacceptable, and probably impossible to achieve in normal circumstances, can occur with less outrage and resistance during times of war. Removing enemies within the Camarilla ranks, particularly princes or elders who don't toe the line, is so much easier when Sabbat assassins run loose in the city.

To many Camarilla elders, such things are unfortunate irritations, but necessary in the long run. The chaff must be separated from the wheat. The Sabbat has done the Camarilla's job for them. Problems achieve resolution, irritations find removal, and damage has been done to Sabbat interests. Best of all, the Sabbat continues to damage their own interests — overreaching themselves — by maintaining an interest in any of the newly conquered cities. The Camarilla can reclaim those cities at its leisure.

PRACTICALITIES

Mortal military planners have a saying: Amateurs study tactics, professionals study logistics. To a vampire, the necessities of transporting troops, food, supplies and weaponry to a battlefield are much less important. A modern Kindred battle involves at most, two dozen creatures — creatures that subsist on blood and have little need for field rations or ammunition. Still, the battlefield needs to be prepared. Logistics must be considered: do Lupine hunting packs haunt the wilderness between cities? How can the Camarilla ensure a supply of weaponry close to the action? The euphemistic term Camarilla planners use for these strategic obstacles is "practicalities."

DEFENDING TERRITORY

Some princes draw a defined border around their domains and claim all therein as their own. This is typically the view of older Kindred, those who in earlier nights fought for territory in mortal wars. The first line of defense is the city limits, and every inch of the city must be paid for in Sabbat Final Death. The mere rumor of the existence of a Sabbat vampire within that marked territory constitutes a personal insult to the prince of the

city. This approach is the most difficult to enforce. Only the strongest, and most feared, princes can realistically make such claims.

Other princes identify individual assets in their cities that they consider worth defending. They mark what they consider necessary for their continued rule and survival. Which businesses are most important to the prince's fortunes? Which properties and havens belong to the prince's closest allies (or vampires the prince would like to have in her debt)? How important are areas deemed Elysium? Which places belong to the gang that is useful for the occasional service? These things are worth defending. The rest of the city is merely hunting ground.

Regardless, once the Sabbat has laid claim to the things that the Camarilla considers important in that city, the Sabbat, for all intents and purposes, has denied the city to the Camarilla. Moreover, the Camarilla claims certain things in a city for no strategic reason. It claims numerous petty domains and turfs out of pride, out of vanity, and out of the odd obsessions that only the undead could pursue.

What follows is a partial list of what places within a city that the Camarilla has historically defended with open violence.

HAVENS

Only so many vampires make their havens in a city. Even though many vampires swear by the utility of having many places in which to hide, a vampire fights to defend only a finite number of precious "homes."

NIGHTCLUBS

So long as the concepts of "after hours," curfew defying, drinking and gathering places for mortals have existed, the Kindred have been there. That is to say, the Kindred have haunted "the Rack" almost since their creation. Whether claimed as domain or otherwise, almost every nightclub in every Camarilla city belongs, in some way, to the vampires. Nightclubs are usually home to enough debauched weirdness, and even occasional violence, that vampiric conflict can transpire without surrounding mortals noticing.

BUSINESSES

The real keys to the Camarilla's strength are a city's economy and its business district. Dominating, blood bonding and terrifying the Chief of Police into submission is one thing. But in the real world, influence comes with money, and any sensible prince desires influence. The Camarilla does not — cannot — own all the businesses in the city;

indeed, it is rare for a business to be owned fully by a vampire. The taxation and regulatory authorities in the modern world have access to too much information for such an arrangement to be safe. But the prince and primogen typically own large stock options in bigger businesses, and usually have their eyes open for bright, profitable new companies to invest in. But if the Sabbat were to establish a major influence in the business sector of a city, then the Camarilla's subtle influence would be jeopardized if not contested outright.

MUSEUMS, ART GALLERIES AND ANCHORS OF CULTURE

As candidates for Elysium, these places are almost sacred to the social clans, but also offer diversion, conversation and amusement to other Kindred. While this may not seem worth sending one's precious minions or ghouls to fight for, such diversions are sometimes the only thing that can spare a vampire's *humanitas*. Thus they are precious. Moreover, they are a source of pride and status in the world of the Kindred. A prince with a particularly fine gallery in his city is respected for it. If a prince in an esteemed city allows the Sabbat to wrest that special place from her, her reputation crumbles.

CHURCHES

Ornate, beautiful havens of faith in an uncertain world, churches are holy places and denied to the Damned. Witch-hunters sometimes operate from churches. In some old cities, even stranger things happen there. But some vampires feel a certain... love for these churches, these houses of God on hallowed earth. In the cold, alien minds of the elder Kindred, these places are a reflection on the heaven denied to them and are thus sacred beyond words. Churches represent everything a vampire cannot have. The Sabbat routinely burns down old churches for the sake of little more than entertainment, cheap rebellion or spite.

GOVERNMENT OFFICES

The greatest weapon Kindred have is the Masquerade; the best way to maintain that weapon is the manipulation of information. Government offices exist for the accumulation of information. Most of this information is never used. It is locked away and forgotten. But that information, forgotten as it may be, is safe. Many hidden secrets can be unearthed in the vaults of the local Births and Deaths Registrar, for example. As such, vampires do their best to ensure that such information is kept secret and claim these places for their own. They do not hunt here, they do not dwell here, but

WITCHES' WARDS

Certain powerful Tremere have the knowledge to work a ritual, in association with the sigils of demesne, that functions as something of an early warning aura around the city. Such a thing is not easy to create and requires the sacrifice of human life. Then again, princes cautious enough to request the Tremere chantry to maintain such a ritual, and all the prestation and cost that this entails, believe it is worth the risk.

The ritual, a development of the Ward Versus Kindred ritual, alerts the Tremere chantry when a vampire passes the sigils of demesne. Needless to say, the Tremere are under no obligation to report the arrival of a new vampire into town, or the departure of an old one.

RIITUAL OF DEMESNE (LEVEL SIX THAUMATURGICAL RITUAL)

The exact details of this rite vary by the caster. Some whisper that a human life must be sacrificed once a month. Others even claim that the lowest generation vampire in the Tremere chantry must destroy a fledgling. Other methods, or so the rumors claim, require blood bonds of the prince, the sacrifice of favored ghouls or even "a pound of flesh" from the caster himself.

Rumors aside, what is certain is that each of these sigils of domain must be anointed by blood. The sigils must also be located in a position where every major thoroughfare passes and at every point of entry. This could mean the customs post in the nearest airport, the platform at the train station, or even at the signs posted at the city limits.

System: The player spends a point of blood on each of the sigils of domain; this can, obviously, become quite costly in terms of blood. The effect lasts one lunar month. When an unknown vampire crosses the invisible line delineated by the ritual, the magician shudders. He receives an image of the vampire in question and a vague notion of her location.

It is up to the Storyteller to decide if the ritual works on the entire city perimeter or on the entry point nearest the sigil. This ritual is included here as a plot device.

they fight to ensure that they, and only they, may have dominion over the information kept therein.

DOMAIN

Some Kindred observe an old tradition of marking the territory of one faction or another with almost invisible sigils carved into trees or buildings or other landmarks at the edge of the claimed territory. These are the scourge and the sheriff's way stations. Even if the prince is a fatalist, considering only certain havens within her territory of importance, she still claims those places within the marked territory as her own. The sigils have to be carved on some place a strange vampire might pass, like on a road or near the city gates. The literal challenge to any foe is simple: will the Camarilla defend its havens and clubhouses and Elysium or will it start its defenses at the edge of the claimed dominion? This presents a difficult quandary to any enemy. It forces the enemy to choose, to guess, what the Camarilla response will be. The enemy is then reacting to the Camarilla's intentions, even before the killing begins.

Of course, in the modern nights, such a practice is almost apocryphal. While the Sabbat generally acknowledges certain colors and symbols as associated with itself, the Camarilla has less of a tradition of this nature. Of course, this lack of formality may provide just the excuse an ambitious scourge needs to rid his city of "pests" ("See that Coca-Cola billboard? That means you're in Prince Decker's domain. Time to die, you dumb sons of bitches."). Likewise, any rallying point Camarilla defenders can stand behind serves as a boost to morale.

In warfare, be it mortal or undead, holding that initiative can mean the difference between victory and defeat.

KNAVE COLUMNS

The use of vampiric mercenaries as a defense against an enemy is not a new tactic. Princes have long known Cainites who would take another's unlife in return for money, favor, diablerie or hunting rights. Some Assamites have been paid killers for millennia. However, several other clans and bloodlines are not members of the Camarilla and may need a degree of encouragement to aid a Camarilla prince determined to keep his domain.

In recent nights, certain princes have had reason to call upon coterie of unaligned vampires to operate against Sabbat attacks. Dubbed "knave columns" by some overly poetic Toreador tribune (see Ranks of the Camarilla in Wartime, below), these coterie are paid in

cash, information, property, stock options and hunting rights, to kill Sabbat vampires.

These knave columns tend not to hail from the city they are commissioned to defend. They are social outcasts, despite their utility, and the harpies usually frown upon a prince who offers too much attention to them. Perennial outsiders, they have no real association with the social rituals of their Camarilla paymasters. This is intentional; few Camarilla princes want the social stigma of associating with such ruffians, but a prince can, by simply making public his invitation to the knave column, underline the necessity for action. More than one primogen has been spurred by the mere arrival of a known knaves' coterie.

A knave column does not have to bring violence to the Sabbat, though violence is perhaps the most common way of dealing with them. Setite underground railroaders, Giovanni chamberlains, Samedi assassins, Gargoyles and still stranger children of Caine are all potential hirelings in the war against the satanic Sabbat.

THE HOUNDS

Not all mercenaries are paid interlopers; sometimes the mercenaries must work off their own debts to the prince and are expected to kill in his name. These mercenaries enjoy some protection and limited hunting rights, but likely no social status whatsoever. They exist because the prince tolerates them to exist or because of a prestation situation, and his tolerance comes only when these vampires fight in his name. The rules of prestation are strict, and a vampire who doesn't play the game must expect to pay the consequences.

Dispensable and expendable, these "hounds" are most frequently set loose on the enemy. On orders of the prince, these Kindred must stop what they are doing and take up the cause, or they can expect to feel his judgment. A few Kindred have told stories of certain primogen keeping their hounds in tenements, nicknamed kennels. Each night, the hounds are thrown a casket of animal blood so that they might survive. When they are let loose, frenzy often overwhelms them. Some have a cruel name for these half-maddened Kindred maniacs: dog soldiers. Typically, however, these indebted mercenaries are left alone and may be offered some degree of status at the prince's discretion — after the fact, of course, and perhaps posthumously.

THE GANGREL

Until recently, the Gangrel were members of the Camarilla, and while socially inept and possessed of a bestiality that offended many, they had their uses.



RANKS OF THE CAMARILLA IN WARTIME

From the almanac of Ludo Giovanni

I have seen many sieges and struggles. In most of them, the Camarilla seems to almost enjoy the pomp and circumstance involved with planning one, if not the actual fight itself. Here and there they've come up with several titles, largely honorific, but reoccurring nonetheless. While not every besieged or besieging Kindred society bothers to draw such distinctions, some epithets have indeed become part of wartime Camarilla vernacular.

THE DUX BELLORUM

This is the official title of the vampire delegated control of all other vampires in wartime. This figure could be, and typically is, the prince of the city. However, princes less experienced in martial issues can select a more warlike underling to lead the Cainites of the domain into battle.

THE TRIBUNE

In classical times, the tribune was the spokesman for the citizenry. In the twisted world of the Kindred, the tribune is the herald of the elders, and responsible for the communication of information, be it tactical intelligence or spy reports, or even reports as to who is committing treason. The tribune is only a wartime title, but some cities have a tribune as a permanent office. This Kindred, usually an ancilla, functions as her ancient namesake might, representing the vampiric "citizenry" of the city. But he also exists diplomatically among that same citizenry, keeping them informed on behalf of the prince.

In theory, the tribune in wartime announces the commencement of hostilities, issues the orders of the *dux bellorum* and is responsible for keeping the primogen and the prominent elders informed of the "state of the union" among the lesser Kindred.

FIELD KNIGHTHOOD, ET CETERA

Since few cities have a vampiric population (or a constant state of siege) sufficient to support a full military hierarchy, the Camarilla observes no real "middle ranks." In addition to the tribune, the city sheriff and scourges retain their standard roles. They do not have any increased authority, however, but they do have a larger degree of latitude in the performance of their duties. Note, however, that the assignment of these titles frequently happens after the battle — to legitimize the bloodshed in the reassuring terms of officialdom. The Brujah rabble-rouser blackmailed into action by the prince may be referred to as the "tribune." The hated Nosferatu primogen who slew so many of that Sabbat pack before succumbing to their claws (having been deserted by the prince's allies earlier), is remembered in the heroic terms of the "*dux bellorum*," undone "by Sabbat treason."

Dwelling in the alleyways, the barren suburbs or even in the wilderness, the Gangrel were expected to be, if not the first line of defense, something of a deterrent. After all, hasn't every Sabbat fledgling heard some horror story about the fate of a Sabbat pack straying into a Gangrel's territory? The Gangrel fight like rabid wolverines to keep outsiders away from their claimed prowling grounds; they gather intelligence, and in the end, they can trap Sabbat invaders and stop them from escaping to regroup.

In return for these services, the Gangrel were allowed remain members of the Camarilla. The same protections and considerations were extended to them, equivalent in theory to any Toreador primogen.

Since so many Gangrel have defected from the Camarilla, and thus removed themselves from the protection of the prince and the Masquerade, many

have hired themselves out to the prince in return for some tolerance. Not every vampire can leave everything they love. Many Gangrel, who were once respected as the first line of defense at the city limits, are now reduced to fighting so that they might continue to exist. Chained, stripped of much status and respect, Gangrel hounds are now beggars in their own cities. Many Gangrel elders are disturbed by this practice, and are considering a remedy.

THE CAMARILLA ON THE OFFENSIVE

While the most celebrated Camarilla offensive against the Sabbat was the 1999 New York City "campaign," it is not the only one. Recent years have seen successful Camarilla offensives in Belarus, Italy, Poland

and Russia. Granted, the Camarilla does not like to make bold, obvious moves such as merely invading a city. But cities are treasures to the vampires. A city is worth fighting and dying for, or better yet, making others fight and die for.

THE CAMARILLA TACTICS

Discussing the tactics favored by the Camarilla in its offensives cannot really be discussed in any but the most general terms. Sieges don't happen very often, after all, and each invasion is unique. Typically, the same "tricks" used to defend one city can be used to assault another. But certain predilections have been noted.

SETTING LOOSE THE ANARCHS

Deep in the lifeless heart of every anarch lingers the desire for a place to dwell, rest and hunt, in relative peace, where the elders cannot harass them with their horrible, evil schemes, and every honest vampire has 40 acres and a mule. Offer them a taste of that, and they will give you their heart's blood. They were very useful for my own considerations.

— Sir George Hammond, acting Tremere Pontifex of London, speaking in 1999

The anarchs are, in these Final Nights, a spent force. Even before, they were rarely very much more than foolish neonates pretending that they were rebels. A few spectacular exceptions arose from their ranks, but even key events, such as the founding of the Anarch Free State, were mayfly moments in the history of the undead. The Sabbat has stripped away many of their members, either into their ranks or to their Final Deaths. Others have returned home to their sires. With the Anarch Free State rapidly crumbling, most remaining anarchs are a leaderless rabble.

That makes them expendable weapons against the Sabbat.

Anarchs are young. They are violent. They are accustomed to the modern world. They are smart, and they bring a startling originality to any situation. They can meet the Sabbat on the Sabbat's terms. They are also boorish, rude, ill disciplined, ignorant and frightfully naive. No one misses them when they disappear or meet their Final Deaths in some housing-project conflagration somewhere.

Camarilla tacticians have many methods of properly manipulating an anarch gang, or an even larger group, but a current favorite is the "Free State reborn" stratagem. The remaining anarchs need peace, security and a purpose. In the souls of their chosen leaders lies the desire to ascend to the glorious heights of the class

struggle as did their heroes, vampires such as Smiling Jack and Jeremy MacNeil.

These are temptations that any savvy vampire can dangle in front of the anarchs' idealistic faces. Perhaps a primogen might suggest that he is willing, in the medium term, to stand against the prince, and throw down the Camarilla's authority in favor of the "justness of the anarch cause." Perhaps a prince might confess a secret admiration for the memory of MacNeil in the presence of an anarch spy. In any event, the trick is only as successful as the anarchs are gullible — few would believe the aforementioned primogen unless he tempered his statement with an indication that he might look the other way while the anarchs took whatever action they wanted. Of course, these intimations are often lies, but that can be handled after the siege dies down.

Anarch baiting has proven to be a remarkably successful formula for drumming up a lot of support on short notice, and not just to assault Sabbat cities. Any cause, any stratagem or any intrigue will suffice. London's Tremere found themselves under attack from anarchs in late 1998; the Tremere quelled the anarch resistance, but not without cost. Anarchs are dangerous and must be used carefully.

When using this gambit, a prince should ensure that Camarilla agents oversee the anarch ranks. This is to keep the anarchs' idealism, enthusiasm and energy channeled to where it is most useful — in this case, toward some Sabbat stronghold. Of course, the agents are also there to ensure that the anarchs do not get any ideas above their station, such as turning on their masters or siding with the enemy.

Unlike most anarchs, the Camarilla elders see beyond the short term. Once the anarchs are ensnared in elder intrigues, the elders want to keep them there. Controlled, foolish neonates are so very useful, especially when the Sabbat tries to take the city back. Better yet, the anarch leader, hero of the hour, can even be allowed a stint as a temporary prince or some other suitable position of influence. Who knows, if he is any good at the job, the elders may even leave him there, certain that the job will, faster than the ravages of time and immortality, make the anarch one of them. If he is not so successful, his own supporters might remove him, creating a power split and allowing the Camarilla to formally mend things.

QUIET WARFARE, THE FAVORED SOLUTION

This is by far the most common type of Camarilla assault. It does not involve overt violence or even a large degree of risk. It goes on against almost all Sabbat cities, and it may prove to be successful in the long run.

The clichéd view of Sabbat cities suggests that they are crime ridden, polluted hellholes. Urban decay, unemployment, economic weakness and civil disorder are staples of a Sabbat-infested city. The Camarilla likes to point these facts out to independent Kindred who might be tempted to support the enemy. Look, they say, at Detroit or Mexico City. The Sabbat can really befoul a perfectly good city, they say. Even a hint of these problems would make most Kindred pretty nervous. A ruined rust-belt city might make a fine place to gather prey, but they provide little else to occupy a vampire's infinite nights.

Of course, Toronto is a Sabbat City. Montreal is a Sabbat city. Tallinn, Estonia is a Sabbat city. These cities are clean, wealthy places. The Camarilla calls these cities "exceptions to the rule, showing that not even the Sabbat can fully remove civic pride from their mortal conquests."

The Camarilla holds some of the financial and economic strings of the world very tightly. As one European ancilla put it, if the Camarilla does not own the world, it certainly holds a lot of stock options on it. It is the Camarilla, not the Sabbat, that undermines the economic and social fabric of the city. Camarilla agents divert investments away from the city. Corporations, whose major shareholders include more than a few Camarilla elders, change their labor practices, divert their inward investment programs elsewhere, thereby ruining mortal livelihoods. It is a slow process, but within a few years of a city falling to the Sabbat, the city's economy often lies in ruins. It barely survives in the face of global economic pressures, and the process, once started, rarely ceases without Camarilla intervention or massive overhaul on behalf of mortal residents.

This is not to say that the Sabbat could not make a city fall apart by its own negligence, however. And, if the Sabbat has sufficient resources and financial contacts, it can counteract the Camarilla economic assault. But this is not common.

As the city decays, the Sabbat has fewer options. Morale in Sabbat ranks weakens, especially as the beautiful city they fought and suffered for falls asunder about them. The Sabbat leadership has less access to resources, from cash to contacts to healthy mortals to feed upon. The result is an increased claustrophobia, a

siege mentality developing among the Sabbat, and, eventually, a destabilization of the Sabbat leadership. The Sabbat, used to dynamic conflict, must then deal with a new, more defensive, more reactive reality. Younger pack priests and bishops accuse their superiors of destroying the city and then challenge the elders for leadership. Monomacy saps the coherence of the Sabbat domination of the city. As individual Sabbat become increasingly obsessed with the nightly support of their doomed city, the Camarilla quietly moves its agents into the city. These are not necessarily ghouls or even mortal retainers, but hirelings who are unaware of the Damned nature of their bosses. These agents are there as realtors, investors and carpetbaggers. Their job is simply to buy property and influence.

These agents are, in effect, purchasing havens for the next wave of Camarilla operatives, who follow some years later. Meanwhile, the Camarilla acquisition of swaths of local property continues. Urban renewal developments spring up, building gated communities for foreign corporations, for example, which become the havens for the first Camarilla Kindred in the city. But vampires do not follow immediately, perhaps requiring another half decade to prepare the way.

The first infiltrators come to a city legally primed, set up with the infrastructure necessary to support a Camarilla presence. The city is filled with contacts among the mortal population. The first-wave infiltrators are usually neonates, with very little experience —

STORYTELLING QUIET WARFARE

Quiet warfare is a perfect subject for a long-term, Machiavellian chronicle. It requires patience, intrigue and spying on the Sabbat as well as dealing with external pressures as Camarilla politics endanger the coterie. It is also perfect for a newly formed, low-powered coterie. Indeed, the characters could be Embraced by their sires in the targeted city. Their sires may sneak in and out of town, debriefing them about almost everything they do, subtly judging the characters, placing almost unbearable pressures on the confused, terrified fledglings. They may even become friendly with local Sabbat who suspects them of being just another pack, or even some particularly clueless nomad pack settling in. The chronicle could climax when the Camarilla coup occurs, pitting the characters against their erstwhile allies — or their sires — as they try to survive when all they worked for in their unives comes undone, while a decades-old Camarilla plan comes to fruition.

otherwise they may know just how much peril they are in. Coteries are told that its members may become the primogen of the city in the wake of the siege. Who knows — they may, but it is far more likely that they suffer Final Death in some Sabbat skirmish first.

Some time later, a second wave arrives, of older, more experienced Kindred. Nosferatu spies wander in and out of the city. Slowly, the Camarilla watches and learns.

This strategy has been in effect for a long time in almost all of the greatest Sabbat cities. A city has never fallen to the Camarilla in this way, but it is only a matter of time, perhaps a decade, at most, until many of these cities belong to the Camarilla.

THE CLANS AT WAR

It is important to realize that it really makes little difference which clan a Lick belongs to. Clans are not lockstep “teams” or even races, but rather families of Caine’s inherited curse. They are all on the road to damnation, whether they call themselves Toreador or Lasombra. But the curse brings certain edges, in the form of Disciplines, or even mental states, that the elders of the Camarilla, even though they themselves have sometimes abandoned such prejudices and illusions, strive to cultivate in their young.

BRUJAH

Young Brujah can often expect little more than a short, violent and brutal unlife. Their elders look at them with a degree of irritated indulgence. Dragged into unlife cursed with uncontrollable rages and passions, these neonates seem to have little place in the intrigues and manipulations of the Jyhad. Almost by joint consent, the elders of the Camarilla treasure the Brujah youth as enforcers, soldiers and, eventually, cannon fodder. Older Brujah are considered with more esteem, but if the Brujah neonate perishes long before gaining any acceptance by the Camarilla elders, that’s just too bad, and no one much cares.

Cursed with a predilection toward anger and bloodshed, and possessed of supernatural abilities that allow them an edge in combat, the Brujah must struggle to make a place for themselves in the modern nights. They fight. They are expected to defend the city and carry the battle to the enemy. Embraced predominantly from the violent, young underclass of Camarilla cities, Brujah fledglings are desperate to believe in something. Opposing the Sabbat, they at least have something to stand against.

MADNESS?

From the almanac of Ludo Giovanni

Following the commencement of the contest of Oslo, several Black Hand packs moved north to Bergen. Battle-hardened, professional killers, the Black Hand operatives were obviously confident of a repeat of their recent successes. The Camarilla vampires of that city were unprepared.

A small group of young vampires stumbled across the pack, by accident, and met their Final Deaths soon afterward. Even as the Black Hand killers set fire to the Camarilla vampires, they, too, were being observed.

They received instructions from a superior, directing them to a warehouse in the middle of town where a Camarilla arms cache was hidden. Accomplishing this task, they received another set of instructions, leading them to a minor elder in the Camarilla’s social power structure. Then they received another message, telling them to walk the city topless, so that a hidden Sabbat scout would know who they were. Then they were told to paint a red circle on their chests, so that members of a Swedish nomad pack, who had come to the city as reinforcements, would know them. As the night wore on, the instructions became more and more bizarre, until, close to dawn, the pack was forced to hide in the very warehouse they had found the Camarilla armaments, naked, covered in paint, utterly lost in an unfamiliar city.

At sundown, a Camarilla Kindred found them, staked, hanging from the ceiling in the warehouse, naked, perfectly clean. When taken away for interrogation, the Black Hand members wept openly, whispering about “the devil’s voices in [their] heads,” or some such.

It emerged, in later months, that a Malkavian who worked as the prince’s enforcer had played a demented game of hide-and-seek in Bergen’s streets. He used the powers at his command to constantly whisper strange things into the pack leader’s ears, making the increasingly bizarre orders from “above” seem perfectly rational. Then, when the Sabbat were trapped in the warehouse, Lyder Krohn, the Malkavian, asked the prince’s trusted ghoul to secure the warehouse so that its bounty could be collected that evening. Apparently, the Black Hand assassins thanked the prince of the city, when he staked them for the sunrise, some nights later.

MALKAVIAN

Malkavians do not comfortably fit into any clear role when violence erupts. But therein lies their strength. Their insanity leads to unpredictability, which is both a blessing and a curse. An enemy simply cannot predict what a Malkavian might do. However, certain Camarilla elders treasure the Malkavians for this very madness, which sometimes inclines them to a fearsome depth of sadism or hideous creativity in their violence. A Malkavian can inflict the sort of horror that can demoralize or even destroy even the most resilient foe.

However, if faced with their *antitribu* brethren, both sides may become curiously obsessed with each other and attempt to outdo their counterparts in the most bizarre and sick games, usually played on mortals or other vampiric combatants. These games serve no tactical purpose and are more akin to bizarre reflections on the tableau of violence going on around them than any real part of the battle. Sane vampires usually give such displays a wide berth, even to the extent of stopping their fights by mutual consent and moving away, to somewhere the Malkavians are not a distraction.

However, once the battle is done, the Malkavians are much favored for their skills at interrogating prisoners. Malkavians often work better as supporters of a sect clash than on the frontlines. They also have, through their combination of Disciplines and precarious mental states, great utility as spies, agents provocateur, scouts and information gatherers, all with a high degree of plausible deniability.

NOSFERATU

The Nosferatu are spies, information brokers and watchers. They see everything, hear everything, and information is their currency. For a price, they can find anything, discover any secret and look deep into the enemy's plans and concerns.

But the Nosferatu are also lords of the streets beneath the streets — the sewers, the subway tunnels, the strange caves of ancient times, the rivers long forgotten by the city above. These are just as important to the vampiric influence over a city as influence among the mortals.

Therefore, the Nosferatu often fight their own wars, deep within the gloom and stench below. They fight their own battles, luring the enemy into traps crafted with such deftness as to give a Toreador pause. They call upon hordes of animals, plagues of rats and cockroaches



to gather information of an enemy's position, and for pure psychological warfare.

The clichéd view of the Nosferatu spy is also challenged by stories of terrible Nosferatu warriors, whose hideous visages and deadly combat abilities can make enemies flee before them. The justicar Petrodon was one such warlord, according to sources. In the words of a veteran Sabbat templar, "By the time the fucking rat's compromised his hiding place, he's only given it up because he's behind you and doesn't need to be unseen to cave in your head with his nasty-ass fists." Even when they can be found, their Potence makes the Nosferatu brutal foes.

But in sectarian conflicts, there have been suspicions that the Nosferatu are not as scrupulous in the observation of sect allegiance when confronted by their *antitribu* brethren. Indeed, some suspect that they play their own games of brinkmanship, horse-trading and intrigue in their sewers and across SchreckNET. Perhaps, some whisper, the Nosferatu, *antitribu* and otherwise, are playing their own Jyhads against the other clans. But these are only whispers, made by those who fear that most despised of clans. It is entirely possible that the Nosferatu do not fight in their sewers, but rather use the opportunity to discuss, unobserved, matters with their brethren.

TREADOR

The concept of the Treador at war is one that causes flutters of amusement throughout other Cainites. However, in nights past, members of the Clan of the Rose numbered among some of the most feared of vampiric knightly orders. Other Treador practice a martial discipline such as karate or fencing as an art form, which makes them legendary in violent situations.

For the most part, the Treador tend to remain noncombatants. Some work as tribunes, using their skills in *Auspex* and *Celerity* to move around the city, reporting what is going on and delivering orders, as well as, most eloquently, announcing the commencement and cessation of hostilities.

In times of conflict, the networks of contacts Treador tend to cultivate are critical. At times, entire bloodbaths have been prevented by the timely arrival of a news crew or police cruiser. As to how they arrived, why, it only takes one phone call to put a favor in motion. You don't expect the Kindred to resolve their differences by *fighting* do you?

THE TREMERE'S WEAKNESS?

From the almanac of Ludo Giovanni

As an aside to this discussion of the magic of Clan Tremere, I recall a meeting with a girl in Montreal who claimed to be one of the fae born to a mortal legacy or some such oblique creature. She said, however, that magic is leaving the world, and when it goes the world will end. She has spoken of certain signs that I have heard Noddist eschatologists mention. She spoke of the "final winter," unless I misremember her words. (I was more interested, however, in her blood, and I tasted some. I did not remember much of the next few nights.) This could be a point of concern for the Tremere. It is also apparently a concern among mortal occultists. It would be unwise to expect that Clan Tremere does not harbor similar fears for its magic. All of this begs the question: How powerful are the Tremere without their sorcery? If their magic was to die, what then for the clan? What then for the Camarilla? My Tremere contacts have been unsurprisingly taciturn on the issue.

TREMERE

Tremere rituals can do almost anything from scrying on the enemy to boiling a rival's blood from a distance. In a war between the sects, that versatility is a valuable asset. Indeed, the Camarilla may survive because it is devious, but with the Tremere, hated and feared as they are, the Camarilla prevails. Clan Tremere is perhaps the most proactive of all the Camarilla factions. Sometimes considered a sect within a sect, the Tremere's influence grows nightly. Hierarchical, tightly organized and surely following its own agenda, the Warlocks seem destined to lead the Camarilla deep into the Final Nights. They are certainly one of the driving forces pushing the Camarilla's expansion into Sabbat domains. This rally comes largely as a result of half a millennium of planning and slow, purposeful, patient and creative intrigues in the Jyhad. The Tremere are invaluable in wartime for the same reason as they are invaluable to the Camarilla — their knowledge and occult power.

In 1998, the Sabbat Tremere of House Goratrix apparently died by some mysterious fire. Without those scarcely trusted Sabbat magicians, the Camarilla held the balance of terror in the realm of occult warfare. Idle rumors of Sabbat magicians regrouping around Goratrix the Betrayer or the Anathema Valerius Maior notwithstanding, the Camarilla holds the occult advantage.

Note, however, that Tremere Thaumaturgy is ritualistic. And one cannot very well start preparing a ritual during a raging battle, with bullets flying and violence erupting all around. So the Tremere prefer to work away from the frontlines. Preparation is the key. It takes time to work thaumaturgical rituals. Blood magicians must research the rites and requirements necessary to create their effects. The Tremere need the luxuries of time and resources to gather intelligence sufficient to make a difference. The Sabbat, naturally, tries to deny the Camarilla that very precious time.

Still, one would do well not to underestimate the Warlocks. Even a small chantry has powerful and clever defenses. But the Tremere do not work their magic out of generosity or the goodness of their ashen hearts. With each victory, or each defeat they avert, the prince of the city, and by extension the Camarilla as a whole, cedes a little more prestige, influence and resources to the Tremere cause — whatever it is.

VENTRUE

The Ventrue claim royalty, the military, the police and the corporate aristocracy of the new world order. But in the diseased, alien minds of the elder Blue Bloods, these assets are trusted to the modern version of noblesse oblige. The Ventrue are hardly paragons of chivalry, but the elders sometimes expect it of their underlings.

Ventrue warriors are renowned for their bravery and skill in battle, but soon enough, every Blue Blood Lick learns better ways of winning a war. Subtlety, intrigue, betrayal and plain old cheating (all the while maintaining the *dignitas* of a true noble) are the hallmarks of Clan Ventrue.

Ventrue neonates and ancillae rise in clan status — and among Ventrue, the regard of one's peers is exceptionally important — by building her own web of influence, which may of course be used to aid the sect. To a Ventrue neonate or ancilla, warring with the Sabbat is the quickest way into power — but also to Final Death. This can become a strange obsession among some of the more martial Ventrue. They constantly test the limit of their elders' authority, attempting to provoke conflict with the Sabbat, so that they may prove themselves in battle.

Wise elders allow these fractious youth some latitude to cause their own problems, and solve them. That is, after all, how one creates leaders. However, this almost decadent attitude has had serious consequences on occasion.

DEFENDING THE IVORY TOWER

A war is not won by the "good guys." A war is won by those willing to compromise their nightly morality in order to defend their deepest ideals. The Camarilla is the greatest embodiment of that rule, its members having, from time to time, compromised almost every trait of human morality, in order to defend the world from the ravages of the Sabbat. The Camarilla is not a kind institution, and it is not a fair institution. However, armies are not kind, and they are not fair. The Camarilla is an organization that defends its ideals, and defends the kine from their greatest enemy. You believe that we are a political and social organization. I say to you that politically, socially and physically, we are no different from the ancient Romans or the Americans during World War II. We are fighting a war — a war that I will see us win.

— Karsh, Warlord of the Camarilla, in a statement to his archons

To newly Embraced childer, or to anarchists looking in from the outside, the Camarilla is a soft target, waiting for the Sabbat to gut it and end its corpulent unlife of idleness. To those who have existed long enough or seen the Sabbat try to take a Camarilla city, the Camarilla is revealed as a machine that never sleeps, that forever grinds toward domination and victory.

The Sabbat is continually frustrated by its inability to sweep across the world and destroy the seemingly weak Camarilla. The Sabbat wears blinders, the same blinders worn by the Camarilla's critics and even some of its defenders. What they all fail to see is a pattern and a purpose that has been hidden by some of the greatest players of the Jihad. The Sabbat is built around war by any means necessary. They fight until the last packmate dies, just to defeat the Camarilla. But their limited scope of conflict is the reason they have such trouble with such an "easy" target.

The Camarilla was built from the ground up as a pillar of ideological supremacy. The salons, Elysium, the subtle games of status and prestation, are all designed to help the Camarilla win the war with its enemies. The Camarilla and its secretive leaders seek to define the battlefield then fight the battle in ways the Sabbat cannot and will not.

TO BUILD A WORLD...

To a childe just released into Elysium, the nightclubs and other social settings that make up Kindred

society, the myriad rules and customs may seem bewildering and deadly. Say the wrong thing, bow the wrong way or owe the wrong person, and social ostracism or even Final Death can be the reward. A neonate often feels this way even after being trained for years as a fledgling, and even the Ventrue find themselves cleaning up after their progeny from time to time. It's one thing to play the grand game with training wheels, but it's something very different when your sire won't just show up and make the problem go away.

After years, and sometimes decades of mistakes, a Kindred understands the flow and feel of her city and grows comfortable with the rules of the Camarilla. Now she begins to expand her reach, and use to her advantage the rules that once victimized her. At times, she turns around and takes advantage of the newest neonates released by their sires. The cycle begins anew; the Jyhad continues, on however personal a scale.

Now imagine that you are a Sabbat Cainite sent to infiltrate the Camarilla. You know the Traditions, and you learned about the rules of Elysium from a very old archbishop. Tonight you will walk into a Camarilla Elysium and introduce yourself as a Camarilla member

THE PRICE OF WISDOM

From the almanac of Ludo Giovanni

It might occur to some of the independent Kindred and self-serving Camarilla Kindred out there: "Hey, we know the rules of the Camarilla. Why couldn't we sell that information to the Sabbat for big money?" Two main reasons prevent such wholesale treachery. First, we don't know the Camarilla as well as we think. I once tried to sneak into Milwaukee as a Brujah and was caught within three hours by one of the elders of the clan. Keep in mind that this was the Brujah, considered by many to be the guys with the worst internal security of any clan.

The second reason is both practical and ideological. Sure, the Sabbat might pay you tonight, but they'll kill you tomorrow. Many are utter lunatics. The Camarilla may be "the Man," but they leave you alone most of the time. Most princes don't even want to know what you're up to, so long as it doesn't violate the Traditions — too much. The Sabbat, on the other hand, is like an enormous ant colony. Sure, they're really efficient and good at fighting, but they're also incapable of doing much else besides that. If the Sabbat are in a city, there's no such thing as independence. That's why we don't sell out the Camarilla to the Sabbat. It's just good business sense.

from another city. After all, how hard could it be to blend in with so many other "Kindred"?

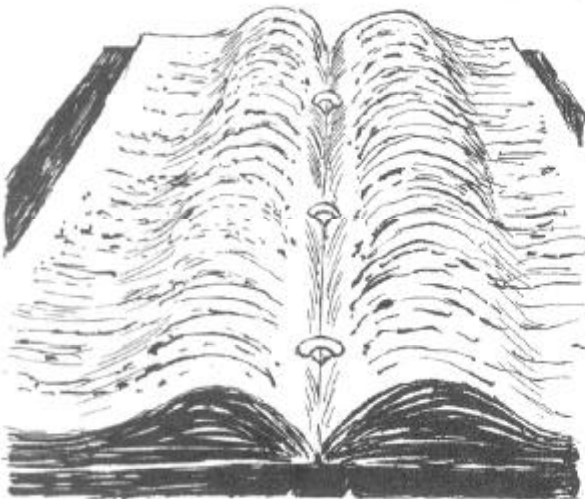
The Camarilla has created a complex microcosm in which the outsider is easy to spot, and the entire room thrills to drain what information or advantage they can from someone who doesn't know the rules. Add to this a prince and primogen who all probe for flaws in order to stay in power, and a scourge who is often only a hair's width from murder, and the average Camarilla gathering resembles a vast exercise in social eugenics, not a cocktail party.

Short-term infiltration by Sabbat members rarely succeeds in the most Camarilla cities because of the immense complexities of Camarilla society. What seems like a set of archaic and arbitrary rules acts as a sort of lie detector for all visitors. Is he really Camarilla? If he is, then why did he shake hands with the Tremere primogen? It's traditional that common members of the city never shake hands with the Tremere primogen; that's a privilege reserved for the prince. And how could he sit at Nathaniel's table? Doesn't he even know where to sit? What is this guy, an idiot... or a liar?

INFILTRATION

The archons (and even some princes) have begun their own programs of infiltration. The Sabbat has become more aggressive, necessitating a more aggressive response from the Camarilla. Part of this is a program called "Innosense," devised by the Malkavian elder, Dr. Douglas Netchurch. With the permission of the Prince of Memphis, he has begun creating new childer and reworking their minds, implanting deeply buried suggestions and commands. He uses the supernatural powers at his disposal as well as tried-and-true brainwashing techniques used by cults and government agencies. Dr. Netchurch implants what information he knows about the Sabbat, along with an intense desire in the victim to "fit in" to a new social group. He then releases these unfortunates near cities that have been newly captured by the Sabbat, leaving them severely injured and low on blood. These young Cainites then stumble upon the Sabbat and tell a harrowing story of their pack was ambushed outside the city, their assailants wiping them out. Sometimes, these vampires are accepted as legitimate members of the Sabbat and are recruited into a new pack.

So far, the program has been running for over a year with no results. However, Netchurch's backers are very patient. They are aware that the timeline of the project is measured in years, not weeks. After two years in the



Sabbat, one of the deeply implanted suggestions will trigger. That night, the formerly loyal member of the Sabbat finds himself at a pay phone, reading off the locations of the Sabbat havens in the city to a very interested person on the other end of the connection. Dr. Netchurch and his supporters expect the first moles to begin reporting in the next eight to 12 months. At that point, Project Innosense will help the Camarilla take back the night.

POLITICS AND POLICY

Every election year, a city's government shuffles around, and the same politicians often find themselves re-elected to the same positions. They pass the same sort of policies as they did the previous term, and then the next election arrives, and the next....

But sometimes, the political climate changes. The politicians finally turn serious about the problems facing the city. The mayor makes a passionate speech about fighting crime, and the city council passes measures that really make a difference. The city is cleaner, safer and generally a better place to live. Women feel safe going to their cars at night. The elderly can walk their dogs again. Everything just feels better.

This isn't what happens when the Camarilla holds influence over a city. Many princes prefer their cities to be like over-ripe plums, with easily manipulated mortals and officials with flexible morals. When the Sabbat takes a city, things often fester, as the plum splits and the blood of city soaks the ground. As of late, some cities have confounded the leaders of the Sabbat by actually becoming more idyllic *after* being seized by Cainites.

One of the most potent advantages the Camarilla holds over the Sabbat is the influence of mortal institutions. Members of the Sabbat largely find the concept distasteful and beneath them, leaving the game of influence to the Camarilla and the independent clans. Many Lasombra and Tzimisce have interests in that area; they usually keep their dealings secret and limited, like a bad habit. On the other hand, the princes and elders of the Camarilla treat the gathering of influence like mortal executives treat dinner parties, as a natural part of existence. And those elders have used this weapon with gusto, sending police after Sabbat leaders, extraditing Sabbat warlords and condemning buildings suspected of being Sabbat havens.

THE DOOMSDAY BOOK

All the classic influence tricks in the world sometimes fail, and the forces of the Sabbat manage to grab

a city from the Camarilla. In times past, the members of the Camarilla still surviving by then would flee the city, taking what personal belongings they could and leaving the rest. With the aggressive push by the Sabbat on the East Coast, princes and elders have devised a new method for leaving a city, a way that elevates the term "sore loser" to its own pedestal of honor. At a private symposium held just for this purpose, a group of princes and former princes codified this method into a thick black binder. With a flair for the dramatic, they called it the *Doomsday Book*. Almost upon completion, the volume was confiscated by a previously unknown archon. To the princes at the symposium, that was the stamp of approval they had been looking for. After all, archons don't confiscate stupid ideas, just dangerously clever ideas.

The wise Camarilla prince does not want a well-run city with efficient police and a good school system as her domain. In fact, many princes spend a great deal of time and effort avoiding that rosy picture. If the police are corrupt, they are corruptible by the prince: Nobody likes an honest cop if it's close to dawn and you're trying to arrange a release from jail. If the schools are substandard, gangs form, providing companions for the Brujah and an excuse for larger police forces. Poor utilities keep some streets dark, making hunting easier. Without a street lined by nightclubs and cheap motels, the Kindred of the city sometimes go home hungry. It is in the best interests of a prince to keep his city working — but not working too well.

The *Doomsday Book* takes the conventional wisdom of the prince and turns it on its head. As a city begins to fall to the battle plan of the Sabbat, the prince (or whoever is in charge at that point) may find himself visited by an archon with a thin black binder. To many princes, that moment is one of horrible sorrow, for it means that the powers that be have decided that the prince's city is a lost cause and have moved to damage control. The prince reads the binder, accepts his new role, and the archon leaves, taking the binder with him, as quickly as he arrived.

The *Doomsday Book* is short and blunt, the opposite of most Camarilla writing. It sets forth a list of actions to be taken by the prince before vacating the city. The prince who performs them all will sometimes find himself respected by other princes for doing his duty even while losing to the Sabbat. The prince who fails to complete the actions of the *Doomsday Book* is seen as an utter fool, unable to even lose properly.

DOOMSDAY FRAGMENTS

From the almanac of Ludo Giovanni

I've never seen the complete manual, but I'm compiling a list of some of its "commandments." This thing is definitely written by a collection of elders, because it reads like a book of the Bible. Here are some of the nasty tricks I've found out about so far.

- Create a curfew. All those under drinking age should be banned from the streets from dusk until dawn. This deprives the enemy of sustenance.

- Shut down nightclubs that are patronized by the lower and middle classes. Target the trouble spots first, but leave orders to continue harassing clubs until few remain. Issue drug possession charges, noise ordinance violations and health inspections to eliminate these feeding grounds.

- Clean up the police. Create a citizen's oversight committee and give it real power. Stop holding back Internal Affairs. An honest and honorable police force is a thorn in the side of the Sabbat for months. Do not allow them to take up the bribes where you left off.

- Make drug trafficking as difficult as possible before you depart, preferably using the newly reformed police department. Inform the Kindred in your city who peddle in this field to stop shipments, and send the newly clean police after the remnants. Deny the enemy this method of gaining vessels and resources.

- Repair the city. Let the city's maintenance department finally replace the streetlights and clean the sewers. Give them funding and the will to use it. Deny the enemy easy havens and dark alleys.

- If you have time, make sure the laws of the city are tight. Allow your city council to pass ordinances without loopholes and allow the judges to govern by the letter of the law, without your interference. Make the law applicable to all, and make sure that none are above the law. In this way, the sorrow you create tonight lives on for years, or until we take back the city.

We should take notes from this book. I've never been more impressed at how absolutely, bitterly nasty the leaders of the Camarilla can be. From what I've heard, this *Doomsday Book* hasn't stopped the Sabbat, but it's been like burning bridges when retreating. The Sabbat has been slowed to a crawl, since they're inheriting cities in which it's hard to spit without being ticketed.

THE NEW WAYS OF WAR

As the Camarilla becomes more desperate and the occasional new idea succeeds, savvy elders have taken to "asking" their progeny to use more modern methods to study the Sabbat. Thaddeus Carter, a Ventrue neonate, was Embraced specifically to analyze the Sabbat. Based out of Rochester, and using his years of expertise as a mortal market researcher, he set to work tracking all Sabbat captured, killed or encountered in the last five years, building a better picture of the enemy. After interviews with dozens of sheriffs, princes and frontline fighters, he found some interesting trends.

The Sabbat appears to have high numbers of neonates, many of whom have only recently been Embraced. Most of these fledglings left paper trails as mortals until just a few weeks before their second deaths. By analyzing credit card receipts, parking tickets and timecards, Thaddeus was able to show that the Sabbat creates shock troops for each attack, using mortals in the city the Sabbat is about to besiege. This information has spread throughout the Camarilla, in the hope that mass disappearance of mortals will give some warning of an attack by the Sabbat that may be a few nights or weeks away.

Thaddeus' second discovery was that the Sabbat is comprised of higher percentages of ethnic minorities than the Camarilla. Large numbers of Latinos and African-Americans populate the Sabbat, as opposed to the more Caucasian-European mix of the Camarilla. This trend is expected to reverse itself as the members of the Camarilla bring more Americans into the fold, but for now, the Sabbat is often much better integrated than the Camarilla.

Thaddeus Carter reached his conclusions based on science and statistics. What the elders of his clan did with that knowledge would horrify Thaddeus, and anger most of the Camarilla. They have taken a simple fact of demographics and turned it into a weapon against the Sabbat that is at the same time subtle and sickening.

POLITICALLY INCORRECT

Racism and bigotry are good for the elders of Camarilla and bad for the Sabbat. That is the simple conclusion reached by the elders of Thaddeus Carter, and their conclusion has fueled a direction to their manipulation and influence of mortal society.

DRIVING WHILE BLACK

Profiling is a tool used by the police to narrow their focus toward people who appear more likely to commit crimes. To do this, police compile a list of visual and other signals that increase the probability that someone has committed a crime, or will commit a crime. These signs might include wearing a heavy jacket in the summer, driving much slower than the speed limit, wearing large amounts of jewelry or looking nervous when approached by police officers.

The concern of many civil rights groups is the disturbing regularity of young black men "matching" the description of a possible criminal. In some cities that use profiling to pull over and check random cars, the percentage of African-Americans pulled over is amazingly high. Civil rights groups are trying to eliminate profiling as a police tool, while the police argue that its effectiveness is too high to be ignored.

The elders of Maryland have embarked on an ambitious and far-reaching plan to increase bigotry, racial unrest and race-related violence along the East Coast. They are pouring money into the coffers of hate groups and are using their sway to promote racial profiling by police officers as a good law-enforcement tool. As the level of intolerance rises, the Sabbat finds it harder and harder to travel freely without being harassed by the mortal inhabitants of a city. For many Sabbat members, mortals are a small distraction at worst, and a quick meal most of the time. But to packs of Sabbat warriors trying to quietly enter a city without violence, a few thrown stones and racial slurs can set off a sensitive member of the group, cause an open brawl and blow weeks of careful preparation.

It's unknown what the reaction of the Camarilla as a whole will be if this tactic is eventually announced to all Kindred. It seems to be working well, and every weapon that helps the Camarilla is a welcome aid in troubled times. On the other hand, many young Kindred may have severe problems with a policy that takes civil rights and throws them out the window. The remaining Spanish and Italian elders on the East Coast also wonder who's going to pay for the inconvenience this new weapon is causing them. Some archons and justicars might also find problems maintaining the aura of moral superiority if they're fighting for a sect that actually *promotes* racial hatred.

A NEW KIND OF KINDRED

Very recently, a group of Malkavian elders and ancillae presented a new weapon to the justicar, a weapon that every one in the Camarilla would like to get their hands on. The Malkavians handed over five neonates, two women and three men. The twist is that these neonates seem totally unaffected by daylight and act with a solidarity and single-mindedness that terrifies the few Sabbat who have heard rumor of their existence. The neonates have been placed in the care of Archon Delaurent, who guards their secret zealously. The greatest interest comes from the Tremere. How is it that a group of Malkavians accomplished in a short time what it took the Tremere years to perfect? And how did they manage to do it without any Thaumaturgy or similar blood magic? Only the Malkavians involved in the project and Archon Delaurent know for sure, and none of them are talking.

THE GREAT DAYLIGHT PRANK

Of course, the Malkavians didn't accomplish anything so grand as creating a new breed of Kindred. Instead, they have used their gift for deceit to craft one of such beauty that they have even fooled the Sabbat.

When the Sabbat began its new campaign of aggression, a small group of Malkavian elders, led by a European Malkavian named Dieter, decided that they were going to contribute their own weapon to the cause. They sent out very subtle feelers into the mental hospitals of the Eastern Seaboard, looking for patients with certain traits that they would need for their "test subjects." They ended up with 10 mortals, four females and six males, who all shared the same batch of severe emotional problems. They were all sociopathic, they all had deep codependency issues, and they all had been on medication for years.

More importantly, they each matched the height and weight of one of the other mortals in the group. The Malkavians tugged gently at their puppet strings, and all 10 humans were discharged with clean bills of health. They then disappeared from mortal society and began their new life in the condemned shell of an old high school outside of Lansing. Dieter found it amusing to teach them in a house of learning.

Dieter had one secret weapon that was key to the operation: He held a Tzimisce of the Sabbat, captured in a raid specifically for that purpose. The Tzimisce was a mental vegetable, crippled so severely by Dieter that she needed help feeding. With his 10 test subjects secured, he revealed his Tzimisce to the

other Malkavians. With the flash of insight unique to the Lunatics, the others instantly saw his intent, and his genius. This was to be a prank that would be talked about for centuries. They waited for the Tzimisce to do her work, eagerly awaiting their chance to help. The mortals were paired off with the Malkavians, and then instructed according to the new plans that fate held for them.

The pairs were brainwashed to believe that they were two parts of the same whole. They could not live without each other. One was light, the other darkness, but they were the two halves of the same person. The mortals were already inclined to obsess over someone else, and eagerly latched onto each other, convinced that they had finally found their missing piece that would make them whole. Over the months of alternating isolation and intimate indoctrination, the mortals became more and more tied to each other, often finishing each other's sentences and thinking more and more the same.

Dieter called in several serious boons owed by local ancillae and neonates. In exchange for the boons, Dieter merely asked that they each Embrace a child of his choosing and then walk away. Most balked at such an open flouting of the Traditions, but with the threat of even deeper debt should they refuse, they eventually agreed to this bizarre form of repayment.

The pairs of mortals were separated from each other, a process fraught with crying and screaming. Five were taken to a separate wing of the high school to meet their sires for the first and only time. One was Embraced by a Malkavian, two were created by two Brujah, one by a Toreador, and the last was made by a Ventruue. The sires left their childer to the mercies of the Malkavians and met with Dieter to make sure payment was complete. For their sacrifice, he removed the memory of the payment from their minds, ensuring that their sizable boons were still owed. Dieter knew he was operating well outside the bounds of the Traditions, prestatation and good taste, so a few more breaches of etiquette wouldn't add much to his growing roster of sin.

The new Kindred were given a month of training in their newly developed powers, while the mortals were taught stealth, intelligence gathering and urban warfare techniques. Along with such delicate practices, they were also taught how to blend into any city or town they would be sent to, and the Kindred learned how to sustain themselves without taxing areas with limited feeding grounds. Dieter was carefully training them to

be perfect spies, careful investigators and perfect vampire hunters.

Once both groups had learned enough, they were brought back together and told the "truth." The dark halves were now creatures of the night and would exist during the times that the sun did not show in the sky. The light halves were creatures of the day and would exist when the sun was in the sky. The new Kindred fed a bit of their blood to their twins, making them ghouls.

Dieter then introduced the final two twists in the project. The pairs were told that they were kept apart from each other by a group called the Sabbat. This organization believed that everyone should be a part of each other, rather than pairing off with the person that was your actual match. This enraged the new ghouls and vampires. How could such heresy be allowed to exist? Dieter then told them that they could, if they wished, help fight the Sabbat. A group called the Camarilla would love the help of the twins. All they had to do was use their training to fight the Sabbat, who were all dark halves, with no light half to balance them. The Camarilla would give them direction, supplies and the chance to "live" as they wanted. The pairs immediately agreed to help. How could they not? Dieter had designed them for just such a purpose. They could no more deny help to the Camarilla than they could fly to the moon.

THE DAY-TRIPPERS

Archon Delaurent finds his new weapons incredibly unpleasant to socialize with, but he understands their worth. He was hesitant to use them at first, fearing that they might decide that Camarilla elders were as easy to kill as the Sabbat. However, their constant preaching about light and dark eventually irritated him enough to send them into action, with surprisingly good results. He now keeps them active almost all the time, sending them into cities with known Sabbat activity. They work as a single unit, their operations continuing smoothly from night into day. They are so much alike that they think similarly, act similarly and obviously still look the same. From what they've seen of the Sabbat so far, their "father" (Dieter) was absolutely right. They are more committed than ever to wiping out the Sabbat.

What Archon Delaurent doesn't know yet would probably be enough to make him destroy the twins. Now that they are outside of any supervision, they have begun to develop on their own in ways Dieter might not have planned. They are freely teaching each other

whatever vampiric powers they can and have taken to sharing their blood with each other on a nightly basis. They are no longer a mere experiment but a cult of personalities, a hive whose shared mind continues to develop. Ironically, they have begun to resemble the Sabbat more and more with each passing night, their duty to destroy the enemy filling them with the same religious fervor as their counterparts in the Sword of Caine. They are as out of place in the Camarilla as they would be in the Sabbat. For this reason, they are a barely contained disaster waiting to happen.

Most disturbing are the actions of Tessa, the Malkavian of the group. She has learned a lot about altering minds and has also seen the handiwork of the Tzimisce. She has slowly pieced together what Dieter did to them, and rather than be horrified, she is grateful. After all, they are happier than they ever were before, so why should they be mad at their savior? Tessa is so grateful, she is looking for a new group of mortals that fit the mold for indoctrination. The twins currently seek a Tzimisce to capture, one weak enough to be persuaded by Tessa and used to create a new cell of twins. Tessa and the other twins are convinced that it is their holy duty to help cure other unfortunates by "twinning" them, and teaching them how to fight against the collectivized Sabbat.

If Archon Delaurent continues to keep the twins at arm's length, he may find himself with not one cell, but multiple cells of fanatical lunatics, all intent on wiping out the Sabbat, all of them fanatically loyal to each other and the Camarilla. The question becomes, is that a good thing or a bad thing?

Dieter is convinced that his project is not just a weapon against the Sabbat but is instead the future of psychotherapy. When the project began, he had 10 useless mental patients, all highly drugged and all of them wasteful drains on society. At the end of the project, he had 10 productive, motivated, self-sufficient killers, all of them ready to go out and make the world a better place. Couldn't this be applied to nonidentical pairs? Dieter has published one research paper under a pseudonym, advocating that codependency can be healthy, if encouraged. Already the theory has convinced a few mortal counselors, who encourage couples to become *more* obsessed with each other, not less.

Some of the younger Malkavians question the direction that this logic is headed. Rumors already circulate among Malkavians of Dieter's experiments, and some of the more lucid members are concerned that



NEW JERSEY AT DAWN

Something bizarre is happening in Newark. I have read a recent report from a contact I have there claiming that Archon Delaurent has met a group of vampires able to walk around during the day! Here's the story:

The guy I know was trying to wipe out a pack of really sneaky Sabbat that had been messing around in his domain. He had brought in some mortal bail-bond agents, the guys that track you down when you skip bail. Anyway, they're tracking this group of Sabbat through the back alleys of Newark and suddenly this group of Kindred in black shows up, like terrorists or something. The bail-bond guys freaked, but calmed down when these newcomers said that they were the "good guys."

The pursuit continued until close to dawn, with this new group scouting ahead from time to time, disappearing for 10 or 15 minutes while they check out some clue or sign. My associate tells the bail-bond guys that he has to go meet his boss but to call him when they find the guys they're looking for. He leaves. The next night, he's got this insane message on his answering machine from the bail-bond guys. They left town and won't work for him anymore, all because of what happened when they found the Sabbat.

From what they said, the group of five "good guys" busted in to this crack house and headed straight for the basement. When the bail-bond guys got there, there were five or six corpses decomposing all over the basement, there was blood everywhere, and the female leader of the guys in black was beating one of the crackheads with a clothes iron. The bail-bond guy evidently described it as "the sound of your fist punching a bowl of Jell-O." Anyway, good news, right? The Sabbat vampires get their asses kicked, and the forces of freedom and justice prevail.

Here's the twist on the story: The attack on the crack house happened at 9:00 a.m., three hours after dawn. If the Camarilla has Kindred that can walk around during the day, we better get some information on them. That sort of weapon is too dangerous to not know about.

— Tony

Dear Tony,

I'll look into it. Just make sure that those bail-bond guys weren't drinking, okay? I don't want to make inquiries for nothing.

— Ludo

the clan has stepped over some invisible line that separated them from their counterparts in the Sabbat. The shocking return of a formerly lost Discipline has only served to fuel the fears of some philosophical members. They preach that Dieter has corrupted the

clan, and that the return of Dementation is a sign that the Malkavians of the Camarilla have lost their already shaky moral center.

Others scoff at such nonsense and hail Dieter as a pioneer in previously unmentionable sciences. Tales have also surfaced that a group of Malkavians in the Tampa area is experimenting with a group of captive Brujah, making them stronger through the careful application of pain and torture. The rumor is that they have found some success, but how far can research travel on that path before the rest of the Camarilla finds out, and reacts with shock and condemnation? Some scientists among the Malkavians still dwell in hiding, unable to show their faces after their "experiments" in Germany during the war.

Meanwhile, Tessa continues her research and has explained her findings to the other members of her family. The Toreador of the group was very religious in his former life and has begun to craft a new devotion to "The Dieter." He believes that Dieter is their savior, and that he and his assistants are the only ones capable of duplicating the "twinning" that created the initial batch. Tessa finds such talk ignorant but does not dissuade her broodmate. Instead, she plans for the night she can create a new hive and use it to destroy the false god that her broodmate has raised. Dieter may find that his creation returns to its home, unwittingly re-enacting Mary Shelley's tragic story....

RAISING TREMERE AWARENESS

One of the most frequent first targets of an attack by the Sabbat, as mentioned above, is the Tremere chantry. The Sabbat is relatively weak with regard to blood magic, and it's essential for them to cripple the Tremere early in the fight or suffer heavy losses later. Like an army with no air force, the Sabbat tries to blow up the planes on the ground before they can take off and bomb them from the air. Because of this doctrine, the Tremere have suffered heavy losses at the hands of the Sabbat. The Tremere have finally started to adapt to the tactics of the Sabbat.

The easiest way for the Tremere to manage this is to maintain at least two chantries. One is sealed and never used — a blind or a decoy — and the other is used as normal. The public chantry is as it was in the past, often a singular building at a remote location with a substantial library and luxurious surroundings for research and study. With any luck, the Sabbat focuses upon it as a prime

target in an invasion. At the beginning of the invasion, the obvious chantry is destroyed, leaving the Tremere with no apparent access to a gathering place or land prepared for rituals and magic. The Tremere know otherwise.

The Tremere who survive the initial attack withdraw to the secondary chantry, sometimes called the "battle chantry" by apprentices out of earshot of the older Tremere. This utilitarian chantry is usually located in an urban setting, in a nondescript building, sometimes part of an office park, high-rise or even government building. In some cases, the Tremere have even acquired certain public records and obtained the keys to a local bomb shelter. Inside one of these secondary chantries, the surroundings are plain — industrial carpeting, bare concrete walls, folding chairs and a good fire-suppression system. However, these backup chantries also house copies of most of the important books from the main chantry (if not the originals themselves), along with rooms for research, casting of rituals and interrogation of captured Sabbat members. Each chantry has different touches peculiar to the specific city, but overly elaborate additions are usually seen as wasteful and distracting by those in the clan. These chantries are supposed to be for times of war. They are not summer cottages for those in charge.

Such secondary chantries have been much more difficult for the Sabbat to destroy. First off, many Sabbat still operate under the assumption that once the chantry is destroyed, well, the chantry is destroyed. They rarely bother to look for second and third chantries. Once the Sabbat realizes that a second chantry exists in some cities, its packs may still find it difficult to locate, let alone do anything to destroy it. If the Tremere of a city are forced to fall back to a secondary chantry, they already know they need tighter security; after all, if the manic Sabbat can unearth the location of their hidden sanctum, someone's obviously been a bit loose-lipped. By the time the secondary chantry is operational, it may even resemble a military checkpoint or police station. It's rare that a Tremere has a chance to fully invoke the powers of flame or force, and a possible attack by the Sabbat is sometimes seen by overly confident Tremere as a chance to "flex the muscles."

Such situations are the exception rather than the rule. Despite rumors to the contrary, chantries are rarely impenetrable bastions of sorcery, guarded by scores of Gargoyles and kept under constant surveillance by computerized security cameras. While such things can

happen, if all it takes for the Sabbat to find the chantry is to look for the Gargoyle-flanked laser bunker, that somewhat defeats the purpose.

THE WAR ROOM

What the Tremere took years to figure out, the princes of the Camarilla have known for just as long. The Kindred in the largest cities in America have pulled strings and purchased homes built during the Cold War, homes that often feature long-forgotten bomb shelters under the floorboards. The prince or an ally has one of his retainers maintain the home and keep it looking like every other house in suburbia. It sits quietly, waiting for the night that the Sabbat invades.

Imagine yourself as a housewife in a suburban development, content to be outside the city center, listening to reports on the news of rioting in the downtown area. Now imagine your surprise when a handful of gray panel vans pulls up to the vacant house across the street, and nicely groomed men start unloading steamer trunks into the garage. Then the luxury cars pull to the curb, disgorging men in suits and ties, wearing nice shoes and worried looks. Hmm, must be someone getting away from all that awful rioting. Maybe it's the mayor!

The prince and his aides often try to find homes built in the '50s, as some of them have bricked-over bomb shelters, perfect for slumber. However, communications have changed since World War II. From a small house in suburbia, the prince and his staff keep in constant contact with the surviving members of the Camarilla, using cell phones and pagers to make sure that all parties have complete information about the current state of the threat.

It is in this communications bunker that the capable neonate has the greatest chance at power. Only very young or very studious princes feel comfortable with modern technology, and a prince's closest advisors are often elders who can barely dial a pay phone. The task of running a massive emergency communications web falls to those mortals and neonates trusted by the prince. From this tangle of cell phones, fax machines and laptop computers, a clever neonate operator may be able to alter orders enough to have his rival's haven staked out or condemned, along with the haven of the Sabbat pack. The prince's wartime haven is a flurry of running neonates, yelling primogen and hurried decisions that may affect a score or more of Kindred.

Meanwhile, the mortal family occupying the house is often relegated to hostage status, stuck in a back room with a loyal retainer to guard them. Thoughtful princes make sure to evict the tenants or send them on an extended vacation before driving over, but more than one prince has found himself with a victory over the Sabbat and a handful of suddenly inconvenient and overly informed mortals.

INFLUENCE IN TIMES OF WAR

When a city is not under siege by the Sabbat, every member of the Camarilla uses what influence she has to subtly move things in the city against her rival in the Jihad, to the benefit of her allies, or simply to make her own unlife easier. When a city is attacked by the Sabbat (or even more rarely, when the Camarilla attacks the Sabbat first), the uses of immediate influence change severely, as subtle plans lasting years fall by the wayside for more immediate and forceful applications of power.

The Camarilla enjoys a huge advantage in the influence game. For the most part, the Sabbat believes that mortals are meat and blood, not worthy of being talked to or trusted. A few crafty elders among the Sabbat still see the wisdom of keeping allies and contacts in the halls of power, but largely, the members of the Sabbat ignore the mortal realm. This leaves a vacuum of power that savvy Camarilla elders are more than willing to exploit. The members of the Camarilla are the masters of mortal manipulation and use every bit of that talent when faced with a deadly horde of bloodthirsty fanatics.

BUREAUCRACY

While mundane at first glance, this field of influence can become vitally important when fighting the Sabbat. With the right connections and a few phone calls, members of the Camarilla can have power cut to Sabbat havens right before an attack, track down new purchases of homes and equipment, delay the fire department's response to an "accidental" fire, or have the sewers flooded or cleaned up.

CHURCH

In the midst of a Sabbat invasion, those who hold sway in religious communities must be exceptionally careful, as they are playing with fire every time they convince the clergy to take action. However, it is not unheard of for the members of the Camarilla to allow the various witch-hunters to be called in during an invasion, assuming that they can be dealt with after the



DAVE THE EARTH

From the almanac of Ludo Giovanni

I once spoke with a Nosferatu in Houston who told me about his problems with a particularly nasty pack of nomadic Sabbat. They all knew how to meld with the earth and would just disappear when the sun rose. The Nosferatu found out that they had been sleeping in a vacant city lot for a few days. He called a few people he knew at city hall. Within 24 hours, he had all the permits needed to put in a parking lot. While he didn't say whether those Sabbat had gone to ground long enough for him to have a concrete foundation laid over their temporary (permanent?) haven, I know that he makes five dollars per car every night — seven on the weekends.

Sabbat are gone, or to subtly sway the moral pitch of the flock. Even without using hunters, a wise Kindred can still use the power of a church to influence hundreds of mortals. A change or two in the tone of a Sunday sermon can set the congregation to organizing neighborhood watch groups. A sermon of fire and brimstone can be very effective at keeping people off the streets the night after. In a pinch, the local church makes a convenient haven for the night, as long as the building itself isn't one of the few cornerstones of True Faith left in the world (and the basement isn't a bingo hall).

In one shockingly brazen incident, a Tremere in Portland, Maine practically handed over a Sabbat Cainite to the Inquisition. The zealots were suitably agitated, and the city was swarming with hunters within a week. It took months for the Camarilla to lie low long enough for the hunters to leave, but in the meantime, the Sabbat backed out rather than deal with a city so saturated in experienced hunters.

FINANCE

When the Camarilla decides to go on the offensive, those with influence in the financial world are often the backbone of preparations. Need a dozen vampire bravos smuggled into a Sabbat city? Those Kindred with ties to the city's bursar's office usually have a trucking company on the list ready and willing to assist. Require a safe house to put them in until they're prepared to attack the Sabbat? That strip mall has an empty store — one that a Malkavian has the keys to. Need to wipe out the savings of a high-ranking member of the opposition? The credit rating of the city's bishop just went into the toilet.

Having clout in the financial community can also grease the wheels in other areas of influence. The local union might not like working an 18-hour day to build new defenses into your haven, but they happily work overtime if the deal includes a briefcase full of hard cash. More importantly, influence in the financial world can make any other sway much easier. A smart Kindred with access to cash can quicken results in almost any other operation that has stalled. For this reason, the Kindred who write the checks are often sought after by the movers and shakers in other fields of influence.

HEALTH

Blood is key to the survival for every Kindred ("Stay in the red."). In the middle of a war, the members of the Camarilla often have trouble finding the safety and time to hunt for sustenance. It is at those times that a quick raid at the local blood bank can ensure a few more nights of survival for the vampiric residents of the city.

Those with sway in the health community are not just limited to procuring blood. The Camarilla often uses ghouls and mortals to fight the actual battles against the Sabbat, and those who survive often need medical attention with no questions asked. Add to this the ability to have an enemy declared mentally unstable and a threat to society, and those with influence in the health-care sector are very popular during times of conflict.

Legend has it that a mental institution in Seattle, Washington is still holding several low-ranking members of the Sabbat in a carefully guarded row of cells. With a few phone calls from a powerful Malkavian, they were declared an extreme threat to the general public, and with the help of a well-connected Toreador friend, the police knew just where to pick up the dangerous but comparatively weak members of the Sabbat.

HIGH SOCIETY

In times of (relative) peace, the Kindred with sway in the areas of art, culture and society has massive power in the halls of Elysium, able to crush or create fashion and popularity at a whim. When war comes to the city, that same Kindred may well find herself relegated to second fiddle, with less to contribute than many others. However, the social viper still has fangs.

One of the nastiest techniques of social warfare was originated by Natasha Dubois, a Toreador from Atlanta. She found herself stuck in a city under siege, hunted by a powerful Sabbat elder and his pack. She could not track him down, and he always seemed to be

in three places at once. She finally found her solution by doing to him what she would never do to an enemy in the Camarilla: She made him popular. Within a week, Dr. Julius Sutphen was the talk of the town and couldn't go anywhere without it being written about in the newspaper and gossiped about in clubs. Within two weeks, Natasha had a good idea of where he was holed up and had her ghouls set up a horrible trap. She still shows friends the videotape made by her servants as they broke in a blacked-out window and hung the crystal disco ball from the window frame, in the full glare of the sun, destroying his child. Though the ruse didn't destroy her rival, it destroyed the progeny of the bishop-to-be. As Ms. Dubois is still known to quote at parties when she visits New York, "Remember, sweetie, art kills."

INDUSTRY

Another workhorse in the world of influence, this undervalued field of influence becomes vastly useful in times of conflict. From heavy I-beams to reinforce the prince's haven, to cutting torches to remove the steel door of a Sabbat stronghold, those with sway in industrial circles can obtain a broad array of "raw materials" and the means to build with (or demolish) them, given a night or two and a few phone calls.

GOD BLESS THE LAWYERS

From the almanac of Ludo Giovanni

The necessity of good legal help can be best demonstrated by a group of mortals. Even if one drags a promising mortal into the society of the Damned, her descendants still have a lot to teach us about being devious and manipulative.

During the Mob wars of the 1920s, both sides had judges and district attorneys who were bought and paid for. Because of this, those "made men" often went from the jail cell to the local speakeasy within hours, not days. Legend has it that one Mob boss was arrested and released three times in one night and still made it to bed by dawn. It's easy to rely on your friends who have contacts among the police, but the thing is they don't "control" anything. They quietly suggest that the police look the other way, but there's always some individual officer who won't take a hint from his sergeant. That's when the legal help comes in. When it's two hours until dawn and you're stuck in a cell with a window, having friends who know the judge is a lot nicer than sitting and waiting....

A favorite trick of the Brujah in New Jersey is to procure several trucks full of concrete and have their allies drive over to a suspected Sabbat haven during the day. Backing each truck up to the basement window, the allies empty hundreds of gallons of concrete into the building, leaving a high-capacity heater blowing into the crawlspace to dry the mixture. This tactic usually doesn't trap many vampires, but it ruins weapons and equipment, angers the Sabbat who wake up covered in concrete, and encourages them to sleep in the aboveground floors of a building, where they're even more vulnerable.

LEGAL

Camarilla members must often cut corners when fighting the Sabbat and sometimes find themselves with a shotgun in their hand, police at the door and few explanations for the blood on the floor. At times like this, the ability to have the charges dropped is vital to continuing survival.

Legal representation is also key to cleaning up after the Sabbat leaves. Allies who fell into hot water because of helping you are a lot less likely to leave if you can get them off with a few weeks of community service as opposed to jail time. In this way, your mortal allies are more likely to do a similar favor in the future, because they know you'll watch out for them.

MEDIA

This is the Holy Grail of influence during a Sabbat attack. He who influences the media has power over the minds of the mortal city. With minor amounts of nudging, a damaging story can be bumped back a few pages. With a few angry dinner meetings, the story can disappear completely. When members of the Sabbat ride motorcycles through the subway and shoot mortals at random, it can be an unlife-saver to make such unpleasantness go away, at least in print.

TRANSPORTATION

Influence of the media or the police can be essential for success during a Sabbat invasion, but the ability to even briefly alter some small aspect of a city's transportation can be key to success on the rare occasions that the Camarilla is on the offensive.

In tonight's modern city, it's almost impossible to close off a city from transportation due to the massive freeways and highways cutting through almost every urban center, not to mention airports and train stations. However, it's still possible to make movement

UNKNOWN ALLIES

From the almanac of Ludo Giovanni

I was once caught in a Sabbat invasion while doing some business down in Dallas. Never heard of a Sabbat invasion in Dallas? That's because as far as almost everyone is concerned, it never happened. Let me explain.

The Sabbat rode in with a minimal attack force, overly confident of victory. The prince was panicked, because he's got a total of maybe two dozen Kindred who make their havens in the city and more than a few of them are Brujah who couldn't be subtle to save their lives. In fact, his main responsibility most nights was to keep *them* from breaking the Masquerade.

The Sabbat roared in and started breaking the Masquerade like untapped kegs when the Irish come to dinner. The prince begged me for help. I couldn't give it to him explicitly, because it's still technically a political involvement, and you know how my family is about that. So we're all figuring the end is near, then the weirdest thing happens. Nothing shows up in the paper, or on television. Nothing. It's like there's a whole different universe being reported through the media.

I figured that someone was covering up and told the prince to not look a gift horse in the mouth. He sent his Brujah goons into action, and while they're trading shotgun blasts with the Sabbat in a downtown coffee shop, the newspaper is reporting on the hot weather for that time of year. Then the newscaster on the radio says that a one-block area downtown was closed off due to a gas leak, and we headed there right away. Sure enough, the HQ for the invasion was in the basement of a diner, right in that block. A few hours later, the Sabbat are wiped out, and no one can figure out who could control the media. Normally we push or nudge the mortal institutions, but this was as close to "control" as I've ever seen, and I've seen powerful elders leaning hard on their influence networks with less impressive results than this.

Two nights later I'm checking out of my hotel, and I almost get run over by a group of goons in suits, surrounding some shriveled little guy in a wheelchair, also leaving the hotel. The little guy glances up, catches my eye, and I froze. He was old, older than anyone I've ever encountered. I stood there sweating blood for almost half an hour, and then I left that city as fast as I possibly could. Thinking back, I suspect that the Sabbat attack was more of an annoyance than a threat to him, so he waved his hand and changed reality, through the media. Being able to command the dead or break through brick walls is nice, but it's nothing compared to being able to just shut down a city's communications.

very difficult for enemies and easy for one's allies. In the midst of a conflict, this influence tends to be all about brute force. With almost every other area of influence, the subtle hand wins the night. When the chips are down, those with sway in transportation tend to do best by acting decisively, and with an almost alarming obviousness. When a subway train is speeding across town, and it's known that a pack of Sabbat is onboard, a single phone call can mean the difference between victory and defeat. The Sabbat Cainites know something is up when the train stops in the tunnel, but the gamble is that by then they will be too late to do anything about it.

Rumor has it that the Chunnel fire of several years ago was not entirely accidental. A group of very dangerous Sabbat assassins were traveling to England, and the Kindred on the other end of the tunnel didn't really feel good about sharing the wealth with the Sabbat (let alone French Sabbat). In France, an igniter was attached to the truck, and in the Chunnel, the truck began to burn. The train was slowing to a stop when the controller received a very persuasive phone call. The train sped back up over its normal speed, fanning the flames even hotter. By the time the controller felt brave and stopped the train halfway through the Chunnel, the assassins in the truck were dust. The next three years were a cat-and-mouse game with investigators, covering up clues as they were discovered, but the Kindred involved felt it was worth the prolonged effort.

UNDERWORLD

At once the best weapon against the Sabbat and the most obvious one, a Kindred presence among the organized criminals of a city can add allies at a time when every trigger finger counts. Gunmen for the Mob are used to working a job with no questions asked, and most Kindred who work with the Mafia feel that hired killers fall under the "ghouls/etc." clause of the Masquerade. In other words, if the mortals never talk about what they saw, no harm done.

In most Sabbat attacks, many of the Sabbat Cainites are barely out of the grave and are unused to being undead or fighters. On the other hand, those who once lived the life of organized crime legbreakers are very accustomed to hurting and killing people for money. Add to this the ability to procure weapons, bombs and body armor, and the Kindred with his dirty fingers dug into the underworld can be a powerful contender against the Sabbat. Of course, it's sometimes hard to go back to

DYING CAN BE USEFUL

From the almanac of Ludo Giovanni

In Boston, not too long ago, we had a small problem with a group of brand-new Sabbat heavies who kept terrorizing my family, figuring we were easy targets compared to the Camarilla. We were getting sick of dealing with them, so we arranged for dinner with the head of the local Mafia family, on a night we suspected the Sabbat thugs were going to try something.

Sure enough, they drove by in a big panel van and gunned down everyone at our table. We stayed still until we got to the morgue, had our people working there look the other way while we departed, and then counted our losses. We would each need a new mortal identity, since we had "died" in public. The important thing was, the Mob boss was dead. Was this bad or good? Good, in this case.

The local Mafia family went crazy with grief and rage. They're still very big on family pride in Boston, partly to keep the flame burning from the old days, so they geared up all their knuckle-draggers and sent them after the Sabbat thugs. They finally cornered them in this biker bar. My God, you haven't seen firepower until you've seen the Mafia on a bad hair day. Some Kindred say that bullets don't hurt us, but what they really mean is that bullets cause us less structural damage. The thing is, with enough bullets, we still hurt pretty badly. The pain receptors still fire, unfortunately. Following one of our earlier suggestions, the goons took hacksaws and cut the heads off of the Sabbat, who they figured were bikers. It wasn't a stake and holy water, but it was enough. The Mob got their revenge, we got the Sabbat off our back, and everyone came out feeling like winners. Except, of course, for those poor headless bastards from the Sabbat....

subtle behavior after the crisis is done. More than one Kindred has been foiled by his inability to give up his new "toys," most of which are illegally obtained and traceable by serial numbers.

UNIVERSITY

What could be more useless in a time of crisis than influence over students and teachers?

On the contrary, some clever Kindred find remarkably good uses for this overlooked field of influence. The mental block that most Kindred create is to concentrate on the people involved in education and lose sight of the educational institutions themselves.

Universities and even some large high schools are like cities unto themselves. They have their own apartments, restaurants, police and every other amenity of a small city. Those few Kindred who take the time to grow deep roots of influence in a university find themselves at a city within a city. When the Sabbat invade, they often have the same blind spot that Camarilla Kindred have toward universities. Many Kindred find it possible to sidestep a Sabbat invasion entirely, holing up within their mini-city, watching the drama play out in the rest of the urban jungle. The only danger is that the Sabbat sometimes wins, leaving a few Camarilla Kindred isolated in the middle of Sabbat territory. Such are the risks of diversion plays.

An opposite tack was taken by Bruce Pittman, an ancilla who was Embraced into Clan Brujah right after graduation from Pinetree College in Olympia, Washington. He stayed there and built up quite a network of influence until the Sabbat siege of 1984. The Ventrue fought long and hard against the invaders, since Olympia was the state's capital and a rich prize for the Sabbat. They weathered such a long (and eventually unsuccessful) siege due to Pittman.

Pinetree College was built during the turbulent '60s and '70s. Like many colleges built during that era, the campus was built with huge tunnels connecting the basements of all major buildings. The tunnels were big enough to drive a car through and were put in under the assumption that student riots might occur at some future date. The tunnels allowed the National Guard to evacuate the staff from all over campus without ever having to fight through the students rioting aboveground. The students were told that the cavernous trenches dug during construction were for "steam tunnels" to heat the campus.

Bruce Pittman had long ago seen the advantages of the steam tunnels. When the Sabbat invaded Olympia, he allowed the prince and his forces to create emergency havens in the basements of several campus buildings, with an exit emerging out the back of the college grounds. With this secret bunker complex in a location the Sabbat would never suspect, the prince and his Ventrue allies were able to continue fighting and eventually drive out the Sabbat.

In other cases, presence in the halls of academia can go unnoticed for a great deal of time. For almost 200 years, New York City had been widely accepted as a Sabbat city, yet the Chantry of the Five Boroughs operated therein for at least half of that time — centered

as it was first at Columbia University and then later at Barnard College. More often than not, the Sabbat tends to overlook pockets of quiet resistance. Hiding in those blind spots may serve the Camarilla well.

CONTROL VERSUS INFLUENCE

Those inexperienced in the ways of the Jyhad often blunder into the field of influence with only a vague idea of how to use it properly. They base their understanding on conspiracy theories and television shows, in which all-powerful masterminds sit behind large desks in dim lighting, ordering their minions about and smoking endless packs of cigarettes. The elders find this sort of naiveté quaint and often chide the new recruit for his foolishness. They know that true influence comes by showing the mortals why they want to take certain actions and by trading favors with those mortals. Being able to convince a lawyer why he should lie in court is much more useful than being able to Dominate his mind. If you end up owing him a membership at the country club, so be it. Paying back favors is usually easy when you have the resources of an undying schemer. However, for all their savvy and intelligence, these same elders can make the mistakes of a neonate when the Sabbat comes knocking on the door.

The members of the Sabbat rarely involve themselves in influencing mortals, but those who do often do it very well. To outside observers, the elders of the Black Hand seem to have no scruples and appear to be coldly dispassionate players of the influence game. The elders of the Camarilla are often resentful, fearful of Final Death and nervous about taking risks. In the midst of a war, even a shadow war, the elders of the Camarilla can often become as awkward as the neonates they mock in "peaceful" times. They seek to control the masses rather than influence them, hoping to remove the element of chance from the Jyhad. In a chess game against passionless, inhumane opponents, that sort of stumbling can spell doom for an entire city.

WAR IS... OPPORTUNITY

Conflict between the sects is a landscape of sorrow for many, but a landscape of opportunity for a few. The Camarilla is a static, slow-moving behemoth with few chances for the young to advance in power and prestige. However, conflict changes all of that. When a prince feels cornered and helpless, she does not care who saves

DRAGMATIC ZEALOTRY

From the almanac of Ludo Giovanni

I once asked a Brujah neonate why he was getting ready to head across the country and fight the Sabbat for a clutch of elders who represented everything he hated. His amazingly pragmatic answer explained to me why the Camarilla will never lose to the Sabbat: "I hate our elders and their egotistical political crap. The thing is, I hate the Sabbat elders even more. At least the Ventrue leave me alone when I walk down the street. The Sabbat is like those guys who kill abortion doctors in the interests of preventing murder. I wanted to strangle them when I was mortal, and now I can... with the blessings of the guys in charge."

her domain, whether it is an elder or a rank neonate. The ongoing war with the Sabbat is a source of constant worry and irritation to the elders of the Camarilla, but to many wily neonates and ancillae, the war with the Sabbat is just the outside agitation they need to climb higher up the ladder of success.

In fact, the Sabbat actually wins many battles but will almost certainly lose the war. Every victory against the Camarilla displaces a handful of elders and leaves power vacuums within clans, while every victory by the Camarilla against the Sabbat is often due to the quick thinking of a young vampire with a good sense of timing. Without an enemy, the Camarilla would turn inward and eat itself—more so than it already does. In the face of the constant threats posed by the Sabbat and the anarchs, the Camarilla remains unified.

HOW TO KILL YOUR ENEMIES AND EARN PRESTIGE

The neonate who wants to climb the social ladder of the Camarilla follows five simple guidelines.

Avoid violence. The average "war" against the Sabbat isn't two sides facing off like British and colonial troops in the American Revolutionary War. It's a series of three-on-one gunfights and the occasional pipe-bombing of a suspected safe house, combined with panicked and desperate power plays using mortal influence that the Kindred hold only tenuously. Only the most brutish Brujah wade into that sort of bloody conflict without worry, because they're built for combat. The Gangrel used to join in, but they're only in it for the money now or to save their own Damned hides.



The wise neonate stays out of the direct violence when she has any chance of Final Death, and instead helps out from the sidelines or behind the scenes.

Coordinate influence. If you have some sway over the downtown hospital, and you know another neonate with influence among the downtown biker gangs, work with her to develop some "synergy," as the Ventrue like to say. If she knows that her biker gangs can get quick treatment at the hospital downtown, she's more likely to rally them against the "rival gang," which is to say the Sabbat. After the battle is won, you both look good to the prince.

Keep moving. The Sabbat isn't the horde of slaving fiends the elders often paint them as. Its members are Cainites fighting a holy war. They are often tactical geniuses, able to track down your haven and kill you where you sleep. Avoid complacency and keep moving. Use cash instead of credit and sleep someplace new every night.

Avoid patterns. Most mortals follow the same pattern every day, with only minor variations. The Kindred, static and creatures of habit, are even more likely to visit the same clubs, shop at the same stores and walk the same streets every single night. To a trained Sabbat killer (or a mortal hunter), patterns allow for an easy and predictable stalking. Avoid patterns. Embrace randomness. The Malkavians are dangerous because they're unpredictable. Follow their lead, while avoiding their penchant for screaming insanity and child strangling....

Take calculated risks. A well-trained force of religious fanatics has just decided that your city is their new stomping ground. You will most likely be destroyed within a month. The clever Kindred has no better time than the present to take a few risks and hope for a big payoff. Smart Kindred know that most neonates in the modern nights never achieve more than marginal amounts of power, and that times of crisis are often times of opportunity. When the coin toss is between death and the possibility of real power, many neonates gladly flip the coin and hope for the best.

FIGHTING FIRE WITH FIRE

The Sabbat hordes take few prisoners, ignores the Masquerade when it suits them and Embraces mortals with wanton disregard for the lives it ruins or the world it affects. Camarilla Kindred are hard-pressed to deal with those factors, and the leaders of the sect have often been accused of being slow to change tactics and fight

the Sabbat on its own ground. In fact, many neonates and ancillae have decided that if the Camarilla elders won't protect them, they have no choice but to protect themselves. Using the communications network handed to them by the advent of the Internet and cheap cell phones, these young Kindred have already made some inroads against individual Sabbat packs.

THE CREW

This network of neonates and ancillae grew out of a coterie in Boston that decided it needed a paradigm shift. Rather than wait for the Sabbat to attack a city and follow the orders of Camarilla elders, the Crew decided to fight fire with fire and learn more about the Sabbat. Maybe then the Sabbat could be fought on its own terms, on its own turf. Under the adept hand of a Nosferatu in the coterie, the Crew sent out feelers across the Internet and to the e-mail addresses of young Kindred along the East Coast, inquiring about interest in this radical departure from standard Camarilla tactics. What they received in return was an avalanche of enthusiasm.

The network known as the Crew now stretches throughout the United States and parts of Europe. Members of this loose cabal research the Sabbat, often taking dangerous risks to find information about the tactics, beliefs and weaknesses of the enemy. Individual cells of the network pass that information on to other cells throughout the group, so that all members of the Crew share in the gained knowledge. It is quite an impressive organization, especially for Kindred normally assumed to be powerless members of the ivory tower. Indeed, the Crew has a seemingly inestimable degree of contacts and informants, including members of the anarchs, the Unbound, SchreckNET, and even, some whisper, the paranormal researchers of the Arcanum.

This alliance of the young has not gone unnoticed in the higher levels of the Camarilla. The elders have their spies in the network, always eager for more information without risk to themselves. Several princes know about this information exchange, though they often do not care if the neonates trade secrets that everyone knows already. It is rumored that a justicar has heard of the Crew, but if one has, she has taken no action. However, some aspects of the Crew would make the elders of the Camarilla very nervous if they bothered to look deeper.

Secrets Revealed

The Crew has discovered some interesting information about the Sabbat. This information might be widely known to the more powerful members of the

Camarilla, but to these new players in the Jyhad, every new revelation is fresh and surprising.

The members of the network now know that the Sabbat occasionally uses mass Embraces as a quick-and-dirty method to build up the mobs of Cainites they sometimes hurl against the Camarilla, and they know that the Sabbat ignores the Masquerade at key times, at least while attacking the Camarilla. The Crew also knows that individual Sabbat run in coterie called packs and tend to stay together in communal havens. They know that the Sabbat disdains mortals, and does not curry favor and influence among them. They also have some vague idea of the religious fervor of the Sabbat, but are unsure whether the devotion to the sect is genuine or just a front to distract outsiders from the truth. The Crew has little knowledge of the Vaulderie; its theories regarding the Sabbat are sometimes far off the mark. However, what it does know has been enough to convince them that they need to change their tactics from the reactive, politely human defense they have been conducting in the time of Sabbat aggression.

Walk Like You, Talk Like You...

After a year of information gathering, the originators of the Crew summarized the findings of all the neonates and sent out a compilation of that information plus a report suggesting changes to the structure of the cells in each city. The changes were summarized at the end of the document.

No regard for human casualties, making them hard to fight in a civilized fashion. Due to these findings, we suggest the following summary of changes to the tactics of each crew cell worldwide. Each suggestion is elaborated upon later in this document.

1. Organize communal havens. Each cell should procure a building in a poor part of town or an industrial area of your city. Equip it with fire sprinklers and wire-reinforced windows. When the Sabbat begins an invasion of your city, all members of your cell should assemble at the communal haven within a few nights of knowing the Sabbat are active. For the duration of the conflict, the crew in your city should sleep at the communal haven.
2. Gather weapons. By any means necessary, procure a stockpile of weaponry for the communal haven. More important than getting big guns, acquire some sort of body armor or vests to stop the bullets of the enemy.
3. Use cell phones. Every member of the crew should have a cell phone equipped with a hands-free headset. In the event of an attack, this technology allows the cell in your city to be in instant communication with each other. Why the headset? Because people who drive with one hand and hold a cell phone with the other are assholes.
4. Share your supernatural acumen. The Sabbat seems completely unconcerned about Prestation and boons, and they share their mystical knowledge with each

other freely. Follow their lead and teach your powers to the other crew members in your city.

5. Develop your influence. The elders of our sect can handle all the high-level influence, but it is suggested that the crew should be capable of gathering at least a handful of meth-heads, Mafia enforcers or other violent types with only a few phone calls to the right people. The Sabbat rarely uses mortals for its dirty work, and this represents a resource that we can exploit against it.
6. Put someone in charge. Sabbat kindred travel in packs, using a leader who is not so much a dictator, as he (or she) is a coordinator for the direction and motivation of the pack. This leader is called the Priest of the Pack. Each cell should designate a Priest for their city, with an assistant to take over in case of casualties. This coordinator is only in charge of coordinating crew activities in the city and does not have further power beyond that.

6a. Don't let other people hear you call your priest a priest! My fangs still haven't grown back in. FIXKERS.

-Narcis

7. Keep gathering information. We still have huge gaps in our knowledge about the sabbat and much that the elders of our own sect will not tell us "for our own good." Keep watching and reporting through the network. The crew must keep building our information pool. Knowledge is power.

In the event of a sabbat attack in your city, we suggest implementing the following procedures:

1. Immediately report to the communal haven.

2. The Priest should ask for reports from every member in order to get a general summary of the sabbat's initial attacks. The Priest should then immediately send that summary to the network, so that all crew cities know of the attack and the tactics used by the enemy.

3. The Priest should organize the crew of the city into a prearranged strike team. The team should have combat capabilities, some ability to talk its way out of trouble with mortal authorities and the ability to hide and withdraw. Do NOT neglect the last two requirements. If you walk around with weapons, you must be prepared to explain them to the inquisitive, or withdraw. Every mortal you shoot is a sabbat member who survives because you don't have an extra bullet. The strike team should spend half the time looking for sabbat activity, and half the time resting and monitoring local police radios and news reports. If the strike team encounters sabbat resistance during a patrol, the team should not be concerned about mortal casualties or the Masquerade during that encounter. The sabbat will ignore those factors, and we must do the same to win. The elders will clean up afterward. Make sure to wear masks, so we aren't punished after the invasion is over.

4. Gather sustenance. If you know of any general still in your area, talk to them. They are better than even the Nosferatu at gathering animals. In a time of war, you rarely have the luxury of feeding on mortals. Your hunger makes you stronger in battle, and animal blood works just as well as mortal blood for fueling your strength and speed.

5. Find the sabbat haven. This is essential to success and will be difficult. The sabbat is likely based out of a communal haven. Find it, but do not attack it.

6. Call in your mortal influence. Gather the largest crew possible of thugs, lowlife killers and psychopaths. Embrace them and explain the situation. Give them a few hours of training and a map of potential targets, and assign them to an existing member of the team.

7. Attack the sabbat haven. Send in the new recruits first, then enter the building. The strike team should kill anyone they encounter, even if the victim appears mortal. Everyone in a sabbat haven is the enemy or a victim, and killing the victims of the sabbat is merciful.

8. One member of the strike team should be assigned to capture a member of the sabbat for questioning. This adds to our knowledge for future attacks. Beware the mind control arts of the sabbat. They have ways of turning our members against us, so the member of the team assigned to capture should be watched for several months after the invasion to check for possible treachery.

9. The strike team should not allow a member of the team to be captured. If a member of the strike team is in danger or being captured, it is essential that the team and the compromised member do everything possible to kill the compromised member of the team. The sabbat must not know we are wise to their tricks.

10. Once the operation is complete, clean the site. Burn the building and the bodies inside, friend and foe alike. Withdraw before the authorities arrive and rendezvous back at the haven for debriefing and assignment to kill any remaining sabbat. The new recruits, if any survived, should be either disposed of or taught enough to survive on their own.

11. The Priest of the City should write up a summary of the operation and send it to the network. In this way, the rest of the crew can see what worked and build on it.

CONFUSION AND CONCERN

The Crew has managed to defeat a preliminary incursion by the Sabbat in Seattle, overrunning the haven of the Cainites while they prepared for their second round of attacks. They have continued their information gathering, and several cities now have neonates with quiet black cell phones, neonates who seem much more sure of themselves and confident about existence than the average toady to the elders.

The reaction within the Sabbat has been one of confusion. A ductus in San Diego managed to corner a Crew member on a solo scouting mission. As she cowered in the corner, he used his considerable mental powers to made her speak the truth about her purpose. She babbled something about failing her priest and betraying the Crew before the rest of her friends arrived and opened fire. Shockingly, she threw herself into the oncoming gunfire, ensuring her torpor, if not death. After checking to ensure that no other packs were operating in the area, the ductus spread the word that some new ideology of anarch had surfaced in the area, a group far more fanatical than in the past, and with an obvious past link to the Sabbat.

For all its simple success, the Crew has a fatal flaw. Its methodology is that of the Sabbat, but without two crucial pieces of the puzzle, the Crew is probably destined for failure. The Crew lacks the Vaulderie to give it unity, and most importantly, it lacks the strict Paths that leaders of the Sabbat sometimes follow. The members of the Sabbat are able to commit inhuman acts because they *are* inhuman, following ethical codes that are far different from mortals. On the other hand, the Crew commits the same or similar atrocities while trying to follow a moral code that doesn't work in night-to-night practice. Those who (unwittingly or not) follow what some call the Path of Humanity cannot kill

BRINGING THE SABBAT TO HEEL

From the almanac of Ludo Giovanni

I've seen the Camarilla act like a horse with blinders. But I've also seen a lot of very clever Kindred fight very hard to keep their unlives intact. Influence is invaluable, but when it's you against three Sabbat in the boiler room of an abandoned housing project, the gifts of Caine are lifesavers, literally. I've summarized below some of the most clever and nastiest tricks I've seen used by the Camarilla against the Sabbat, categorized by the primal powers of the undead. Enjoy!

wantonly — for whatever cause — without eventually falling to the Beast. The Crew is probably doomed to destruction by its lack of moral compass. The members are like children trying to imitate adults without understanding why killing is wrong, or how the Sabbat can see it as right.

ANIMALISM

To oblivious and thoughtless Kindred, this Discipline is just a waste of time. Of course, many Kindred swear by it and love its versatility. I once knew a Gangrel who called hordes of rats and stuffed them into a wooden crate. He'd get a crew together, drip some of his blood into the box, go find the haven of a high-ranking Sabbat vampire and then have a Brujah friend throw the box as hard as he could through the window. A "drive-by ratting" he used to call it, and it sure pissed off the owner of the haven. Rats are such sturdy, resourceful creatures.

Of course the best use he had for this Discipline was less clever, but more useful on a nightly basis. He would always send in a rat or bird before he entered a new building. It seemed paranoid, but more than once he'd send something flying down a hall, only to hear gunfire as someone thought the Gangrel were invading.

AUSPER

The classics are always the best. A rather, unfashionable friend up in Brooklyn impressed some of her buddies by scouting ahead in the astral plane and then mentally telling them where each Cainite was hidden in the ambush five blocks away. When they walked into the ambush, already prepared, she went around behind the hidden Sabbat members. Her friends just looked for her and followed her into what the Sabbat had intended as a trap and put the poor Lick — who thought he had the element of surprise on his side — six feet under. They never gave her a bad time about her leather pants and pink cowboy hats after the invasion was done.

CELERITY

Not a lot of originality here, right? I mean, what so original about hitting fast or running fast? Well, a guy I knew in Chicago told me about a time he was being chased by three Sabbat goons who looked like they wanted to take out their frustrations on him. He couldn't shake them, and he couldn't really put a burst of speed on in front of mortals, right? So he cuts down an alley he knows really well, and before they can react, he runs right up the wall. Well, not exactly. There were these two buildings with one of those gaps that's only a few

feet wide. He just scaled up the middle like he'd seen in those kung fu films. One second, he's dead meat. The next he's four stories off the ground and climbing through an open window.

DOMINATE

Let me tell you from experience, there's not a lot you can't do with this. Let me give away one of the more subtle applications of this power when it comes to the Sabbat.

I occasionally place a mental suggestion in the heads of certain mortals. Mainly I prefer people who see a lot of traffic, like the corner hot dog vendor. He remembers me giving him a weird look, but plenty of people give him weird looks. I just give him a list of the stuff some foolish Sabbat like to do in public, like firing weapons, creating darkness out of nowhere and baring their fangs. Then I tell the fellow, "If you see anything like that, you call me, okay?" By the time a pack of Sabbat showed up in my town, there must have been over a hundred mortals walking around with my little suggestion buried way back in their brains. I got a call from a pizza driver describing some idiots riding horses through the town center and shooting each other with pistols, and I packed my bags and left town. From what I hear, every non-Sabbat vampire in the city was dead three nights later. Tricks like this are why I'll be around forever. Of course, a few of the people I did this to ended up in therapy, but that's the tradeoff for using mystical powers on someone's mind. Some eggs are delicate, and a careful hand is always best.

FORTITUDE

Like most of the physical stuff, there's not a lot that can be said for clever uses of this power. However, leave it to the Ventrue to find a use for anything. I knew a business rival in Prague who was accosted by a pack of Sabbat thugs while he was pretending to eat dinner at the home of a business associate. They had already killed his mortal friend and were headed his way. There's no one around, it's a private apartment, and it's on the 12th floor. He's totally desperate and decides to gamble on the window. He grabs one of the thugs, throws himself out the window, and uses the Sabbat drone as an airbag for the impact. The thug is dead as soon as they crash into the alley, and my friend can barely move, he's got so many broken bones. Nonetheless, he dragged himself out of the area



before the other two goons could take the elevator down. He told me that he used to regret concentrating so much on his physical resilience.

OBFUSCATE

A Nosferatu associate of mine had the unfortunate affliction of extreme height. After her Embrace, she stood about seven feet tall and had to wear a back brace almost all the time. Well, the city was overrun by the Sabbat, and everyone else had fled or gone to ground. The problem for my Nosferatu friend was that she was watching over her mortal family in town. With a little effort, she used her abilities of mental suggestion to make herself look like the nastiest Tzimisce fleshcrafter you've ever seen. She stayed around for another two weeks until the Camarilla managed to retake the city. Ironically, they killed her in the process, thinking that she was one of the Sabbat. It was only after she was dead that they realized their mistake. I guess she just got too much into her character.

POTENCE

Well, the obvious use for this power is to hit Sabbat vampires very, very hard, but the creative Kindred can find a lot of uses for those extra muscles. A clanmate of mine was a specialist in brute force. One time we had to leave a gambling establishment rather quickly. On the way out, he stopped at the car of the person chasing us and kicked the tire off. Yes, he literally kicked the tire off the wheel.

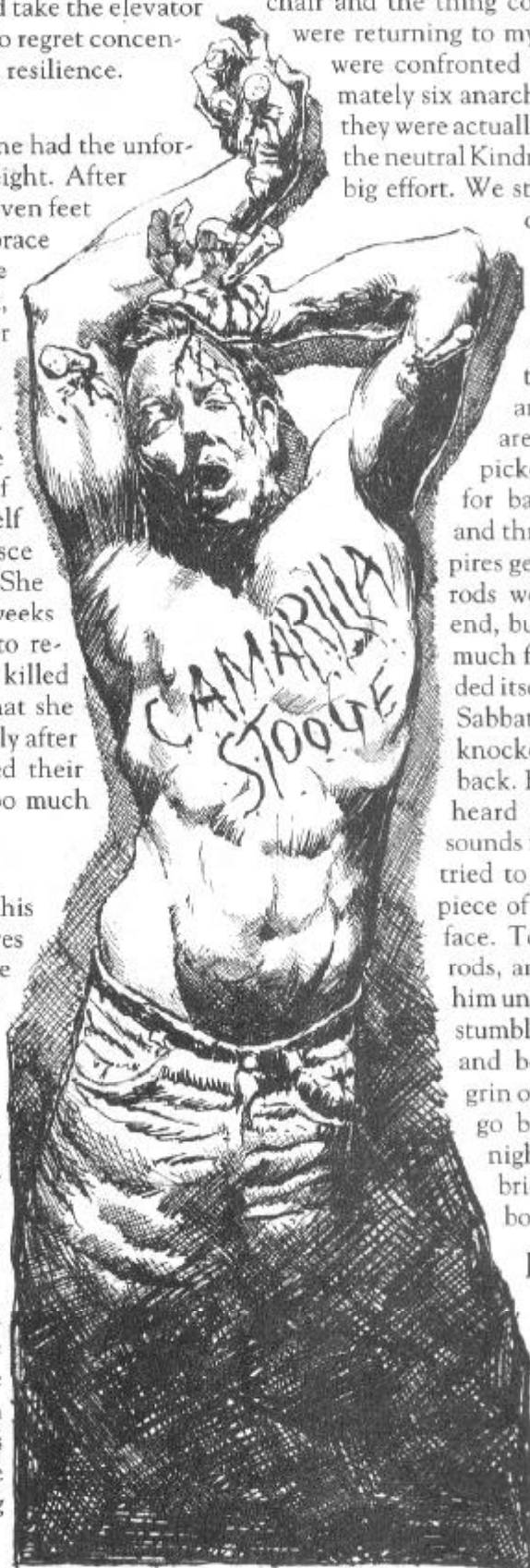
He also used to carry around this briefcase everywhere he went and never told anyone what was in it. I didn't even know, but I knew that it was uncharacteristically heavy. He once set it down on a folding

chair and the thing collapsed. In any case, we were returning to my home one evening and were confronted by this pack of approximately six anarchists. As we found out later, they were actually Sabbat, sent to push out the neutral Kindred before they made their big effort. We stopped, and Tony looked

over at me and said, "Run along, Ludo. I'll catch up in a minute." I started backing away, and I watched as Tony set down the briefcase, unlocked it and opened it up. Inside are all these metal rods. He picked up two, hefted them for balance, and then turned and threw them at the two vampires getting close to him. These rods weren't sharpened on the end, but he threw them with so much force that one rod imbedded itself into the side of the first Sabbat's head, and the other rod knocked the second onto his back. Before I started running, I heard these horrible gurgling sounds from the second guy as he tried to scream around the huge piece of metal sticking out of his face. Tony picked up two more rods, and that's the last I saw of him until close to dawn. He came stumbling in to my haven, bloody and beaten, but with a mean grin on his face. "Remind me to go by the foundry tomorrow night," he said, and tossed the briefcase onto my couch. It bounced, as light as a feather.

PRESENCE

The subtlety of social powers can sometimes make you think that they're not even working. A little Brujah named Nikki out on the West Coast had this same problem one night. She



was in a strange city with no idea of who was in charge. That sort of thing happens all the time to Brujah; they've got no concept of calling ahead. Anyway, she noticed this Kindred who wasn't exactly subtle about the paleness and lack of blinking, and she followed him into this bar at the back of an alley. She tailed him through the main room and got into the private room in back after a long look from the Kindred doorman. That's when she realized that she was in the wrong bar.

From what she described, there were mortal bodies strung up all over the room, with blood everywhere. Some guys in suits had a crib set up and were poking infants with fondue forks, laughing and listening to them cry. She said that they even had a Kindred nailed to the wall, with a sign around his neck that said "CAMARILLA STOOGE." Evidently she started to retch, and the whole room went silent. This nasty-looking Nosferatu came hobbling across the room and leered at her. "Hmm, maybe you've got the wrong room, dearie?" he said, and the other Kindred cackled. He kept getting closer and closer, and slid a black pair of pliers out of his jacket. That's when little Nikki proved that the Brujah attitude is sometimes a useful thing.

She drew herself up really straight, and looked right at him. "Yes, I do seem to be in the wrong place. Thank you for correcting me. I'll be going now." Then she cranks up the "pomp and circumstance" (that's what she used to call her social powers) and stared at him, daring him to jump her. Everyone else backed away, and even this Nosferatu looked a little perturbed, but then he started forward again. That's when she pulled a gambit I'm not even sure I would've had the guts to try: She snarled at him, baring her fangs. She got lucky. He whimpered and scuttled away. She looked around really slowly, and no one was breathing. She backed out of the room, walked slowly to the door of the club, and ran like a racehorse all the way to her car.

PROTEAN

This crazy Gangrel I used to know down in Mexico ran this pack of Camarilla Kindred. They were dedicated to fighting the Sabbat over something that happened a hundred years ago — I think they may have once been an Old West outlaw gang. They resided in Mexico because there were more of the Sabbat vampires down there, and they had some amazing tricks for beating haven security

of elder Sabbat. One time they found this haven that had a large vault the size of an RV, made of some sort of steel plating. Augustus himself couldn't have busted through that thing. So they left for the night and sent their ghoul down to the hardware store the next day.

The next night, they came back with a bag of tools and an insecticide sprayer. They used a diamond-tipped drill to cut this tiny hole through the armor and then shoved the nozzle of the insecticide sprayer up against the hole. My Gangrel friend had turned to mist and had his buddies suck him into the tank, so they used this pressurized bug sprayer to squirt him into the inside of that huge vault. Once inside, he re-formed. Gangrel can see in the dark like it's twilight, so he just walked over and opened up the door from the inside. I laughed like hell when I heard that story, but now I keep all my long-term havens pressurized from the inside so I don't have to worry about Sabbat Gangrel pulling the same stunt.

THAUMATURGY

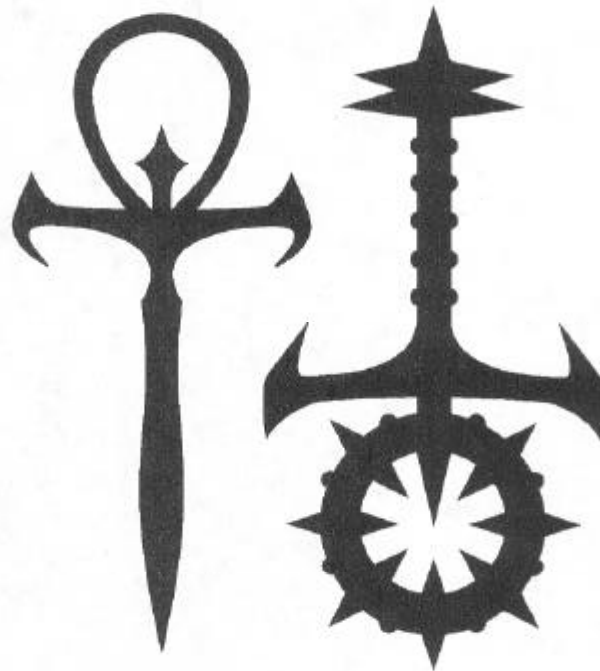
Now, the Tremere are not normally on good relations with the Giovanni, mainly because their magic and our magic are similar enough to cause friction. However, I once found myself a reluctant houseguest in the sanctum of a Tremere, with quite a few Sabbat vampires outside and only an apprentice Warlock to guard the door. It was nearing dawn, and we knew that they'd make an attempt to at least get inside before the sun rose.

My Tremere associate led me to a room right by the main door to the house. It was a long hallway with large skylights, and the first hints of sunlight are already visible. He started chanting. As he droned on and on, he motioned to me to grab a ladder he had propped up in the corner. I ran and grabbed it, and over the next 20 minutes, he directed me where to put the ladder, climbed it, and smeared a bit of his blood on each skylight. The whole time, he kept chanting. As he got done with the final skylight, he stopped chanting, and every skylight instantly went black. Suddenly there was no light in the room at all except the candles in the wall sconces. We stood there at the end of the hall for another 30 minutes, and we're both were expending a lot of effort just to stay awake. We can hear the Sabbat butchering the apprentice and rushed down the hallway. Finally, the door at the other end of the hall opened up and the last of

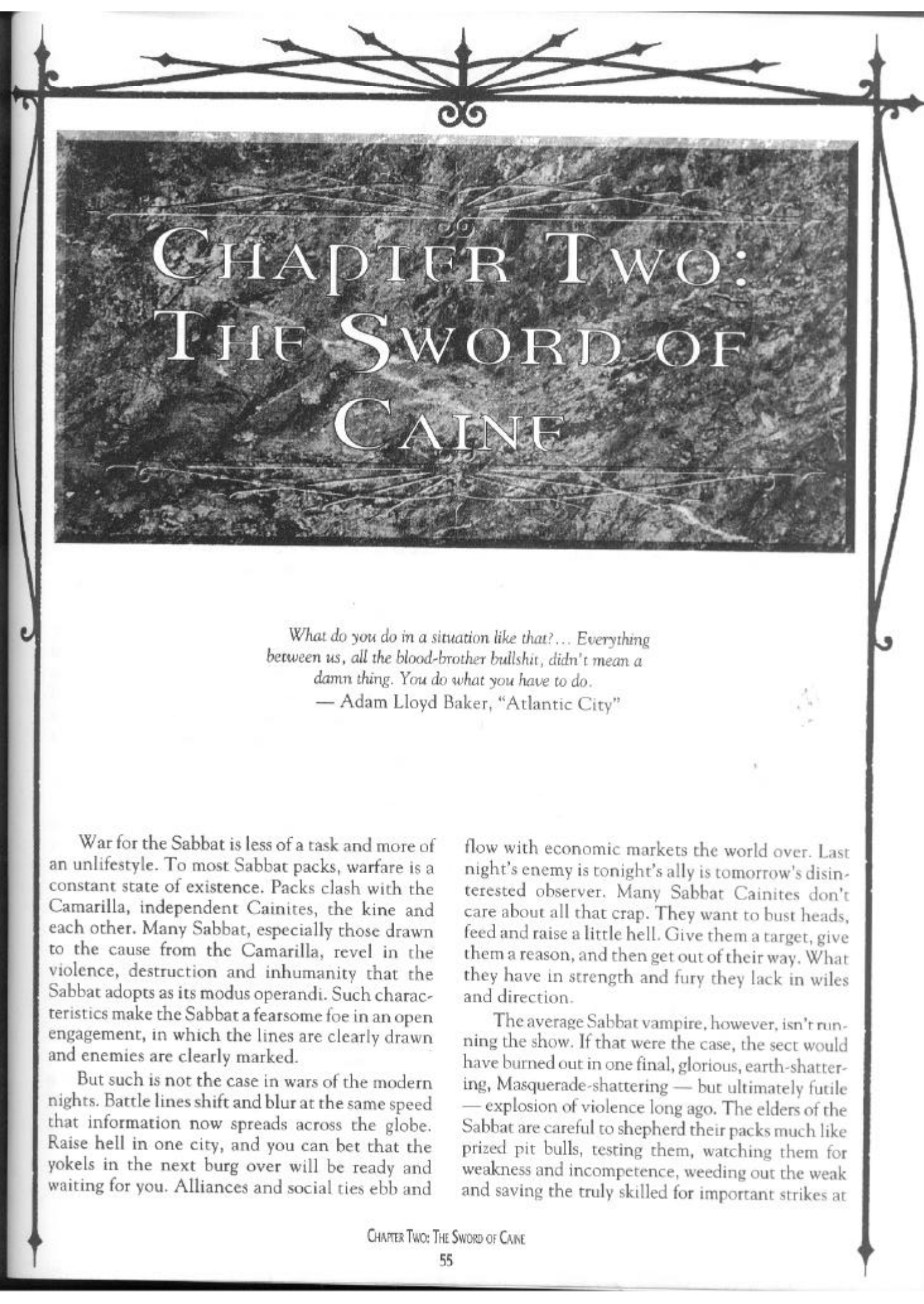
the Sabbat vampires stumbled in, looking very tired and ready to sleep. They came loping down the hall, and the Tremere and I just stood there, so still I thought that he might have fallen asleep. When they were only 20 feet away, he straightened up, looked down at the threshold of the doorway, and very purposefully stepped out of the hallway, and into the room behind us.

Suddenly every skylight went clear again, and sunlight poured in like it was waiting for just such an opportunity. The first vampire in the hallway stopped, looked very startled, and then exploded,

flames and ash flying out in cloud of pain. I could hear his soul screaming as it tore from his dying body, and that's when I slammed shut the oak doors and collapsed next to the Tremere, who was already asleep. As I nodded off, I could hear screaming and fire from the hallway. It was then that I understood how the rest of Kindred society must view us. Like us, the Tremere have powers and tricks beyond the understanding or comfort level of other Kindred, so even the Damned fear and distrust the Tremere. In some ways, I felt a kinship after that incident, and not just because I owed my Tremere associate a sizeable boon.







CHAPTER TWO: THE SWORD OF CAINE

What do you do in a situation like that?... Everything between us, all the blood-brother bullshit, didn't mean a damn thing. You do what you have to do.

— Adam Lloyd Baker, “Atlantic City”

War for the Sabbat is less of a task and more of an unifestyle. To most Sabbat packs, warfare is a constant state of existence. Packs clash with the Camarilla, independent Cainites, the kine and each other. Many Sabbat, especially those drawn to the cause from the Camarilla, revel in the violence, destruction and inhumanity that the Sabbat adopts as its *modus operandi*. Such characteristics make the Sabbat a fearsome foe in an open engagement, in which the lines are clearly drawn and enemies are clearly marked.

But such is not the case in wars of the modern nights. Battle lines shift and blur at the same speed that information now spreads across the globe. Raise hell in one city, and you can bet that the yokels in the next burg over will be ready and waiting for you. Alliances and social ties ebb and

flow with economic markets the world over. Last night's enemy is tonight's ally is tomorrow's disinterested observer. Many Sabbat Cainites don't care about all that crap. They want to bust heads, feed and raise a little hell. Give them a target, give them a reason, and then get out of their way. What they have in strength and fury they lack in wiles and direction.

The average Sabbat vampire, however, isn't running the show. If that were the case, the sect would have burned out in one final, glorious, earth-shattering, Masquerade-shattering — but ultimately futile — explosion of violence long ago. The elders of the Sabbat are careful to shepherd their packs much like prized pit bulls, testing them, watching them for weakness and incompetence, weeding out the weak and saving the truly skilled for important strikes at

the enemy. While the neonates seethe with fire and fury, the elders quietly attend to their ledgers of war, carefully balancing their losses and gains. The elders strive to keep the flames of hatred at just the right level: hot enough to scorch the Camarilla, but not so fierce that they burn beyond control. Popular belief holds that the Sabbat is an out-of-control war machine that can barely keep itself together. Sabbat elders don't argue with that, because that's what they want the Camarilla to believe.

ON THE OFFENSIVE

Most Sabbat elders dictate strategy by figuring out what they want and then working backward from there. The sect has no textbook on Sabbat strategy because the Sabbat has no need for one. Developing rigid or even sequential strategies plays into the Camarilla's hands. If every Sabbat siege starts with a few recon parties raising hell in a Camarilla city, the Camarilla can just sit tight and wait for the real assault to begin rather than chasing down skirmishers.

The Sabbat operates a campaign of guerrilla warfare. They hit hard, hit fast and leave the Camarilla wondering just what the hell the point of the entire attack was. If a bishop in Atlanta wants to harass Savannah, he has to avoid any counterblows before they can hit him. The best way to do this is to simply deny the Camarilla any targets. The Sabbat's chaotic nature and disorganization lends itself to this strategy. Since the packs are so hard to keep in line anyway, there's no point in wasting time and energy trying to mold them to a style of warfare to which they are not suited.

The Camarilla's deep entrenchment in the worlds of politics and finance lend them access to resources that most bishops can only envy. The Sabbat can't afford to engage the Camarilla on that sect's terms. To do so is suicide. Instead, the Sabbat must force the Camarilla on the defensive and keep it off balance at every turn. A complacent, predictable Sabbat is a dead Sabbat.

CARROTS AND STICKS

Sieges and crusades are the bread and butter of coordinated Sabbat actions. Of course, in a society like the Sabbat, coordination is a relative term. The elders are not foolish enough to set down rigid plans complete with tightly scheduled rendezvous, elaborate tactical plans and extensive pack cooperation.

Sabbat packs are unreliable enough that such planning would be wasted. All it takes is one righteous Loyalist with a bug up his ass to shoot a tightly organized plan completely to hell. Sabbat elders often prefer to pose commands as requests, tests or rewards. A pack is only rarely "ordered" to go on a rampage in a city park on a certain date. Instead, the pack might hear through trustworthy channels that the archbishop is looking for particularly enthusiastic packs to take part in an upcoming War Party. Showing off Cainite superiority to the kine in a very public place would be the perfect demonstration of the pack's vicious streak, their inside source tells them, putting into motion the archbishop's plans without trampling on the pack's sense of freedom.

Most Sabbat elders are wily enough to realize that in a sect that places such a premium on freedom from both an ideological and practical point of view, convincing the childer that they're doing things out of their own free will goes a long way to getting things done. Sure, a bishop can browbeat the packs and sic his templars on those who don't lick his boots and follow orders. But he'd better be ready to deal with a rival who shows up at his door with every last Cainite he pissed off right behind him, ready to show him exactly where he can stick his high and mighty demands. And if his templars are off acting as his bullies rather than by his side ready to protect him, so much the better for his enemies.

Of course, this system of commands as suggestions and rumors makes the Sabbat awfully hard to reliably direct. The elders play this game because they don't have much choice in the matter. Rather than worry about a problem that is essentially endemic to the nature of the Sabbat, elders try to turn the neonates' obsession with freedom and choice into an advantage. Elders accord high esteem to packs that don't need much prodding to go out there and do the jobs that they've been unwittingly set up to do. A pack that is planning, carrying out and succeeding at tasks that it considers to be of its own devising is a much deadlier weapon than a gang of forced conscripts. If the Bishop of Miami wants his packs to raise some hell in Tampa, he can go about it in two ways: He can whip his packs along with a stick, or he can lure them ahead with a carrot. With the stick approach, he can drag a few truculent neonates along by the fangs and tell them exactly what he

wants done and how he wants them to do it. A pack under orders like that wastes a lot of energy. They may well roll into a Camarilla city pissed off at the bishop, not at their rival sect. If the bishop's lucky and the pack isn't particularly ornery, they work that anger off by giving their task everything they've got and then slinking back home for a pat on the back. Packs like that might do what they're told, but more likely they fuck everything up — if they aren't standoffish enough to resent being pushed around, they probably aren't tough enough to take out anything. A whipped pack moves into Tampa, maybe makes a little noise, and then either runs back home clutching its completely checked off list of things to do or winds up destroyed, probably not before giving up everything they know about the bishop's plan to some Camarilla sheriff or archon. In short, the stick method doesn't work well.

Carrots, on the other hand, are tremendously efficacious. A pack that decides to head on up to Tampa for a little fun, because it heard some rumor that the bishop will appreciate it, does a thorough job with the sadistic flair for which the Sabbat is known. The pack rolls into town ready to bust heads. Its members *want* to be there, they know what they can earn out of smashing things up, and they aren't walking around with a chip on their shoulder, bent out of shape over the Lasombra fuck who sent them there. They make a plan that fits their talents and motivations, things that a bishop is far too busy to take into account if he drew up a detailed plan himself. They improvise and take advantage of opportunities that present themselves, rather than working in resentful subservience to the almighty plan. If they see a tempting target, they go for it because they don't have some stupid-ass plan telling them otherwise.

And if they do screw up, it's most likely because they tried to bite off more than they can chew and crashed and burned in some spectacular fashion, which may end up serving the bishop's needs anyway. And if the pack ends up captured, it doesn't know enough about the big picture to spill anything important. Sure, a pack knows its target for something like a War Party, but if the Camarilla is so dense that it can't figure out what a War Party is up to, it's probably dead already. In situations that require secrecy, a pack doesn't need to know why it's doing something. It doesn't even have to know what it's supposed to be doing, if that can be avoided.

Thus, Sabbat operations are very well thought out and planned at the highest levels, but that planning gives way to chaos and happenstance at the lowest levels. The Bishop of Miami might have a very exact list of what he wants to go down in Tampa, right down to particular Camarilla Cainites he wants whacked. He might send some trusted packs and retainers with specific orders into the city to take care of the really important jobs and set the tone for the siege, but for much of the rest of it he relies on the weight of numbers. If he sends enough packs into Tampa with a vague idea of what they need to do, someone eventually is going to get lucky.

RECON

Reconnaissance is a major part of every Sabbat siege. Cainites are solitary, often isolated, figures. It's easy to overlook even a relatively powerful vampire in a city of more than a million mortals. Few Sabbat war councils convene with someone bringing up the story of Danny O'Brien, the former Bishop of Boston. According to the story, Danny got the bright idea of extending his influence northward, toward Portland, Maine. Initial scouting parties revealed nothing but a few anarchists and some isolated Camarilla-sympathetic undead in the city. Emboldened by the apparently easy pickings, Danny hastily ordered the destruction of the local undead in force. In celebration of the victory, Danny personally headed north to inspect his new domain, only to be torn apart en route by a gang of (then) Camarilla Gangrel quite pissed off to find Sabbat Cainites capering about the urban territory that blighted their beloved wilderness. The other Kindred were bad enough, but the Sabbat was just too much for them to handle. Because of this tale and similar horror stories, Sabbat reconnaissance tends to be thorough.

Aside from the traditional scouting and spying efforts that rely on stealth and keen observation, the Sabbat has grown fond of certain gambits while sniffing out a Camarilla stronghold. One involves sowing confusion and misdirection in the Camarilla while simultaneously drawing out its strength. A particularly bothersome pack or one made up of disposable agitators, suspected traitors or fervent Loyalists is asked or encouraged to set up shop and start raising trouble in a Camarilla city (usually in a manner described under Shattering the Masquerade, below). The pack is then left isolated and given up for destruction.



The kicker is, the pack doesn't know that. Their contacts with the bishop feed them elaborate — and thoroughly false — reports of massive offensives that are in the planning stages, reinforcements that are due “any night,” and elaborate plans to bring in Sabbat Cainites from all over the country for one massive showdown. When the shit hits the fan and the Camarilla brings the hammer down on the hapless pack, the Camarilla hears an earful of this fearsome calamity that's ready to sweep it away.

As the Camarilla reacts to this news, the real spies, the solo operatives who've been watching the entire situation develop all along, carefully take note of the preparations the Camarilla makes — which elders are going to screw whom in the fray, Cainites who might be sympathetic to the cause, conscripts for the frontlines — and report back. When the real siege hits, the Sabbat has a good idea of the Camarilla's resources and plans. The initial feint also pushes the local prince into a “Chicken Little” position, trying to call for support and aid against an attack that might be a complete ruse, just like the last one. Of course, unless the pack set up for this operation is suspected of treachery, a bishop had better hope that the neonates don't hear about tactics like this.

Another ploy is a variation of the one above that lulls the Camarilla into complacency. The initial scouting parties are dispatched into a city with slightly different false information: They've been sent into action as a sort of test. The packs most successful at stirring up trouble have a crack at taking part in an operation aimed at a different city. When the Camarilla responds to the Sabbat presence, it reveals its strength, ends up with false information about the nature of the attack, and may end up in one of two very bad situations. Either the Camarilla in the first city is fooled into a false sense of security, content to know that they aren't the true focus of the attack, or the Camarilla in the alleged target city ramp up their defenses in preparation for a siege, tipping their hand while wasting their resources.

SHATTERING THE MASQUERADE

The Masquerade is a cornerstone of the Camarilla. The Sabbat has it dead in their sights. Sabbat vampires need only saunter into a Camarilla city and do what comes (un)naturally to draw the attention of the kine authorities. The critical goal

in any such action is making sure that the heat hits the Camarilla in the aftermath. A stupid pack exposes itself too much when trying to break the Masquerade. A pack that robs a few convenience stores while blatantly taking gun shot wounds in stride and using Disciplines finds a squad of cops bearing down on them — and it never pays to fuck with the cops. Meanwhile, the Camarilla pulls a few strings in the press and the entire incident is written off as the work of a bunch of PCP freaks on a rampage. The Camarilla is ready to deal with Cainites doing stupid things in a blatant manner. The way the Sabbat sees it, the key to breaking the Masquerade is doing stupid things (relative to how the Camarilla measures them) in a smart manner.

A favorite Sabbat technique is the Jack the Ripper ploy. A pack targets a particular type of mortal that the Camarilla in a city might favor for feeding, such as club kids, prostitutes or the homeless. It systematically butchers one such person once or twice a week. As the story hits the papers, feeding time becomes that much more troublesome for local Kindred as the cops and media invade the social spaces where Kindred interact with the kine. As an added bonus, the bad publicity discourages business, migration to the city, and might even drive away residents, all of which damage the Camarilla's resource base. A variation on this strategy is targeting minor bureaucrats or businessmen and murdering them in ways that involve the blatant use of Disciplines. For example, a Nosferatu *antitribu* may use her powers of stealth to walk right by security guards and murder an office worker, carefully letting herself be caught on videotape but concealing her features well enough that she is unidentifiable on camera. The murder strikes at the upper and middle class core of the city while bringing media attention to the presence of something inexplicable, a win-win situation in the Sabbat's eyes.

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

A common Sabbat tactic is to whittle away at the Camarilla's cohesion and organization. The easiest way to do this is gunning for young Camarilla vampires. While childer don't pose much of a threat to Sabbat operations, they are relatively soft targets that don't normally require much time or resources to bring down. By slowly wearing away the ranks of the Camarilla, the Sabbat sows fear in

its enemies and plants a seed of mistrust and doubt in the minds of Camarilla vampires.

Cainites still tell tales of the Sabbat known only as Goldentongue. According to the tales told around the fires, Goldentongue's identity is kept a secret to maintain his effectiveness against the Camarilla. Posing as a Camarilla member, he infiltrates ivory-tower cities and insinuates himself into the local Cainite community with his cutting-edge artistic skills, the nature of which tends to change with each telling of the story. As a member of the Camarilla community, he allies himself with the neonates of the city, giving them counsel while taking careful note of their habits. He picks out the staunchly pro-Camarilla ones for elimination by Sabbat assassins while swaying the rest with his anti-elder rhetoric, which is carefully crafted to strike a fine line between pointed criticism and an outright call for revolt.

Once the Sabbat begins its siege and the Cainites marked for elimination by Goldentongue are murdered, Goldentongue steps up his rhetoric urging the "defenseless" neonates to abandon the prince who obviously cannot and will not protect them from the marauding Sabbat. If all goes as planned, the Sabbat strips the Camarilla of an important resource and aggravates its numerical disadvantage, forcing skilled and important Camarilla vampires to take on tasks that might have been passed along to the more disposable among them.

Goldentongue's efforts have had an unforeseen but quite welcome side effect. Many Camarilla princes, feeling the heat of a siege or even just Sabbat probes, lash out at those who criticize them and crack down on malcontents, further splintering the Camarilla community and instilling a damaging sense of paranoia and fear in the Camarilla ranks. While no one questions that Goldentongue exists — his efforts have borne fruit for years — his exact nature is open to debate. The story's shifting details may indicate that the Sabbat has a secret network of moles carefully sowing discontent within the Camarilla, or that Goldentongue is simply a *nom de plume* for Cainites who use this sort of technique.

THE SWORD UNSHEATHED

Direct physical assaults are the meat and potatoes of sieges, at least to younger Sabbat vampires. The rank-and-file Sabbat might see an assault on a haven as an excuse to break people, places and

things, while those in the know see it as just another piece of a larger puzzle. Still, a flat-out brawl is just a brawl. If a Sabbat pack spots a lone, known Camarilla Cainite, they often choose to take him down, no questions asked. Sometimes, the only way to dislodge the Camarilla is to send it to the Final Death, one "Kindred" at a time. And if a lone target isn't involved with the Camarilla, then the practice just makes the next attack go that much easier.

When faced with a rumble, the Sabbat prefers to come to the table with plenty of manpower. Shovelheads, fledgling Cainites who have been indoctrinated with a crash course of anti-Camarilla propaganda, most of it rather unbelievable to clued-in Cainites even by the Sabbat's standards, are sent in en masse, a first wave designed to absorb the enemy's initial defenses and counterattacks. Once the shovelheads have absorbed enough Camarilla firepower, the real fighters wade into clean-up whatever's left.

Shovelheads occupy a precarious niche in the Sabbat. Not yet fully initiated into the sect, they are looked upon as disposable firepower, barely above the kine in status and utility. Such disposable Cainites are recruited into the Sabbat in several ways. Besides the typical whack on the head with a shovel, the Sabbat sometimes employs other methods to bind a new Cainite to the cause. Some kine are swayed with promises of immortality and strength. After a display of Cainite fortitude, such as shrugging off a knife wound or gunshot, some kine leap at the chance to join the Sabbat. Such ploys incorporate anti-Camarilla propaganda — such as accounts of how the Camarilla oppresses and controls the world from the shadows — or a promise to "complete" or make permanent the kine's change in return for service. Sometimes, the Sabbat outright lies to the shovelheads, telling them that they are now utterly indestructible and infusing them with courage born of overconfidence. Shovelheads know nothing of the night, and the Sabbat take full advantage of this fact to bend them to the will of the sect and forge them into a useful tool.

Suicide bombers are a desperate, last-ditch Sabbat technique that highlights the disposal nature of newly Embraced Cainites. In the face of a particularly determined foe, a pack may saddle its new allies with explosive devices before they are tossed into the



ground (if the pack practices that method of indoctrination) but not after they awaken in frenzy. In their thirst for blood and in their confused state, most shovelheads might not even notice the explosives planted on them. Once they waded into battle, they usually discover it the hard way once the device detonates, taking out a few disposable recruits along with — hopefully — a relatively powerful, and not easily replaced, Camarilla Cainite. Other stories spread among the packs, including the one about Tzimisce fledglings who unknowingly had their flesh twisted to hide a bomb.

Often, though, violence isn't directed solely at the Camarilla. Rampant destruction, vandalism and arson are overt, violent actions that keep the neonates busy while sticking it to the Camarilla. Such activities put a drain on the local economy and gnaw away at the Camarilla's economic and social resources. The Sabbat loves to disrupt important civic and cultural functions, such as art

BITING THE HAND THAT KILLED THEM

From the almanac of Ludo Giovanni

The Sabbat loves to set up its pawns and send them out for sacrifice, but things may have gotten a little out of hand in Houston. A siege was on, and as usual the Sabbat was in desperate need of fresh recruits. Some of the packs went overboard and Embraced quite a few new conscripts, perhaps more than the Sabbat could handle. Rumors now run rampant of a fanatically anti-Sabbat gang of anarchists that's been beating Sabbat Cainites to death with — the irony! — shovels. Such audacity! Further muddying the picture is a report I received that a pack of Sabbat was ambushed and destroyed in a brief but vicious fight not far from a graveyard. The notable thing was that the Sabbat Cainites were all toting shovels. All of this occurred just prior to the first reports of the shovel-bearing anarchists.

If a connection exists between the two incidents, and if a gang of would-be Sabbat cannon fodder really is at large, turned against their erstwhile masters, this highlights a possible weakness in Sabbat strategy. A mass Embrace typically relies on propaganda and emotion to incite its products to a proper state of fanaticism. If the Camarilla could somehow devise a strategy to blunt the conditioning of such conscripts, or perhaps actively target such operations for disruption, they could turn a major Sabbat advantage into a weakness.

exhibits and sporting events, spreading bad press and damaging a Camarilla city's social and economic landscape. Simple inconveniences, such as freeway accidents at rush hour and rat feces turning up in soup at the local four-star eatery are relatively simple to implement and difficult to trace back to the Sabbat, yet they go a long way toward shaking mortal society and by extension the Camarilla. Many of the problems at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics can be traced to meddling Sabbat packs intent on giving Atlanta, and by extension the then-predominant Camarilla, a black eye. Such operations focus less on going toe to toe with the Camarilla and more on just making the world a shittier place for the kine and the Camarilla that interacts with them.

THE HEART OF THE ENEMY

One of the most important parts of any siege, from both a military and political standpoint, is the eventual assault on Elysium, dubbed a "panty raid" by some Sabbat, an obvious dig at the perceived softness and weakness of the Camarilla. As the symbolic heart and soul of the Camarilla social order, any successful blow against Elysium is a major victory for the Sabbat on multiple levels. Tactically, Elysium is often heavily defended. A successful attack usually results in the destruction of many of the Camarilla's most trusted and powerful members. Politically, the fall of Elysium often signals the death knell for a city's Camarilla dominance. Once Elysium is overwhelmed, surviving Camarilla Cainites usually become scattered, seeking a safer (and sometimes solitary) refuge, compounding the losses sustained in the failed defense.

An attack on Elysium is an attack on the social structure that holds the Camarilla together. Elysium is an important symbol that defines the Camarilla on multiple levels, a Kremlin, Taj Mahal or Versailles for a city's Cainites. It represents political power, social unity and artistic achievement. A blow to Elysium strikes at many levels and leaves few among the Camarilla unaffected.

Of all the actions that occur during a siege, the assault on Elysium is the most likely to have the look and feel of a real, honest-to-goodness siege action. Camarilla loyalists fight like hell to keep Elysium intact, taking actions that tread far closer to breaking the Masquerade than they would usually tolerate. The Sabbat prefers to wear away at Elysium's integrity before descending upon it in one final push. The first strikes against it are

designed to crack its shell. A common Sabbat ploy is to stage an accident that somehow involves Elysium. A Sabbat neonate may hijack a chemical truck and ram it into a building designated Elysium, damaging its physical defenses while drawing unwanted mortal attention to it. Other Sabbat Cainites may disrupt Elysium's electric and water services, damaging pipes and power lines to remind the Camarilla that, while a siege might not involve wholesale combat on the streets, it isn't an easily endured experience.

As the siege progresses, so too does the assault on Elysium. Assault does not always connote an outright attack. In fact, most assaults are waiting games rather than street wars. Plans against Elysium take aim at its social and political importance, not just at leveling the physical structure; blowing it up or waltzing in and breaking stuff does the Sabbat no good if such a move does no damage to the Camarilla's morale and cohesion. An attack on Elysium is an attack on the Camarilla's spirit and unity, not just a simple vandalism run.

The frequency and type of assaults on Elysium are good barometers of a siege's progress. If the Sabbat increases the pressure on Elysium and threatens to destroy it, the Sabbat is in a strong position in the city, having neutralized the Camarilla's influence with mortal agencies and crippled its ability to defend its domain. If the attacks are nuisances, such as graffiti, disrupted power, or showy but ultimately futile vandalism, the Sabbat's siege is grinding to a halt against a solid Camarilla defense. Much as how Elysium defines Camarilla society in many ways, so too does the Sabbat's actions against it reflect the Sabbat's power in a contested city.

The exact timing of an attack on Elysium is tricky business. Some elders hold that a rapid assault is the Sabbat's best bet, as it can catch the Camarilla off guard and put them at a serious disadvantage. The counterargument to this plan is that marshaling the forces necessary to effectively hit Elysium, even one not especially keyed up for an attack, most likely attracts Camarilla attention and thus defeats the purpose of a rapid assault. The more commonly held view is that a strike against Elysium is the coup de grace in a siege, a matter to be dealt with once the Tremere chantry is out of the way and the Ventrue and Toreador have no more allies from whom to enlist aid. Of course, the

FINAL DEATH FROM ABOVE

From the almanac of Ludo Giovanni

I am always intrigued by what's possible when fanaticism and self-sacrifice cross paths. In a recent siege, a newly Embraced Sabbat happened to have training as a commercial pilot. Preying on the pilot's ignorance of the Cainite condition, they convinced him that his newfound capabilities included the capacity to survive a plane crash. The Black Hand hit upon the idea of his crashing a commuter plane into Elysium. The plan was really the closest thing to a successful, preemptive Elysium assault that I have encountered. Such a gambit is something of a Holy Grail among the Sabbat, a rapid and efficient strike that lets them sidestep the Camarilla's superior resources in one fell swoop. I'd imagine that many a bishop whiles away his quieter nights imagining a siege that starts with the prince and a few archons already destroyed. Ambitious, if nothing else.

If I remember correctly, the commuter plane was sabotaged on the ground, endlessly delayed by a series of spot safety inspections and mishandled flight plans. As is so typical of the Sabbat, they forget that a mortal, such as a high-ranking airport administrator, can quite easily undo their most cunning plans. Pity, that. It would have been quite interesting to see how the siege progressed from such a spectacular beginning.

crushing loss of Elysium is a somewhat forgone conclusion. If the Camarilla is on the ropes, they probably aren't in a position to stand up to a final, decisive assault. The major benefits of a successful strike don't pay off if it's done after the fact.

END GAME

Once the Sabbat has broken the Camarilla, all that remains is to clean out any remaining pockets of resistance and deal with survivors. The Sabbat can often find itself with more problems in dealing with victory than with the actual siege. Remaining Camarilla retaliate carefully, turning the Sabbat's own guerrilla tactics against it. Refugees, independent Cainites, autarkis and anarchists may pick fights with Sabbat Cainites who impinge on their territory, leading to a whole new round of conflict. The chaotic and fluid nature of the Sabbat, which is an excellent tool for keeping a target off balance and uncertain, now becomes a major weakness. The sewers, tenements and other nooks and crannies may go without a proper search due to simple leadership

concerns, lack of manpower or even laziness on the part of Sabbat Cainites eager to enjoy the spoils of victory. Given the violent and nomadic nature of the sect, fellow Sabbat may go missing without anyone bothering to investigate the disappearance at all.

Brutalized kine, especially in light of the rising crime rates and violence that often accompanies the Sabbat's presence in a city, may work against the city's new residents, helping the Camarilla — knowingly or otherwise — to reestablish a foothold and work against the Sabbat during the day. Vigilantes might stalk the streets. Hunters may flock to the city. In the wake of Sabbat habits that leave the city an economic and social wasteland, the federal government may step in with funding for increased police presence and seed money to reinvigorate the region's economy. This influx of cash can draw the hungry Camarilla back to the city and strengthen their advantage in civic and political arenas for round two.

Sabbat leaders must take care to avoid overextending their resources and political reach — a task at which they frequently fail. Many neonates, having tasted the thrill of a siege, have problems reverting back to an unlife that isn't characterized by combat, even if only temporarily. Faced with rabid packs eager to carry the crusade to another city, bishops must rein in the troops and keep the sect together in a time of relative peace. The most common solution, and one that has dogged the sect for countless nights, is to simply move on to another target. The Sabbat is notoriously bad at holding on to its conquests. All too often, the veterans who have cut their fangs on a siege are sent again into the meat grinder, perpetuating the Sabbat's endless cycle of war at the cost of actually making any progress. The Camarilla has found that the Sabbat expends so much energy on a siege that a simple counterattack pushes that sect back out of the city. The Sabbat tends to fall to infighting and chaos once it takes a city, and the bishops know that the siege is the easy part. Hanging on to the prize is the real test. Between a splintered membership that usually doesn't take well to orders and a philosophy that paints mortals as useful only as sustenance, the elders have a hard time reconciling the need to hold on to a city with the wants and drives of the neonates.

For every Sabbat victory, dozens of aborted raids and outright disasters occur. It is disturbingly common for the Sabbat to launch a crusade and

utterly fail without the Camarilla having any clue about what's going on.

Defeat is a doubly bitter brew for the Sabbat. Not only does a failed siege leave the sect short of personnel, but often the city that served as a jumping-off point for the siege is left unprotected due to the loss of resources. In such a case, the Camarilla may seek vengeance by taking the fight to the Sabbat.

WHEN THE HAMMER FALLS

The Sabbat is a finely crafted instrument of war. It can bring terror and horror upon any city it targets, bullying its victims into submission with overwhelming force and sheer bravado. But like most bullies, the Sabbat has trouble taking what it likes to dish out. The ramshackle organization and firebrand enthusiasm that characterize the sect severely hamper its efforts to defend its turf. While the elders are painfully aware that defensive planning is a critical component of strategic planning, neonates and too-young-to-be-proven sect members often can't be bothered with it. To young Cainites, the conflict with the Camarilla is supposed to be all about sticking it to the enemy and bringing about change, not just holding on to the status quo. This division runs deep within the Sabbat's social structure. As described above, Sabbat offensive operations rely on highly motivated packs that have a clear sense of independence and self-direction. When pushed on the defensive, the Sabbat leadership tends to overreach its authority and assume a much more dictatorial stance. After all, the elders have much more to lose on the defensive than they do when on the attack.

With the personal stakes that much higher, the natural tendency of the Damned is to overreact. Most young Cainites resent the idea of meeting their Final Death in the name of maintaining some Tzimisce or Lasombra elder's precious claim of domain. A radical few see little need for holding on to cities as anything more than staging areas for the next siege. Unlife isn't about worrying how to pay the mortgage.

Much of the Sabbat's defensive strategy involves preparation for an attack, as opposed to dealing with the attack itself. The Sabbat maintains a constant war footing, which means that obvious targets, such as Elysium, are rarely present in a Sabbat city. The Sabbat's preparations don't go much beyond caching weapons

and creating secondary and even tertiary strongholds, but it is worth noting that they exist. When a Camarilla strike occurs, the Sabbat slides into a panic exacerbated by its chaotic nature. But if the initial assault doesn't inflict enough damage, the Sabbat falls back to prepared defenses and weathers the siege.

An effective Sabbat defense maintains the packs' sense of freedom and independence. Young Cainites need to feel that they have just as much of a stake in the defense of a city as the elders do. Successful defenses draw on the same strengths that make Sabbat sieges effective: decentralized authority, high morale and tactics that leave the enemy on a confused, defensive footing.

AN INTERESTING TRINKET FROM MY COLLECTION

From the almanac of Ludo Giovanni

8/12

So I'm dustus now. That dumb fuck Wiggins taught me one thing: know your enemies. This here is my little black book of pain. Fuck with me and you get mentioned here. Let's start out right: Annie Kimble, Lucy the Lasombra bitch I met at the elub last month, and all those Camarilla faggots. Fuck 'em all.

8/14

Kenny didn't make it to esbat this week. Son of a bitch. Greg says it's my responsibility to make sure stuff like that doesn't happen. He's probably off dealing with some Hand shit.

8/16

Things to do: kill a few cops. Fuckers busted up the meth lab! No warrant, no arrests, nothing. Just waded in and starting smashing up shit. Sprigs shut a brick.

8/21

Kenny didn't show again, and neither did Dee. Greg is really pissed. Fuck 'em. If they'd been around, the entire thing with the lab never would've gone so badly. Sprigs and Frank got arrested, so now we need to find new contacts to replace all our shit. Stupid fuckbags. Always screwing up when you actually need them.

8/26

I'm getting rusty or something. Those two cops were way too fast for kine. Whatever, they just made the list. Motherfucking pig one, motherfucking pig two. Tomorrow night, they're dead.

8/28

Greg missed esbat this week. Still no Kenny or Dee. What the hell? Where is everyone?

8/30

Dear Diary,

I'm a Sabbat loser who keeps a diary. I'd mention Gwen Moss as one of my enemies to kill but, coppers, she got me first. — G

A Sabbat diary? How CUTE! I just have to tell Winston about this! — T

DEAR IDIOT. YOU'RE DIARY IS ALMOST AS FUNNY AS YOU WERE IN A FIGHT. TOO BAD YOU'RE WASTED ASS ISN'T AROUND TO WISE UP. — C

PUSHING FORWARD BACK

Since attack is what the Sabbat does best, the sect retakes the initiative and takes the fight to its enemies. While the Camarilla pursues Sabbat targets, the elders send forth scouting parties to identify where the attack originates, who is coordinating it, and where the attacking Camarilla are holed up in the city. Once the Sabbat has this information, it counterattacks mercilessly, perhaps sending in waves of shovelheads or calling upon the Black Hand and War Parties to put an end to the Camarilla threat. Of course, the Sabbat has to gather information while enduring a determined assault. A race against time rapidly develops as Sabbat spies desperately dig up information while the elders can still make effective use of it.

TURNING UP THE HEAT

While the spies dig up information on the attackers, the rest of the Sabbat does not sit idly by, sharpening its fangs. A favorite defensive measure

is to terrorize the city with violence. Operating on home turf, the Sabbat usually has more reliable boltholes and havens than its attackers. Incidents of vicious gang warfare and bizarre murders spur local law enforcement to turn a wary eye toward all violence and suspicious characters, including Camarilla invaders. Far from its home network of power and influence, the Camarilla can't easily pull some strings and cool off the heat. This tactic often inflicts a bit of collateral damage on the Sabbat, and may restrict its ability to launch a counterattack using fresh intelligence, but it buys the Sword of Caine time while the Camarilla smooth-talks local mortal society and establishes its own wartime base of influence.

Time is critical in a Sabbat defensive campaign. The longer the Sabbat can hold out, the better its chance of identifying Camarilla weak points and launching a successful counterattack.

SCORCHED EARTH

One successful Sabbat tactic is to deny the Camarilla any strategic gains by systematically working to cripple the city's economic and social base. Working in parallel with campaigns of brutality, packs descend on important kine social and economic institutions and worry them with well-placed attacks. On the night of its grand opening, a local mall is the scene of a vicious gang-related brawl. A transformer explodes and darkness envelops the city on New Year's Eve, ruining any official celebrations and damaging the tourist industry for years to come. The Sabbat cares little for the kine. They are there for fun, games, feeding and no more. But the Sabbat is smart enough to recognize that much of the Camarilla's power is based in the mortal world. By denying the Camarilla any economic or political spoils, the Sabbat hopes to drive the cost of the siege far beyond any potential gains the Camarilla can hope to squeeze out of a victory.

ROPE-A-DOPE

Part of the Sabbat's preparation for an eventual siege (as mentioned above) includes creating decoy havens and other stratagems that misdirect Camarilla invaders. A bishop or archbishop counts on her active packs to draw the bulk of the Camarilla's attentions during the first phase of the defense while she herself retreats to a secure haven, one that only the bishop and her templars are aware of. If the Camarilla's attack is merely a probe



or a minor incursion, Sabbat business returns to normal. If the attack develops into a full-blown siege, the Sabbat may decide to simply cut its losses and hightail it out of town. As the Camarilla begins the difficult process of cultivating its own permanent influences in the city, the Sabbat sends spies back into the city, who closely monitor the Camarilla's progress and pin down the locations of havens, Elysium, and other critical spots in the Camarilla's new infrastructure. Once the Camarilla is comfortable in the city, the Sabbat counterattacks, using its superior knowledge of the city to break the nascent Camarilla bloc before it has a chance to solidify its influence. As with other Sabbat strategies, this one requires the Sabbat to grit its teeth and sustain heavy losses. If the Camarilla is particularly diligent, the Sabbat might not even have a chance to escape the city to plot its recapture.

WAR OF ATTRITION

As in siege operations, neonates are an important part of the defense of any Sabbat stronghold. When the Camarilla first hits town, one of the first things that the Sabbat works on is swelling its ranks to favorable numbers. More conscripts means more work for the Camarilla, which in turn drags out the siege. Fledglings also make good decoys, drawing the Camarilla to relatively worthless targets and exposing them to counterattacks. A sudden surge in the Cainite population strains the Masquerade and gives the Camarilla a new threat that it must work doubly hard to silence or hide in a city where its influence is tenuous at best.

Conscripted Cainites aren't the only resources that a Sabbat elder can throw at the Camarilla. Given the relatively high level of formality the Camarilla places on unlife, as opposed to the Sabbat's more casual involvement in its members' nightly unlife, independent vampires and anarchs are prime candidates for recruitment to the Sabbat banner. Even Cainites who the Sabbat previously tussled with can find themselves receiving overtures of an alliance "for the good of all." Competent and eager recruits take part in standard operations, while weaklings and neonates find themselves banded together with a group of freshly Embraced recruits for a suicide attack.

Knowing the Sabbat's proclivity for suicide tactics, few independent Cainites heed the call for

recruitment. But those who ignore it know that if the Sabbat carries the night, they won't be able to openly make their havens in that city. The Sabbat remembers its allies (even if they've all met the Final Death) and makes examples of those who spurn its offer of alliance. Still, the Sabbat can recruit effective fighters from outside the sect, as sometimes a Cainite chooses to dwell in a Sabbat city for the express purpose of avoiding Camarilla interference.

CRUSHING MORALE

As the Sabbat knows very well, attacking forces need to be highly motivated in order to operate effectively. One favorite ploy of Tzimisce masters of Vicissitude is to turn their power against captured Camarilla agents. Once the Fiends are through with them, the now grotesque, crippled victims are left to stumble back to their havens, a horrid reminder that other fates besides the Final Death await Camarilla vampires who attack the Sabbat. The effect on morale is devastating, as Camarilla vampires become acutely aware of the cost of capture. Coterie become hesitant and overly cautious, degrading their effectiveness and buying the Sabbat still more time to launch its counterattack. Toreador *antitribu* like to get in on

ATTACK OR DIE

From the almanac of Ludo Giovanni

The Sabbat's emphasis on attacking objectives, as opposed to defending them, leaves the sect exposed when it's on the receiving end of a siege. The sect has many tried, yet few true, plans for dealing with such situations. One of the most bizarre (but effective) strategies was innovated by a Sabbat bishop who held power just over a decade ago. Faced with a particularly determined Camarilla assault that had left his criminal connections in a shambles and his coffers drained, the bishop did what comes naturally to the Sabbat: He retreated to a nearby city that was not involved in the fighting. Because the city was nominally held by the Camarilla, it was an awfully risky gamble. It left the bishop exposed, but in the end his audacity paid off. Disheartened by the reckless counterattack, the Camarilla pulled its anxious coterie back and called off the campaign in order to deal with the new threat to Camarilla stability. The prince behind the invasion was soundly criticized for his rash actions in unnecessarily rousing the Sabbat's fury and lost much face in Camarilla circles.

the act, too, creating horrid displays of "beauty" that incorporate the withered organs and other pieces of destroyed Camarilla agents.

This tactic is not always helpful. As often as not, it inspires an even greater fury and resolve among the Camarilla, which redoubles its efforts in the name of vengeance. Disfiguring prisoners is a risky tactic that works only for situations in which the Camarilla's resolve is already wavering. Such a move comes after other plans have been implemented and is usually meant to enhance the effect of other operations. Still, it is not unknown for a zealous Cainite to independently decide to put such a plan into practice out of sheer boredom, spite or perversion.

DEALING WITH MORTALS

Just because the Sabbat holds itself above mere mortal humans does not mean that the sect completely ignores the kine. The elders have learned that mortals can be put to good use, especially when dealing with the Camarilla, whose members don't often anticipate the Sabbat's dipping into the herd for resources other than quick reinforcements. Sabbat elders view the kine as even more disposable than newly minted, non-Sabbat Cainites. While mortals are largely overpowered in a fight, they can attack the Camarilla on the battlefields that often count the most, such as the media, courtrooms and even the boardrooms of corporate America. The Sabbat tends to use the less desirable elements of human society: violent criminals, drug traffickers, fringe cultists, the types of people that the Camarilla considers too unreliable or dangerous to regularly deal with.

CRIME

Criminal activities are a common source of recruits and cash for the Sabbat. Crime keeps the kine in their place, grinding the population in a hopeless cycle of drug addiction, violence and poverty while giving an outlet for the truly vicious, cruel and cunning among them to rise to the top and, by extension, to the Sabbat's attention. The profit margins on drug sales are tremendous, while involvement in narcotics opens up all sorts of other resources: illegal weapons, mortal hit men and other tools to throw at the Camarilla that you can't just pick up down at the corner store.

Many street criminals tie their fates to the Sabbat's fortunes, whether wittingly or not. An increased Camarilla presence often means a more

active and problematic police presence, as the Camarilla flexes its political muscles and sets governmental agencies to work dismantling the Sabbat's source of revenue and resources (and sweeps in to usurp those contacts afterward). While many gang members end up Embraced and sent on suicide missions, someone has to watch the lair during the day. Rather than create ghouls, a pack hires a few gang members to stick around the place during the day and keep an eye out for trouble.

The Sabbat prefers to pick an amenable criminal figure of stature and win influence with him and his underlings, opening a steady supply of weapons, laundered cash and muscle. As most Sabbat Cainites are something other than human, they lack the social awareness and subtlety to deal with kine as anything other than enforcers. So long as the right kine live in mortal terror of pissing off the Sabbat, the sect can maintain influence in criminal operations while at the same time keeping its exposure to a minimum. Individual packs may set up drug labs and directly integrate themselves into the landscape, but elders in particular prefer to take a hands-off approach, letting their cut of the action flow in without working too hard for it. Getting involved with the kine, especially the filthy masses, is dirty work far beneath the proud leaders of the Sabbat.

During a Sabbat offensive, gang members often accompany packs to a new city with the aim of expanding their influence and staking out markets for their illicit goods and services. Such a move benefits the Sabbat in two ways. First, the inevitable gang warfare between the target city's crime syndicates and the newcomers destabilizes the city and gnaws at the Camarilla's power base. Second, violence serves as a good screen for Sabbat spies and packs, allowing them to slip into the city while the Camarilla is temporarily distracted by problems among the kine.

Finally, influence in criminal circles gives the Sabbat a very handy weapon in eliminating important mortals whom the Camarilla has in its pocket. If the Sabbat hears tell of a politician or prominent businessman with dealings in drugs or prostitution, it busts heads to ensure that the politico is snorting the Sabbat's drugs and sleeping with prostitutes supplied by its pimps. If the Camarilla needs that human's influence, a few packets of incriminating photos



dropped off at every available news outlet swiftly crushes that person's effectiveness.

MEDIA CHANNELS

The Camarilla usually enjoys enough influence in the media to blunt any Sabbat in that arena. If a Sabbat rampage threatens to break the Masquerade, a few carefully pulled strings keep the television news programs silent on the matter. The media can write it off merely as gang-related violence, protests gone over the edge or any number of explanations that blend the Jihad with the pastiche of mortal crime. Newspaper stories end up edited to put a humorous or crackpot slant on any sightings of the supernatural. As the Sabbat sees threats to the Masquerade as an important weapon against the Camarilla, it must find other venues beyond the Camarilla's influence. The best way for the Sabbat to counter the Camarilla's influence among the media elite is to target its opposite, the smalltime operator of a fringe Web site or alternative press, someone too new on the scene or "below the radar" for the Camarilla to influence... yet.

The Internet offers a whole venue that is simply too chaotic for the stodgy Camarilla to effectively

corral. A few images sent to the right Web site can wear down the Masquerade. Although the Web is far from a trusted news source, there are people who turn to it for fringe news and off-the-beaten-path coverage of events. Both the Sabbat and Camarilla use the Web to cover their asses, blowing up stories that can benefit the opposition with so much hyperbole that no one takes it seriously.

Other favorite Sabbat media outlets are underground 'zines and street propaganda. 'Zines have the same editorial and legitimacy issues as Web sites, but they offer a more geographically focused audience and tend to appeal to club kids and other typical Camarilla herds. Street propaganda is the Sabbat's weapon of brute force in a media campaign. After the Camarilla media coverup takes hold, the Sabbat responds with an intense propaganda effort designed to work from the bottom up in human society, avoiding the Camarilla's heavy hitters and focusing its efforts on media influenced by smalltime Cainites who are more easily dealt with. Sabbat vampires create and distribute pamphlets and leaflets that suggest the mainstream media is not revealing the true story behind that incident in the park the other night, playing on

the public's preoccupation with conspiracy theories and coverups.

The Sabbat uses similar smear campaigns to discredit and weaken politicians under the Camarilla's influence, which has the added bonus of drawing mainstream press coverage that can push the limit of the Camarilla's influence to the breaking point. As the mysterious leaflets and their charges of corruption, Satan worship and mysterious forces at work in the city spread, they become a news story in and of themselves. Of course, such media outlets usually attract only derision from the mainstream, but the cheap and easy nature of this operation makes it an attractive one for the Sabbat.

SEEDS OF INSTABILITY

Much as the Sabbat works with fringe media and outlets too small for the Camarilla to notice, the sect extends its influence into similarly positioned political groups. Extremists and radicals fit right in with the Sabbat's preference for dealing with the desperate and fanatical among the kine, those willing to look the other way if they notice the brutal bent of the sect. Terrorists and other political outlaws fit into the Sabbat's plans just like other criminals; the Sabbat simply must modify the carrots and sticks it offers them to fit their political aims. Other times, the Sabbat simply takes the group's agenda and runs with it, using political rallies to raise havoc without attracting undue notice.

Fringe political groups that do not thoroughly embrace illegal methods, such as Earth First! or PETA, are much more useful to the Sabbat in terms of sowing chaos and restricting the Camarilla's access to power. If the Sabbat catches word of activities connected to industries or figures that run counter to a radical group's agenda, the Sabbat gladly hands the evidence over, cementing the group as an ally and casting another fly into the Camarilla's ointment. Especially in the United States, where freedom of speech is usually well protected, radical groups sap the Camarilla's time and resources in both the political and economic arenas.

Fringe groups also can provide a quick gateway to more legitimate social and political contacts. Some celebrities take active roles in the administration of fringe political groups, especially those dealing with the legalization of drugs such as mari-

juana. Furthermore, the radical end of more traditional political organizations often intersects with the more moderate edge of a radical group's membership. A canny Sabbat infiltrator can work her way across the political spectrum, slowly finding her way toward reining in traditional, mainstream politicians, pointing an unexpected dagger at the heart of the Camarilla's network of influence and power.

CULTISTS AND FRINGE MILITANT GROUPS

Isolated groups of armed militants, such as survivalists or cultists, make excellent tools for the Sabbat. The Embrace of a cult leader gives the Sabbat a pack of highly fanatical, cohesive kine ready to endure a variety of indignities in the name of the cult. Such allies are a valuable resource. The Sabbat uses them as daytime guards and integrates them into many Sabbat operations, all for the good of the cult, of course.

A group of utterly loyal humans gives the Sabbat a very useful resource to counter the Camarilla's ghouls and connections to local law enforcement. The cult can also throw the Camarilla off the Sabbat's trail, especially during the early portions of a siege. A radical militia group might hold an antigovernment rally, complete with violent outbreaks and wanton vandalism that distracts law enforcement and the Camarilla; the true threat, the Sabbat, moves into town. The Camarilla might waste precious time making the connection between the two events, leaving itself vulnerable to

TAKE IT LIKE A MAN

From the almanac of Ludo Giovanni

The Sabbat's involvement with human cults and radical groups usually catches the Camarilla off guard. A prince was caught in quite a sticky situation last year when a prominent conservative attorney was murdered by a leftist radical in broad daylight. Convinced that the Sabbat was behind the deed, the prince left no stone unturned trying to ferret out the real culprits, burning favors left and right to get to the bottom of the crime. He came up with nothing.

The most damaging part of the incident is this: He still doesn't know for sure if it really was simply the work of a lone radical or the prelude to something more sinister. Quite clever, O Black Hand — if it really was you behind it.

similar operations involving coordination between the seemingly mundane, if dangerous, militia and the Sabbat.

The Sabbat also recruits from subverted cults and militias when it needs volunteers for suicide missions. By casting the Sabbat-Camarilla conflict in the light of the cult's chosen battle, be it religious, occult or political, the Sabbat can draw upon a steady supply of dupes ready to give their lives for the cause. If an anti-UN militant is convinced that the local Elysium is actual a safe house for the UN's multinational agents, he can organize a picket of the place and attract attention to it that the Camarilla would rather not have. This action saves the Sabbat the trouble of doing it themselves while simultaneously keeping the Camarilla ignorant of the true nature of the threat against them, at least for a while. During the time it takes the Camarilla to investigate the militia and track its ties to the Sabbat, the ensuing siege may already be over.

TACTICS OF THE SWORD OF CAINE

The Sabbat has as many tactics as it does members, ranging from the deranged plotting of a Malkavian *antitribu* to the carefully transcribed epigrams of a Lasombra tactician. Forced to fight the enemy on his home turf, surrounded by hostile forces, under the constant Darwinian pressure of a vampiric war, the Sabbat has forced itself to innovate new ways of damaging the Camarilla and its assets.

RINGING UP THE DEAD

One of the main problems facing a Sabbat invasion is communication, especially when dealing with the quicksilver tactics of its packs. The Camarilla's formal hierarchy can coordinate their efforts against a foe. The Sabbat, by contrast, travels in separate units. Within the packs, the coordination is excellent, but it's difficult — as well as dangerous — for different packs to meet too frequently during an invasion. Phone lines can be tapped, messengers can be intercepted and slain, and Internet connections coincidentally go offline during times of Sabbat invasion (forward-thinking members of the Camarilla shut down ISPs and the like in order to make sure that the Internet can be used only by those whom they want using it). So,

then, how does the Sabbat communicate before a major assault?

The sect makes use of pay phones and secret codes. The communication networks that the Sabbat has when not in combat function tolerably, since the Camarilla can't monitor the comings and goings of every visitor into their city. Often Sabbat packs that may be participating in a strike are given passwords. Once the Sabbat Cainites are inside the city they're attacking, they seek out pay phones, marked in advance, ringing once every hour or so at a random time. Pick it up, say the code, and you'll hear your next assignment or another location where more information is stored. One out of every few pay phones is a trap, designed to give out misleading information if anything is said upon pickup. The Sabbat Cainites also have a few numbers to report back, as personal communication between packs and their superiors is encouraged. Other locations may contain information, or more Sabbat, or nothing at all. While this tactic is infrequently used, it allows packs to accomplish more than a single goal during an invasion.

What keeps this all going? In some cases, it's a coordinated effort on the part of savvy bishops and ducti. In the case of the Miami siege, the "brain" was a Tzimisce innovation/monstrosity that still makes its haven in a warehouse in Miami that supposedly holds goods imported from the Caribbean. In fact, it's been carefully converted into the Sabbat's own personal communications hub. Six Tzimisce, plus an indeterminate number of ghouls, have been fleshcrafted into a single entity. Its surface is studded with mouths and vestigial hands, enough to dial a phone and hold a receiver. The hive-mind within the thing's bulk had enough focus to keep track of every Sabbat pack involved in the invasion, and stayed informed of what to tell the assorted packs.

The Sabbat sometimes ignore the phones completely, leaving the Camarilla to figure out if the constantly ringing pay phones mean anything, or if the information that they have is worth dispatching an investigator to a particular location. In addition, if the Camarilla is somehow able to shut down a phone network — perhaps by greasing a few palms at a local telephone company — they lose the chance to find out what the Sabbat is doing. At times, the Sabbat also sends expendable shovelheads to linger near pay phones. Killing the

shovelheads provides a sense of accomplishment and complacency among the Camarilla, leaving the True Sabbat to do what they need to do.

Is it unnecessarily complex? To some degree, but the ability to baffle the Camarilla at the right time is worth confusing the more expendable members of a Sabbat war campaign.

STORY IDEAS

- The characters are assigned to be the advance agents who are sent into a Camarilla-held territory to mark out viable pay phone sites. Something follows them as they move from phone to phone. Do they try to take it down, or do they finish their mission, all the while knowing that they're being stalked?

- A ghoul manages to extract itself from the Tzimisce "network," and is caught shortly thereafter by local authorities. The player's characters have to rescue the ghoul from captivity without attracting undue attention. They may well have to erase any signs of its passing. Once he's out, the ghoul tells his captors about the horrible thing he escaped from. The discovery of the phone creature explains where the Sabbat receives their signals. But what to do about it?

- Something has compromised the phone lines. The Sabbat is giving the right signals, but its members are receiving bad information — and are slaughtered as a result. The players' characters are tasked to find out who's responsible. Does a traitor lurk within the sect, or has the Camarilla gained a valuable bit of intelligence?

SOCIAL DISEASE

Vampires usually don't bother to pay attention to diseases. It's possible to become a carrier for certain blood-based diseases, such as AIDS and hepatitis, but those diseases don't affect vampires. Some particularly venerable Cainites literally forget what disease is. The Sabbat sometimes decides to act upon this ignorance, in a way that could eventually come back and bite them in the ass — hard.

One such tactic the sect uses is the deliberate Embrace of plague dogs. Pick a shovelhead out of the latest crop, preferably one who looks like he's smarter than the others — a player's character, if you will. Give him a few weeks of training, some propaganda and the like. Allow him to participate in his pack's Vaulderie one last time. Then dope

him up with every communicable disease known to man and send him into Camarilla territory with instructions to "poison the wells."

What the plague dog does next is up to him, but a great many things can happen. For example:

Large herds are difficult to defend. Concentrated herds are easy to infect. Both are major targets for a plague dog. All that it takes to infect an entire herd is the infection of a single member. Many Sabbat spies concentrate their efforts on determining the favored vessels of Ventrue and Toreador socialites, or the preferred herd of a particular vampire.

The Ventrue have a major vulnerability in their prey exclusion. Infect or kill vessels who fall into that group (if it's small enough to reliably dispose of), or prevent anybody from putting themselves into that group, and the leadership of the Camarilla finds itself running out of blood. A desperate Ventrue may not find out that he's carrying tuberculosis until his new herd is infected.

This gambit also works against Sabbat Cainites. To be sure, the prey tastes of some Sabbat are extremely broad, but the ones whose herds can be assaulted may also wind up as targets for this sort of tactic.

An threat of epidemic can shut down a city — and draw national attention — which makes things difficult for the Camarilla. In extreme situations, a disease scare can shut down a city as the authorities try to contain a (real or imaginary) plague. Some scientifically minded Tzimisce and Lasombra have even set about cultivating lethal strains of communicable diseases for their next invasion.

So why isn't this tactic infallible? For one, the Sabbat themselves are vulnerable to disease. A single Vaulderie can infect every Cainite in the pack, which means that they become plague dogs in turn, which leads to a sudden outbreak of lethal diseases among the Sabbat's own vessels. The Sabbat may well kill their victims in occasional Blood Feasts, or as the result of indiscretions, but an upturn in murder (even in a Sabbat city) and incidences of AIDS and related diseases further sap the power of a Sabbat-dominated city. Nobody wants to live in a city where people have their throats slit or contract AIDS for no good reason at all.

Once the Camarilla has been driven out, the plague dog reports back on whom he's infected. Then he may even find himself quietly staked and sent to Mexico City, where he's interred as one of

the Sabbat's secret heroes. The people that he reported as infected are then slain without mercy, or left to die on their own.

STORY IDEA

• After a successful invasion, the characters are given a pair of crates by a local bishop. They are told to bring them to Mexico City — and they're not supposed to stop for anything. Speed-snorting ghouls will handle the driving, with the vampires occasionally relieving them and providing security. A piece of cake, right up until a carload of nomadic anarchs starts following the truck. Then a tire blows out, leaving the Sabbat stranded in a bloodless wasteland. Then one of the packages breaks open, and the player's characters discover the staked corpse of a well-known Sabbat hero inside. What's going on? What do the anarchs want? Why aren't they attacking? Where are the Sabbat going to find blood? Season with gunfire, vehicle combat and a seemingly endless drive south to Mexico, and feed it to the troupe with a .45. It'll be quite a switch from a regular session of *Vampire*, but everybody can use an opportunity to let off steam sometimes.

LUPINE OBEDIENCE

The Sabbat regards Lupines the same way that a mortals might regard a sentient great white shark. Run, try to fight, whatever, you're more than likely to die before you've finished dealing with it. As some of the Sabbat lead nomadic unives, they tend to run up against the Lupines more often than Camarilla vampires do. Their familiarity with the methods of the Lupines has led to a vague form of contempt, in which the Lupines are seen as berserk killing machines that don't like vampires. Since they don't distinguish between the different sects of Cainites, they can be used as weapons.

In its basest form, this means that when the Sabbat finds itself pursued during a retreat, they sometimes move into territory that they know is home to the Lupines. Once there, they make as if they're about to dig in against both Lupines and any pursuing vampires. If the Camarilla pursues, they fall into the hands of the Lupines, who are eager to decapitate any Cainites they can lay claws on. If the Camarilla stays out, then the Sabbat can regroup elsewhere, retaining whatever forces survive the teeth of the Lupines.

Needless to say, it's an insanely risky tactic. Like the Sabbat, the werewolves possess a war mentality. When an arrogant bunch of vampires decides to bring their carcasses onto Lupine territory, werewolves are more than happy to bite off some heads. The trick is to shift the notice of the Lupines to the noisier members of the Camarilla and packs of shovelheads while letting the Black Hand move through. If a shovelhead pack actually manages to survive the night, its status as True Sabbat is virtually guaranteed. If not, the Lupines cull them — and hopefully some Camarilla types as well.

If Sabbat Cainites do this, they prepare to do so well in advance. Scouts put tentative feelers into Lupine territory, sacrifice a few new recruits to determine their strength, and locate safe places to hide if worst comes to worst. The local bishops might also earmark various packs as sacrifices and tell them that they're to fight any Camarilla vampires that pursue them through the forest. Not telling them about Lupines beforehand strengthens their resolve — after all, there's nothing out here but soft Camarilla "Kindred," and they're too worried about their manicures and silk suits to be a real threat.

BRINGING OUT THE DEAD

The Masquerade is both a strength and a weakness of the Camarilla. It's likely that the custom of hiding among mortals would survive the collapse of the Camarilla were such a thing to happen, but for the moment, the Sabbat has little trouble using it against the sect that it seeks to destroy. But the Sabbat can do more than simply violate the Masquerade and wait for the Camarilla to clean it up. Many Sabbat regard the kine as little more than food — but they're able to use the kine's structures as blinds for their assaults on their ideological enemies.

One proven technique involves the use of a city's emergency vehicles. A small pack of Sabbat, preferably the more disciplined members of the sect, steal an ambulance or a police car. Once they've acquired it, they cruise around the city with the emergency lights blazing and sirens at full blast, waiting for the next signal. The Camarilla rarely pay them any mind, so long as they're not making themselves a threat that requires more than mortal capabilities to

resolve. The Sabbat pack can move anywhere in the city without being challenged.

However, the Sabbat uses emergency vehicles for more than transport. The Sabbat picks a high-profile target, preferably one of low generation and fond of appearing in public. Since the Sabbat usually isn't reckless enough to attack a vampire in the middle of a crowd of people, the Camarilla target hopefully becomes complacent — just in time for a pack of new conscripts to assault him.

The objective is to ensure that the vampire is shot or stabbed in a very visible manner, especially in a fashion that suggests instant death. The Camarilla vampire can either publicly break the Masquerade by fighting back — which means a whole new slew of problems in the aftermath — or feign death and let his ghouls and hangers-on drive the pack away. While the pack's being destroyed, Sabbat-paid pundits in the crowd cluck over the seemingly dead elder, making sure that everybody present knows that he's dead or dying.

Then the stinger. The Sabbat-piloted ambulance pulls up, sirens wailing, and Cainites dressed as EMTs hop out and take the elder aboard. Attempts to stop them are regarded as hysteria by the bystanders, who likely intervene to make sure that the wounded man is taken to safety. While the elder rests, planning to either feign death or kill all aboard after they're out of sight, the Black Hand puts a stake through his heart. Incapacitated, the elder goes to whatever fate the Sabbat has in mind for him.

For the moment, this trick works — it relies on the crowd knowing that the injured person has been shot and needs to be aboard the ambulance. If the elder's entourage can move him away, or if the Kindred is powerful enough to handle four prepared members of the Black Hand, then the plot fails. It's risky, but at the same time, it's an excellent way to remove an elder's allies and isolate him from help in a single stroke. It also increases the Camarilla's paranoia. They suspect ambulances, but they'll never know for sure what's inside.

This trick also works for less potent Camarilla vampires, especially in situations where vulgar gun battles have taken place — it's easy for the Sabbat to cart "dead" bodies off in ambulances — in full view of the public — only to stake them once inside.

STORY IDEAS

- The Camarilla has turned the tables; a Sabbat elder fled from a full burst of machine-gun fire in view of a dozen people, and the Masquerade has been broken. But one of the witnesses has been marked for the Embrace by a Lasombra archbishop, and he has to be caught before the Camarilla eliminates him as a witness. The players' pack has to ensure that the witness doesn't talk to the media, or any of his friends, while also ensuring that Camarilla Masquerade enforcers don't kill or Dominate him first.

- An EMT somehow manages to fend off an attack by the Black Hand. Now he's busily stalking the streets, joined by a makeshift strike team of anyone who will listen to his tale. Can he be stopped without attracting further attention to his crusade? Has he talked to his friends in the medical profession? Has he come in contact with the Inquisition or the new breed of hunters? As if the characters don't have enough to handle without creating new enemies at every turn....

BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE

The Sabbat has a love/hate relationship with fire. Sabbat Cainites are fully aware that it can kill them; it's an instinctive mistrust that can easily lead to frenzy if the fire isn't contained. But the Sabbat seeks to subsume what it can't destroy, and fire is one of those things. They're constantly exposed to it during their *ritae*. As time passes, they become accustomed to it. Indeed, fire often symbolizes the sect in many of its leaders' words. But their enemies in the Camarilla have no such experience, no such restriction, and as a result, they're vulnerable to it.

During an invasion, the Sabbat have little difficulty with sending some of their expendable members to a high-profile location to set the place ablaze. The Cainites ensure that the fire spreads out of control, up to and including fatally trapping the first firefighters on the scene in order to make sure that it spreads. Cainites fear fire, but they fear the wrath of their leaders more, despite the populist rhetoric of the Sabbat. After the war is over, the fire can be contained. If the Sabbat has lost, the Camarilla may be left with domains in an ash-scarred city.

STORY IDEA

• The characters' pack is asked to start a fire, but they realize that their instructions were actually forged halfway through the job — there are no vampires here, only kine, and plenty of them. Have they been duped, or is the arson part of a larger diversion?

BLOOD AND LIES

The Sabbat has slowly become aware of the lengthy process that the Camarilla often goes through every time it Embraces a new Cainite. One of the more important parts of this recruitment process is ensuring that the vampire knows the Traditions, the origins of vampires, the need for the Masquerade and so on. A vampire who doesn't know about those precepts can cause endless trouble for her fellows.

Which the Sabbat realized a short while ago.

The standard drill involved is to grab somebody who looks gullible — children, new-to-the-scene blood dolls, the maladjusted and antisocial — and Embrace them, usually in a showy fashion. Once that's taken care of, the Sabbat doing the Embracing explains the facts of being a vampire — with absolutely no truth in what he says. Vampires are actually fallen angels whose job it is to clean the streets of the homeless, who in turn are people who are dead but don't know it yet. The abilities that you have are the result of a complicated blood parasite that demands that you kill anybody you feed on. It's best to start a cult with you as its center, and make sure that word spreads around. You're actually God.

The resulting Masquerade violations cause problems for the Camarilla; it's easy enough to stake a vampire and leave him out for the sun, but if the misinformation that he was given is convincing enough, it may spread to those in the know, causing them to waste their time in debunking half-baked theories. And if the fledgling in question is a player's character, the Camarilla may have a harder time than expected in running the neophyte to ground (otherwise, what's the point?). It's an annoyance, but it can be a persistent nuisance to throw at the Camarilla in times of trouble.

THE UNDERWATER RAILROAD

Moving Cainites in and out of a particular location can be one of the more difficult parts of an

invasion. If the prince of a city is of the paranoid ilk, cars full of unrecognized Kindred may be met by a scourge, Molotov cocktails or a simple traffic snarl. The Sabbat has realized how vulnerable most Sabbat are when they're moving into a city for the first time. Thanks to the actions of a particularly scruffy Pander named Joseph Cruz — later nicknamed "Reek" — they've found a new way to enter a city without being detected.

The initial version of the technique was used by Joseph to evade a Gangrel archon who had just laid waste to his entire pack without breaking a blood sweat; panicked, Joseph found a septic truck that drained the contents of chemical toilets. He threw himself inside. Not wishing to pursue, the archon let the truck go on its way. Several hours later, Joseph pulled himself out of the tank and reported back to his superiors. Although they weren't pleased with his cowardice, or his stench, his actions had given them an idea.

Shortly thereafter, a train pulling mostly oil cars arrived in the city and was let through without attracting an incident. When night came, Sabbat pulled themselves out of the oil cars (which were actually filled with water), fed on a few night watchmen and railroad hoboes and then moved into the city. The Camarilla had expected the Sabbat to come via passenger train or car; when they suddenly found themselves neck deep in Sabbat templars and Black Hand operatives, they had lost the edge of that bit of information. No data was obtained on how the vampires were able to slip into the city.

Despite the success of this technique, the Sabbat aren't entirely fond of using it. For one thing, the rail yards are a popular feeding ground for disenfranchised Kindred. While these wayward Kindred can't stand against the impact of a concentrated Sabbat attack force, they can warn the rest of the city of the Sabbat incursion. And newly Embraced Sabbat aren't yet used to the idea that they can remain underwater for extended periods — and even some elder Sabbat have trouble in the black claustrophobia of a tank car.

Worst of all, the Camarilla has used the Sabbat's means of transportation against them. After the initial railroad invasion, the Camarilla kept an extremely close eye on the neighboring city. A mortal working for the railroad yard tipped off the Camarilla. The Camarilla sabotaged the engine so

that it stopped at a particular point along its journey. When the train stopped, the Sabbat were stranded deep within Lupine territory and had no immediate source of vitae beyond squirrels, deer and each other. Out of 50 members of the Sabbat, three escaped, all of whom were Gangrel *antitribu*. Some were torn apart by their compatriots in blood frenzies while still in the tanks. Others fell to Lupines or were incinerated by sunlight trickling through the trees. Some of the frenzied Sabbat are still in their tanks, in torpor, just waiting for somebody to free them from their wombs of steel.

STORY IDEA

A few hardcore Sabbat have used the tanker tactic as a wartime Embrace technique. Throw five mass Embracees into a watery oil car, and whoever survives is a new member of the Sabbat. Obviously, this should be the players' characters, but who knows what sort of animosities may stem from such hellish rebirth?

THE ONLY WAY TO FLY

The Sabbat know the value of a blitzkrieg attack, which works wonderfully against the cautious institutions of the Camarilla. Mass Embraces of Sabbat cannon fodder work suitably for this purpose, but a roundup wastes time, especially in the short nights of summer. When the Sabbat absolutely need to bring a city under their sway, some may resort to risky tactics.

One apocryphal method concerns a small jet full of passengers, preferably on a short but late trip. Getting a trio of capable Sabbat aboard the plane is simple enough. Once they're aboard, they pick a specific section and wait. At first, they Embrace one at a time, making absolutely sure to use discretion, giving their neonates plenty of blood so that they don't frenzy. Then they ambush whoever's unlucky enough to draw their attention. The first stage is the most precarious point of the operation, and the use of various vampiric Disciplines is frequent. By the end of an hour, the passenger cabin belongs to the fledgling pack.

Once a critical mass has been achieved, the ringleaders move forward to the pilot's compartment. The vampires bully or Dominate everybody there to inform the tower that everything's fine. At any show of resistance, the vampires depressurize the cabin. Cainites can survive thin air and biting cold — most mortals can't.

Once the plane has been fully converted, the original Sabbat put the remainder of their plan into action. The plane flies low over the coast, or a nearby body of water, while the Cainites aboard pour out of the emergency exits. The last original Sabbat aims the airplane at some convenient target, destroying it and causing a major conflagration as well as stopping air traffic in the city. Meanwhile, the vampires who escaped gather on the shores and move inland, some 20 strong and hungry to put their new curse to the test.

In one variant of this plan, the Sabbat Cainites allow the plane to land and disembark normally, only gathering the pack when they're away from the airport. Another involves killing the entire plane, save for the pilots, and letting the plane land, forcing the Camarilla to decide whether it's a Masquerade violation. All of this leaves ample opportunity for the Sabbat to exploit the Camarilla's indecision.

THE CITY BY NIGHT

Knowing a city — truly knowing a city — is a project that can take a lifetime, sometimes more. The average Cainite doesn't know much about the city beyond his own personal domain and haunts, and the Sabbat can frequently find themselves lost when they venture into foreign territory. A Sabbat infestation of Cleveland in the 1980s collapsed when a trio of Sabbat packs were lured into the suburbs. The maze of tract-home alleys and cul-de-sacs made them easy prey for Nosferatu ghouls who knew the area implicitly. Without a knowledge of the city's geography, an attack can be crippled.

With that in mind, the scouts of a Sabbat invasion can do some judicious Embracing. One of the most popular targets for the more subtle Disciplines — or the Embrace — are the taxi drivers of a city, who are typically familiar with the city and its quirks. Need to attack an Elysium from an unexpected angle? An unused street leads right to it, with only an ivy-covered chain link fence as an obstacle. Want to find a great place to dump a body? Taxi drivers know those kinds of sites. Want to find somebody who knows about the occult underground? Taxi drivers hear all kinds of weird stuff from their passengers. Need a fast getaway? Who's going to stop a taxi on the grounds of being suspicious? Beyond the obvious advantages of knowing the terrain, the average taxi driver has



seen some weird stuff in his time. Some of them have met and spoken with people who are, or have links to, the supernatural.

STORY IDEAS

- The characters catch a taxi, only to find that the driver is a Cainite himself, looking to score a little sustenance. When the cabbie makes his move, the characters may reveal their true nature in surprise. Whether this gains them a new ally (or packmate) or results in Final Death is up to the pack.

- The pack forms its own taxi company, staking out fares in order to gather precious information about the city and its hidden denizens. In constant contact via radio, pack members can aid each other with but a call or rendezvous if a particularly important passenger hails the cab.

GRIDLOCK

The Sabbat is well aware of the value of knowing the enemy's location. They're becoming more and more aware, however, of the utility of being able to limit a particular target's mobility. Unless

an elder has a supernatural method of fleeing, he has to use the conventional methods of movement — cars, planes, helicopters and the like. Limousines are a favorite among the wealthy undead, while many young Kindred prefer the raw animal force of a Harley. But traveling in the same fashion as the kine do means that the vampire is subject to the same kind of annoyances that the kine deal with every night.

By way of an example, consider the limousine. It's easy enough to follow, doesn't maneuver very well, takes up a lot of room on the highway and isn't very quick. The Harley, by contrast, is much faster, much smaller and a lot more maneuverable, but it's also easier to bail, and the Harley has no safety device to prevent you from sliding 200 feet — headfirst — in the event of a crash. Either way, the Sabbat are quite fond of snarling up traffic, especially in ways that play on the paranoia of elders. Drive two cars into each other at the right spot, hard, and you've blocked the intersection. It's not impassable, but it delays a car long enough for a Sabbat pack to tear it apart.

Motorcycles are even more vulnerable to certain tactics. Take a wire cable, painted black, and string it across the highway, preferably at neck level. Taunt a passing gang of Kindred from behind the wire, wait for them to pursue. Driving into a wire, neck first, at sixty miles an hour results in almost instant decapitation. It helps to prepare, but a wire trap really isn't that hard to construct, and it works well for removing the Camarilla's ability to arrive where they need to be.

DEALING WITH BLOOD MAGIC

If the Camarilla has one advantage that the Sabbat would love to neuter, it would be the Tremere and their command of Thaumaturgy. A clan that, in its earliest nights, withstood the steady assault of the Tzimisce, not to mention guerrilla attacks from the Nosferatu and Gangrel, can easily withstand the assault of a few Sabbat packs. For that matter, the hierarchy of the Tremere means that they can easily direct, or be directed into, an attack at just the right place. Thaumaturgy has no predetermined list of effects; a promising young Tremere can come up with an original curse that throws the Sabbat for a loop. Even a clever ruse like pretending to mark a group of vampires with a magical beacon causes confusion and panic. "Can they do that?" is usually met with an answer of "yes" from those in the know.

The most potent counter to the Tremere — the *anútribu* of the same clan — has been destroyed, leaving only two potential assets against Tremere magic. One of them is the underground of Sabbat who are spreading knowledge of blood magic. Thaumaturgy still thrives in isolated but potent clutches, with sorcerers imparting the secret ways to their packs.

The other, for better and for worse, is Koldunic Sorcery, which is the stock in trade of the Tzimisce *koldun*. The revival of the craft has caused an intellectual schism within the ranks of the Tzimisce. A small but growing number of Fiends have argued that Vicissitude has caused the softening of the clan, resulting in members growing more and more interested in their own experiments and less interested in the survival of the Sabbat. They argue that while Vicissitude has its place, it can ultimately result in the distraction of the Tzimisce from their duties to the sect. This has not been met well at all from more "conservative" members of the clan who feel that

AT WHAT PRICE KNOWLEDGE?

Unfortunately for the Sabbat, the sect's would-be thaumaturges may have bitten off much more than they can chew. In the last six months, the Sabbat's Inquisition has seen an upturn in Cainites using Dark Thaumaturgy, mostly in cities that are contested between the Camarilla and the Sabbat. The infernalists who weren't crushed out cost the Sabbat dearly; at one point, a bishop and a Black Hand strike team were sucked into... somewhere else by a screaming conglomeration of swirling black trash bags, dead leaves and hooves. The only survivor, a ragged Nosferatu *anútribu* nicknamed Tooth, admitted that he'd been dealing with the demon who'd dragged away the bishop and his bodyguard. Tooth is still being tortured to Final Death somewhere in Mexico City.

He is not alone. One copy of the grimoire he used turned up in Montreal; it's an untitled dot-matrix printout, stained with blood and what smells like coffee. To the few Inquisitors who know about it, it's called the Textbook Damnation, and possession of it is grounds for Final Death for the entire pack. But it's a double-edged sword. Sometimes, a Cainite who knows Thaumaturgy can turn the tide for the Sabbat. A Cainite who can do that gains allies, and those allies can protect him from the unjustified jabs of a righteous Inquisition. And the Textbook Damnation continues.

The Textbook Damnation is made of unassuming dot-matrix letters printed on standard white paper. A few illustrations have been crudely arranged within the text, and mostly take the form of Post-It notes and ballpoint diagrams in the margins. It can't be transcribed or copied. Attempts to do so result in a storm of coincidences that foil the efforts of the transcriber; the lights go out, people knock at the door, ceilings collapse, the book combusts.

Vicissitude is both a philosophical tool and an excellent method for exploring the boundaries of the flesh. If you can't be free from the shape you were made in, they argue, how can you be free in any other fashion?

The discussion is swiftly becoming more and more important. The Tzimisce rarely break into open conflict over the issue on any scale other than vendetta — it's an argument akin to the chicken and the egg — but the Sabbat's vulnerability to the Tremere

forces the rare Tzimisce *koldun* to act. The basics of Koldunic Sorcery are now being taught to a growing minority of neonates along with Vicissitude.

For the moment, the Sabbat tends to deal with the Tremere in a very careful fashion. If a Tzimisce *koldun* isn't available (and few Tzimisce even know that such creatures exist), the Sabbat must rapidly change their tactics. The Sabbat like to establish a favorable ratio of Sabbat to Tremere, worrying any Tremere that they can find like a pack of wild dogs, putting off more important tasks to force the Tremere out of the way. The Sabbat pull few punches, hoping to prevent thaumaturgical attacks. The essence of the matter is *speed*; moving slowly only gives the Warlocks time to prepare.

THE YOUNG ONES

The Camarilla is usually careful in who it Embraces — it's typical for a vampire to sound out a candidate's thinking and to introduce him to vampiric society before the Embrace. The Sabbat views that as so much wasted time. If the newly Embraced Cainite doesn't hack it as a member of the Sabbat, well, then, at least he dies having temporarily known the glory of being one of the undead.

Of course, only so many people can become Cainites within a given city. Moral prohibitions against killing are strong in our society, and leading figures of both sects know that overpopulation stretches the already scarce resources of the Damned.

So the Sabbat have come up with an alternate plan. Embracing children. En masse. And then turning them loose on the Camarilla.

This tactic is unbelievably damaging to the Camarilla. For one thing, while a fight between two grown men can be excused in any number of ways, a fight between a man and a pack of children is going to attract attention — the kind that should prevent all but the dumbest of Kindred from using any obvious Disciplines. Another source of damage is more subtle. Despite the relative lack of compassion in the higher ranks of the Camarilla, many neonates still cling to appreciable amounts of humanity. Killing a child — even a vampiric one — can be enough of a jolt to a neonate that it causes a fracture in her morality. If the situation warrants, the Sabbat can offer the vampire a form of expiation by framing a fellow member of the

Camarilla. If the Camarilla can shelter the kind of monster who can use a child as a weapon of war, well, the neonate had better join the Sabbat to fight just that kind of monstrosity. It's very rarely used, since some neonates just aren't that gullible, but it has "converted" some choice recruits for the Sabbat in the past.

Other benefits to Embracing children exist. Vampires frequently don't take notice of children, especially when they're in groups. Given a choice between watching the thin, ethereal woman with a few blood specks on her clothing — a decoy — and a bunch of children playing, the Camarilla vampire monitors the woman, leaving himself open to a swarm of children suddenly burying their fangs in his body. Children can hide in spots where adults wouldn't think to look, can place themselves in police protection without a second thought — "Mister, I'm scared!" — and are the last suspects when anything heinous occurs. Although they may be physically weak, an undead child has the same unholy powers as any of the Damned. One particular pack, the Blood Orphans, had three members who'd somehow lucked into immense supernatural speed. At one point, they destroyed a pair of templars simply by using Celerity and straight razors.

But some Sabbat consider the Embracing of children to be beyond the usual Sabbat monstrosity. Others simply don't wish to bring a true innocent into the Sabbat, believing that the transition is too sharp, and that it's too difficult to persuade a child to maintain the Sabbat's loose version of the Masquerade. And while children can make effective shock troops, they likely have difficulty adapting to the rigors of unlife.

But the tactic is seeing more and more use in the Final Nights, and some thin-blooded Sabbat envision a horde of tiny children fighting a rising Antediluvian.

THE BRAT PACK

The "children" of the Sabbat, sometimes nicknamed "brats," occupy a unique place within the hierarchy of the sect. One of the major problems with the brats is that they actually have a higher survival rate than other hastily Embraced conscripts. If the crusade is successful, they're generally considered as probationary members of the Sabbat, but their lack of

experience in politics, especially the undead variety, and the natural impetuosity of youth makes it likely that they don't enjoy the same political status as adult members of the Sabbat. Lack of caution on behalf of the brats, such as reckless killing, violations of the Sabbat's own principles of self-preservation and squabbling with other Sabbat often ensures a messy end to the pitiful monsters. However, a few Panders, Brujah and Nosferatu *antitribu*, feel a warped sense of sympathy and have used their political influence to ensure that the brats at least have a chance. Sometimes an experienced member of the Sabbat such as a pack priest or a templar with time on his hands is assigned to assist the brats in adapting to unlife, as well as informing them of the more abstract elements of vampiric existence.

Those who survive the first few wretched nights of their existence tend to fall into the same categories as Panders. The Sabbat generally leaves them on their own in the care of packs to "grow up." The hope is that, over time, the children will grow into a stunted form of maturity.

Since the children haven't had time to acclimate to the mores of the human world, shifting to a Path isn't as difficult as it is for those Embraced in adulthood — they have no "bad habits" to break. Many brats, unaccustomed to the hideous demands of the Beast, adopt themselves on the Path of the Feral Heart in order to survive — they can either be extraordinarily bad boys and girls, or they can be archfiends who just happen to look like children. However, some brats also find it easy to simply given in to the Beast, at least according to a few stories of faceless, maggot-skinned homunculi haunting Sabbat-infested cities....

The brats themselves tend to enjoy their vampiric existences for the first few years. Many of them find a communal haven and concentrate on helping the pack. Those who suffer separation issues with regard to their parents try to replace them, moving into a house and Dominating the occupants into treating the brats as their children or adopting parental figures from the sect's leaders. Of course, it's difficult to punish somebody who has Disciplines, and most parents don't last long. Those who do sometimes end up as ghouls, or Embraced by the children themselves — who lack the moral sophistication to know what they're doing.

And the brats of the Sabbat have been overheard to refer to help from some kind of malign spirits. One of the suggestions made by the Giovanni is that the spirits of dead children may be helping the brats, but why would dead children aid such inhuman creatures? Perhaps something in the afterlife doesn't mind seeing innocence dragged down into oblivion....

ANY WAY YOU WANT IT

Certain factions of the undead have long had a reputation for being able to obtain whatever you want, as long you're willing to pay the price. But their reputation as being untrustworthy has chased them for as long as they've been around, and many Kindred know that dealing with such dubious company is a good way to gain what you wanted and lose everything else. Setites, Giovanni and numerous bloodlines and groups are all part of this independent "scene" that chooses to exclude itself from sect politics and deal instead with individuals.

The Sabbat, by contrast, has never been regarded as the last organization that's going to do anything for anybody. If a vampire is approached by the Sabbat, the natural response isn't suspicion at their ulterior motive — it's astonishment. Why would a normally selfish organization suddenly come calling with an item that the vampire has been searching for all of his unlife? And all that it takes to acquire that item is a minor favor, like letting the Sabbat know where the prince of the city likes to meet his vessels. In addition to the small favor, the Kindred doing the betrayal can expect to survive the crusade without much trouble — assuming she's unwise enough to remain.

What's the Sabbat up to? Not much more than the above, really. The sect knows that it's generally regarded as untrustworthy, so it may well do everything it can to ensure that vampires who "turn" will be treated well, so that they may continue to use the tactic in the future. Very few exceptions to this rule exist. And the items or services offered are genuine as well. Of course, those who have taken the favors offered by the Sabbat are fully expected to give something in return; otherwise, they're hounded by the Sabbat until the end of their existences.

Cultivating traitors is a remarkable amount of work, but the Sabbat has found that it reaps many rewards. For example, say that the local Tremere

wants access to a particular fragment of a forgotten grimoire. Sending a pack of Sabbat to retrieve it distracts the Camarilla, removes a particularly troublesome pack from the local bishop's hair and gives the pack needed experience in using their Disciplines. If they happen to be wiped out, they probably weren't going to contribute much to the next Sabbat war effort anyway. And, most importantly, they have the first crack at whatever the Sabbat's client wants. Vials of an elder's blood? Give the "client" one and keep one. A look at a transcription of the *Book of Nod*? Give him the original and take the copy. An artifact? Keep anything else that happened to be in the area. Kill your sire and break the blood bond? Sure, and take anything that the sire owned while you're at it. The Sabbat will probably never be as good at temptation as the Setites — its members have too much else to do to concentrate on temptation — and their overtures to potential debtors are frequently clumsy, but it's slowly becoming better at it. And a few crucial defections or absences at the right time are what the Sabbat needs to turn the tide of a battle.

UNDER COVER OF THE SEASON

Many Kindred really don't pay a lot of attention to yearly events — the turning of the seasons, the celebration of mortal holidays, the weekend and so forth — except as it affects them. Freed from worries about the cold or heat, unburdened from the subliminal threat of knowing that they'll die in a few decades, most Cainites regard marking time by mortal standards as simply beneath their notice. And excusably so; they have much more important concerns. A few of them, used to the permanent summer of the American South, have actually expressed shock at the sight of falling snow; it's up to a (hopefully) sympathetic fellow Kindred to explain just what the white stuff falling from the sky is.

While most vampires use the winter nights for research and recreation — winter granting more time to complete undertakings — many Sabbat have begun to make this period into a season for vicious raids on Camarilla territories. The winter offers dozens of advantages for vampires on the move. For example, Masquerade violations have additional cover, since the driving snow hides a lot during a blizzard, and

inhumanity can be concealed under a jacket and snow pants. Unlike the frantic attacks of summer, in which it's a race against the rising of the sun, winter attacks can afford to be stretched out. Sometimes, two attacks can be launched on the same location in the same night, or the attacker can vary his pace to keep the victim in a state of discomfort. In addition, heavy snow has created what the Sabbat call "ice havens" — invading packs can simply find a car and bury it in a snowbank. A bit of camouflage and briefly running the heater at thirty-minute intervals gives the pack an almost undetectable haven. Of course, sudden thaws or discovery by the police can lead to a messy situation for all involved. In an emergency, Sabbat have been known to simply have themselves buried in a snowbank, sleeping through the day and shaking off the cold when nightfall hits.

METHOD IN THE MADNESS

The Sabbat offensive thrives on what the Camarilla doesn't know, whether it's the staging point of a Sabbat invasion, the motives of a Lasombra elder or how many havens have been identified by their spies. Nothing thrills the heart of a bishop more than to hear a dozen different theories of what the Sabbat is and how its members fight, hopefully from the very same Camarilla vampires who will be on the frontlines against the sect. Misleading the Camarilla about its basic objectives means that the Sabbat can concentrate on its true objectives with less interference.

So the Sabbat often simply tries to confuse the hell out of their opponents. Packs are dispatched into the city on obvious suicide runs, supposedly given proof of their invulnerability by a secret *ritus* — which is useless. Another is sent to put a masking-tape X on a particular lamppost, then leave. Another's sent to draw as many chalk body outlines as they can on a particular street, some of which are against vertical surfaces. The ultimate result is that the Camarilla finds itself deluged in Sabbat packs that perform inscrutable tasks that seem to be part of something much larger. The obvious consequence of not figuring out what they're doing is the culmination of some awful ritual that will kill every vampire in the city or raise some hellish elder — or so the Camarilla



thinks. While the Camarilla chases down red herrings, the Sabbat can attack somewhere else.

CORPSE BALLOONS

Fighting in the air has never been a big factor in the endless Jyhad, primarily because there's just no need. Of course, observers on the ground can be killed, Nosferatu spies aren't always reliable, and there's no way to obtain a coherent picture of what's going on during a direct assault without actually being there yourself. Somebody within the Sabbat came up with the idea of using hot-air balloons in order to monitor what was going on below. Unfortunately, a few problems arose almost immediately. The first, and most vocal, was that no self-respecting Cainite was going to be caught in a hot-air balloon, especially one that looked like it had come off a motivational postcard. Another was that the intense flame involved in heating the balloon would likely cause Röttschreck at the worst possible time. The third was that a hot-air balloon would make noise and be easy to detect. It also lacks an immediate escape route, which further distanced the Sabbat from the notion.

Leave it to the Sword of Caine to come up with one of the most bizarre, disgusting and potentially Masquerade-threatening tactics of the modern nights. The idea would have simply been discarded if it hadn't been for the actions of a Tzimisce, self-styled "the Organist," who had to discipline one of his ghouls. The ghoul in question was afraid of heights, so the Organist cut his legs away and knitted his flesh to a weather balloon, which he then promptly floated up to a distance above his haven. The ghoul conquered his fear of heights, and while he was up there, the Organist had himself an idea — why not give him a pair of binoculars and a radio? For that matter, why not float a few of his kind over a city? The Organist immediately presented his plan to the local bishop, and was awarded some degree of accolade shortly thereafter. Several Tzimisce neonates were given the creation of balloon ghouls as their journeymen pieces.

During the next invasion, the balloons went up. A dozen ghouls, each equipped with a radio, a small handgun and a pair of high-powered binoculars. Hanging upside down from matte-black balloons, the ghouls were anchored from specific

points — mostly medium-height buildings that didn't attract a lot of attention.

Several times during the night, the ghouls were able to warn the Sabbat below of approaching Camarilla agents, spreading fires and mortal authorities. Of sixteen, three were lost — one drifted into power lines, one was brought down by what seemed to have been a thaumaturgical ritual, and one had his line severed. The ghoul drifted for two hundred miles, eventually expiring from exposure. The corpse was found, caused a minor Masquerade breach and made a few tabloid headlines, and may or may not have tipped the Camarilla off to the existence of the corpse balloons. The Organist himself met an extremely painful Final Death by a mage ally of the Camarilla known as Jack Robot, but his legacy survives. During some Sabbat invasions, a black balloon rises into the air, bearing a twisted homunculus beneath...

A MUTUAL RESPECT

The Lasombra have always been best at leading the Sabbat — organizing attacks, disciplining

their subordinates and keeping an eye on what the Camarilla does. Almost every attack on the Camarilla has had the Keepers at the helm at some point. Many Lasombra neonates find purpose as spies and scouts, but a devoted few voluntarily risk themselves in combat. Their sires don't fight with the common rabble, reason the neonates; therefore, neither should they.

Of course, the demonstration of this attitude has had repercussions for the Lasombra. While the Lasombra elders themselves surely aren't above fighting in the streets, the actions and attitudes of a few neonates have given the rest of the Lasombra the impression that they're above the rank-and-file of the Sabbat. This has led to some rather venomous bickering; a few neonates who styled themselves as superior have quietly "disappeared," usually at the hands of their sires. Pride makes few allowances for cowardice.

In order to repair this breach, some of the Lasombra's elders have decided to take their roles to the frontlines. Instead of planning the next

SACRED ELYSIUM

From the almanac of Ludo Giovanni

I know that the Sabbat love their Elysium attacks. Where better to stab than at the heart of the Camarilla's authority? Where better to catch the bulk of the Camarilla's most august leaders, where they'll be unprepared for a sudden outburst of violence? An infallible tactic, surely.

One night, while searching for a particular relic in Milan, I was invited to attend Elysium by the esteemed Giangaleazzo. He anticipated a Sabbat attack, but conducted the Elysium anyway. I thought it an extraordinarily foolish action at the time. I chose not to attend, of course; I had things to do. I found the saint's finger I was looking for an hour later, though, and found myself wanting to attend the Elysium for my own edification.

I only understood why after the fact.

I could see the Sabbat gathering for their strike as I approached. Loose clothing to conceal the marks of unholy fleshcraft, Sabbat communication graffiti etched in the usual places, a raging fire that nobody could bring under control. Elysium was a small palazzo, empty when I walked in save for two people. One of them, on a raised stage, was a girl of perhaps 14 who was absolutely terrified. The other squatted in the front row, crawling with shadow. I thought Lasombra when I saw him, but later thought better of it.

The Sabbat attacked. I recall watching the girl start to sing — nonsense syllables at first, but later it coalesced into words. Her singing drowned beneath the gunshots, catcalls and war cries. The shadowy figure in the front row stood up. I think that I realized why I'd come then, why I couldn't see his face, why the Camarilla hadn't bothered to reinforce him. He moved past me. I watched the girl, listened to what she was saying. Outside, the gunshots grew sporadic. A car alarm sounded, then went dead. Something thumped down the stairs into the palazzo, and I broke my gaze from her long enough to see that it had belonged to a Cainite.

When words crept into her song, the shadowy figure was back. I could only mark its passing by the blood trail it left on the floor. The girl — no longer terrified — was singing verses from the *Book of Nod*, but no version that I'd heard. I listened until she'd finished, then left. The only remnant of the Sabbat attack still moving was a Cainite who had been torn nearly in half. I finished the job — indulged myself, really — and left.

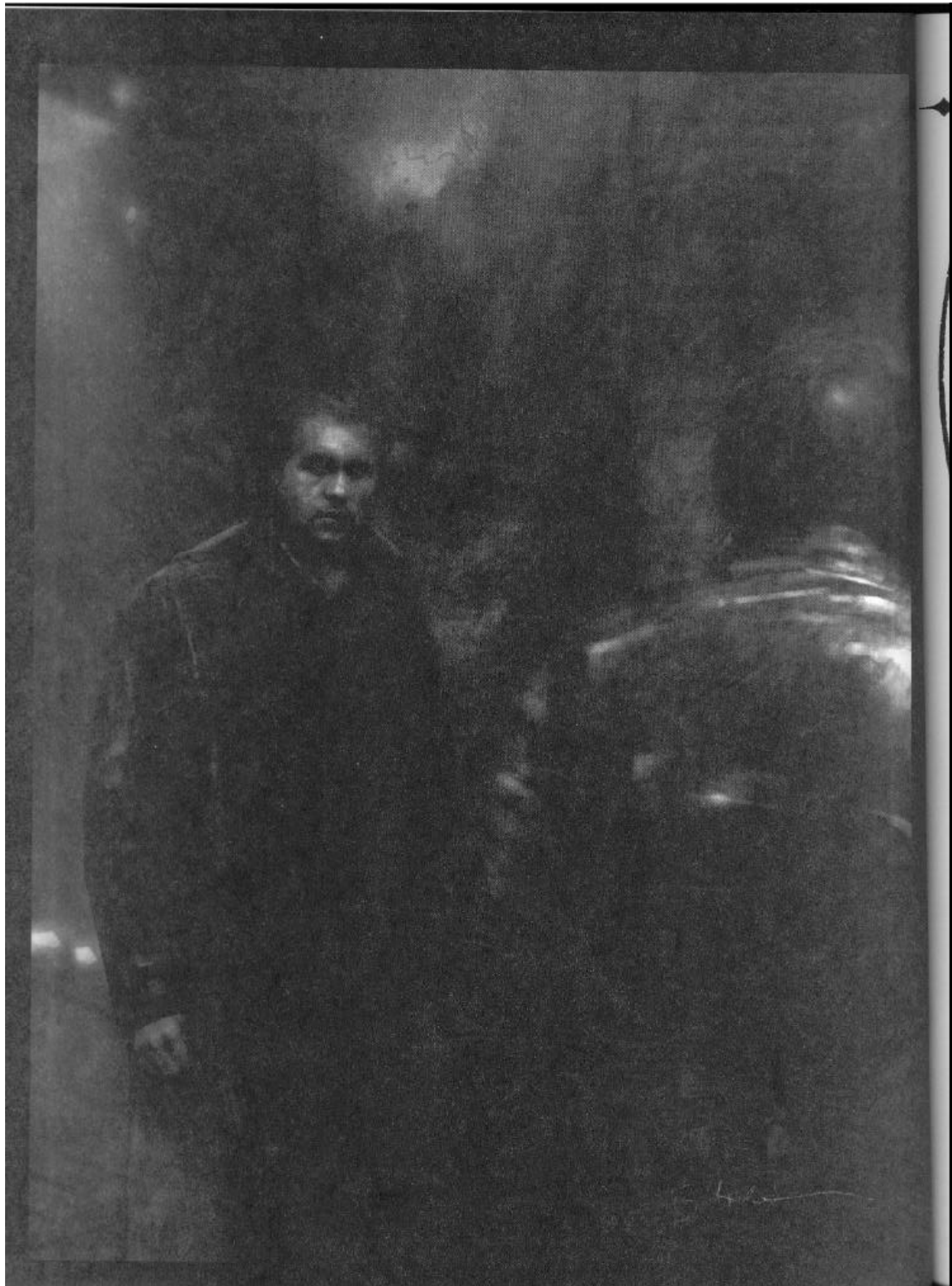
That was a single elder, in fury. Two or more in the same space? Elysium suddenly seemed a very safe place to be. Europe is a complicated place.

attack from behind a table, they lead packs of Sabbat into the conflict directly. Some Lasombra elders have even been given charge of shovelhead packs, whipping their fledgling charges into frenzy with brutal efficiency. Camarilla coterie usually expect a certain level of challenge from a pack of raging Sabbat, but as soon as one of the members of the coterie is pummeled into torpor by a vampire who was thought to be a newly Embraced neonate mere moments ago, their confidence plunges. Once the Camarilla can no longer rely on Sabbat packs to be consistent, they're forced to expend more resources on mass Embraces than would normally be necessary. Meanwhile, Obtenebration is a powerful combat Discipline, especially in the shadows of a city.

However, the Sabbat acknowledges certain drawbacks to having a Lasombra elder traveling with its packs. For one thing, the elder often outranks every other Cainite in his pack, in age if

not status, and he very likely isn't shy about sacrificing one of the weaker members in order to secure his own survival. He's likely unfamiliar with the pack's tactics. The pack bond between him and the rest of the pack may be tenuous, since he has only partaken of one or two Vaulderies, if he deigns to do even that. His commitment to the pack's goals may be marginal — strong and steady when it comes to dealing with the Camarilla. But if the elder needs to save his own investments from a Camarilla coup, he may simply bow out and leave the pack to its own devices.

His presence among a Sabbat pack, if detected, ensures that the pack gathers attention — both from the Camarilla and from the elder's rivals within the Sabbat. An assassination attempt on an elder from a rival can easily be concealed during an attack — and the unstable pack that was with the elder at the time can be framed with little difficulty, if not simply eliminated as witnesses.





CHAPTER THREE: STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

*Hark, hark! The dogs do bark!
The beggars are coming to town!
Some in rags, and some in tags,
And some in a velvet gown.*

— Traditional ballad

In the Western world, the struggle between Camarilla and Sabbat is the engine that drives the night. The Camarilla and Sabbat routinely exploit resources, trends and cultural detritus on a scale nigh unimaginable to mortals. Of course, as the two sides fight, mortal, fiscal and cultural capital inevitably falls lost in the struggle, like scraps from the mouths of two lions contesting a kill. All manner of outsiders willingly risk being trampled to scavenge what they can from the battling behemoths.

This chapter covers the role that the independent clans and other neutrals play in the great sect wars. Whether you're trying to hire an Assamite slasher, curry a Setite's web of favors, or simply make some sort of peace with those damnable anarchists, you'll find tips for doing so.

OUTSIDERS AND THE SECTS

When negotiating with a vampiric independent, vampires of the Camarilla have one vast advantage over the Sabbat: the very prestation ties that bind them on so many other occasions. In short, Camarilla vampires tend to honor their (publicly granted) boons, and independents know this. A Camarilla prince who publicly promises domain and a seat on the primogen to the leader of the local Caitiff in exchange for help against the Sabbat will likely — albeit reluctantly — keep her promise. Thus, Camarilla vampires can often negotiate favors now in exchange for a boon to be called in at a later date.

The Sabbat, by contrast, feels no compunction against cheating outsider Kindred. This is fine, except when the outsider Kindred in question are

aware of this. Thus, most favors must be repaid immediately by a favor in kind, if not by an outright payment of blood or cash (see Chapter Two).

The following listings detail several groups of undead (and other creatures) that, while outside the immediate planning perimeter of a sect siege, nonetheless have ample opportunity to participate willingly or otherwise in the struggle.

ANARCHS

Anarchs are the primary group with which both Camarilla and Sabbat must contend during a typical siege. While organized bands of anarchists are most common in Camarilla domains, a few powerful anarch coteries have survived in Sabbat territories as well.

Unlike many other independent Cainite social groups, anarchists rarely strive to stay neutral during a siege. Unless the entire brood network is composed of puling, hypocritical cowards — which is entirely possible, mind you — local anarchists will certainly involve themselves in a sect war. The questions to be answered are how, when and for whom.

In Camarilla cities, the prince, primogen or other authority figures' relationship with and attitude toward local anarchists determine how the powers that be view them during a siege. In some domains, the elders are tolerant of anarch deeds and screeds; they see anarchists as wayward childer, a phase that many hot-blooded young Licks go through before absorbing the true lessons of unlife. In other areas, anarchists are viewed as traitorous scum, and interactions between princes and anarchists are marked by nightly tension, hateful words and sporadic bloodshed.

But professing a distaste for an elder by no means ensures a knee-jerk allegiance to any force that threatens that elder. Anarchs have heard all the nasty rumors about the dread Sabbat, circulated several paranoid stories of their own to boot, aren't too eager to welcome demon-worshipping, fire-eating monsters into their domains. If the prince, primogen or clan leaders have made some concessions with regard to domain and the like, most anarchists with a reasonable sense of self-preservation will aid in the defense of their domain rather than see it overrun by vampires with unknown powers and obviously satanic intentions.

In cases where the anarchists themselves are scared of the Sabbat, they often make a great and blustery show of negotiating pacts of truce with their elder rivals, and wise elders play to the anarchists' pride just enough to cement a firm alliance against the enemy both truly fear.

Even in a domain in which anarchists routinely squabble with the elders, anarchists often ultimately side with their rivals against a Black Hand invasion. As much as they publicly espouse the ideals of change and egalitarianism, anarchists are still vampires, and they tend toward "devil you know" syndrome as much as any mortal. When relations are this cool, though, anarchists often drive a hard bargain, negotiating for considerable concessions with regard to prey and domain in exchange for their aid against the Sabbat. Failed negotiations might not drive the anarchists into the Sabbat's arms, but such anarchists might publicly proclaim their intention not to raise a fist in the domain's defense.

Of course, some anarchists truly loathe their princes and primogen (often with just cause) and would gladly deal with the devil to bring them down. Others are fascinated by the Sabbat, admiring the sect's drive and energy. In any event, such Kindred's knowledge of the domain is invaluable even if their influence and power are weak, and all but the most foolish Sabbat gladly accept these rogue elements' aid in overthrowing the domain. In exchange, they may allow the anarchists a chance to stay in the city after the balance of power has shifted. Then again, they might simply offer to count to 10 once the dust has settled — giving the anarchists a fair shake at getting the hell out of Sabbat domain.

One of unlife's many ironies is that, properly courted, anarchists can be a domain's saving grace. Once placated, the young, feverish Licks are relatively easy to inflame against a target of one's choosing. A prince of sufficient cunning can have the majority of her dirty work — including the "brawl in the street" stuff — done by the very Licks who rail against her in more peaceable times. It's happened in Chicago, Los Angeles and Milan.

A prince who can not only turn away a Sabbat siege, but uses that very siege to weaken internecine enemies, gains great status in the eyes of her peers and is likely to be well spoken of at the next conclave.

Princes must beware, though, that leaders among the anarchists aren't too smart for the prince's own good. It is not unknown for a canny anarch leader to come to terms with her elders, then play prince and Sabbat against each other, weakening forces on both sides until she can purge the domain of all rivals.

In one instance, with a Sabbat siege imminent, two previously rival anarch leaders secretly joined forces while feigning their usual state of enmity. One leader betrayed the Camarilla for the Sabbat, while



the other leader offered his followers' services to the prince for the duration of the conflict. Both anarch leaders were careful not to harry each other during the ensuing siege, instead directing their efforts toward fighting their professed foes, hindering actions on both sides, and generally forcing both the sects into costly and bloody engagements. When both Sabbat and Camarilla were sufficiently weakened, the two "rivals" joined forces, ganged up on the remnants, and took the domain for themselves. Of course, the "truce" lasted all of six months before both leaders were at each other's throats, but that's beside the point.

Anarchs in Sabbat territory are relatively rare, but those who manage to exist there are probably powerful enough to stake a domain claim and savvy enough not to swallow the sect's propaganda. This makes them forces to be reckoned with by both defenders and attackers. It's likely that any anarchs ensconced within a Sabbat zone have come to an understanding with their neighbors regarding mutual defense of the area; then again, given the Sabbat's chaotic nature and constant change in leadership, it's entirely possible that this is not the case. In any event, such anarchs are very likely powerful enough not to have their hands forced into doing anything. Camarilla agents who can turn these anarchs to their side — perhaps with promises of domain or even a special seat on what will be the primogen council — have recruited gainful allies indeed.

CAITIFF

Here we discuss the clanless caste that occupies the dregs of Camarilla domains. While Sabbat Panders are considered full members of their sect, albeit tenuously, and their participation is planned for as with any other Sabbat stratum, Camarilla Caitiff are often ignored by members of both sects until the events of the siege get fully underway. Alas for the Caitiff, they're not ignored much longer after that.

Little in unlife is good *per se* for a Caitiff, and a siege is particularly traumatic. The situation for a Caitiff caught in the midst of a siege is roughly akin to that of a new fish in a maximum-security prison. Devoid of allies, such a creature can only await the assault that's sure to come. To the Camarilla, Caitiff are cannon fodder; to the enemy, Caitiff are relatively defenseless rations. It's tough to say which is the deadlier attitude.

For the clanless, the best time to weather a siege is before it starts. Wise Caitiff are well schooled in the arts of remaining unnoticed. They often have occasion to

notice one or two scruffy new Licks attempting to do likewise. If the local Caitiff community can correctly peg these newcomers as Sabbat scouts, they might be able to reach a proactive agreement with the powers behind the upcoming siege. The goal of any negotiation, of course, is a nonaggression pact: Do what you (the Sabbat) want to do, target whom you will, and leave us (the Caitiff) alone regardless of the outcome. We won't harm you, and if you win, we'll acknowledge your supremacy. Of course, such ideal pacts are rarely reached and even more rarely honored. But in a siege, Sabbat are gunning for the big dogs, and they have little need of jackals nipping at them in the process.

Some naïve Caitiff have tried to capture these spies and bring them before the prince's justice, believing that by doing so they can both root out the Sabbat cancer before it takes hold and get on the prince's good side in the process. Such a course of action is logical, clever, honorable and thus often disastrous in the viper's den of Kindred society. Most princes scoff at the idea of the clanless dragging "one of their own" before them to be judged in some kind of tacky internecine squabble, all the while babbling paranoid nonsense of Black Hand conspiracies. If they get sufficiently irate, they likely punish the whole lot — accused, accuser and any other Caitiff in the vicinity. Moreover, if the Sabbat gets wind of the Caitiff's actions, the sect likely devotes a paladin or two to cut down the Caitiff "community" as an example or simply for spite.

Once the rumblings of war start, of course, the local Caitiff can count on a visit from a sheriff, seneschal or other representative of vampiric authority. Many of the clanless find a certain bleak amusement as elders, who have previously spoken of (and to) the clanless only in epithets, now court the Caitiff with honeyed words and phrases like "community of the Damned" and "our city." Nonetheless, Caitiff typically find themselves in no position to turn down such backhanded succor, and, with a very heavy and unnecessary sigh, commence to choosing sides in the conflict.

The one meager advantage the clanless have is that, in the event that the tides of war shift, they can switch sides more readily. Generally, the leaders of the Sabbat see Caitiff as only marginally allied with their foes anyway.

The upturn in siege activity over the past decade or so has seen a few examples of cunning Caitiff using a Sabbat siege to gain status in the Camarilla, Horatio Alger style. Far more Caitiff end up as expendable pawns to be casually sacrificed in the most suicidal

and hopeless of gambits. A Caitiff's best bet for survival is to pretend to cooperate with whichever representative of whichever power shows up at her haven demanding cooperation, play all sides against each other, and find new digs if possible. Sometimes this means outright evacuation into the werewolf-infested countryside. This is but one of many miseries that plague the clanless.

THIN-BLOODED

Generally speaking, the position of the thin-blooded during a siege is similar to that of Caitiff, save that their lack of social cohesion is made even more precarious by an accompanying lack of vampiric power. Simply put, any coterie of thin-blooded vampires foolish enough to stand in the way of a war is probably going to be ripped to shreds.

But thin-blooded Cainites have two primary advantages unavailable to other Licks. These advantages aren't much to speak of, but they offer the barest possibility of survival at ground zero. First, thin-blooded vampires are generally not even worth bothering with during a siege. They're the ticks that will be squashed after the city is secure, and ticks of sufficient wisdom know enough to change dogs well before this eventuality occurs. Secondly, some thin-blooded vampires can disguise themselves as mortals. This is typically used to lie low and avoid notice, but clever and gutsy thin-bloods can parlay this ability into an offer of employment as spies. Whether any full-blooded Kindred even deigns to honor a bargain made with thin-blooded undead is a matter of circumstances, but that's something with which the thin-blood in question simply must contend.

AUTARKIS

"May you live in interesting times" — a Chinese curse — a malediction to bring war, famine, political upheaval and other miseries into a previously staid life. For the autarkis — those Kindred who care little for the Jihad or the sects that fight it — a siege is nearly always the very definition of "interesting times."

As purported neutrals in the sect wars, autarkis make excellent scapegoats for nearly any wrongdoing committed by enemy spies and more "upstanding" Cainites alike. If a Sabbat acts as an agent provocateur, her first instinct is to frame a local autarkis for her villainy. If a Camarilla opportunist decides to use the siege as an excuse for profitable treason, domain-grabbing or outright diablerie, his first instinct is to swoop on the nearest autarkis. After all, while it would be a shame if "our Kindred neighbor was brutally murdered by the dread Sabbat during their

maleficent invasion of our prince's proud domain," it was her own fault for "not choosing to partake of the safety inherent in community."

On the other hand, most autarkis with more than a few decades to their names are not fools — and a siege provides as much opportunity to "do unto" as to "be done unto." For every autarkis who prefers the relative peace and quiet of a Camarilla demesne, there's another who readily sells the Sabbat information on the city's infrastructure, political webs and domains — especially the domains of those elders who have driven the autarkis to the dregs from which they typically feed.

ASSAMITES

When one thinks of a vampiric siege, one immediately thinks of war, bloodshed, slaughter and violence. And so it is not surprising that of all those bloodlines allegedly neutral to the great sect wars, it is the warrior caste of Clan Assamite that is most visibly sought out during an impending conflict.

Certainly, the clan has much to offer vampires who come courting it for military aid. Clan Assamite has access to a vast network of mercenary and espionage services and agents, which it can provide if the price is right. While primarily based in the Middle East, the clan has set up a web of contacts, cells and fixers across the globe. A clan representative can act as an arms broker and mercenary recruiter, granting access to espionage and military hardware and trained personnel that most princes don't even know exist, let alone have access to. Assamites are generally aware of most major (and many minor) moves in the Jyhad and can recommend the perfect tools (hardware or human) to accomplish key tasks. Properly deployed, a surveillance system, decryption device or unwitting mortal spy can accomplish as much as a 6th-generation fire-breather... and if the minions of the Sabbat scoff at pathetic mortal involvement in the grandest of struggles, they should perhaps look back to the nights of the Inquisition.

The clan produces remarkable tacticians and strategists, of both the ghoul and vampire variety. Despite their reputations as agents rather than planners, Assamites are often consulted strictly for their knowledge. A Camarilla elder whose memory of military tactics stopped with pike phalanxes or the Battle of Agincourt would do well to purchase the advice of an Assamite when faced with the Black Hand. In particular, Assamites are privy to the specific stratagems of their own *antitribu*. More than one

Assamite has been retained as a temporary vizier by a prince and primogen council who themselves know little of war.

Assamites themselves are formidable spies and saboteurs, particularly if a prince doesn't trust (or is prejudiced toward) the Nosferatu who make their havens in his domain. Though Clan Assamite lacks the information network of the Nosferatu, an individual Assamite can slip into a guarded haven as readily as any Sewer Rat — and, if detected, an Assamite's supernal speed and fighting skill make her much more likely to report back.

Assamite spies are of particular value to Camarilla princes in the modern nights. While the breaking of the Tremere curse was no doubt a source of woe to the Inner Circle, it has had one beneficial effect: Assamites can much more readily "pass" as their Sabbat brethren. So long as they can avoid the Vaulderie (and, as diablerists by trade, Assamites are skilled at avoiding unwanted sanguinary entanglements), a non-Sabbat Assamite fits in rather readily with the members of, say, the Black Hand. When packs and individual Sabbat Cainites are trickling into the site of the crusade from hither and yon, it's often ludicrously easy for a resourceful prince to plant an Assamite spy in the camp of her foes.

In the most blunt and simple terms, of course, the average Assamite contributes most greatly to the Jyhad as a fighter, particularly with the enthusiasm many have shown in their desire to become the Camarilla's seventh pillar. It is the Camarilla that most often maintains the scimitar's edge, as many Sabbat luminaries refuse to employ outsiders in their holy wars. Don't mistake this for anything approximating egalitarianism on Camarilla elders' part: Most Camarilla of low generation are even more leery of the diablerist sect than are the Sabbat. Still, when all plans have been laid, pawns deployed and economies of scope and scale chosen, a battle must often be won through selective physical violence — and in this, the warrior Assamites have no peer among the Kindred.

Even in the manipulative, debauched world of the undead, it's shocking just how much sheer force can balance the scales. If a generalization must be made, the average Camarilla vampire tends to be less skilled at direct violence than an average Sabbat of similar vintage, simply by virtue of different directions in unlife. However, an average Sabbat, used to sporadic slashing brawls between befuddled orgiastic rites, is less of a bad ass than a focused, disciplined Assassin. The canny elder has an understanding of

how to deploy all resources — Assamites included — to balance the strengths of the field.

Perhaps even more importantly, the acceptance — however reluctant or tentative — of the Assamites on the part of the Camarilla sends a clear message: We will do anything and everything to retain our domain. Given the checkered past between Clan Assamite and many Camarilla luminaries, the fact that a prince and primogen agree to bring the Assassins into their domains (and muster the necessary prestation to do so) is a clear show of force and unity to onlooking Sabbat.

Sabbat sieges, by contrast, rarely retain Assamites. Once the battle is joined, an Assamite is merely another (expensive) warrior, and the Sabbat is rarely short on cannon fodder. Most targets can be overcome by a mob of newly Embraced neonates. Then, too, any siege of significant scope invariably results in the mustering of the Black Hand, many of whom are Assamite *antitribu*. Assamites' propensity for diablerie can deprive Sabbat partisans of their spoils — and Sabbat elders are well aware that, rhetoric or no rhetoric, the promise of elder vitae is the surest means of firing up the troops. Finally, deployment of an Assamite can be seen as a show of doubt about the Sabbat's own ability to take its target — which can

weaken Vaulderie-forged camaraderie and give hope to encircled Camarilla targets.

Exceptions, though, do occur. Some key targets (many elder Tremere, for example) are well protected. If a Sabbat siege must rely on small numbers of skilled veterans (for example, templars and paladins) as opposed to gangs of *ritus*-created maniacs, sending even one minion after such a risky target might be too great a gamble to take. In such a case, the wise archbishop or priscus might make a decision to expend resources on an Assamite rather than risk undead capital.

Assamites are also more widely used in the initial stages of a siege, when the Sabbat seeks to eliminate critical threats without revealing its own presence. Ideally, the Sabbat will deploy an Assamite in a Camarilla town, have the Assamite commit its murders, then attempt to pin the killer's crimes on the victims' primogen, clan rivals or the treachery of the Assamites among the Camarilla fold. Thus, not only are important targets slain, but the survivors are also thrown into confusion and distrust.

Certain Sabbat leaders, seeking to instill ferocity in their charges, contract an Assamite for the battlefield with the public understanding that the Assassin is entitled to commit diablerie upon any elder she



can catch. Seeing their own prizes thus put at risk, the war packs fight all the harder in an attempt to take down elder prey before their erstwhile ally can do so.

Of course, Assamites themselves are hardly passive onlookers during a typical siege. Like most so-called “neutral” vampires, Assamites do not hesitate to interject themselves into an undead struggle if so doing serves their interests.

Some independent Assamites actively seek out confrontations between the sects. Perhaps they’re trying to weaken both sides for an eventual Assamite gambit. Perhaps they have inscrutable reasons of their own for their behavior. Most likely, they’re just out for as much money and blood as they can take. Such creatures follow the winds of war, appearing at just the right time to offer their services to increasingly desperate combatants on both sides. Indeed, one famous Assamite is known to work only during sieges, only for individual vampires, and only takes contracts involving the slaying of one chosen rival. She shows up during a siege, offering her services to whichever individual on either side can first pay her exorbitant fees, whereupon she meticulously and unflinchingly slays the single vampire named by her employer. Following this deed, having proved her value, she again opens herself up for bidding — often to the opposing side.

Other Assamites prefer to slink like hyenas around the perimeters of a contested city. In the chaos and violence, they can easily take down prey for their bloodlust, knowing the murder will be blamed on the attacking forces.

A few proud Assamites, remembering the scornful words heaped on them by their Sabbat “brethren” during their period of humiliating enslavement to the Tremere curse, routinely offer their services to Camarilla princes facing a Black Hand assault. Having accepted payment, these Assassins gladly take on the *antitribu* on the other side, seeking to make the erstwhile “Unconquered” pay for every slight hurled their way over the past 500 years. Most sane princes (and even some Malkavians) are all too happy to avail themselves of such allies.

FOLLOWERS OF SET

Next in line at the Jyhad negotiating table are the Followers of Set. Although the clan is not generally known for its aptitude at war, any sort of sizable conflict is sure to be a breeding ground for the deals, favors and influence on which the Serpents feast.

A Setite’s key advantage as a potential ally is his unctuous willingness to help. Unencumbered by ancestral hates or clan rivalries, a Setite is all too eager to listen to the sob story of any potential client. As a rule, Setites are also flexible. If you can’t pay an Assamite’s fee up front, she’ll probably cease negotiations; Setites, by contrast, make a point of working with you to arrange a feasible deal. Indeed, the more destitute and desperate the client, the more readily the Snakes will help him.

Perhaps the most important asset the Followers bring to the Jyhad is their staggering prestation web. This is especially true in Camarilla domains, where such genteel traditions are honored. But Setites have ways of holding even the most blood-addled Sabbat berserkers to their promises. A Setite, particularly one who’s been active in a domain for a while, typically acquires a network of relationships and favors from the domain’s other Kindred. This weapon is most potent during a Sabbat offensive. A Sabbat who comes to a working agreement with a Setite who’s well connected in a Camarilla domain can use the Serpent’s prestation boons to literally turn Camarilla vampires into Sabbat pawns. This is particularly true in the case of members of the status-conscious “leader” clans such as the Ventrue, who must choose between their pretensions of “honor” and what they know to be the expedient thing to do.

An apocryphal story relates how the Sabbat besieged a European city (the name of the place varies depending on the teller) whose prince owed a life boon to a local Setite for favors done in the past. The Sabbat paid the Setite to call in her boon on the prince, and the prince summarily abdicated, declared the domain a Sabbat territory, and walked into the sunrise rather than besmirch his word.

Naturally, this is a tactic best used by the Sabbat. The Sabbat themselves flout the concept of prestation and rarely honor any such obligations put upon them. Setites, knowing this, tend to demand that deals with the Sabbat be repaid in tangible capital (blood, money, territory) rather than promises — at least on the Sabbat’s end. For their own part, their terms are infinitely negotiable.

In terms of sheer financial capital, the Serpents play an edge often ignored by members of loftier clans. While many Camarilla top-feeders swarm around the obvious sources of capital, and many Camarilla bottom-feeders dwell among the destitute and powerless, Setites often base their power struc-

tures among the multitudinous niches of ready cash to be found within communities of the urban poor.

Just as an individual grub or termite provides little nourishment, but an entire colony can feed a much larger animal such as an aardvark, so modern Setites have learned the secrets of battenning on the myriad unglamorous but succulent morsels in a city's economic compost heap. Low-level drug transactions, prostitutes' takes, conveniently directed or misdirected welfare checks, grants to fraudulent public housing registries, and (particularly in socialist or quasi-socialist nations) the ubiquitous "dole" all make tantalizing sources of income for the Serpents.

Many Setites are experts at generating, redirecting or cutting off these sorts of cash flows. This influence becomes most profound when the minions of another vampire depend directly or indirectly on such income to sustain themselves. On the simplest level, perhaps, an anarch's favored retainers, allies or herd, discouraged by the scarcity of lucre, tend to stay at home instead of going out into the Rack where they can be easily contacted. And it need not be added that this sort of money is more liquid (and less visible) than the portfolios with which some other clans prefer to deal.

Setites themselves don't tend to be of as much direct use as their minions, but they are still formidable opponents. Setites' capacity for espionage is nearly as great as that of the Assamites and Nosferatu — but it is as agents provocateur that the Serpents are unparalleled. Their Obfuscate and Presence Disciplines allow them to ensconce themselves among an enemy's mortal minions, then bend those minions to their will. In particular, if a sect wishes to soften its foes' minions with propaganda and weaken their organizational ties, a Setite is often the perfect tool to accomplish this.

The primary danger of employing a Setite in the Jyhad is that it's entirely possible the Setite is weaving both you and your foe into her web. While deals with Setites tend to be the easiest to meet up front, they're also the hardest ones to escape. Whereas an Assamite might charge a steep blood-price before doing anything for a contestant, at least the price and the services rendered tend to be clearly fixed. Many Setites, by contrast, simply smile and offer loose agreements of alliance — then orchestrate things such that their "allies" need their help more and more as the struggle goes on. And once the battle is "won," the aftermath of an entire domain in debt to a Serpent can be worse than a domain ravaged by the Sabbat.

A GIFT WITH A FORKED TONGUE *From the almanac of Ludo Giovanni*

One... ahem, interesting facet of the Followers of Set is their fetish for snakes. While this would ordinarily be merely a fascinating, albeit repulsive, addendum to the sordid tale of a fascinating, albeit repulsive, clan, this trait was exploited by a particularly brilliant prince about 60 years ago. This particular prince was besieged by a Black Hand warband led by a Sabbat priscus and virulent Camarilla traitor who happened to be the prince's own blood-sister, the fellow childe of the same sire. Driven to the Sabbat by insane jealousy and rage directed against this prince (whom the priscus melodramatically accused of poisoning their mutual sire's heart against her), the priscus had sought for nearly two centuries to lay her brother low. Certainly, the situation looked grim; the priscus was frankly more personally powerful than the prince, unquestionably more fierce, and had assembled a force that outmatched and outnumbered the prince's own. However, from the early nights of their Embrace, the prince remembered that the priscus suffered from acute ophiophobia, a holdover from her breathing days.

Without hesitation, the prince entered into a prestation pact with a coterie of Setites in exchange for a fairly minor gift: some of those ghoulish serpents the Followers liked to have slithering about their temples. Perplexed, the Setites agreed, asking in return for some modest privileges in the prince's domain, and the prince called in a ghoulish courier to surreptitiously plant a package in enemy territory.

In short order, the priscus had made an undignified display, succumbed to an exceedingly destructive frenzy. She was torn apart for treason and cowardice. The disorganized remnants of the warband had been driven from the domain.

GIOVANNI

Naturally, the vampiric Giovanni tend to orchestrate their affairs through their hydra-headed mortal family; as any historical account of them details, the family structure is the primary means of, and base of operation for, achieving their varied ends. As a player in the Jyhad, therefore, Clan Giovanni often faces a dilemma similar to that of England or Turkey in a *Diplomacy*

game: it's strong in those areas of the board that its family directly cultivates but suffers setbacks when expanding into areas not under its purview.

Of course, a family that encompasses everything from senatorial politics to South American witch doctors is fairly well diversified. Still, the Giovanni's influence, while expansive, often ends very abruptly at times. What the Giovanni can do, they can do very well; what they can't do well, they probably can't do at all.

In theory, so far as the Camarilla is concerned, the Giovanni clan is bound by mutual agreement never to interfere in the doings of the Camarilla and, by extension, the Sabbat. In practice, this treaty is honored as much as most Kindred agreements — in the letter more so than the spirit.

Despite that, Giovanni rarely interject themselves in the Jyhad, if only because of disinterest. If any Giovanni at all make their havens in a given domain, their numbers tend to be few. Nor are the Giovanni's arcane interests served by the power brokering of the typical sect squabble. In most cases, it's simply easier to use their family connections to pack up and move to another territory rather than stay and risk doing business in a war zone.

The sect wars can, however, serve the Giovanni cause if they're large enough. The greater the scope and ferocity of the struggle, the more people die; the more people die, the more souls the Giovanni can harvest for their necromantic ends. Thus, Giovanni can take a vested interest in large and convoluted entanglements, while scrupulously avoiding minor squabbles (quoting their nonaggression treaty all the while). Over the years, this has come to mean one thing: When the Giovanni deign to become involved in a sect war, major trouble is sure to be brewing.

As befits the polymorphous nature of its extended family, the clan itself has much to offer would-be allies. The family's involvement in organized crime permits the clan to take a role in many of the gambits common to Jyhad, from intimidation of kine to money laundering to gangland assassinations. The family's political connections, though relatively sparse, are highly placed; influencing a congressional bill takes considerable planning and prior notice. Giovanni ghouls tend to be highly skilled and heartlessly mercenary, and the family's undead members sometimes consent to "outsource" their ghouls, brokering them to the highest bidder for services that few vampiric Giovanni would likely consent to perform.

The Giovanni perhaps serve best, though, in the unglamorous but vital role of lending institution. In any

given siege, perhaps the only thing more important than a steady supply of blood is cold hard cash. The family can provide a desperate prince or archbishop with necessary capital (paid back with interest) in much the same manner as any mortal banking enterprise — with the vital advantage that it's less necessary to explain just where the money's going or for what purpose it's being used.

Of all the independent clans, the Giovanni tend to be the least courted by either side during a sect war. Not only are the Necromancers roundly distrusted (more so than most Kindred clans), but they also tend to drive the most obviously hard bargains. Whereas most Followers of Set want you to be pleased with the deal you made, whereas most Assamites agree to (and honor) fairly straightforward terms, and whereas many Ravnos simply bargain for whatever suits their fancy, the Giovanni have no compunctions about tightening the screws and laughing as their debtors wince. In some senses, such negotiations can simply be termed honest — but few Kindred appreciate honesty, preferring to do business with the Setite who tells them what they want to hear.

Of course, any individual Giovanni might become involved with either side for his own personal reasons. In

THE TROUBLE WITH MONEY

Despite vampires' purported "Machiavellian manipulation" of human society, it's not nearly as easy for them to raise large amounts of capital as one might think. The scenario of "the prince walks into the bank and Dominates the president into giving him a bunch of money" is, frankly, farcical. Disciplines or no Disciplines, few mortals are likely to blithely commit acts that are so detrimental to their continued freedom and livelihood. And even if one or more high-ranking bank officers or CEOs are complete blood-slaves of a given vampire, there's only so much any one mortal or group of mortals can do to move capital. A CEO or CFO must answer to a board of directors; a bank president typically answers to higher-ups at the bank's central branch. Then, too, in the case of banks, there are FDIC regulations (or their equivalents in other countries) governing the control and distribution of the bank's funds.

From a mechanical standpoint, few powers allow a character to force another to act contrary to her Nature — unless a lending officer's underlying character trait is foolishness or gullibility, she's not going to be signing any vast sums of money without sufficient collateral to cover her own ass.

the simplest terms, going to bat for the winning team offers the possibilities of garnering a slice of the spoils once the dust has settled. Giovanni are as interested in blood, power, influence and wealth as any Kindred, commodities that flow freely during the greatest struggles. If a generalization must be made, Giovanni prefer to assist the Camarilla during these affairs, if such an alliance seems reasonable. It's simply easier to do business in a region of relative stability. However, a few young Necromancers have sided with the Sabbat in exchange for arcane secrets or simply for morbid amusement.

RAVNOS

The leaders and luminaries of the sects find the Ravnos capricious and uncontrollable even in times of peace. Why in Caine's name, then, would they want their "help" in an undertaking as chaotic as a vampiric war? For the most part, this is the attitude taken by both sects. Nonetheless, Camarilla and Sabbat have both found occasion to court the Rogues, or at least accept their offers of aid, if the situation is right (or sufficiently desperate).

Ravnos, with their cunning ways and strange illusions, have their uses in a struggle. An attacker of either sect can weaken the defender's organization, morale, or both by sending one or more Ravnos into the domain well prior (in some cases, years prior) to the actual siege itself. Such a course of action is chancy — the fastidious Ravnos typically exact a heavy price in exchange for risking their precious necks, and their help tends to be more of a selfish "cause general chaos" variety rather than for attaining any specific result. Accordingly, this sort of aid is solicited by the Sabbat, as it fits their style of domain war better than that of the Camarilla.

The Ravnos have one stratagem, though, in which they excel, one that can be exploited by both sides. Ravnos are infamous for their ability to steal. While theft of objects is not typically of vast importance in a Jihad struggle, "theft" of key enemy personnel — i.e., kidnapping — can prove vital. In many cases, a well-orchestrated Ravnos kidnapping can prove better than a Sabbat War Party; not only is an important Cainite removed from the enemy's forces, but she and whatever she knows are delivered fully functional into the hands of the enemy. Of course, the kidnapping of key mortals, such as a preeminent Ventrue's herd or a trusted accountant, is a potentially devastating weapon in the hands of the Sabbat. And certain of the more tradition-bound clans and bloodlines — for example, the Ventrue and Trimisce — might even listen to offers of ransom for a luminary of sufficiently hoary vintage.

(It goes without saying that a staged kidnapping is an excellent way of extracting a double agent of either sect from the aegis of the enemy. Moreover, many Ravnos are happy to participate in such duplicity and might thereby give their aid for a lower-than-normal price.)

Perhaps the most attractive feature the Ravnos have to offer, though, is the mobility inherent to their nomadic existence. Ravnos can often position themselves as a siege's supply chain (for attackers) or black-market lifeline. Even in peace, few Kindred of any stripe care to contest the Deceivers' comings and goings; this is doubly true during a war. Clever Ravnos can slip from downtown to outlying suburbs or neighboring domains, smuggling in needed blood or smuggling out Kindred, messages or other necessities. During the siege of San Antonio, one enterprising Ravnos made a killing (figuratively and literally) by smuggling in Mexicans right from the Sabbat's own domains and into the waiting talons of starving Camarilla strategists.

Ravnos can likewise smuggle guerrilla warriors or other operatives through checkpoints and guarded domains to attack the foe when and where they least expect it. Naturally, the pre-station debt for such risky work is high indeed, but such activities can spell the difference between victory and defeat.

The nomadic Ravnos can, of course, also disrupt others' supply chains and hinder key targets' comings and goings. Wise (and desperate) princes have occasionally entered into deals with the Ravnos, employing the Deceivers to stop or at least slow the influx of Sabbat nomad reinforcements into a siege region.

Of course, the independent Ravnos don't confine their movements to conform to the whims of Camarilla or Sabbat warlords. An individual Ravnos is as likely as any other Cainite, and perhaps more than most, to slither into a siege-torn domain in hopes of profiteering. A domain in a state of chaos provides ample, if perilous, opportunities for the acquisition of money, favors and vitae.

Then, too, a Ravnos might simply take the initiative in offering her services to one or both sides. As a rule, Ravnos hirelings prefer to act as spies, saboteurs, or agents provocateur rather than brawl in the streets — but, as with all things Kindred, this depends on the individual vampire.

As a whole, though, Ravnos tend to avoid sect wars, preferring to conduct their business in more congenial surroundings. War's a messy business, and it's all too easy to become the victim rather than the victimizer. Why bother to prowl a war zone, think the Ravnos, when pickings are just as easily obtained in more peaceable surroundings?

INCONNU

Older than the sects themselves, the ineffable Inconnu rarely condescend to involve themselves in the struggles of their progeny. At least, that's what Camarilla elders tell themselves. The Sabbat, by contrast, inflames its packs with paranoid whispers of monstrous Inconnu puppeteers standing in every Camarilla city's shadows.

In truth, Inconnu rarely have a unified agenda to uphold during a siege. First and foremost, any Inconnu ensconced within a domain is likely to conceal herself and wait out the struggle. If that's not a viable option, many Inconnu subtly help the defenders if possible, not wishing their havens to be ruined by crazed fledglings.

But sometimes an Inconnu might instigate or encourage a siege. Having forsworn indiscriminate bloodshed, though, such an Inconnu likely has very clear reasons for doing so. Maybe a fellow Inconnu in the besieged domain needs help in clearing out some overly violent or clever Kindred residents; the entire siege is orchestrated with just this aim in mind. In any event, Inconnu partial to rival sides practically never come into conflict themselves, and they generally try to negotiate a resolution between themselves, then implement this resolution through blinds, unwitting allies and outright puppets.

Should an Inconnu be discovered during a siege — an extraordinarily unlikely occurrence — Sabbat in the area very likely make the destruction of the "Antediluvian devil-spawn" their primary objective, outweighing even the capture of the domain.

When introducing the Inconnu into a siege story, storytellers should keep in mind that these ancient vampires, who so predate the sects, generally have a larger picture of any given struggle than the sect leaders themselves do. Like the gods in dramas such as *The Iliad*, the Inconnu might help or hinder individual stratagems or vampires for their own motives — which likely have little to do with the ostensible goals of the struggle itself. It would be a strange thing for an Inconnu to orchestrate an entire siege simply to help one Kindred along the path to Golconda — but Inconnu are strange things themselves, and one never knows with the hidden ones.

CATHAYANS

If a sect war is a perilous and bizarre undertaking, then how much more so in regions known to be inhabited or traversed by the weird and mysterious Cathayan undead. These Asian vampires, with their uncanny powers and strange methods of warfare, can turn the

tide of battle or turn a struggle into a bloody three-sided contest. The only thing certain about them is that their presence is likely to bode ill for at least one, and probably both, sides in a sect war.

Relatively few conflicts between Camarilla and Sabbat take place near Cathayan domains. However, Cathayans are increasingly making their presence felt in North American and European sect struggles.

Garnering these beings' aid is an exceedingly problematic task for either side. For one thing, they seem to dislike, perhaps even despise, both sects, considering their tenets absurd and crude. For another, many Cathayans don't resemble vampires as Cainites understand the term; some can masquerade as living mortals, while others seem to have divorced themselves from the same hunting practices and feeding needs that bind all Children of Caine regardless of sect.

The Cainite who disregards conventional wisdom and deals with the Cathayans is advised to try a few tricks. For starters, he should learn the language of the creatures' herds, or default to Mandarin if he can't (a fair number of the beings' words seem derived from Mandarin). He should realize that the Cathayan social structure is nothing like anything he's used to, and he should assume that any Cathayans with whom he deals probably aren't the ones making the real decisions (all the while, of course, treating the envoys with exceeding respect anyway). He should hope for a nonaggression pact at best; trying to recruit Cathayans into a Cainite sect war is a display of shocking temerity and outright crudeness. Finally — his best hope — he should avoid contact altogether, try to trick his enemies into angering the Cathayans, and watch the ensuing fireworks from a safe distance.

For more information on Cathayan martial practices, see *Shadow War for Kindred of the East*.

SHAPESHIFTERS

As the undead well know, werewolves and shapeshifters of all descriptions haunt the wilds beyond the cities. One of a siege's few blessings, though, is that it's likely to be conducted within the confines of an urban or at least suburban domain. While there have been incidents of shapeshifters interjecting themselves into a Jihad gambit to strike down both sides indiscriminately, such incidents are far from common.

Danger from shapeshifters is most prevalent among members of Sabbat nomadic packs. These wild outlanders, who hunt prey along the perimeters of a siege, have sometimes been hunted themselves.



Throughout the course of Kindred history, accusations and suspicions have colored the relations of the Damned and the Lupines. One clan is suspected of having some league with the werewolves, while others are understood to be their mortal enemies. For the most part, this is untrue — the Lupines seem to regard all Kindred with the equal hatred, whether he is a bestial Gangrel or a peerless Toreador. In most of the sieges that have somehow involved Lupines, the Lupines were of equal threat to both sects, such as the conflict in Chicago just a few years ago. To most Kindred, the werewolves are little more than dervishes of claw and fang; they may be even less than animals — even animals are capable of controlling their rage.

In a precious few cases, though, tenuous agreements between certain Kindred and Lupines have been struck. Despite the fact that the werewolves seem to have a similar clan structure to that of the Cainite race, they have proven to be just as capable of individual thought as any given vampire. Any soldier on either side, assuming he's able to figure out what the accursed things want, may be able to forge an alliance, however temporary.

The obvious use for a mercenary Lupine is combat, but a notable few shamans of the race have exhibited mystical powers as potent as any Tremere. In the end, dealing with the Lupines is always a tremendous risk. The two races have hated each other since time immemorial and have stubbornly refused to learn anything other than the basest of prejudices over that time. Whether or not Rome burns is merely a footnote in the history of these creatures' racial enmity.

MAGES

Some vampiric domains house mortal mages, perhaps even entire enclaves of them. Vampires tend to avoid these creatures; they're problematic enough in peacetime, unnecessary complications during the chaos of a sect war. Occasionally, Camarilla princes make contact with these sorcerers through their Tremere allies. Generally, though, a vampire must be truly desperate to undertake this course of action. If nothing else, most princes' pride prohibits them from turning to a mere mortal — no matter how talented — for aid in a crisis.

Some elder Sabbat have personal alliances with mages, and a few cabals of sorcerers have been known to work with certain Sabbat. Generally, though, such pacts are individual and idiosyncratic — certainly nothing to be counted on.

The most common way, if such can be said, for the sorcerers to become involved in a Cainite siege is, not surprisingly, by being dragged unwillingly into the affair. Whether out of resentment over the constant depredations of the warring undead jackanapes or the desire to profit from one side or the other, a mage does what she wants for her own reasons.

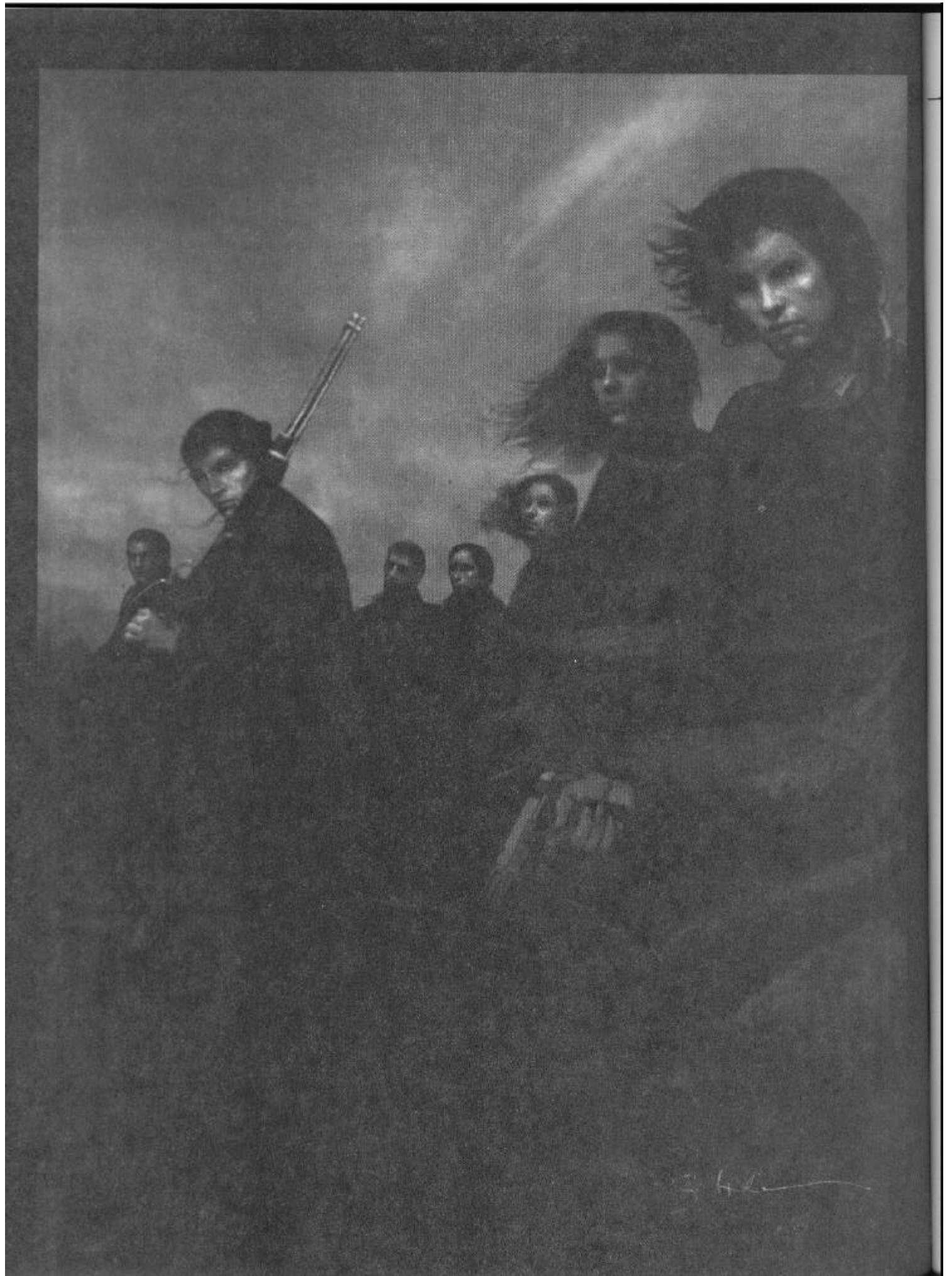
Not that the sorcerers are above building ties to the Kindred world; quite the contrary. Many mages are inquisitive creatures, and it's in their nature to seek out the enigma that the Childer of Caine present. Many leave the tables of the Damned disillusioned, though, perhaps disappointed in the petty squabbling upon which so many Kindred squander their eternal unlives.

GHOSTS

It is widely known that the Giovanni can contact the spirits of the dead. From time to time, vampiric struggles in spots reputed to be "haunted" have given rise to eerie events transcending even what could be expected during a Cainite war. For the most part, though, the dead do not mingle in the affairs of the undead.

FAERIES

If the fae exist at all, they know enough to keep their heads down during an undead war. Of course, any supernatural struggle that takes place over centuries will have its share of strange and inexplicable incidents. It's possible that some of these can be traced to mischievous or vengeful fae. No verifiable evidence of such is forthcoming, though.





CHAPTER FOUR: STORYTELLING THE TIDES OF CONFLICT

*The object of war is not to die for your country but to
make the other bastard die for his.*

— General George S. Patton

Winston Churchill referred to war as “the times that try men’s souls,” and this is equally applicable to struggles among the undead. Note that Churchill didn’t even bother to mention the obvious — the physical horror that the enemy troops could inflict on the British defenders. The true measuring stick in conflict is what happens internally to the characters involved in it — do their souls remain intact through the trials of war and devastation, or do the characters’ resolve and strength fail?

The heart of storytelling is the crucible — a series of events that tests the protagonists physically and spiritually, forcing them to persevere, adapt or suffer ignominious defeat. Few situations form as much of a crucible as warfare, and so wars

have been the backdrop of stories ranging from the myths of the Titans to *Three Kings*. Characters from Saul and David to *Apocalypse Now*’s Captain Willard have had their convictions tested, upheld or shattered during the vagaries of war.

Warfare among vampires should be no different. A sect siege, when it finally erupts, should be a crucible in which all characters, player and Storyteller, are irrevocably changed. All too often, Vampire stories or roleplaying games in general present conflict as a simple mechanical exercise — how many dice rolls does it take to hack down the nameless, forgettable foes in front of you? Such an approach reduces the grandeur of the great epics to the one-dimensional carnage of a first-person shooter video game — and while such exercises are

admittedly enjoyable in their own right, conflict in *Vampire: The Masquerade* can be something more stirring and meaningful.

The following chapter is designed to help Storytellers conjure up such a sweeping tale — to make the Siege of Detroit or the Liberation of Miami be a story every bit as moving as the Fall of Troy, Battle of Britain or Siege of Gondor. Hopefully, you'll craft a tale that your players will talk about for years to come.

GENRE CONVENTIONS

Look in an indie video store, and you might well see an entire wall of "War" movies. Just as with other genres, such as the Western, the romance, or even the gothic horror story, certain conventions apply to war stories — certain common traits passed down from the earliest tales of the Babylonians and Mycenaeans, without which the story just wouldn't feel "right." This chapter is designed to introduce you to some of these conventions.

Of course, the introduction of vampires into the mix means that we can throw a few of the conventions out the window. The thought of an anarch's Caitiff buddy dying in her arms, a last plea to "win one for the boys in the Rack" gasping from his blood-flecked lips, is as inappropriate as it is maudlin. Still, war is hell even among the Damned, and it's surprising just how many of the timeless storytelling techniques apply to the great Jyhad.

MODELS OF MAYHEM

Before planning her chronicle of epic conflict, a Storyteller would be well advised to spend a couple of weeks looking at how other tellers of tales through the ages and in all media have done the same thing. Invariably, the common denominator in such stories is not the struggle itself, but rather the ability of the teller to craft empathetic characters and demonstrate how the horror and stress of war affect the outlooks of these characters.

Take, for example, Akira Kurosawa's masterpiece *The Seven Samurai*. Essentially a "siege" story, the film revolves around a childish simple plot — seven nomadic warriors are hired to protect a village from marauding bandits. In the hands of many other "artists," this story has been (re)told in a shoddy fashion. In Kurosawa's hands, the tale becomes a timeless treasure, simply by focusing on the characters and how the events of battle interact (often tragically) with their personal

worldviews. Katsushiro, the eager samurai-in-training, discovers that his glorious illusions of valiant combat are just that — illusions. Kikuchiyo, a lowborn and delusional peasant, dies a hero's death and is buried as a samurai. Kyuzo, greatest swordsman of his age, falls ignominiously to a gun-wielding brigand. Because Kurosawa took the time to establish his characters and make you care about them, their triumphs and defeats in the midst of chaos ring that much truer.

One of the key elements of this sort of thing is that the characters and situations leading to the struggle are built up well beforehand. This is what's so advantageous about a *Vampire* siege — usually, the conflict itself is the result of years, perhaps even decades or centuries, of espionage, diplomacy, alliance mongering and political maneuvering. Thus, when the siege finally happens, it's at the climax of an established chronicle. Everything that's happened in peacetime is mirrored, ruined or inverted in the cauldron of war.

The onset of a siege is a great backdrop for tragic flaws and an effective way to bring subplots and buried tensions to a dramatic head. By its nature, a sect war is often the Most Important Thing in the unives of the local undead. Once the struggle starts, all lesser plots must be swiftly dealt with and resolved — all at once, usually. Is a primogen afraid beyond all reason of fire? Have her become trapped in her burning haven, either as a poetic end or as a means for her to face her terror. Is the anarch leader in love with both the Brujah whip and a Sabbat paladin? Now's when he has to make his choice — or perhaps he walks into the sun in despair. Has the sniveling second-in-command been itching for a chance to take out her pack leader? There's no better time than in the midst of a savage, chaotic melee.

War is essentially about the sudden juxtaposition of real people with savage violence and death; this juxtaposition works much better with established characters for whom the violence is a confrontation with their own weaknesses. The cowardly, effete Toreador prince who meets his Final Death at the talons of a Sabbat pack after suffering grievous health levels of aggravated damage — who cares, really? More interesting and evocative is the cowardly, effete Toreador prince who's captured and subjected to brutal revenge at the hands of the dread Sabbat foe whom the prince

has feared for centuries. The cowardly, effete Toreador prince who's assassinated in his own chambers by his "blood bound" lover, who is revealed to be a Black Hand remover in deep cover — more intriguing still. And the cowardly, effete Toreador prince who, facing the foe he's dreaded for centuries, suddenly finds the courage to hold off the Sword of Caine for a few turns to let his childe escape the fray — well, now you've got a story to tell.

STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES

The following is a list of various storytelling techniques. Some of these can be applied to any story, but most are particularly useful for siege stories.

HEEL AND FACE TURNS

In professional wrestling (which is really an ongoing, lowest-common-denominator epic myth) they're known as heel and face turns — those junctures in which the purest of good guys suddenly "turn bad," renouncing their former teammates and fans, or when the vilest of the vile suddenly have an attack of conscience or honor and come to the good guys' aid. More elitist viewers might instead recall Darth Vader's betrayal of the Emperor in the finale of *Return of the Jedi*.

In any event, the heel or face turn, or something similar, is a staple of war stories and can be an effective storytelling device. The stalwart minion of The Other Side who, overcome with respect or love for a player's character, decides to join that character's side — or, conversely, a defender of the faith who suddenly turns traitor — is an integral component of conflict-oriented tales because it adds a dash of human drama to the otherwise straightforward fighting. Let's face it — the Sabbat Gangrel *antitribu* who goes out and rips all of her foes into gobbets, just like she's expected to do, is boring. The same Gangrel who suddenly turns on her sect due to centuries of suppressed resentment over the overbearing Black Hand dominion who's showed up to orchestrate the siege, or who realizes that a long-lost childe of hers serves as the besieged domain's sheriff... well, that's a little more interesting.

Of course, such changes of allegiance should be as meticulously thought out and sensibly executed as they are in movies, literature and, yes, pro wrestling. "Shock turns," implemented for no



other reason than because vampires are *eeeeevil*, leave the players questioning the story's logic and in turn ruin the precious suspension of disbelief.

GO ALL OUT

A siege is a big deal. To the lords of the Camarilla, it's catastrophe. Even among the most hardened war packs of the Sabbat, sieges are momentous events that change the balance of vampiric power forever. Treat them accordingly. Don't let anyone, player or Storyteller character, escape a siege unscathed. This is the time when you can throw the "personal" horror to the wind and get epic.

This is also the time when important characters die, or when that anonymous vampire who's been kind of hanging out on the fringe of your hand-drawn coterie chart suddenly reveals herself as the mastermind. This is the time when wretched anarchs carve their place in the city's power structure, and when proud primogen fall.

All this drama is not necessarily synonymous with "all the vampires face off in the middle of downtown and proceed to get all Jet Li on each other's asses." A dramatic high point can be as simple as the entire primogen council delivering a vote of no confidence to an established prince.

THE DARKNESS AND THE DAWN

Generally speaking, the part of a story immediately preceding a climax is also the most desperate. As human beings, we don't really like stories dealing with *faits accomplis*. The invading army who outnumbers its desperate foes ten to one, then proceeds to... well, *win*, is realistic, but it's not what we, with our love of the underdog, want to see. We want to see a ragtag, desperate force hopelessly overwhelmed and pushed to the brink of despair, then somehow, impossibly, come back to pull out the victory from defeat.

This is doubly true in a siege. Even in *Vampire*, sometimes it's just good drama to let the good guys, or at least the lesser evil, triumph against all odds. Hopefully, the players' characters will be the catalysts of such miraculous comebacks. Make things look hopeless for the characters, let them seem to be on the verge of being wiped out, and then offer them that faintest glimmer of hope for turning the tide. Then, if you need to fudge a few dice rolls or nudge the story in a certain direction for the sake of a satisfactory conclusion, go for it. Just don't let the characters figure out you helped them.

Of course, you might want to focus on the characters' desperate attempts to escape the inevitable victory of the Other Side and the ensuing carnage.

A valiant but futile struggle against the inevitable, if handled well, can be among the most riveting and heart-wrenching of stories. Some of the most remarkable and stirring true war tales, from Thermopylae to the Warsaw Ghetto, deal with doomed soldiers who, in losing, made their victors earn every bloodstained inch of their conquest.

CLASH OF THE CHAMPIONS

We've spent much of this book telling you not to run war chronicles by taking the cheesy route of having the Big Bad Ass-Kickers on the Camarilla side and the Big Bad Ass-Kickers on the Sabbat side square off in the middle of downtown and start whooping up on each other with Feral Claws and Lure of Flames and rocket launchers and katanas concealed in trench coats and God knows what else. That having been said, sometimes it's fine to have superhumanly deadly predators, you know, *actually fight each other*. Really. It does happen. If your siege involves a 6th-generation Gangrel with seven levels of Protean on one side, and an Assamite *antitribu* who's been practicing swordplay since the Crusades on the other, it's not a mortal sin to bring the two together and let them rumble. As with any other aspect of storytelling, it's how you do it that spells the difference between Epic and Crappy Comic Book.

It must be remembered that many elder vampires spent their breathing days in eras when duels were commonplace. In some ancient cultures, opposing armies routinely sent their best fighters to face off in single combat with the champions of the foe. Such duels commonly served as a prelude to the mass combat, but allowed one side or other to gain a significant psychological advantage. Especially in cases in which one side is outnumbered but has a few excellent combatants, a couple of preliminary duels can improve the morale of the "troops," provided their side's warriors win.

In a few cases — especially if a siege has been or promises to be costly for both sects — a duel between champions might determine the result of the siege. This is particularly dramatic when a player's character is one of the champions in question. Imagine the pressure when the outcome of

the entire siege rests on your shoulders (and Traits). Then again, if one of your players has built his Brujah with Potence and Celerity up the wazoo; maxed out his Physical Attributes, Brawl, Dodge, Melee and Firearms; and run amok through the Rack for the entire chronicle (and we all know one of these sorts, don't we?), now's a perfect time to let him put his money where his fangs are.

Such an event can be an excellent way to point out the difference in mores between elders and neonates. In a dramatic standoff in which the Ventrue prince wouldn't dream of interfering in the one-on-one duel between her sheriff and the Sabbat templar, the players' characters might be feverishly plotting ways to do a drive-by on the distracted combatants. Such crass behavior will likely see the characters branded as untrustworthy curs even if their actions gain their side an advantage. But then again, expediency generally supersedes honor during a war, and doubly so during a vampiric war.

EVERYBODY'S SOMEBODY

War's a big business. Even in the relatively confined crucible of an undead siege, all manner of things take place. Neonates scurry around the streets seeking sustenance or havens; ancillae and elders deploy their human and financial capital, wielding entire economic and social strata like rapiers in pursuit of victory. And so, in the nightmare of battle, Storytellers can sometimes forget that the players' characters are the most important story components, regardless of the scope of the goings-on around them.

A siege, more than nearly any other moment in *Vampire*, provides opportunities for characters to test themselves and their limits. More importantly, it provides opportunities for characters to matter. In a game that often stresses how insignificant the characters are in the grand game of the Antediluvians and Methuselahs, it can be a refreshing change to make a difference.

Let every character have her "do-or-die" moment — the point at which that character must rise to the challenge of her rivals, or something similar. Preferably, the character should face some personal dread — an unbeatable foe, a personal weakness, a phobia. The character with Courage 2 can rescue the chantry leader who knows the ritual to ward off the Sabbat's ghouls — if only he can force himself to enter the burning building where

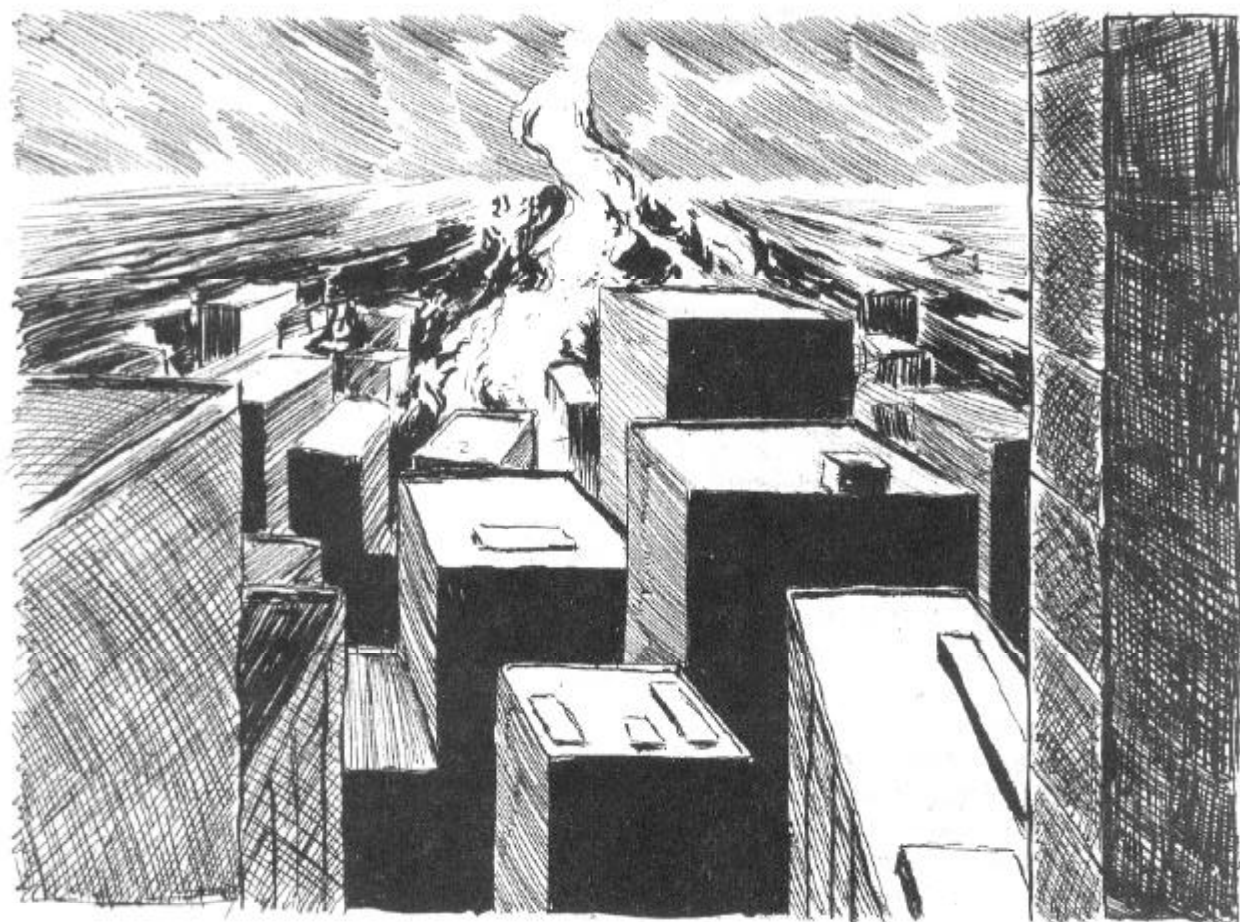
the leader was being held. Another character has to face off against the foe from whom she's always been forced to flee... or her sire, who taught her everything she knows about vampiric power... or her mortal lover, now undead and loyal to the other side.

Oh, and since we're discussing the conventions of war rather than horror per se, we'll actually say something that us tragic White Wolf types rarely advise: The character — the "protagonist" — should probably win. Screw the tragedy, and screw the die rolls. It's just flat out more satisfying.

An excellent example is found in *The Lord of the Rings*, during the battle of the Pelennor Fields. All through the series, Tolkien took great care to make the reader well aware of just how terrifying the Dark Lord's lieutenant, the Lord of the Nazgul, was. This monster had dogged the protagonists from the beginning of the story. Everything about him, from his black cloak to his burning red eyes to his poisonous breath to his repulsive pterodactyl-like steed, was designed to convey the creature's sheer power and evil. His presence on the battlefield sent entire armies routing in panic. And thus, when humble Merry Brandybuck the hobbit, in the climax of his personal story, helped in the slaying of the fiend, the impact of the event far exceeded what it would have been had, say, Aragorn or Gandalf struck down the Nazgul. Although the feat, in and of itself, did not win the War of the Ring, or even significantly turn the tide, it marked the defining moment of Merry's character development. At that moment, regardless of the outcome of the war itself, Merry had won his own battle.

Of course, this is *Vampire*, so you don't have to let the characters win without a price. The Pyrrhic victory, in which the heroes win but at a heavy cost, is as old as the war story itself. Even in the Norse epics, Thor slays the Midgard serpent at the end of time — but is in turn struck down by the creature's venom.

Just how far you can go with a Pyrrhic victory, of course, depends on your players' tastes and maturity levels. Some players relish the thought of their doomed Tremere character confronting the monstrous Inconnu, hurling himself into a magical duel that destroys the character but fatally weakens the ancient creature and thus turns the tide of the siege. Other players feel like they've just been screwed over and put in a no-win situation.



Note that, just as the majority of “action” in a siege does not involve direct physical violence, so not every “magic moment” for a character has to involve a direct threat on the battlefield. A character who can pull off an impossible alliance with a Lupine or completely divert funds from the enemy’s Swiss bank accounts has accomplished as much — if not more — as the guy who spends five points of Willpower to stake the archbishop.

ANTAGONISTS

Some war stories feature the characters against legions of faceless Nazis or Turks or bug-people or other goons. A few even do it well — especially if the story is more of an introspective look at the protagonist than an actual action tale. In *Vampire* sieges, however, it’s probably best to have antagonists — guys on the other side of the fence whom your players’ characters can hate with all the depths of their undead passion.

As mentioned earlier, it’s probably best to design a suitable foe, or at least a challenge, for

each character. If a player’s character is a fence-sitting anarchist, let him meet up with a former broodmate who joined the Sabbat years ago and now seeks to turn the character to the Sabbat cause. If the character has sought to establish order and stability throughout the chronicle, let her confront a crazed Malkavian who delights in tearing down everything the character has wrought. Preferably, these enemies are ones who have already been established in the chronicle, though it’s possible for a particularly loathsome rival to come rip-roaring into the characters’ unives during the siege itself.

ANCESTRAL FOES

In the scheming world of *Vampire*, an actual in-your-face siege is a pretty big deal. It’s the nexus at which a lot of pent-up issues finally play themselves out. And so it’s not uncommon for otherwise uninvolved Kindred to swoop in like vultures if they see one of their long-time foes weakened and struggling. If, for example, the Prince of Baltimore has made a fair number of enemies over the centu-

ries, and now he's being uprooted by the Sabbat, all manner of pissed-off vampires — Sabbat, independent and otherwise — are likely to show up for a piece of the prince.

This even applies — especially applies, one might say — to the characters. If the characters have an enemy, and their city is now under siege, it's a perfect time for that enemy to petition to be part of the siege, all the better to get a piece of the characters while they're distracted. This is true even if the enemy in question is part of the same sect — most Kindred patiently wait for a foe's moment of maximum weakness, then show up at that time to deliver the coup de grace.

FRIENDLY FIRE

Regardless of the circumstances of the siege, you can bet that there will be opportunists on both sides who are merely there to profiteer on the misery. Hell, it's how the Giovanni became a clan. During a siege, vampires come and go, the Traditions of Domain is loosened, random violence takes place, and the authorities are too busy watching for the enemy without to notice all the chicanery going on within their own ranks.

And chicanery there *will* be. Any vampire worth her fangs almost undoubtedly uses the siege as an opportunity to settle internecine scores or eliminate rivals within her own coterie, clan or sect. In a harshly run Camarilla domain, a siege might be the only chance an ambitious neonate gets to bump off that reactionary (or delicious) harpy, or that neighbor with the high-rent domain. Assuming the characters aren't the ones indulging in these practices, somebody other than the enemy will doubtless be gunning for them at some point during the siege. After all, most mortal crimes of violence are committed by persons known to the victim. Why should it be any different among the undead?

THE NOBLE VILLAIN

In the morally ambiguous (or bankrupt) world of the undead, perhaps the title "noble antagonist" is a better choice of phrase. In any event, the noble antagonist is a character — usually a Storyteller character — on the other side of the siege who is possessed of virtues valued by the players' characters. The noble antagonist is typically honorable, courageous and dutiful — a brilliant soldier who happens to play for the other team. Sometimes,

the noble antagonist and a character even fall for each other — witness the erotic attraction between James Bond and Pussy Galore, or even Batman and Catwoman.

Sometimes, the characters and the noble antagonist can find common ground and resolve their differences — generally not. In the World of Darkness, the characters and the noble antagonist usually must face off, albeit reluctantly, to the death.

COLD-HEARTED REVENGE AND IGNOMINIOUS DEFEAT

The flip side of the noble antagonist theme is the opportunity to knock a bitch-ass punk the fuck out, piss blood on his pathetic face, and make him bawl like a little girl. In *The Iliad*, Achilles didn't just kill his rival Hector — he stripped his corpse naked, tied it behind his chariot, dragged it through the battlefield grime in front of Hector's entire family, and threw the mutilated body to the dogs. Powerful stuff — and this sort of "eye for your entire fucking face" revenge has been the staple of countless stories thereafter, from comic books to movies like *The Godfather* and *New Jack City*.

While *Vampire* is not an excuse to indulge in sadism, even vicariously, we humans have a primal reaction to this kind of Draconian vengeance. This sort of thing goes on all the time in the world of the undead, where Jihad players wait centuries to pay back their enemies for lifetimes of slights. When they finally have an opportunity for revenge, most Kindred aren't likely to be too merciful. The losers of a siege usually end up as gut-churning examples for the survivors. In other words, while cruel and unusual vengeance isn't for everyone, it's a very effective tool for those coteries that can stomach it.

Making a character the target of cruel revenge is not necessarily recommended — but if you want the players to hate a rival for the span of the chronicle, having them be cowed, humiliated and generally bitch-slapped in public is definitely a way to instill such loathing. It's also an interesting exercise to present high-Humanity vampires with the opportunity to wreak furious vengeance on the most deserving of foes. Players who would burn their entire Willpower pools rather than harm an innocent will sometimes willingly go to surprising lengths against the captured foe who's been tormenting them for the length of the chronicle.

THE DOPPELGÄNGER

A particularly fun enemy for Storytellers to bring out during a siege story is the doppelgänger — a Storyteller character whose personality, Traits and general “role” are similar to those of the player’s character, but who owes allegiance to the other side. The doppelgänger, upon discovering her “mirror image” in the player’s character, relentlessly seeks to destroy or at least show up this threat to her superiority. Consider *Tombstone*’s Doc Holliday and Johnny Ringo by way of example.

In a **Vampire** story, a player’s character with status among the anarchs might find her followers seduced from her service by a charismatic, street-smart Sabbat Pander. The prince’s child might discover his nemesis in the form of a deadly paladin, the second-in-command of the archbishop’s own pack. The Tremere warlock might find herself targeted by a Tzimisce *koldun* who’s every bit as gifted as (or maybe a little bit more than?) the character herself.

Doppelgängers are fun — not only are they evenly matched against the characters, but their co-opting of the characters’ “specialties” make the players all the more eager to have their characters put an end to these miserable rivals.

TRAITORS AND THEIR ILK

It is impossible to read military history for any length of time without running across a story of treason — and this is all the more true when dealing with the wars of the undead. **Vampire** chronicles are rife with treachery of all sorts — not only are the “normal” motivations there (power, greed, envy), but magical tools such as the blood bond, Dominate and Presence offer countless ways to set up all manner of plausible and implausible betrayals.

Particularly in a **Vampire** chronicle, traitorous characters might have been lying in wait for centuries, disguised as upstanding members of the undead community in question. Or a formerly loyal sect member might suddenly turn his coat during a siege itself, seduced by promises of power or simply disgusted by his own side’s actions during the siege.

Of course, not all treachery is the byproduct of “enemy” action. A classic subgenre of the treachery theme is “the protagonists are set up on a mission their superiors know is destined to fail.”

This plot has been employed in works ranging from *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* to *Rambo: First Blood Part 2* — because it’s a powerful and effective device. In this sort of story, the characters spend much of the story trying to accomplish something that they think is important or crucial, only to discover that the entire task was in fact a diversion in order for someone else to accomplish something else entirely.

For this theme to work to maximum effectiveness, of course, the characters must be given an opportunity to discover their superiors’ treachery and react to it. Otherwise, all the players know is that their Storyteller sure made things miserable for them.

If the characters survive, this device also serves to change the direction of a chronicle — imagine the wrath of a coterie or pack that discovers the prince or bishop to whom they’ve been toadying for the entire chronicle, and who sent them out to accomplish a “vital task,” really set them up to fail and be slain. Such characters might willingly defect to the other side of a sect siege, or at the very least ignore the struggle in favor of taking out the bastard who set them up.

Finally, of course, this is **Vampire**. The characters themselves might take it on themselves to callously betray their sect allegiances to take a spot on the winning side. Not exactly heroic, but then again, the characters are blood-drinking corpses. And a band of quislings newly pledged to the victorious side has plenty to do — not only are they Public Enemy #1 in their former sect’s eyes, but their new sectmates eye them with distrust. They have plenty of proving to do, and probably don’t enjoy a lot of protection from their new allies in the process.

TYPES OF STORIES

Siege stories can involve pitched battles over a single night or epic chronicles going on for centuries. Here are a few examples of how games of various lengths might be structured.

- One-shot stories typically focus on a particular action within a siege. In such a case, the coterie has likely been brought together for a specific task: infiltrate the opposing sect, capture Enemy X, bankrupt Rival Asset Y.

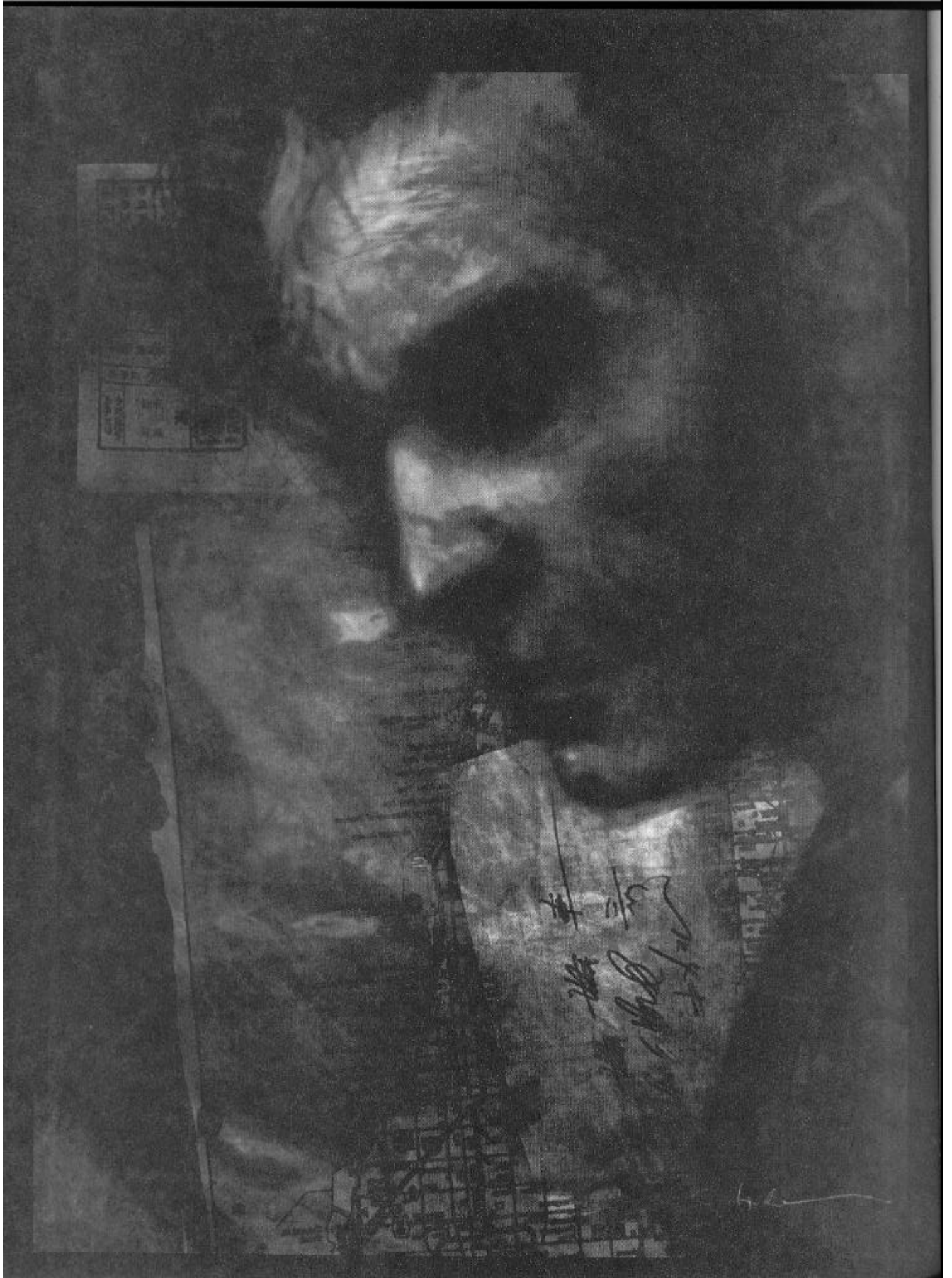
- A longer-term game can involve the running of a siege from beginning to end. Characters might

be the agents provocateur sent into a rival territory to sow the area for the siege to come. They might remain there for years, even decades, insinuating themselves into the rival society, all the while maintaining contact with their allies on the outside. Finally, the siege itself begins to take place, and the characters must take their place with their true sect... or perhaps they've actually grown accustomed to unlife in their target city and decide to defect?

- Finally, a siege can be the event that culminates or irrevocably changes the direction

of an existing chronicle. In some cases, a sect struggle can be the end to a chronicle that began before the formation of the sects themselves, as two powerful elders who hated each other in Carolingian nights now find themselves ready for the final battle in the New World. In other cases, a siege may abruptly change the nature of the chronicle — for example, characters begin the game as Sabbat, get trapped behind enemy lines during a failed siege, and have to exist as autarkis for the remainder of the chronicle.







APPENDIX: THE WAR CHEST

But these men can think of nothing but the enemy; they're like lovers; when they say certain words their beards quiver, their eyes glisten, and their hands stroke the barrels of their rifles.

— Italo Calvino, *The Path to the Nest of Spiders*

This appendix is a collection of odds and ends for stories about the Camarilla-Sabbat conflict. Included herein are a few considerations that both Storytellers and players should concern themselves with (which is why we didn't hide them in the Storytelling chapter), some loose guidelines that should serve both players and Storytellers seeking to understand the chronology of a midnight siege. This appendix also includes a few templates that can serve as a starting point for Storyteller characters and give players some inkling of what they can expect to come up against during a siege. Players should remember, though, that the Storyteller is well within his rights to tweak the numbers presented—if a player designs her character with the sole purpose of whacking a certain tribune and he proves to be far tougher (or weaker) than the

player suspected, well, all's fair in war, or so the old saying goes.

COMMON GROUND

Perhaps coming to a common point of view seems strange in a book that details how to portray both sides of a sectarian conflict, but bear in mind that you and your players want to have fun. It's the characters who should handle all the fighting, intrigue and backstabbing. If you want to gather with friends and have a knockdown, drag-out brawl, you should probably pursue another hobby.

For a story to work well, one of the Storyteller's cardinal principles should be to let the troupe know beforehand the style of play that the chronicle will encourage. Just as people feel misled if they go

to see a movie because of an action-packed preview that turns out to be a slow-moving love story, so, too, will players feel misled if the Storyteller says, "It's all-out war with the Sabbat!" and proceeds to run a brooding chronicle colored with treachery and intrigue.

As a word of warning here, don't think we're telling you how to run or play your stories. You paid your money for **Vampire** material, and you'd damn well better believe that you can use it as you wish. When we design **Vampire** books, we have certain themes and ideas in mind, but we're hardly going to force you to use them. Especially with something so broad as the conflict between the sects, every Storyteller and player has her own desires for the chronicle, and the wise troupe prepares for that situation.

What is important, however, is to make sure that the troupe has fun. Avoiding that initial miscommunication is paramount. Naturally, such a thing is important in any chronicle, but it's especially critical in a story in which the conflict is so plainly stated. This isn't necessarily going to be a soul-searching probe through the characters' psyches to find out who among them is a traitor; this is going to be a straightforward clash of ideologies, and the blood may run in the streets. (Then again, perhaps your story has its own subconflicts, with traitors in the midst of the characters' coterie and the powers that be waiting until the last possible moment to choose their sides. Well, hell; more power to you. Such paranoia is **Vampire's** stock in trade.) Before you gather for your first session — maybe even before you have the players create their characters — let them know what to expect. A character designed to wither under the loss of Humanity he experiences in deadly combat is out of place in a heavily diplomatic chronicle, and a character designed with smooth-talking diplomacy in mind has little to do in a chronicle that requires the characters to be bold scouts sneaking into a Sabbat city to test the Black Hand's strength.

THE NATURE OF THE CONFLICT

One of the most important items to consider, mentioned in examples above, is the type of conflict the chronicle will focus upon. Is combat the most common form of conflict? If so, the players will — rightly — want to create characters who excel at physical violence. Is combat a common

threat, but one that the characters will want to avoid? This provides a refreshing twist on the combat story, but be warned that it requires a clever Storyteller. Running forever from threats is entertaining for only so long, and the story grows stale if such a situation never resolves itself. If it does resolve itself, and does so with the massacre of the players' characters, the troupe will feel that the story had no meaning, and that their characters died with no dramatic payoff. Is the physical conflict merely a backdrop for the high politics of the two sects? If so, characters will probably create more social or cerebral characters, with the odd physical terror or two to highlight their capacity for serious damage.

Obviously, there's no such thing as a right answer to a question like this. Some fantastic stories may be told with physical brutality at the core of the story. Other stories may blend the three seamlessly, using physical violence (or the threat of physical violence) to underpin the horror of the setting while resolving the conflict itself with wit and panache in the velvet-draped halls of Elysium.

What is important, though, is making this clear beforehand. Players who design inappropriate characters will feel cheated, or grow bored, or possibly become problem players. Storytellers who claim one style of play but actually tend toward another earn the resentment of their troupes and probably find themselves without players.

Talk it out with the troupe. Stick with the decision. Feel free to alter the flow of the conflict a bit here and there for flavor, but don't mislead the group. This advice goes for players, too! Players, if your normally cool and sedate fixer character has suddenly had enough and snaps, that's great — explore the cost to her morality and let it show that these Kindred are real personalities, and that everyone has her limits. The same word of warning goes to you as well as Storytellers, though — don't create one type of character and play him as another. Not only will the character fail to come to life, you'll be cheating yourself out of the opportunity to evoke a believable character.

A rare few exceptions to this last warning do exist. Certain characters may legitimately have gone beyond the pale and make for great doomed characters — so long as the player understands the character's terminal nature — who burn out in a blaze of violent glory. The other side of the coin

features hardened combat veterans who have simply seen enough pain and misery to sate them for eternity. If players can overcome the urge to play these characters as preachy, they can make very compelling protagonists cursed with tragic histories. As always, the onus is on the player to make the character believable, but the best Storytellers never forbid any concept out of hand. If you trust the player, great; if not, she may need to be encouraged to play another concept.

THE TONE OF THE CONFLICT

Once you've decided what form the conflict will take, your next step is to decide how it will be handled.

Roleplaying and storytelling games grew out of war games, and many of them reflect their roots with the prevalence of the combat that occurs within them. Even so, the style of combat that occurs is just as important as how it contributes to the chronicle. Action is not necessarily a bad thing, even though actual physical combat is assumed to be rare in a **Vampire** context. Some troupes prefer highly cinematic combat situations, while others prefer more realistic combat and still others prefer to resolve the conflict in the chambers of those who would never sully their fists with something so base as a brawl.

We're just writers and designers; you don't have to listen to us. Just because we want **Vampire** to be a sublime game of subtlety, politics, paranoia and horror doesn't mean you can't play the game in the context you enjoy best. If katana-wielding, flamethrowing, Discipline ninjitsu in the streets that results in entire SWAT teams being torn to shreds is your taste, have at it. The systems don't work really well for it, but the genre can, and hey, you like what you like.

The position taken by most of this book is that of the "secret war" which takes place among decidedly unvampiric elements of real-world cities every night. Gang war, ethnic hostility, national strife — any of these can work as a model for the invisible conflict that characterizes the clash of the undead. Not that we're condoning this sort of violence, but so long as you confine it to the story and don't prowl the alleys of your fair town as some sort of self-avowed undead warrior, it's nothing more than words in the air.

To that end, the violence in a chronicle can become savage and horrible, rather than fantastical

and commonplace. Consider a war story — but not in the context of a comic book or a John Woo movie. Think instead of the shock and horror a CNN war correspondent's footage elicits, or of the sorrow and loss evoked by the Omaha Beach scene in *Saving Private Ryan*, in which valiant soldiers hold their spilling guts with their hands or trudge onward after having gobbets of their flesh torn away by shrapnel. In this sense, the violence becomes itself part of the horror. It's not even "splatter" at this point, unless you start to use such violence as a cheap shock tactic — it's the terrible truth of a physical threat made real, a painful consequence of being on the "wrong side," whatever that means in your chronicle. This is the "default" value of violence in **Vampire**; it thrills for the sake of action and it horrifies in the aftermath. In the hands of a skilled Storyteller, one who watches those Humanity, Self-Control and Conscience Traits, it also serves to reinforce the core themes of morality and the Beast.

Another option is to cast the violence in a faraway and almost inconsequential light. This is a wise choice for stories featuring jaded elders or stories that focus on what the conflict means or the backroom politics involved rather than the cost in lives and unives of the war itself. In this mode, characters may never see violence, at least firsthand. Final Death is little more than an entry on a tribune's ledger or a footnote in a bitter Black Hand dominion's request for more aid. As Josef Stalin said, "One death is a tragedy. A million deaths is a statistic." This is another fine venue by which to illustrate degrading *humanitas*, elder ennui and the sacrifice of compassion for other goals.

As a word of warning to Storytellers, it is very difficult to evoke horror on this level, at least in a conventional sense. With death ubiquitous and the body counts of each side rising, the characters grow familiar with death and even contemptuous of it. A story that regards violence and casualty so, well, casually needs to find its horror focus somewhere else and cling to it. To do anything less negates the theme of the game and takes nihilism to new depths of tastelessness (which may well be the point with such cynical Kindred).

MATTERS OF CONSEQUENCE

Hand in hand with the matter of violence comes the question of what happens afterward.

This isn't "what happens afterward" in terms of healing the characters back to their full complements of health levels, but rather the less tangible results of violence.

Quite simply, violence is legally and ethically wrong in most places on earth. Sure, your character may have nine dots in his Beat the Crap Out of Everything dice pool, but when the police respond to a public disturbance call and find your character and his 9-iron spattered with sticky crimson, he'd better be prepared to face the music.

In a game that acknowledges any level of morality at all, consequence should always follow action. While it's perfectly acceptable for a character to overlook the outcome of her behavior, it only works to the detriment of the story if the Storyteller overlooks it.

This has all been said before, and repeating it at length only belabors the issue. The **Vampire Storytellers Handbook** regards the issue as the Law of Common Sense. In a nutshell, it's the Storyteller's job to apply any consequences that may occur from a character's actions justly but firmly. Characters who kill wantonly go to jail. Characters who routinely burn havens go to jail. Characters who run away from police go to jail. Jail is bad for vampires.

In a chronicle, however, the Storyteller must take pains to apply consequences across the board, not just with regard to violence. Social snubbing, especially of other Cainites, is a fantastic way to earn rivalries, and when your rival is the *dux bellorum*, you're probably screwed. Likewise, failing to observe *ritae*, ignoring prestation, embarrassing the Tremere — any breach of custom, whether Kindred or mortal — *has consequences*. There's nothing wrong with that. Indeed, some Kindred have made names for themselves by flouting tradition, and it's the coin of the anarch realm. Those individuals, though, have accepted the consequences and survived them. They can make compelling characters if they're willing to suffer. Spoiled characters who never want to face adversity for their own antics, though, are rarely compelling.

Storytellers, it is your responsibility to never waver when considering and applying consequences. *Ignore them only when it would hurt the story otherwise*. Even in this, you must weigh your options. Sure, it may harm the story if the truculent Gangrel smuggler is staked and left to meet the sunrise, but it hurts the story more if he's allowed to ignore and abuse mighty

elders, whose personal gravity provides a sense of duty to the rest of the coterie. The old maxim, "Don't let them get away with murder" applies here, even if murder isn't the issue. If a character says or does anything untoward that might yield him the least bit of negative attention or repercussion, make note of it (at the very least) and apply it when it serves the story.

THE CHRONOLOGY OF CONFLICT

Below are four timelines detailing the progression of offense and defense for both the Camarilla and the Sabbat during times of siege. Please note that these are tendencies, not battle plans. Neither sect runs all of its combat by a universal playbook. The chronology is likewise loose; a Sabbat scout pack might decide to stage a mock assassination before the decision is made to invade a city, just to test the waters. However, the information presented here should give the Storyteller some idea of what the sects do when preparing to take over a city, or in defense of a domain.

THE CAMARILLA

OFFENSE

The temptation is to compare the Sabbat to roaches — breed quickly, can't ever seem to kill the last one, not too bright but good survivors, and so on. And so you think you can go in, guns blazing, and eliminate them all. Good luck.

— Nat Grayson, Tremere assassin-for-hire

Hardly the sect's default state, the Camarilla is much more effective defending territory than acquiring new turf. It does, however, act instead of reacting at times (as evidenced when it recently took New York from the Sabbat). When it does, the progression goes something like this.

Planning

• **Decisions:** The final decision to "move" on a contested city can take years. Camarilla elders may wish to wait until a certain mayor is out of office, but not wish to tip their hand by disposing of him. Time eventually puts new leaders in power, one way or another. Likewise, certain events provide cover or advantage — a festival or a city's bicentennial may change the city's routine for a few nights long enough for the sect to make its opening gambit.

• **Favors:** The currency of the Camarilla is debt. When the sect decides to go war, the leaders of the effort call in any favors that might be owed them, making use of allies' resources, personnel, Disciplines, knowledge and whatever else might be useful. Beyond the obvious advantages that the indebted may be able to offer, the leaders can employ resources that they may or may not have at no real expense to themselves. During the planning stages, the elders in charge may also promise boons and status to any who stand with them in battle (or, more likely, represent them in battle).

• **Secure the surrounding area:** It doesn't do any good to destroy the Sabbat in Detroit if the rest of Michigan brims with hungry Cainites. Before staging a takeover, the Camarilla makes sure that it has the support, at least to some degree, of surrounding cities.

• **Buy the independents:** Not all vampires belong to the Camarilla or the Sabbat. However, the vast majority of such Kindred are self-interested enough that they can be bought, at least enough to stay out of the Camarilla's way. The Sabbat does not command the material resources that the Camarilla does, nor is it as willing to do favors in exchange for cooperation. If a Sabbat-dominated city happens to have a strong Giovanni presence, the Camarilla will definitely try to make sure that the Necromancers aren't running guns or information to the Sabbat during the coming conflict.

Opening Moves

• **Politics:** The local police may find levies passed or donations made so that more officers can be on duty at any given time. Homeless shelters may find that funding is suddenly available for more beds, which means fewer bodies on the streets at night for the Sabbat to feed from or Embrace. The Camarilla can make unlife difficult for the Sabbat in any number of ways by subtly affecting social policy.

• **Rumors:** The vampires of the Sabbat believe in silly things like "Antediluvians" and "Gehenna," and watch dutifully for signs that the end may be near. The Camarilla is more than capable of manufacturing such signs. The rumor of a mystical artifact or a powerful elder sleeping "just outside of town" may not fool the elders of the Sword of Caine, but it's probably enough to get younger Cainites interested — and distracted. It's also a testament to Sabbat vanity: Even if such things as Antediluvians

existed, why would they care about New York City? Certainly their plans would be far too grand for such petty concerns over real estate...?

Attacks

• **Assassinations:** Random violence is not the favored tool of the Camarilla. After all, they want the city to remain standing until the conflict is over. But the Sabbat is very dependent on ritual, and the Camarilla can exploit this by identifying and excising the priests and other local leaders. The Camarilla is usually careful to wait on this tactic until after the Sabbat is busy chasing phantom elders or dealing with mortal concerns. It's difficult, after all, to make a vampire's demise look like an accident, so by ordering a murder, the Camarilla tips its hand.

• **Foreclosures:** The wrecking balls descend on communal havens — by day, of course. The cleanup crews typically include at least a few ghouls or Dominated mortals who won't panic (or take pictures) at the sight of burning Cainites. The Camarilla tries to make sure that destruction of such buildings is legal — arson and terrorism invite federal scrutiny that the sect doesn't need.

• **Soldiers:** The Camarilla does not have the guerrilla disposition that the Sabbat does (deliberately). Sabbat vampires are all warriors to some degree. Therefore, any actual foot soldiers sent in to hostile territory will: a) travel in groups, b) be accomplished warriors themselves, c) usually include someone proficient enough at Thaumaturgy to scare opponents, as the Sabbat have little access to such mysticism, and d) *always* have escape routes. Camarilla "war parties" rarely go looking for trouble. Instead, they try to isolate Sabbat packs and eliminate the members. They only rarely try to find or destroy elder Sabbat, for reasons discussed below.

Endgame

• **Close Escape Routes:** One of the reasons that the Camarilla takes pains to garner the support of surrounding cities is that refugee Sabbat will flee to those cities if the sect is successfully ousted. The attacking Camarilla parties place sentries and deputies in these cities, bolstering the ranks of those cities' own scourges and sheriffs until the refugee area is deemed safe (which often takes years).

• **Deals:** The Camarilla doesn't usually target elder Sabbat, expecting that the elders will behave like elders. That is, the Camarilla assumes that they

will make deals or flee in order to save their own hides. This is often true. After all, a Sabbat bishop who loses a city to the Camarilla isn't making any allies and may well face retribution from his sect. The Camarilla, likewise, recognizes both the difficulty in finding and destroying elders of any sect and the value of trading secrets for anonymity.

- **Leaders:** The question of who will be prince (and primogen, and so forth) of the newly claimed domain has hopefully been resolved long before the attack ever began. While a certain amount of politicking is inevitable, the prince, at least, must be firmly determined before the first shot is fired. Any bit of hesitation or infighting is an opportunity for the Sabbat. Of all considerations, though, this one is the most often ignored, as the sect is loathe to fill society's rosters if the society has yet to exist.

- **Preparation:** The Camarilla does not expect the Sabbat to give up easily. Once the prince is in power and has chosen his supporters and officers, his first act is usually to declare a moratorium on creating progeny and on visiting Kindred. The Kindred of the new Camarilla city want to know every other vampire in the area before accepting new ones. Naturally, the Sabbat sends spies and terrorists, and may well mount a countersiege to reclaim its city. The Camarilla does not wish to be complacent and lazy in defending its new prize.

DEFENSE

If you see someone you don't know, you shoot them. Now how hard is that?

— Bucho, *Desperado*

Whether defending against an invasion or trying to hold recently acquired territory, the Camarilla's natural state is defense. A Camarilla city under siege usually responds as follows:

The First Sign of Trouble

- **Head Count:** The prince and his officers take a quick census of the city's Kindred. Independent clans in the area are required to make full disclosure of their operatives (whether or not they actually do so is another matter). Any Kindred who has been in town for a short time (i.e., less than a decade) is brought before the prince (or at least the sheriff) and "interviewed."

- **Warn the authorities:** The Camarilla warns any member of the mortal authorities that has ties to the sect that bad times are coming. This is rarely (if ever) a phone

call from the prince's lieutenant stating "Expect a lot of bloody, vampire-related violence soon." Instead, the local police might have special seminars on occult crime, or on the effects of certain drugs that might make criminals stronger and more violent.

- **Preserve the Traditions:** Obviously, the Masquerade is of the greatest importance, especially since the Sabbat typically makes a point of breaking it during sieges. The prince of a city under siege often offers rewards to Kindred who report breaches of the Masquerade and intensifies punishments of the First Tradition. However, the Second, Third and Fifth Traditions are also enforced more strictly than usual. Creating progeny during a time of war is a Sabbat tactic, and even asking for permission to create a childe as such a time is likely to provoke questions.

- **Keep the young in line:** Ghouls, fledglings and neonates — any of them can possess just enough information to be dangerous. If a sire feels that his young childe has not learned enough to conduct herself well during conflict, he may well send her away (or, if he's especially paranoid, stake her and hide her somewhere) until the danger has passed. Some sires Dominate their childer and ghouls to prime them with false memories, but since the two staple clans of the Sabbat, the Lasombra and the Tzimisce, both practice the Discipline regularly, this is rarely foolproof. The only true way to stop the young from accidentally revealing something is to silence them permanently, and in the cases of expendable ghouls, this is sometimes done. Even then, the Sabbat seems to have some way to contact the dead, so even the ultimate step is not without risk.

Combating the Enemy

- **Supply lines:** Since Camarilla Kindred don't kill their vessels as often as their Sabbat counterparts do, the Camarilla must be very careful to maintain its herd during a siege. After all, it's impossible to keep the Sabbat away from people entirely, so the enemy is always able to feed. The more circumspect Camarilla Kindred, however, develop new feeding habits during crises: not hunting in the same place twice, taking victims from various social circles and so on. For Ventruue, this can be especially problematic, but such is the sacrifice a good leader must make.

- **Misdirection:** The prince is a prominent figure in any city, and since most visiting Kindred are required to present themselves, hiding the

prince's identity is futile and counterproductive. But during a siege, the prince often takes pains to appear weak where she is strongest (and vice versa) and to distance herself from her most able supporters, for their own sakes. If the Sabbat doesn't see a target as worth striking, they focus on other matters, leaving the prince's most powerful allies intact (an example of this tactic can be found in the opening fiction in **Guide to the Camarilla**).

- **Lightning rods:** While directing attention away from the true powers of the city, the Camarilla draws out its enemies. The prince may allow the sheriff the "deputize" young, but capable, Kindred who can think for themselves but are still green enough to think that being singled out is an honor. The sheriff may teach the young coterie Disciplines, equip it with weapons and train it in tactics and combat. Of course, the Kindred likely suffers when the seasoned warriors of the Sabbat find them, but they can hold their own against mass-Embraced shock troops. Kindred who survive this treatment are indeed accorded respect when the dust clears.

Counterattack

- **Sabbat supply lines:** Since Sabbat vampires may feed on anyone within reach, cutting off their blood supply isn't easy. However, a Camarilla vampire with ties to the underworld can often keep tabs on the weapons trade in the city, and this may allow the Camarilla to stop the Sabbat from getting their hands on good equipment.

- **Stop the mass Embrace:** The prince and the primogen instruct all of the city's Kindred (especially young "deputies") to report any sign of a mass Embrace *immediately*. If the Camarilla can uncover and stop such an occurrence, the Sabbat suffers a major setback.

- **Use the Elysium:** The Sabbat assumes that the hidebound Camarilla would sooner meet Final Death than risk damaging an Elysium. They are wrong, of course. The known areas of Elysium in the city undergo security upgrades and always have guards on duty during a siege. Since the Sabbat often attacks such places, it makes sense to focus the battle where it will be most efficacious.

Aftermath

- **Pursue the enemy:** Allowing the enemy to retreat enables a game of guerrilla warfare that few princes wish to play. Instead, they declare blood

hunts on the invaders and urge princes of nearby cities to do the same. By driving the Sabbat as far away as possible, the prince ensures that it won't be back in a week, trying again.

- **Convert the enemy:** A prominent Sabbat Cainite, proudly serving at the prince's side, does wonders to weaken the resolve of his former comrades. This is difficult to arrange, but simple time and persuasion can turn a vampire's loyalties if she's sensible enough to read the writing on the wall. Naturally, she earns some very bitter enemies, but if those enemies aren't capable of protecting their own interests in the first place...

- **Preparation:** The same steps undertaken at the end of a successful Camarilla siege are taken at the end of an unsuccessful Sabbat siege. Suppression of visitors and progeny, strict enforcement of the Masquerade and so forth all occur — one never knows if an attempted siege was a true grab for power or merely a feint.

THE SABBAT

OFFENSE

The very saints interest us most when we think of them as engaged in a conflict with the Devil.

— Robert Lynd, *The Blue Lion*

The Sword of Caine is always thirsty for battle and new domain. When the Sabbat goes to war, the battle might progress (from its perspective) like this.

Planning

- **Fast action:** The Sabbat rarely allows enough time for rumors of a coming invasion to leak to Camarilla ears; a siege is planned and begun in a matter of weeks.

- **Movers and shakers:** The Sabbat likes to know who the powerful players in the target city are. The prince and primogen are obvious targets, but the sheriff, scourge, harpies and any other prominent or well-respected figure finds themselves in the crosshairs when the battle begins.

- **Intelligence:** Often, a Sabbat operative who can hide what she is (usually a follower of the Path of Power and the Inner Voice or the Path of the Feral Heart, occasionally a Cainite who maintains her Humanity) is sent into Camarilla territory to watch the Kindred. She may make "friends" and behave like the "Kindred" of the city. But when the revolution comes, she is expected to fight with the rest of the Cainites.

Opening Moves

- **Destroy or replace the Nosferatu:** "The first to die in any Jyhad are the Nosferatu," states the *Book of Nod*. The reason for this is simple tactics, namely, crippling the enemy's information system. The fact that most Nosferatu habitually frequent the Barrens (or are otherwise loath to call for aid from the other clans) means that a dedicated war pack can decimate a city's Sewer Rat population in a matter of nights if the Nosferatu are caught unaware. The fact that a Sabbat Nosferatu and a Camarilla Nosferatu are virtually indistinguishable also helps matters for the Sword of Caine.

- **Propaganda:** Rumors about the fate of the prince's former allies and friends begin to circulate. Any indiscretion that an elder or officer of the city has committed comes to light again. The Sabbat exposes the tyranny and hypocrisy of the Camarilla for any Lick willing to listen (or not). The Sabbat won't win many converts, but the goal here is to convince Kindred who would otherwise stay and fight to flee when the real conflict begins.

- **Methodical chaos:** Gruesome, beyond-the-pale, just slightly supernatural murders may crop up weekly. Cars burn in the parking lot of the Elysium. Gang violence explodes for a weekend. The Sabbat rarely targets vampires at this stage — it's testing the prince's power. The invaders note how quickly the Camarilla responds, and how effectively. By gauging where the prince is weakest, they know where to strike. Likewise, by attacking places or people that hold special, personal significance to the prince, the Sabbat drives his Beast closer to the surface and makes him prone to snap judgments and mistakes.

Attacks

- **Mass Embrace:** This infamous tactic is sometimes the first real proof of a Sabbat presence in a city. By then, it may be too late for the Camarilla to mount a defense. Most shovelheads are not expected to survive the war, but they make fine shock troops.

- **Break the Masquerade:** While out-and-out breaches of the First Tradition are frowned upon by the Sabbat, earning the attention of the local police (and press) stirs up trouble for both Camarilla and Sabbat. By drawing hunters to the city, the Sabbat encourages some of the less loyal (but more self-interested) Kindred to leave. Likewise, if the police are looking for a "vampire-inspired serial

killer," they might well connect the case with any past indiscretions that Camarilla Cainites have committed in the area.

- **Mock assassination:** If a vampire maintains a mortal façade, the Sabbat can end it with a few gunshots and a call to the police. If a crowd of people sees someone shot multiple times, fall down, be pronounced dead by a medic and taken away in an ambulance, that person had best not be seen walking around again the next night. This tactic not only demolishes a vampire's influence or fame (as well as reducing or destroying the appropriate Backgrounds), it renders him helpless for a short time. At least one Sabbat pack has hijacked an ambulance and conveniently been in the area moments after the shots rang out. See Chapter Two for more examples of these tactics.

Endgame

- **Attrition:** The Sabbat encourages conversion but does not make deals. For the most part, Sabbat Cainites slay any Camarilla Kindred they discover, sack the prince's haven and keep prisoners only long enough to determine if they would make willing Cainites. Elders or ancillae rarely survive successful sieges without fleeing, if for no other reason than young Sabbat wish to feed on their potent blood.

- **Ritae:** The rituals of the Sabbat take on special importance after a siege. A Blood Feast acts as a celebration; the Vaulderie cements the loyalty of new recruits. Sermons of Caine show the priest who knows their rhetoric and who doesn't — and those who don't may not be Sabbat at all.

- **Power vacuum:** While the Sabbat as a whole paints itself as being "above" the mortal world, the hard fact of unlife is that mortals rule the world. Having power within their institutions is of great benefit. The masters of the Sabbat, the Lasombra and the Tzimisce, have covertly ridden the wave of mortal climes for centuries. So, when a prince is deposed (and probably summarily diablerized), the elders of the Sabbat set to taking over his former interests. A siege in which the mortal power structure remains intact attracts less retribution from other Camarilla cities, not to mention from mortal hunters.

DEFENSE

War does not determine who is right, only who is left.

— Bertrand Russell

The Sabbat isn't often on the defensive. The Camarilla takes years to mount an attack, after all.

But when the Sabbat finds itself besieged, things may progress this way.

At the First Sign of Trouble

- **Embrace fodder:** If the Camarilla is busy dealing with slaving hordes of fledglings, it probably won't see the stronger troops sneaking around its back. The fact that the Sabbat is on home turf makes this easier, as they know locations to conduct mass Embraces that won't attract attention.

- **Rhetoric:** The priests and bishops indoctrinate the younger Sabbat very thoroughly with talk of "duty to the Sabbat," "fighting to keep our havens" and, if necessary, "taking the enemy with us." Liberal use of the *Vaulderie*, perhaps the discovery and execution of the traitor (a scene along the lines of the brutal "confession" found in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* would not be out of place here), and stories and examples of valor in the Sermons of Caine all serve to motivate the sect's warriors to stay and fight.

- **Chaos tactics:** A raging gang war breaks out. The mortal sheriff-elect is assassinated in his own car, parked in his own driveway. A major historical landmark burns to the ground. The Sabbat isn't above amputating a finger to save the arm, so to speak. Anything "old guard" that the Camarilla might use to its advantage is fair game for destruction, if by destroying it the Sabbat can throw its attacking enemies off guard or demoralize them.

Combating the Enemy

- **Fighting in the streets:** The Sabbat is usually superior in outright combat to the Camarilla, especially on familiar turf. When the Sabbat must defend said turf, it prefers to do it on its own terms — that is, brutal combat. Sabbat Cainites try to lure Camarilla coterie into ambushes, trap desperate Kindred away from their havens and disappear before the police show up.

- **Elders disappear:** Never let it be said that the Sabbat is composed of fanatically loyal thugs who would give their unives for the cause. This is somewhat accurate when discussing Sabbat neonates, but few elders of the sect have the desire meet Final Death, noble or otherwise. Said elders go to ground when the fighting becomes intense, communicating with their underlings through trusted emissaries or even less traceable means.

- **Suicide tactics:** As mentioned above, the Sabbat is quite willing to make sacrifices. Whether

it's a predawn run that leaves all parties involved scrambling for cover as the sun creeps up or a psychopathic Cainite wired with explosives leaping into the fray, the unlife of one warrior is quite worth the ongoing victory of the Sword of Caine.

Counterattack

- **Weathering the storm:** For the most part, the Sabbat does not strike back at the Camarilla until after a siege is over. Since the Sabbat lacks the intelligence-gathering abilities of the Camarilla, it rarely has enough information to make good use of counterstrike tactics while defending a city. The Sabbat would rather repel attacks, build strength and contemplate revenge later.

- **Siege tactics:** Not to say, of course, that the Sword of Caine sits idly by while the pawns of the Antediluvians attack them! Several of the same tactics discussed under *Offense*, above, work well for the Sabbat as defensive stratagems, too.

- **Call to arms:** Since Sabbat Cainites Embrace frequently in times of war, cities that have been Sabbat strongholds for many years tend to have more vampires than they can easily support. In times of need, a besieged Sabbat city puts in a call to other Sabbat cities, requesting troops. The chance for bloodshed and diablerie means that they rarely have trouble finding help.

Aftermath

- **Bulwark:** After repelling an attack, the Sabbat does not pursue survivors beyond city limits. It knows that dividing forces too much means a window through which another invading force might slip. Instead, the Sabbat looks for ways to tighten security in its city.

- **Figurehead victory:** The elders emerge, with the head of a great foe or some other trophy, and soldiers talk of how they couldn't join their brothers on the frontlines because they were thwarting the real danger from behind the scenes. This is typically accompanied by various celebratory *ritae* and some tangible proof of the battle won.

- **Escape Routes:** If things do not go well and the Sabbat is ousted, the elders and the more canny neonates fall back on prearranged plans to leave the city. Often, they scatter to other Sabbat or contested cities and use the Sabbat's defeat at the hands of the Camarilla to bolster courage and fury in their compatriots, the better to begin a siege to retake the city. And it begins again....

TEMPLATE CHARACTERS

The following characters are included as guidelines for Storytellers and players. Some of these archetypes have appeared in different incarnations in other books, but these interpretations of them are built especially for sect war situations. That doesn't always mean they're tougher in combat....

Storytellers, feel free to adapt these characters to suit your chronicle. You should resist the urge to "throw a templar" at the coterie, but should you find yourself in immediate need of a character type, these should work effectively. You may wish to alter Trait scores to reflect the strength or weakness of the coterie. Also, because players are sneaky sons of bitches, you might want to adjust the scores here to keep them on their toes in case they've read this book.

Players, we've said throughout this book that turnabout is fair play. Go ahead and read these, but always remember three things. First, don't read these with the intent to build a character to beat them; use them instead as guides to what abilities work in the context of a siege. Second, know that your Storyteller has license to adjust the information as presented. **Vampire** is a horror game, and much of that horror comes from facing the unknown. If you look at these characters as simple foes to be slain, and you're reading this to learn how to defeat them, you're doing a grave disservice to the genre and to the Storyteller's efforts. Third, if you are the kind of stink-o secret-reading cheater who does this sort of thing regularly, your Storyteller probably knows it and suspects you of it, and he's going to be coming after you with a vengeance. Good luck.

CAMARILLA TEMPLATES

When it comes to the matter of sieges, the Camarilla often takes a conservative role. Unless it's absolutely necessary to react otherwise, the sect goes about its business as normal, trusting in its own entrenched power structures and webs of influence to weather a Sabbat incursion. More often than not, the Camarilla names wartime officers, only to tread water and allow the Black Hand to tear itself apart. In times when the Camarilla is prodded to action, though, it is an implacable foe. In addition to its ties to the mortal

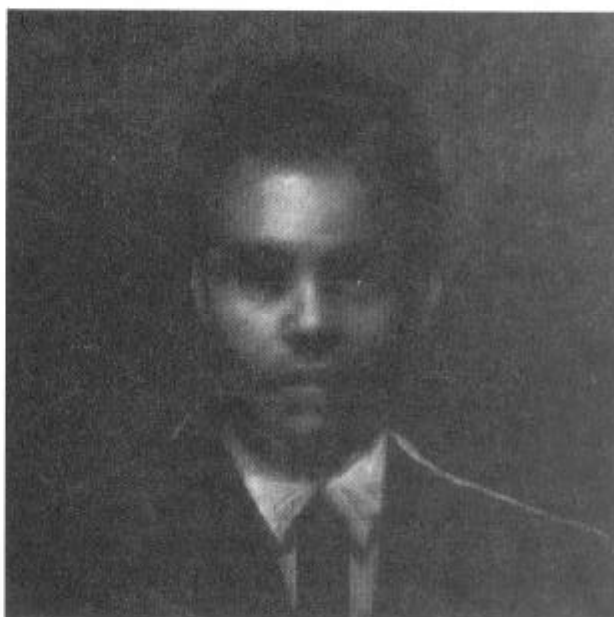
world, the Camarilla has an unparalleled willingness to suffer in order to exhaust the opposition.

On the offensive, the Camarilla tends to favor stealth over brutality — at least in the initial stages. Once the sect has successfully wound its roots into a city's infrastructure, it spares little effort in rooting out opposition. From the ranks of these Kindred warriors come the diligent scourges, sheriffs and councilors; after all, what better way to prove oneself to the primogen-to-be than in the crucible of war? Note that the templates below work equally as well on the offensive as they do when defending.

TRIBUNE

Background: The tribune is the Camarilla's herald of conflict. He makes formal declarations of war, moderates councils with elders and primogen, and keeps channels of communication open with Kindred on the "right" side of the siege. Although not every prince (or *dux bellorum*, see below) appoints a tribune, they do appear more often than not. Indeed, the office is almost never neglected in the Old World, though a New World prince may choose not to bother. Most often, tribunes are ancillae who look at the role more as an opportunity than a grudging duty.

Image: Much of the tribune's work is social, and he looks the part. Immaculate grooming, a fine wardrobe and a serious demeanor all combine to make others take the tribune's words seriously. He exudes an aura of importance and formality that suggests not heeding his advice is tantamount to joining the Sabbat.



Roleplaying Hints: You have been given a grave responsibility, and nothing will stop you from seeing it through. It is a great sacrifice — some others see you as a glorified toady, while others would rather commence to fighting rather than listening to some Lick in a suit's call to rally. Still, your office is important, and the others *will* accept that before the siege ends.

Clan: Toreador

Nature: Competitor

Demeanor: Architect

Generation: 9th

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Empathy 4, Expression 4, Grace 2, Intimidation 2, Leadership 3, Style 2, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Crafts 2, Drive 1, Etiquette 3, Firearms 2, Melee 1, Performance 2, Stealth 1

Knowledges: Academics 2, Bureaucracy 3, Camarilla Lore 1, Computer 2, Finance 2, Investigation 3, Linguistics 1, Politics 3

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Celerity 2, Dominate 1, Fortitude 2, Presence 4

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 2, Herd 1, Influence 1, Mentor 2, Resources 3, Retainers 1, Status 2

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

Morality: Humanity 6

Willpower: 6

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

Background: In some ways, the sergeant-at-arms is simply a martial tribune, and a prince may appoint one instead of a tribune. The sergeant's duties are the same as the tribune's, though the sergeant often takes part in the physical conflicts of the siege itself. Most princes hesitate to name sergeants-at-arms because doing so tends to polarize the remaining Camarilla Kindred — the prince's domain, with its scourges, sheriffs and sergeants tends to resemble a junta, however short the conflict lasts. Still, in some cases, naming a sergeant-at-arms is just what the city's Kindred need to prod them into action (sometimes on pain of Final Death). Like the tribunes, sergeants are often ancillae, though some princes appoint multiple neonates to the position in times of desperate need.

Image: The sergeant has a commanding presence that inspires respect as well as fear. While the



tribune's respect stems from his connection to the halls of power, the sergeant's comes from his capacity to deliver decisive violence.

Roleplaying Hints: Might makes right, and that's just what the prince told you to let everyone know. If they're not for you, they're against you, and if they're against you, it's time to kick ass. A city threatened by the Sabbat doesn't have any place for fence-sitting opportunists. It's your job to galvanize the Kindred against the outside threat, whether they recognize it or not.

Clan: Ventrue

Nature: Director

Demeanor: Judge

Generation: 10th

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Empathy 1, Intimidation 4, Leadership 2, Streetwise 3

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

Knowledges: Academics 1, Camarilla Lore 1, Computer 2, Investigation 3, Law 3, Medicine 2

Disciplines: Auspex 1, Dominate 3, Fortitude 4, Potence 3, Presence 2

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Herd 1, Mentor 2, Resources 3, Retainers 1, Status 1

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 3, Courage 5

Morality: Humanity 5

Willpower: 6

DUK BELLORUM

Background: The *dux bellorum* is the “commander in chief” or master of wartime ceremonies in a Camarilla city. This is most often the prince, but in certain cases, the Camarilla may send one of its high-ranking members to overrule the prince. This is rarely done, and the precedent for it is grim—a city has to be all but overrun. Even then, once the Camarilla sends a justicar or someone like the warlord Karsh, the prince can rarely reestablish his claim of domain afterward. After all, if the prince was so weak that he needed outside assistance to protect his claim, his principedom is probably a paper tiger. For this reason, the Camarilla is typically loath to assign a *dux bellorum* because it undermines the stability of the city even after the immediate Sabbat threat has been dealt with.

Image: The *dux bellorum* is a veteran of both battles and negotiations. She wears her scars as badges of honor, letting those around her know that she's earned the right of sovereignty in times of war. Her dress is a blend of modern sensibility and restrained brutality—it won't do to be caught by witch-hunters on the night of her greatest victory.

Roleplaying Hints: You are an expert in the matters of war, and if others don't see it, then they will learn the hard way. The position of *dux bellorum* is not that of a consultant, and you expect obedience. After you've done the job and returned to your haven, they can say anything they want about you, but while you're in town, they had best be



ready to follow you into hell without the slightest protestation. If they're not ready for that, you have a little discipline to enforce before getting started....

Clan: Brujah

Nature: Competitor

Demeanor: Masochist

Generation: 8th

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 5, Diplomacy 3, Dodge 4, Expression 3, Interrogation 3, Intimidation 4, Intuition 2, Leadership 4, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Crafts 3, Drive 4, Firearms 4, Melee 5, Security 2, Stealth 1, Survival 5

Knowledges: Academics 1, Camarilla Lore 2, Computer 2, Finance 2, Investigation 4, Law 3, Linguistics 3, Medicine 2, Politics 3, Sabbat Lore 1

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 4, Dominate 1, Fortitude 3, Obfuscate 2, Potence 4, Presence 4, Protean 2

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Contacts 2, Herd 3, Military Force 2, Resources 5, Retainers 3, Status 4

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

Morality: Humanity 4

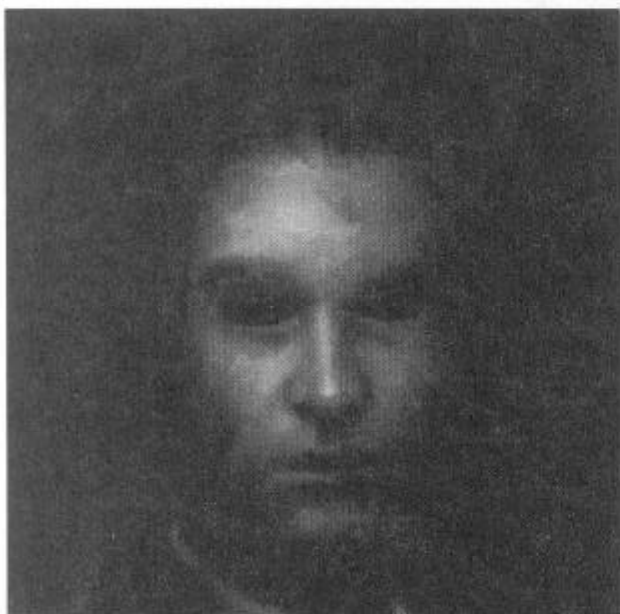
Derangements: Obsessive/Compulsive

Willpower: 7

WAR COUNCILOR

Background: The duties of the prince are largely peaceful—cities that exist in a constant state of war rarely have a prince, but rather a long list of would-be claimants to that title. That being the case, war isn't always the prince's forte. Many princes enlist the aid of their compatriots, from tested advisors to mentors. The war councilor is one such consultant. He may be the prince's sire, an acquaintance from centuries ago or simply a mercenary captain hiring his expertise out to the highest bidder. In any event, the war councilor advises the prince (or *dux bellorum*) on tactics, strategy, guerrilla techniques and special circumstances. Indeed, an especially enthusiastic war councilor may even take part in the skirmishes themselves.

Image: The war councilor is very much the hoary old chamberlain. Veteran of more conflicts than most Kindred could hope to survive, the councilor is hardened and more than a bit weary. Still, the price for failure is high, and many princes are willing to pay to avoid such failure, so the war councilor stretches his creaking limbs to consult on another engagement.



Roleplaying Hints: Prestation, hunting grounds, notoriety, even cash—all of these motivate you to put your knowledge on the line and help princes who have need of you. You've pushed your luck too many times, of course, and one night it's all going to finally come to an end for you. When that night comes, though, you'll drag as many Sabbat screaming into Final Death as you can.

Clan: Malkavian

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Martyr

Generation: 8th

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Empathy 3, Expression 2, Intimidation 4, Intuition 4, Leadership 5, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Animal Ken 3, Crafts 5, Drive 1, Etiquette 3, Firearms 1, Melee 4, Performance 3, Stealth 1, Survival 3

Knowledges: Academics (humanities) 4, Camarilla Lore 3, Finance 3, Investigation 4, Law 4, Linguistics 3, Politics 4, Sabbat Lore 3

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Auspex 5, Dementation 2, Dominate 3, Fortitude 4, Obfuscate 4, Potence 2, Presence 3

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Contacts 5, Mentor 3, Military Force 3, Resources 3, Retainers 1, Status 4

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

Morality: Humanity 5

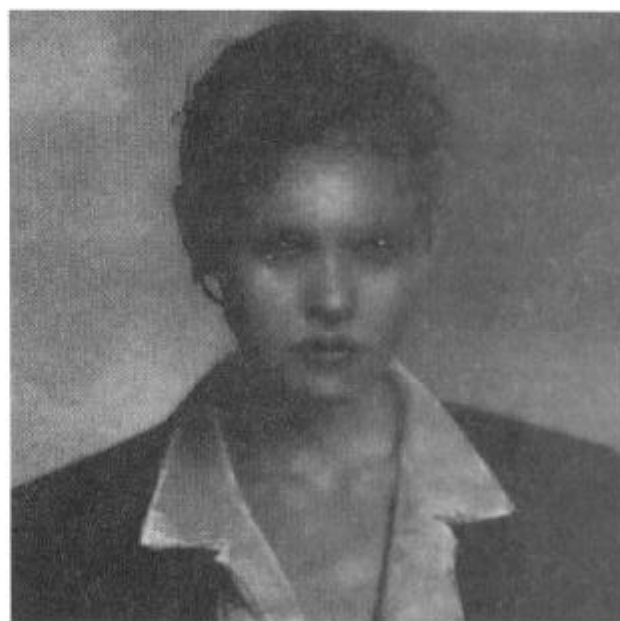
Derangements: Fugue, Self-Annihilation Impulse, Disassociative Blood-Spending

Willpower: 6

VIZIER

Background: The Camarilla's list of advantages over the Sabbat is subjective — while the ivory tower exalts its conservatism, so does the Sword of Caine favor its radical bent. The Camarilla prides itself on its complex social structure while the Sabbat champions its members' freedom. One aspect for which the Sabbat cannot answer back so readily, however, is the Camarilla's (i.e., Clan Tremere's) proficiency with blood magic. The vizier is a wartime advisor skilled in the art and application of Thaumaturgy. Such an expert can take many forms, from the wizened scriber using the art to unearth the enemy's secrets to the alchemist planning on poisoning the enemy's blood supply to the veteran sorcerer bringing down the Sabbat with pillars of flame. While few of these last survive for too long, the fact that they exist at all is a testament to the versatility of blood magic — and to its vast utility in a siege. Mercenary sorcerers can command great prices, while those acting in the interests of their own city no doubt harvest the prestation and status associated with the critical role they play.

Image: The nights of the cackling witch are long over — the modern vizier affects the business suits and luxury sedans so favored in the mortal



world. Thaumaturgy is by nature an academic art, and the vizier looks like she could fit with equal ease at the head of a professor's classroom or behind a mahogany desk in the CEO's office.

Roleplaying Hints: Unlife under the Sabbat ideology would be such an inefficient waste. Its members are little more than blood-soaked savages. With your refined art, however, and the stability afforded by the Camarilla's social order, Kindred of the modern nights need not worry about such heathens. Why, sure, you've acquired a favor or two over the course of the siege, but what should one expect in a situation that requires one to risk her unlife?

Clan: Tremere

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Perfectionist

Generation: 9th

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 3

Talents: Dodge 1, Empathy 2, Leadership 1, Subterfuge 1

Skills: Animal Ken 1, Crafts 3, Drive 1, Etiquette 2, Firearms 1, Security 1, Survival 1

Knowledges: Academics 4, Computer 1, Finance 2, Investigation 3, Linguistics 3, Medicine 2, Occult 5, Politics 1, Science 2

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Dominate 2, Fortitude 2, Thaumaturgy 4

Thaumaturgical Paths: Path of Blood 4, Path of Conjuring 3, Path of Curses 3, Hearth Path 2

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Resources 4, Status 1

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

Morality: Humanity 6

Willpower: 8

LORD OF THE CLUTCH

Background: The Nosferatu are masters of the animal realm, a fact that is all too often overlooked. In this sense, the beastmasters among the Sewer Rats can provide untold versatility in their roles as scouts and soldiers. Flies buzz in and out of Sabbat war councils with information gleaned therein. A pack of pestilential rats brings down an overconfident scout making his haven in an abandoned tenement. A ghoulish mastiff drives a Sabbat assassin from his hiding place in the prince's mansion. Do the lesser beasts of the night do this of their own volition? Certainly not



— the wise soldier thanks the Nosferatu master of animals for his efforts.

Image: Twisted and profane, this Nosferatu looks even less human than his bestial charges. His back bears a perennial hunch and tufts of hair burst forth from his malformed head. He hides the less presentable bits of his body beneath a mildewed cassock... or perhaps that's where he hides a nest of itching lice.

Roleplaying Hints: Despite the fact that these effete cowards mock you at every turn, someone needs to keep the city from falling into the talons of the Sabbat. Hell, it's not like you can't turn your pretty brood on them after the whole mess settles down. You're in this for yourself and for your charming pets — that's the only reason you don't want this city under Sabbat dominion. They'd burn you to ash or guzzle your blood. At least the Camarilla Licks leave you to your own devices.

Clan: Nosferatu

Nature: Curmudgeon

Demeanor: Deviant

Generation: 12th

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 4, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Talents: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 1, Expression 1, Intimidation 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1

Skills: Animal Ken 4, Crafts 2, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Investigation 2, Medicine 2, Occult 2, Politics 1

Disciplines: Animalism 4, Obfuscate 2
Backgrounds: Herd 3, Retainers 3
Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 3, Courage 4
Morality: Humanity 7
Willpower: 4

SPIN-DOCTOR

Background: You can tell when the Sabbath rolls into a city — the fire department's suddenly working overtime, the state-funded hospitals see an influx of patients missing limbs, and the white kids in the suburbs suddenly have drug problems. The spin-doctor specializes in keeping all of the potentially damning information out of the papers and off the evening news, or at least puts a slant on the stories that leads people not to take them seriously. On the offensive, the spin-doctor pushes through stories that lead to increased policing and social rejuvenation — but not enough so that it would be difficult for Camarilla Kindred to make a place for themselves.

Image: The spin-doctor sits at the front of all the press conferences (all the press conferences that take place after dark, that is). She's an unassuming woman, a bit rumped in her appearance, but no more so than any copy editor who's been burning the midnight oil to make sure the story that hits the presses includes everything it needs to — or omits everything it needs to omit.

Roleplaying Hints: Your cell phone rings constantly. So does your beeper. Your instant messenger accounts deliver a constant barrage of sound bites and terse questions. From the moment you wake up



until the moment you sink into cold sleep, you're conferring, editing facts, omitting "exaggerations," and keeping the local media from becoming "the tabloid mess it's threatening to become! Are you people journalists or pulp writers? A headless body, for chrissakes? They can go through the public records if they want to read that lurid shit!"

Clan: Tremere

Nature: Conformist

Demeanor: Traditionalist

Generation: 11th

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 2, Dodge 3, Empathy 3, Expression 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Drive 3, Etiquette 1, Firearms 2, Performance 1, Security 2, Stealth 1

Knowledges: Academics 3, Computer 2, Investigation 2, Law 1, Politics 2

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Dominate 3

Backgrounds: Contacts 5, Fame 1, Influence 1, Resources 4, Status 1

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

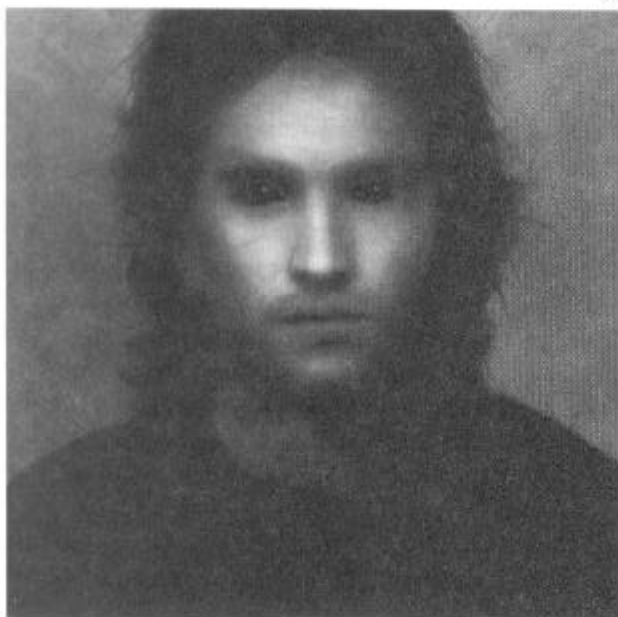
Morality: Humanity 6

Willpower: 4

SOCIALITE

Background: This isn't the dark ages — people don't toil in the field all day and go to bed at sundown in preparation for the next back-breaking day. People go out, and everyone knows it's more fun to be with some people than with others. The socialite is always among those "in" people, generally because he's one of them himself. Always clad in the latest of fashions, always in possession of the latest designer drug, always at the latest gallery openings and latest shows, always in the latest German car, always dating the latest model, the socialite can always have some unsuspecting Kindred banned from a club or thrown out by security. On the other side of the coin, he can focus the attention of an entire city's society on the next "it" guy or girl — and that attention can become quite uncomfortable if the person in question is among the Damned.

Image: Halfway between the gutter and the stars, the socialite can hobnob with high society or slum glamorously with the dregs. Whatever he



does, he does it looking like he's ready to be shot for the cover of a magazine. His demeanor is cool and nonchalant, and he moves as if everything he does was directed by a photographer. Whatever he's doing to that girl right now — she's positively swooning — even that's got panache.

Roleplaying Hints: You are the party, and everyone loves a party. Those who can't handle it can fuck off. Those who can handle it taste a little of the limelight themselves. And yes, as a matter of fact, you *are* the one who decides whether they can or can't handle it.

Clan: Ventrue

Nature: Bon Vivant

Demeanor: Gallant

Generation: 10th

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Empathy 4, Expression 3, Intimidation (snubbing) 4, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Drive 2, Etiquette 3, Firearms 1, Performance 3

Knowledges: Academics 1, Finance 3, Politics 2

Disciplines: Dominate 4, Presence 4

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Contacts 5, Fame 2, Herd 4, Resources 4, Status 2

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

Morality: Humanity 4

Derangements: Gluttony

Willpower: 4

SABBAT TEMPLATES

No one welcomes the possibility of conflict with the Sabbat. The sect's soldiers are fanatics, terrors of the night who gladly abandon the bloody shreds of their mortal lives to win the holy war that threatens to consume the world. Brutal and violent, the Sabbat is not averse to sacrificing itself for its greater goals — parts of itself, at least. At the highest echelons, the elders of the Sabbat are little different from the elders of the Camarilla, at least in their desires and methods. Although the Sabbat may choose to forsake its humanity actively, elders in that idiom differ little from Camarilla elders whose age and alienation from humanity often engenders the same result.

On the frontlines, however, anyone at war with the Sword of Caine can trust it to fight with fang and talon until its bloody Final Death. Sabbat Cainites are masters of guerrilla warfare, whether it happens with firearms in the streets or in the halls of a doomed Elysium. Its members range from murderous thugs to devout prophets — all of whom would jump at the chance to tear an enemy apart. Even those who don't subscribe to the propaganda that makes up the sect's ideology often rise to the fight. For some, bloody combat is its own end.

Of course, this viciousness rarely lends itself as well to defensive postures as it does to offensive efforts. True, the Sabbat fights with tenacity when cornered, but its frenzied members often lose sight of their larger purpose when charged with defense. Packs guarding locations can be drawn away from their posts if goaded with a fight; individual Sabbat can be fooled or ambushed if they think they have the upper hand. When fighting the Sabbat, the clever Kindred draws the sect away from its strengths, isolating and ultimately convincing it to destroy itself.

WAR HERO

Background: Bane of the Camarilla, drinker of Cainite vitae, killer of foes, the war hero rides the crest of the Sabbat's wave, following it wherever it takes him for his next fight. Not so much a master of tactics as he is a fiend of vicious cunning, the war hero specializes in turning the Camarilla's plans against it. Let them plot and maneuver in their back rooms! None of that will mean a damn thing when they find themselves chased from their havens by the war hero, with a hatchet in one hand and a complacent elder's head in the other. So



much of the Sabbat's effort is built on the backs of True Sabbat like this — and their unives tend to be short enough that the elders don't have to bother with any long-term recognition.

Image: The war hero looks like trouble. His clothes are a patchwork of tough fabrics and leather that serves as armor and, well, anything he takes as a trophy or sees on a clothesline that he likes. His face is pale and his eyes have sunken into his head, the price one pays for a dwindling humanity. He may have once been pretty — or even plain — but now he has become a cadaverous horror.

Roleplaying Hints: You're just doing what they told you they wanted you to do. As it turned out, you were good at it — the ass kicking, that is. Now that you've dealt with this whole "vampire" thing a little, you see that they're using you, but that doesn't bother you too much. Hey, what's the fucking problem — they get what they want, you get what you want, and everybody's happy, right?

Clan: Lasombra

Nature: Competitor

Demeanor: Bravo

Generation: 10th

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 2, Intimidation 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Crafts 2, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Melee 3, Stealth 2, Survival 4

Knowledges: Linguistics 1, Occult 3

Disciplines: Animalism 1, Dominate 1, Obtenebration 1, Potence 3, Protean 1

Backgrounds: Contacts 1, Resources 1, Sabbat Status 1

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

Morality: Humanity 3

Willpower: 5

FIELD MARSHAL

Background: The field marshal has seen his share of sect conflict. Experienced in the finer points of the siege, the marshal may have done this a dozen times over the course of his unlife. Perhaps he was a mortal captain, leading a company at the battle of Königgrätz, or he may have commanded a tank squadron during World War II. He may have even learned about tactics after the Embrace, studying the art of war under an accomplished sire. Whatever the case, the field marshal is second to none when it comes to making the fight actually happen. Sure, the war takes place under the veil of night now, with perhaps a score of combatants instead of thousands, but the fundamentals remain the same. That, and the stakes are much higher.

Image: The field marshal bears the features of classical leadership — a strong brow, a firm jaw, eyes that show his resolve. He dresses well, as should any who would lead Cainites ostensibly to their Final Deaths. He stands strong and erect, a



pillar upon whom his charges can lean if they need to borrow his fury on the battlefield.

Roleplaying Hints: This is a grim duty, but one you accept with pride. Not just any Cainite can lead his men in the face of the Antediluvians and hope to win. The only shortcoming you see in your soldiers is their sometimes-fearful lack of planning — they fervently charge at the enemy with little regard for what may happen afterward. In this, you have learned to temper your tactics with promises of plunder and potent blood. Now, all that's left is to hope they can keep their eyes on the prize.

Clan: Lasombra

Nature: Autocrat

Demeanor: Director

Generation: 8th

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Empathy 1, Expression 1, Intimidation 1, Leadership 4, Subterfuge 1

Skills: Crafts 1, Drive 2, Etiquette 1, Firearms 3, Melee 4, Survival 2

Knowledges: Academics (military tactics) 4, Linguistics 1, Occult 1, Politics 3, Science 1

Disciplines: Celerity 1, Dominate 4, Fortitude 3, Obtenebration 2, Potence 4, Presence 3

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Mentor 2, Military Force 1, Resources 3, Rituals 1, Sabbat Status 3

Virtues: Conviction 4, Instinct 2, Courage 4

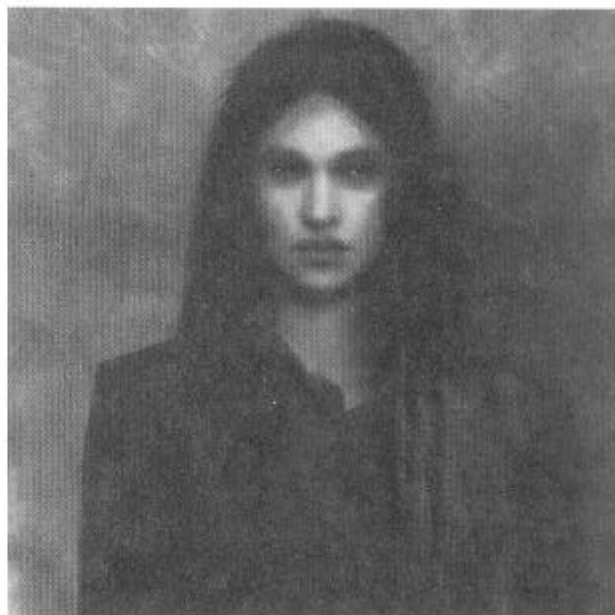
Morality: Path of Power and the Inner Voice 6

Derangements: Sanguinary Animism, Obsessive/Compulsive

Willpower: 7

WITCH

Background: Never trust a Tremere; all Sabbat know this. Among the occult society of the Sabbat, however, the maxim goes one step further — never suffer a Tremere to see another night. Weaned on a steady diet of mistrust and hatred during her fledgling years, the witch has learned the capabilities of the unholy sorcerers and even knows a few tricks for foiling them. While any Tremere worth his mettle could easily defeat the meager sorceries of the witch, it is those very sorceries that come as such a shock to the Camarilla, and



that shock can buy some precious time, either in a fight or as a result of confounding rituals.

Image: Dealing with the occult invariably takes its toll on the student, and the witch no longer has any ideas what passes for the norm, whether among her fellow Cainites or mortals. Her face is a lattice of scars and tattoos, symbols of deals made with spirits. She is hunched and bony, and wears castoff clothes she finds here and there.

Roleplaying Hints: They fear you because they've seen what you can do to others, and they suspect you might do it to them. No matter — you hold a position of prestige in the Sword of Caine. Though they are uncomfortable around you, they need you, much as you need them to provide you with that value.

Clan: Tzimisce

Nature: Capitalist

Demeanor: Deviant

Generation: 12th

Physical: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Dodge 1, Intimidation 1, Intuition 3

Skills: Animal Ken 4, Crafts 3, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Academics 3, Enigmas 3, Investigation 1, Linguistics 3, Occult 4

Disciplines: Animalism 3, Auspex 4, Thaumaturgy 3

Thaumaturgical Paths: Path of Blood 3, Green Path 1, Thaumaturgical Countermagic 1

Backgrounds: Rituals 3

Virtues: Conviction 2, Self-Control 3, Courage 3

Morality: Path of Death and the Soul 5

Willpower: 5

SHOVELHEAD

Background: Whether or not the Sabbat uses the shovel-to-the-head Embrace on a given fledgling, that's often the term True Sabbat use to describe these all-but-doomed neonates. Products of a quick and dirty Embrace, shovelheads exist for one purpose — to cause havoc. The Sword of Caine sends shovelheads on suicide missions, hurls them at potent vampires and generally turns them loose to cause whatever trouble they can in hopes of forcing the Camarilla to pick up the pieces. Some Sabbat oppose shovelhead tactics, arguing that the practice is hypocritical; given the Sabbat's opposition to elder manipulation, how can they in good conscience Embrace neonates and send them to their deaths? Apologists cite that shovelheads aren't Cainites because they aren't yet True Sabbat: All a shovelhead has to do to is prove himself worthy, and he'll never be treated like a shovelhead again.

Image: Fresh from the Embrace, the shovelhead is covered in blood and grime from her recent ordeal. His eyes are wide with horror and the unholy strength he feels in his limbs. Has he died? Has he survived some horrific accident? His face betrays the wonder and confusion of this new state.

Roleplaying Hints: Christ, how your head hurts! One moment you're making out with some chick in the



back of a convertible (come to think of it, she was kinda creepy and cold) and the next minute you're waking up in a meat locker with six other people in various stages of freak-out. Well, fuck that — you tore two of them to bits and kicked your way out of the locker with the other four. Now you've been told to go attack some guy or another, and it seems like as good an idea as any... wait, did you really just think that?

Clan: Lasombra

Nature: Child

Demeanor: Child

Generation: 12th

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 1, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Brawl 1, Dodge 1, Empathy 2, Intimidation 1

Skills: Crafts 1, Drive 1, Survival 2

Knowledges: Academics 1, Computer 1, Law 1, Medicine 1, Science 1

Disciplines: Obtenebration 1, Potence 3

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Resources 2

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

Morality: Humanity 7

Willpower: 3

FREEBOOTER

Background: To the freebooter, the Sabbat's cause is secondary to her own unlife. Although she's technically a member of the Sabbat, her loyalty goes only so far as it doesn't threaten her comfort. To that end, she's a mercenary for her own sect, a Loyalist who's perfectly willing to buy into the Black Hand's rhetoric for the right price. Her fellows call her a sellout, but she knows she's in charge of her own destiny — and to the Sabbat's benefit, because she's quite capable.

Image: The freebooter shows the signs of the open road. Her face is windburned, and she has a scar beneath her eye from when she ventured too far into that deranged Gangrel's domain. She has a beauty accented by formidability — she's attractive because she's capable, not because she looks like a runway model.

Roleplaying Hints: You can be bothered with this whole "crusade" thing only so far as they pay you. Sure, you're a member of the Sabbat, but that's mostly because they let you do your own thing. Still, you're taking payments from them and you're not about to do a half-assed job. That would mean they wouldn't hire you again in the future.



Clan: Brujah *antitribu*

Nature: Rogue

Demeanor: Monster

Generation: 10th

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 1, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Intimidation 3, Leadership 1, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 1

Skills: Crafts (motorcycle repair) 4, Demolitions 3, Drive (motorcycle) 4, Firearms 3, Melee 4, Security 2, Stealth 2, Survival 3

Knowledges: Linguistics 1, Medicine 1, Politics 1

Disciplines: Celerity 3, Fortitude 3, Potence 3, Presence 2, Protean 2

Backgrounds: Contacts 2, Retainers 3

Virtues: Conviction 4, Instinct 2, Courage 5

Morality: Path of Cathari 5

Willpower: 5

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