

Constantinople

b n i g h t



Woc
1996

A SOURCEBOOK FOR VAMPIRE: THE DARK AGES™



ConstantinopleTM

b y n i g h t

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CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT



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Chapter One: Introduction

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
Where anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed,
and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity
- William Butler Yeats, "The Second Coming"

In the Dark Medieval age, few cities shine like Constantinople. For centuries it has prospered, and a mighty empire has grown around its walls - a beacon of light as the fabled Roman Empire collapsed into ruin. Yet, to the children of Cain, Constantinople is more than just another capital; and to three Methuselahs the city is a bastion of hope, an accomplishment that will survive until the Last Night. From Constantinople's palaces and churches, these three Cainites have molded the city to rival not only Rome and Carthage, but Enoch as well. For nearly 900 years their work has prospered, yet nothing completely escapes the grasp of darkness, and soon Constantinople will shine no longer. In the shadows of the night, the children of Cain play their games and, as the Fourth Crusade approaches, Constantine's city will face its greatest peril.



CONSTANTINOPLE CITY OF GOLD

Constantinople, when compared to other cities that weathered the centuries of isolation that followed the collapse of Rome, is an old city. Its golden domes and exquisite architecture, though fading and eroded, capture its glory and splendor. To walk through Constantinople's colonnade-lined streets is to walk simultaneously into the past and future. In 1197, Constantinople is a city of wonder and marvel, both for its own unique culture and because it lies on the threshold between the Western world and the mysterious East. The Byzantine Empire and its capital are enigmas to most Europeans, legendary places that fascinate and frighten.

Ideally located on a peninsula that forms a bridge between Europe and Asia Minor, Constantinople dates from the sixth century B.C., and the Greek colony of Byzantium. Its true history, however, began in A.D. 326, when Roman Emperor Constantine the Great laid the foundations of the city, and it surpassed Rome as the capital of the empire. In the centuries since, Constantinople has grown, incorporating Roman, Hellenistic and, above all, Christian influences into a heterogeneous whole.

At Constantinople's center lies the Church of Holy Wisdom, Hagia Sophia, which is one of the world's most beautiful basilicas. Radiating outward from this nexus along immaculate streets can be found the many forums of the city, its imposing Hippodrome, and the majestic palaces from which the emperors rule Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire. Roman-style villas, bazaars and secluded monasteries can be found atop Constantinople's seven hills, which are home to its staggering one million citizens — making it the largest and richest city in the world.

Although serene, Constantinople has not escaped the ravages of time, and nowhere is this more evident than in the slumlike Latin Quarter that lines the natural harbor of the Golden Horn. This squalid area has become home to merchants from the Italian city-states, who were given complete trading rights in the 1180s. The merchants, and many Latin immigrants who have arrived over the past decade, have brought with them crime and poverty, forever changing the landscape of the city.

Constantinople is the greatest city in Europe, but it also casts a dark shadow. Its streets and churches betray its Cainite masters; indeed, many of its holy icons are reflections of vampires. The imperial throne is dominated by Ventrue ambition and, in the dark and winding streets of the Latin

Quarter, vampires hunt each other as readily as they do mortals. In many ways Constantinople is a city spiraling into anarchy, its factions struggling to hold onto reins that are ragged and frayed.

MORTAL SOCIETY

Byzantine society is divided into three categories. Movement between these three, though uncommon, is not impossible. The first faction of society is the imperial, which includes not only the emperor and his family but also his advisors and high-ranking members of the clergy, army and civil service. The role of the emperor in Byzantine society is paramount as he (or, on some rare occasions, she) is not only the head of state, but of the Church as well. To the people of Constantinople, their emperor, his court and the city itself represent Heaven, and as such the emperor rules with divine authority. Claim to the purple mantle is loosely based on heredity, but ultimately through the will of God. Emperors have been appointed in a number of ways, from council to bloody rebellion; both are considered signs of God's favor. Although this system is, at least to outsiders, unstable and chaotic, the empire has prospered over the centuries.

After from the imperial court, the second-most-important faction of the empire's population is made up of its large civil class. This group includes people from nearly every aspect of Byzantine life, from merchants to bureaucrats. The most prominent members are associated with the Church. The

clergy and bishops of Byzantium are assigned the administrative tasks of the Orthodox Church, while the many monastic orders form the spiritual heart of society. Ranked below the clergy in this faction are those involved with Byzantine bureaucracy, from law to finance, and they are followed by the producers of goods, who include traders and craftsmen. These bureaucrats and manufacturers comprise Constantinople's middle class. Servants and subordinates (including guardsmen and minor civil servants) make up the lowest tier of this faction, leaving the sick, infirm and other undesirables to the grace of the Church.

The third faction of Byzantine society is the army. Service is considered a lifelong endeavor and is designed to be extremely rewarding. Advancement depends on achievement and ambition, though family prestige has become an important factor. Despite the army's benefits, most scions of wealthy families eschew it in favor of the civil service. In recent years, the army and navy have come to rely on soldier-farmers, which has contributed to the steady decline of Byzantine might — such soldiers are more loyal to local lords than to the emperor.

THE DAMNED

Constantinople's children of Caine play an elaborate, dangerous game. In 1197 the city, and for that matter the empire, is extremely unstable, and the Cainites of Constantinople are the citizens who stand to lose the most should it fall. Since Emperor



CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION



CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

Constantine founded the city in A.D. 326, its Cainites have organized themselves according to powerful blood-families, whose influence has had direct effect on the capital's growth and prosperity. The three major families, collectively called the Trinity, trace their roots to three Methuselahs — the Toreador Michael, the Ventrue Antonius and the Tzimisce Dracon — who left the debauchery of Rome with the intent of creating an even greater city.

The families of the Trinity and their subordinates (known as scions) form the power structure of Constantinople. Unfortunately, their ranks are rife with dissent and discord, and their control over the city ebbs nightly. Michael, the patriarch of the city and head of the Michaelite Toreador family, is afflicted with a growing madness that in turn touches the minds of his followers. Only Michael's childe Petronius seems free of the patriarch's madness, but the burden of leading his family weighs heavily on the childe. The local Ventrue are finally feeling the effects of centuries of ambition. Their current leader Caius draws his family into vicious intrigue and infighting. The Obertus Tzimisce face similar obstacles; a dangerous schism is developing between the sibling leaders Gesu and Symeon over the Embrace of a mortal woman.

Contributing to these problems is the arrival of Cainites from across Europe, who hide amid Constantinople's winding streets. The increase in the vampire population has made feeding difficult, and some of the Carrion, as the Europeans are called, have taken to hunting other vampires, heightening to the chaos that threatens to engulf Constantinople. Some of the Carrion are shiftless renegades. Others are fanatics who have established apocalyptic cults and blood cults. Chief among these groups is the Chosen of Calomena, led by the Caitiff Stanislav, who wishes for the destruction of his kind.

The greatest threat to Constantinople is its foreign Cainites who live in the Latin Quarter. Ruling their section of Constantinople as Western-style princes, they are collectively led by the Lasombra Alfonzo of Venice, who uses the city's Latin merchants to put a stranglehold on the city and Trinity. Supporting him is the shadowy hand of the Inconnu, who have had a major influence in recent events. For centuries, these vengeful Cainites have harbored a burning resentment for Michael's Constantinople, which has eclipsed the glory of their Rome. The Inconnu plot their revenge — in the form of the Fourth Crusade.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Within these pages you will find everything you need to set a **Vampire: The Dark Ages** chronicle in New Rome. This book takes you into a different world from that of the **Dark Ages** rulebook, into a society of the night in which the rules are different and the grip of chaos is powerful. A glimpse of this world is offered in this chapter.

Chapter Two guides you through the long and twisted history of Constantinople and the empire it heads. Emphasis has been placed on the broad strokes of history and the place of prominent Cainites.

Chapter Three examines the city itself. A detailed picture of Constantinople is provided, allowing Storytellers to get a grasp of the setting of their stories. A shorter section examines the extent of the Byzantine Empire itself.

Chapter Four examines the traditions by which Constantinople's Cainites exist; powerful blood-families lay claim to parts of the great Dream which is the inspiration of New Rome. A vampire's place is largely determined by his family.

Finally, Chapter Five details the individual vampires who reside in the city.

REFERENCES

The following sources were helpful in the writing of *Constantinople by Night* and can be of aid to Storytellers.

The Byzantium Trilogy by John Julius Norwich (Viking/Penguin). A detailed yet accessible three-volume work that covers the history of the empire from beginning to end.

Byzantium: The Empire of the New Rome by Cyril Mango (Phoenix). An excellent overview of Byzantine society that includes the people, social outlooks and organizations that made the empire so unique.

Byzantium: Church, Society, and Civilization Seen Through Contemporary Eyes, edited by Deno John Geanakoplos (University of Chicago). A collection of short Byzantine texts, this book offers an excellent insight into the Byzantine frame of mind.

Other good sources for wide overviews of Byzantine history include the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Macropedia) and *Mythic Europe* (published by White Wolf/Wizards of the Coast).

THEME

*Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
Caught in that sensual music all neglect
Monuments of unaging intellect.*

—William Butler Yeats, "Sailing to Byzantium"

Nothing lasts forever. Youth fades, ambition wanes, love dies and dreams are forgotten. When all is said and done, only the cool comfort of the grave remains to console us. "The end of an era" is the theme of *Constantinople by Night*. A city that was built to be Heaven on Earth is rapidly being buried by the sands of time while the world around it prepares for an unknown future.

Nearly a millennium has passed since Constantine the Great laid the foundations of what has come to be known as one of the most wondrous and beautiful cities in the world. Now the gold frescos and mosaics that adorn the city are tarnished by time, and the Byzantine Empire crumbles under its own weight. The Fourth Crusade looms on the horizon and could destroy the city, closing its chapter in history.

Those Cainites living within Constantinople's walls sense these changes coming, as did those who lived through the destruction of Enoch, Carthage and Rome. Though these ancient vampires stubbornly cling to the past, hoping that things will continue as they always have, deep down in their immortal hearts they realize that their future is bleak.

The end of an era can manifest in different ways and all possibilities should be subtly presented by the Storyteller. Melancholy and sadness permeate the city, finding expression in its ancient monuments and sculptures that speak of the past's glory and of the darkness to come. Vampires from all over Europe gather in Constantinople to bask in its legacy. In a few centuries the Inquisition will root them out, the Camarilla and Sabbat will be formed, and Cainites will have to hide from the eyes of humanity, no longer ruling as kings and queens. In 1197 the future is viewed with apprehension; the lords of the night fear it more than anything that hides in the shadows.

The way each vampire deals with the city's final moments is different. Some completely ignore the signs they see and continue as if nothing is wrong, hoping that by turning a blind eye to the future it will pass them by. Others prefer to revel in apocalyptic celebration, indulging their every whim and desire. Weaker Cainites simply slip away, never to be seen again. Constantinople's disintegration reflects and is reflected by the

THE DREAM

The Dream of the Toreador Methuselah Michael is, in essence, the city of Constantinople. Palaces, churches and aqueducts; the beauty of a sunset over the Golden Horn; rich, glorious history — these are what the Dream is all about. Through its sheer power to awe and enrapture, the Dream is one of the last things that still unites the Cainites of Constantinople. Even newcomers to the city cannot escape an overwhelming sensation of wonder as they gaze for the first time at the city's endless monuments, statues and subtle references to the Cainites of the Trinity.

Unfortunately, Michael's Dream, like any other, is an ephemeral creation that is open to interpretation, and each Cainite finds something different in it.

The Dream is a creation of ambition and egotism; the ultimate work of art, not confined to a stage or canvas, but manifest on the tapestry of humanity. Michael sought to create a place of heavenly beauty and serenity, an immortal testament not only to him, Antonius and the Dracon, but to all the children of Caine.

Unfortunately, many of the cursed childer of Caine consider existence ephemeral and transient, even though they are eternal. It is their fate to bear witness to the end of things, from the lives of loved ones to the cultures of their origins. Though Constantinople offers Michael the hope of eternity — that not everything must come to an end, that something will outlast him and his curse — even the Dream is fading into the Long Night.

actions of its three ruling Cainite families. The founders of the Dream slowly die with their city, their ambition and vision replaced by petty intrigue and shortsightedness.

Although the theme of this book is one of relative hopelessness, all is not lost. The Storyteller should use this book's theme to propel characters into action. Do they sit back and enjoy the twilight years or try to change the city's course? Nothing is written in stone. You decide whether Constantinople falls to crusaders in 1204 or the characters take matters into their own hands.

If the characters do alter Constantinople's destiny, events still occur that not even they can control. Ultimately, the characters may have to watch as one of the world's greatest cities falls to both Cainite and human folly. Some of the best stories end in tragedy.

MOOD

The mood of *Constantinople by Night* is one of melancholy and lamentation. As judgment approaches, a pall of sorrow and regret hangs over the city. The empire frays at the edges, falling victim to younger, more vital civilizations. The Latin Quarter festers like a cancer amid the splendor. Even the beautiful mosaics and icons that once stood as celebrations to Byzantium's glory now crumble into ruins.

All of Constantinople's Cainites sense this weariness and seek to disguise it behind shows of strength or sneers of indifference. Those who have lost hope fill their nights with petty plans and misguided intentions, while those who struggle against the end find themselves hampered by their own fears and doubts.

Yet there are a few vampires who fight to preserve the city, and who will sacrifice themselves in the nights to come. Some Cainites, those who are less ambitious but equally hopeful, struggle to make the collapse only partial, to plant the seeds of rebirth and renewed vigor. In many ways the fate of Constantinople rests in the hands of these Cainites.

SYMBOLOLOGY

In the medieval world, where candles flicker with pale futility against the enshrouding night, it is easy to believe that things lie just beyond the periphery of mundane senses. Wisdom and knowledge are hidden in every statue and fresco that adorns Constantinople, but are lost by those who can not or will not see them. The city is immersed in imagery born from both the deliberate and subconscious efforts of Michael the Patriarch. Dreams, symbols and portents are indicators of what has happened and is happening behind the scenes. For those Storytellers not satisfied with presenting the city at face value, this section explores its more subtle motifs.

First and foremost, Constantinople represents the one aspect of vampiric existence that consistently proves to be Cainites' undoing: immortality. Supposedly a gift, Cainite eternity is rife with bitter irony; while natural death cannot

claim a vampire, it takes its toll by plundering all to which a vampire clings. Cainites weather eternity far better than their creations, thoughts or even morals can ever hope to.

THE TRIMUMVIRATE AND THE NUMBER THREE

Constantinople was founded on a desire for stability and born from the minds of Michael the Patriarch, Antonius the Ventrue and the Tzimisce known as the Dracon. The three Cainites, though each potent, formed a dynamic whole that declined just as their "eternal" city did.

Antonius the Ventrue represented the best and worst aspects of stability. The practical Cainite was grounded and not given to lofty, ultimately self-destructive dreams. He knew how to deal with situations that fell within his experience.

However, he was unable to adapt when circumstances did not conform to his experiences. His very strength was his downfall. A crisis had to arise before he could decide on a course of action that was alien to him. Antonius represented the isolationism of Constantinople — with Rome fallen, what conventions could he or Constantinople draw upon? All was new.

The Dracon of the Obertus Tzimisce, given his obsession with the ephemeral and transitory, lent a contrasting quality to the Triumvirate and therefore Constantinople. Unlike many Tzimisce who tried to change themselves — as if humanity was nothing to aspire to — the Dracon saw himself as a catalyst for change itself. Rather than pursue cosmetic changes to his physical form, he chose to bring change to those around him. Perhaps, in some unconscious way, he fought against the failing of many Cainites: of being self-involved.

The Dracon was the very spirit of protean. Nothing ever remained stagnant around him, and he constantly adjusted his reactions to every stimulus, whether there was reason to or not. His strength lay in his ability to deal with any problem that arose, modifying his thoughts to best suit the situation. In this manner he was rarely taken by surprise or caught off-guard. But, by the same token the Dracon was unpredictable and unreliable.

Alliances, treaties and even friendships were subject to his ever-changing whims, but his gravest error was in leaving Constantinople during Michael III's rule. The Dracon believed that his presence would erode the peace and stability that, at the time, flourished in Constantinople. Though the stagnation that gripped the city took two centuries to manifest, Constantinople was not stable. The Dracon was guilty of falling into the same trap as Antonius: believing that the city would be as immortal as the Cainites who created it.

The third member of the Triumvirate was Michael the Wanderer, self-proclaimed angel and mad patriarch of Constantinople. For a time it was he who held Antonius and the Dracon together, acting as the linchpin to the wheel they set in motion through their dynamic opposition. Michael was the balancing factor that alternately encouraged and curtailed

the activities of the two vampires. And they in turn centered him. Antonius grounded him in reality, while the Dracon reminded him of his dreams.

After Antonius died and the Dracon left, Michael, no longer supported by either companion, began to display both of their extremes. He became lost in dreams and incapable of adapting to situations. In this aspect, Michael embodies the chaos that grips the city in the 12th century.

Echoes of the Triumvirate still resound throughout Constantinople, even though one of the Cainites has died, one has left and one is delusional. The symbols are still there—the Earth, the Dragon and the Angel—but Constantinople's Cainite families are too blind to recognize and learn from them except, perhaps, in nightmares.

It is unfortunate that Constantinople's contemporary vampires do not recognize the symbolism of the city's founders, for the Methuselahs' existence affects Cainite relations even now. The number three occurs in certain alliances, it affects the memberships of some scion families, and it is the number of Quaesitors (or family judges) in the city. The number three embodies Michael's delusional interpretation of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost — Michael, Antonius and the Dracon. Perhaps if Cainites look to their predecessors, they may realize that a balance must be struck to save the city and restore its grandeur.

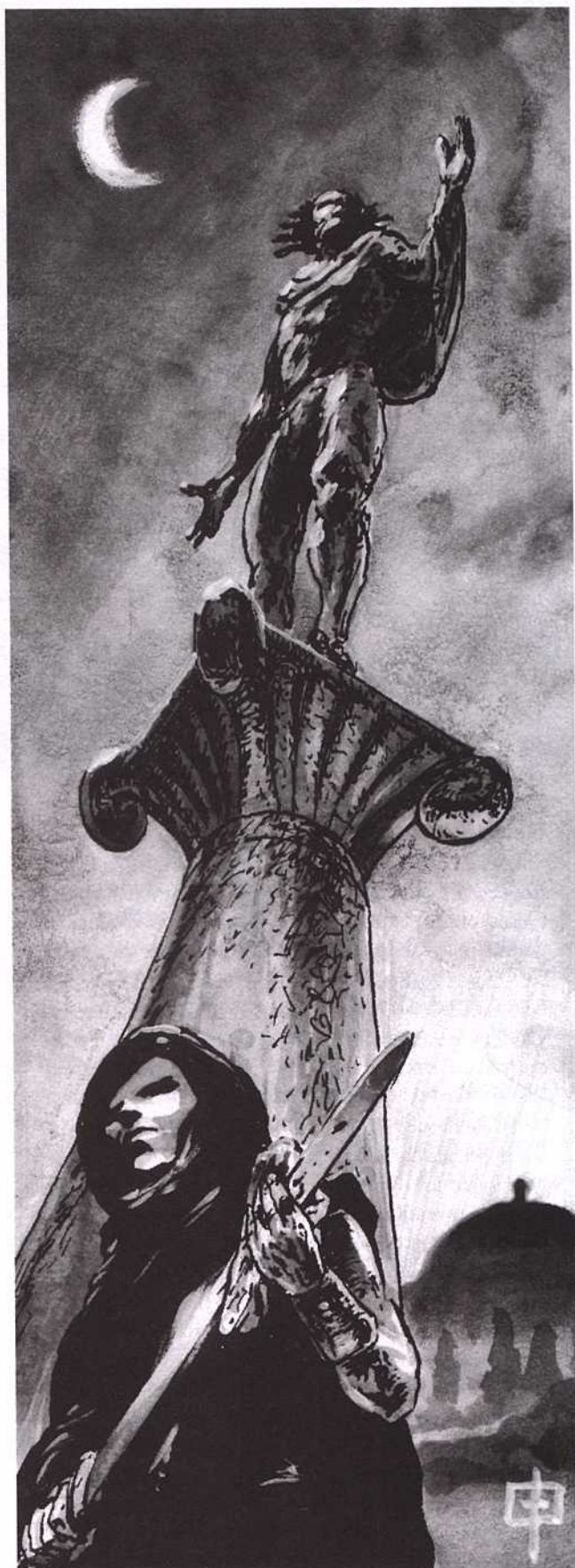
THE BYZANTINE OUTLOOK

The citizens of Constantinople live in a society that's radically different from that of Western Europe. New Rome's richness and history surrounds its populace; the people are descended from Augustus' empire. The citizens of Constantinople consider the rest of the world a hinterland that pales by comparison — and for the most part they're right.

Byzantines are bound by the chains of a golden history, but one that's tainted by blood and pride. The citizens of the capital are surrounded by wealth, but live behind walls that conceal the darkness that looms on the horizon. They turn a blind eye to the decline of their city and cling to the memories of a golden age. They go through the motions of life that their forefathers established, and expect to maintain the same glory.

Yet, rather than feel devotion to the empire as a whole, whether it is vibrant or on the decline, citizens of Constantinople are inclined to remain most loyal to the lands of their birth. Those raised in the city perceive even the rest of the empire as a backwater. Those who come to Constantinople from outlying regions in search of fortune or power see the city as a destination and resource, but remain true to their birthplaces. Many long to return to their homelands. Even the most ambitious politicians lament having to work with those from other, obviously inferior, regions.

More so than Romans or mortal Cappadocians, Thracians or Armenians, however, the children of Constantinople consider themselves Christians. Matters of the spirit are as real to them as matters of the world, if not more so. Eternity is



THE CODEx OF LEGACIES

*Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law
My services are bound.*

— William Shakespeare, *King Lear*

The Cainites of Constantinople do not follow Caine's Six Traditions. Instead, over the centuries and thanks to the city's Brujah Tribonius, they have developed their own set of laws and customs: the Codex of Legacies. The basic principle of the Codex is the rule of the Trinity. There is no prince in Constantinople; instead the Tzimisce, Ventrue and Toreador families jointly rule. Each family is led by a patriarch (although Michael is considered the patriarch of all Constantinople), who rules his family and the scion families under it. In the city's periodic councils, only the Trinity families have a say and can decide on courses of action. Those Cainites who are not part of the family system have no part in city affairs. All infractions of the Codex or disputes among Trinity families are resolved by a panel of judges that consists of a delegate from each Trinity family. These judges are collectively known as the three Quaesitors.

The following are the dictates by which all Cainites in Constantinople abide:

The Legacy of Trinity: "Of Three" is the rule of Constantinople. Only those Three can voice their concerns and set upon this Codex new laws. It is also the responsibility of the Three to ensure that the concerns of the scions are heard.

The Legacy of Progeny: Only those of the Trinity are free to sire. Even the scion families must petition the three Quaesitors for permission to sire. Failure to do so results in destruction of the progeny and banishment of the sire.

The Legacy of Founding: Only the Three can bequeath domain, just as the First Three founded the city. Cainites are granted domain upon the Embrace, if they are to receive any at all, and are responsible for ensuring that the Codex of Legacies is enforced in their domains.

The Legacy of Shadows: The Three are masters of the night, and hence must rule in darkness. They must be revered as divinities, but their true nature should never be revealed. Just as the nature of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost is unknown, so must that of the Trinity.

The Legacy of Ashes: The destruction of a family member is prohibited unless the Three condone it. Violation of this legacy results in a trial, after which Final Death is inflicted upon the offender. Those not of the families are not so protected from harm.

Although these Legacies have existed since the Second Council of A.D. 477, their observance has declined by 1197. Cainites in the Latin Quarter pay lip service to the laws; vampires arriving from across Europe consider the dictates archaic and unenforceable.

believed to await beyond the grave and the Second Coming rapidly approaches, so faith in the Son of God outweighs all other concerns.

With the collapse of the sees of Jerusalem, Antioch and Alexandria, only the Churches of Rome and Constantinople remain to guard the souls of humanity. Those in the East see the Western Church not as a religious brother, but as a distant schismatic order that flouts the will of God. Heresies are not tolerated by the Eastern Church, yet many exist, often melding with regionalism. Bogomils infest the Balkans, but only when such pagans enter Constantinople does conflict occur.

Small Muslim and Jewish communities survive in New Rome, despite its claim to be the heart of Christendom. These faiths — seen as inferior and alien, savage and murderous — are tolerated only because of their isolation. Christians interact with Jews and Muslims only when they have no choice, be it because of their own poverty or because they desire something that only the infidels have. The city's Jewish and Muslim communities are small but strong spheres where the pretension of empire is forgotten and faith is practiced simply.

VAMPIRIC OUTLOOK

The Cainites of Constantinople are a varied and complex breed, but most share a bond with the city. Given definition by the founders of the three Trinity families, the city represents an attempt to forge a lasting civilization, and all those who stalk its street by night are bound to this Dream. The weight of tradition presses heavily on Constantinople's Cainites, forcing them into modes of behavior and outlook forged in the earliest days of the city. But the legacy of the city is dying; even those who trace their blood back to its birth fight to hold onto the Dream.

The future terrifies most Byzantine vampires. Signs of collapse are all around — the churches are not as gold-laden as they once were, the imperial court is in chaos, Venetian traders dominate commerce, and the territories of the empire are under constant threat of invasion — but to speak of such things is to admit the fragility of the Dream, and thus is not tolerated. Byzantine Cainites have become lost in their own factions, unable to accept the coming collapse.

Foreign Cainites who inhabit the city, existing by the grace of the Trinity or under the protection of Italian vampires, are not so tied to the past and are not so intimidated by the future. In the overcrowded Latin quarter, prophets of doom rub shoulders with rapacious vultures who are ready to feed on this most bloated of urban corpses. Meanwhile, the friends and allies of Byzantine Cainites make ready to leave the city behind, saddened that their comrades and loved ones cannot do the same.



RELIGIONS OF BLOOD

Like their mortal lessers, the Cainites of Constantinople are profoundly religious. The Curse of Caine and the prophecy of Gehenna are not abstract concepts or dim mythologies to them, but realities they experience every night. As omens of destruction continue to appear, more and more Cainites pursue religious unives.

The Gesudians, led by the Obertus Tzimisce Gesu, form the oldest vampiric religious order in the city. Bearing monastic trappings, the Gesudians teach a philosophy of purity through an understanding of cruelty and suffering.

Those closest to Michael the Patriarch have come to espouse worship of him as the Archangel Michael. According to these Cainites, Michael, the master of the armies of God, has come to bring about a literal Heaven on Earth.

The Dreamers, another religious sect of vampires, follow the teachings of the mysterious Salubri vampire Achmet the Dreamer. In search of Golconda, Achmet advocates a suppression of all physical urges for blood and an exploration of the world of slumber and torpor.

And for their part, the Children of Calomena have recently arrived from the Balkan hinterland, shattering the trinity of blood-faiths. Made up of clanless Caitiff, these mad prophets claim that the descendants of Caine are on the verge of being destroyed by a wrathful holy mother.

How these sects interact will be decided by their desire to preserve Constantinople and the empire. If they lack the vision of the founding Three, the city will surely fall to religious infighting. The mortal populace can only follow.





Chapter Two: History

*To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
Or set upon a golden bough to sing
To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.*
- William Butler Yeats, "Sailing to
Byzantium"

For most of those who live in Constantinople, their history began with the rise of Rome. Others believe their history to have commenced when Christ gave his life for their sins. Those who bear the curse of Cain in New Rome, however, understand that Constantinople was created as a new entity, separate from Rome and the Crucifixion. They perceive their history as a rich and frayed tapestry that traces the Dream of the Triumvirate.

OVERVIEW OF CAINITE HISTORY

The history of Constantinople and its mortal denizens is a long tale that spans more than eight centuries of both ignorance and enlightenment. For the childer of Caine, however, much of the Byzantine era revolves around the relationships between three vampires and their families. The Toreador Michael, the Ventrue Antonius and the Tzimisce Dracon built their Dream in the city, and their loves, hatreds and crimes have shaped its course.

These three Methuselahs were lovers and allies for centuries before the Christian Emperor Constantine arrived to show them the way. To them, this devout and predatory ruler of the mortal world embodied the virtues and sins of their kind. Following his example, the three left Rome and looked to Christianity to guide their attempts to create an immortal legacy. Calling themselves the Triumvirate, Michael, Antonius and the Dracon arrived in Constantine's city, determined to help build a perfect and lasting civilization — a Heaven on Earth.

In the early centuries, the three lovers cooperated and divided spheres of influence among them, but resentment and recrimination were not far afield. Michael, always the center of the Triumvirate, took pleasure from the competition between his lovers and did little to quell their rivalries. Antonius and the Dracon fought an increasingly heated battle to gain Michael's favor. In the sixth century, the Ventrue took advantage of a rise in the authority of mortal emperors to strike at the Tzimisce, passing edicts against the monastic orders that sheltered the Dracon's kind. In return, the Dracon initiated the collapse of the empire and aided in the spread of plagues, sending the Ventrue-influenced dynasties into chaos and swelling the monasteries with the penitent.

Michael, beautiful and vain, hoped to quell the anger of his paramours by offering them a gift of two children, Gesu and Symeon. Through this demonstration of utter and equal love, he wished to reestablish the balance of the Triumvirate and the Trinity of Cainite families that they had spawned. It was not to be. Disaster and dark sentiments combined to make both children Tzimisce and drove Antonius forever away from his lovers. Taking a cue from mortal thinkers of the time — as the Three had

from Constantine centuries before — the Ventrue Methuselah called for a vampiric Iconoclasm in which the blood-worship encouraged by the Tzimisce would be eradicated and the childer of Caine would fade into the shadows. The combination of mortal and Cainite Iconoclast movements, and the powerful monastic and Tzimisce opposition that existed to both of them, began to tear the Byzantine Dream apart.

On a terrible night in A.D. 796, Michael and the Dracon met with their childer and those Ventrue who opposed Iconoclasm. Seeing no other alternative, the Methuselahs sanctioned the destruction of their lover Antonius. The deed was carried out by the ambitious Caius, the Ventrue Methuselah's own childer. For a few decades, order seemed restored as Caius took his sire's place and Constantinople returned to prosperity, but Antonius' murder could not be forgotten so easily.

For the Dracon it marked the end of his passion for the Dream. The murder of his rival stood as a bloody reminder of his own destructive power and he withdrew into his monasteries. Finally, unable to bear the presence of ghosts of his own making, and hoping to preserve the Dream by his very absence, he slipped into the night and never returned. Michael paid a heavier price. The Methuselah had been struggling against madness for centuries; now his guilt plunged him into delusion. Sequestering himself in the lavish Church of Hagia Sophia, the Toreador believed himself to be a true angel, obsessed with bringing Heaven to Earth. Even now, in torpor, his powerful psyche reaches out across the city and casts many into religious roles, and sows a terrible madness among his childer.

It is the inheritors of the Triumvirate — the murderer Caius; the Tzimisce Gesu and Symeon; and Petronius, the only childer of Michael who has been spared madness — who have been left with the task of holding the fragile Dream together. All, however, are shackled by the legacy of their sires. Caius longs to take Antonius' place as Michael's lover, but is forever denied by the taint of murder; Gesu and Symeon spiral into mutual hatred in an unconscious repetition of the unlikes of the Dracon and Antonius; Petronius finds no shelter from the influence of his mad father and is slowly dragged down.

At the close of the 12th century, the instruments of Constantinople's destruction come in the form of Westerners and Muslims (mortal and Cainite alike). Yet the roots of destruction lie in the three powerful figures who built the Dream on the foundation of their tarnished love.

BYZANTINE CHRONOLOGY

The following is a timeline of Byzantine events both mortal and Cainite.

circa 2100 B.C. The Toreador Antediluvian Embraces Mi-ka-il in the city of Ebla.

circa 550 B.C. The Cappadocian Byzar founds the colony of Byzantium. Mi-ka-il (now known as Beshter) visits the site.

548 B.C.

Beshter takes up residence in Rome.

309 B.C.

Alexia Theusa visits Byzantium and is Embraced by Byzar.

58 B.C.

Beshter and the Ventrue Methuselah Antonius become lovers.

CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

ANTONIUS THE GAUL

Michael the Wanderer first came to know the Ventrue Methuselah Antonius in the decades before the birth of Christ, when the Roman Republic subjugated Gaul. Embraced by the Ventrue Antediluvian several centuries before, the powerful Cainite had long ruled the night as a proud warlord among the tribes of the region. When he saw the Roman tide advancing, however, he recognized the work of his clan and decided to join in the new order. Michael could hardly resist the regal power of the Gaul, and Antonius was likewise helpless before the incomparable beauty of Arikel's childe. The two gravitated to each other over the following years and became allies and lovers.

When Michael became fascinated by the new faith of Christianity, it was Antonius who provided the advice and support that made envisioning the Dream possible. As Michael became lost in wonder, Antonius proposed the specifics of building a new and strong empire. Their relationship was not without its pitfalls, though. The most severe was the arrival of the Tzimisce Dracon. This mutable creature of passion and vision was an almost perfect opposite to the pragmatic and solid Antonius, and was equally irresistible to Michael. Michael soon became the Wanderer once again, traveling between the Roman palace of Antonius and the Cypriot haven of the Dracon.

Antonius busied himself with the task of forging a new empire, all the while trying to regain Michael's undivided attention. He was unable to do so and, once New Rome was founded in the fourth century A.D., he tried to take the largest part of it for himself. Even so, Antonius' resentment grew into hatred and he fought a desperate struggle for supremacy over the Dracon.

In the seventh and eighth centuries, Antonius came to espouse a new philosophy for his kind. Following the lead of mortals who rejected the worship of icons, Antonius called himself an Iconoclast and lashed out against those Cainites who practiced the worship of mortals. The Dracon was the chief target of his ire, but his calls for secrecy and hiding also alienated him from his favorite childe, Septima Dominica. The Iconoclast struggles, in both the mortal and vampiric spheres, eventually became so extreme that they led to Antonius' own destruction.

BYZANTINE CHRONOLOGY

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| A.D. 65 | Beshter Embraces the Roman satirist Petronius. |
| A.D. 85 | Beshter converts to Christianity and is baptized as Michael. |
| A.D. 152 | Michael encounters the Tzimisce Dracon. The two become lovers. |



THE DRACON

Michael the Wanderer never learned the true origins of his most enigmatic and potent lover, the Tzimisce Dracon. Reputedly the first childe of the Fiends' Antediluvian, the Methuselah expressed his clan's philosophy of change like no other. Not content to transform only his body, he saw himself as an agent of metamorphosis for the world. Through the power of philosophy and passion, he initiated the rise and fall of kingdoms and beliefs.

Michael and the Dracon met during one of Michael's journeys to the isle of Cyprus in the second century A.D., and they became enraptured with each other. The Toreador's passion and perfection were irresistible to the Dracon. In return, Michael recognized primal energy in the Tzimisce that would be needed to build his Dream and fill his heart.

The Dracon and Antonius the Gaul became partners in Michael's Dream and love — an uneasy union at the best of times. Antonius' logic and pragmatism cut at the Tzimisce's heart. He in turn lashed out at the Ventrue, and was often encouraged by Michael. This struggle reached devastating heights in Constantinople as the Dracon attempted to destroy all that Antonius had built. It was only after the Ventrue was killed by his paramours' sanction that the Tzimisce lord fully realized that he had loved Antonius as much as he did Michael. Soon after the terrible crime, the Dracon left the city.

ANCIENT BYZANTIUM

The history of Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire does not begin in A.D. 330, but almost a thousand years before with the foundation of a small Greek colony in the sixth century B.C. As Cainite legend has it, the colony was established by the Cappadocian Byzar, who led a small group of followers from the Greek city of Megara to the paradise of the Golden Horn. Thanks to its natural harbor, Byzantium became a leading port and trading post between the Greek city-states and Asia. Although the colony had the potential for greatness, it was never allowed to blossom. Instead it became a prize to be contested between the warring city-states of Athens and Sparta.

Byzantium changed hands between the Spartans and Athenians for three centuries, until it won its freedom. Each conquest nearly destroyed the city, but it always managed to survive and was rebuilt. This cycle of destruction and renewal continued into Roman times when, for the final time before Constantine's arrival, the colony was razed to the ground. During the civil war between Lucius Septimius Severus and Pescennius Niger, Byzantium — now paying tribute to Rome — decided to side with Niger, hoping to earn its independence once and for all. Unfortunately, Septimus Severus destroyed the city in retribution, effectively spelling the end of ancient Byzantium, but paving the way for Michael's Dream to become a reality.

In the shadows of night, Byzar and most of his followers vanished, leaving only the Cappadocian Alexia Theusa to witness the sack of the city. Refusing to implicate herself in the affairs of the other clans, she stood back as the Lasombra Ectoris arrived from Rome to claim Byzantium as his own. Ectoris used polytheistic cults to ensnare the rebuilt city, but steered clear of Alexia, sensing the blood of Byzar in her.

THE COMING OF CONSTANTINE AND NEW ROME (A.D. 196 - 476)

In Hoc Signo Vinces

(In this sign you will conquer)

— A heavenly message seen by Emperor Constantine

It was not long after the reign of Emperor Diocletian — and the rapid stratification of Rome — that the Methuselah Michael and his companion Antonius the Gaul made their decision to move elsewhere. They left the Eternal City of Rome as it withdrew from the world around it, and sought the company of the Cypriot Tzimisce Dracon to realize their Dream of a new and better society. The three knew, however, that the moment to act had not yet come; they awaited an omen which would proclaim the right time.

Antonius was the first to become aware of a new and ambitious general named Constantine, who was said to be touched by God. The three Methuselahs observed the general as he made his bid for imperial power and as he heeded his mother's

BYZANTINE CHRONOLOGY

A.D. 196

Roman Emperor Septimus Severus razes Byzantium during a civil war with Pescenius Niger. During the assault, Alexia Theusa ambushes Byzar and the city's Cappadocians, sending them into torpor.

A.D. 312

Constantine the Great, during his bid to become Roman emperor, battles his rival Maxentius outside Rome. Michael, Antonius and the Dracon now call themselves the Triumvirate.

CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT



advice to become a follower of the Nazarene prophet Jesus Christ. In Michael's mind, Constantine was the greatest mortal he had known. The mortal seemed to embody the divine and predatory, both Abel and Caine, and Michael realized that Constantine's fate was intertwined with his own. But, apprehensive of approaching the man for fear of corrupting him, the Methuselahs could only watch his progress.

Meanwhile, the Roman Empire's old-guard Ventrue and Malkavian lords, unprepared for Constantine's imperial coup, desperately attempted to counter him by backing Maxentius, an upstart who had no real claim to the throne. In their blindness, the vampire lords saw Constantine as a pawn of Michael and hoped to prevent the three Methuselahs from controlling the next ruler of the Roman empire.

In October of A.D. 312, Constantine and Maxentius met in battle a few miles northeast of Rome. It was during this engage-

ment that Constantine received his legendary vision. As the battle raged, he saw an image of the cross in the setting sun. It bore the inscription *In Hoc Signo Vinces*. Inspired by this divine sign, he routed Maxentius' army and practically ensured his seat as emperor. Michael wept tears of blood during the battle; the image of a burning cross appeared in his dreams and, to him, represented the divinity that he was forever denied.

Constantine's position was finally secured with the defeat of Lincinius near Byzantium in A.D. 324. Rome's Ventrue and Malkavians reluctantly acquiesced to his rise. The Methuselahs knew the time to build their Dream had finally come.

Constantine left his mark on the empire and history itself by rebuilding Byzantium and calling it Nova Roma. Michael and his lovers traveled to the holy site to forge their Dream. Constantine believed that Rome's Republican and pagan traditions had no place in the Christian empire he was creat-

BYZANTINE CHRONOLOGY

A.D. 324	Constantine defeats Lincinius near Byzantium, cementing his claim to the imperial throne.	A.D. 329	Constantine's lieutenant Caius is Embraced by Antonius.
A.D. 326	Constantine founds New Rome on the site of Byzantium (later to be called Constantinople). The Triumvirate leaves Rome to take up residence in the new capital.	A.D. 330	New Rome becomes the empire's new capital.
		A.D. 337	Constantine the Great dies. The Triumvirate holds the First Council. Magnus, a local Lasombra, pledges himself to the service of Michael.



ing, and Michael followed his lead. Although pagans were allowed in Constantine's great city, steps were taken to reduce their influence. At the behest of Michael, and using his influence upon Constantine's lieutenant Caius, Antonius had the cities of the empire ransacked for works of art, most coming from pagan temples, for the purpose of adorning the new city. Constantine took this a step further and had these items displayed outside their traditional shrines, where they had no power over their worshipers, thus assuring the prominence of Christianity.

As the new city grew, so did Roman resentment of it; the seat of the empire was moved to Constantinople. Constantine did his best to appease his subjects' worries, but Michael, the Dracon and Antonius made no attempt to reconcile with Rome's Ventruel lords, whom they considered relics of the past. Indeed, the early years of Constantinople were a grand time for the Triumvirate. The city was

theirs and their mortal inspiration did his holy work in their midst; the moment of glory was upon them. They privately referred to this period as the Augustian Years.

The only challenge to the Triumvirate's success came from the Lasombra brood of Ectoris; the lord refused to cede his place of prominence to Michael. The Triumvirate remained content to protect Constantine from Ectoris, as the emperor purged paganism from the city and undercut the Lasombra. To assure the emperor's safety and to reward the emperor's lieutenant Caius for his services, Antonius Embraced Caius in A.D. 329.

In A.D. 337 Constantine died after having Christianized his empire, forged a city that would last for centuries, and paved the way for the Dream of Michael. When its divine icon was laid to rest, the Triumvirate sat down and began a lengthy set of discussions aimed at shaping the future of the city. These

BYZANTINE CHRONOLOGY

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| <p>A.D. 476</p> <p>Rome falls to the barbarian Odoacer. Cainite refugees begin to arrive in Constantinople.</p> | <p>A.D. 489</p> <p>known as Lexor are made scions. Antonius extends protection to Alexia Theusa.</p> |
| <p>A.D. 477</p> <p>The Second Council is held, forming the Trinity system of families. The Lasombra of Magnus and a group of Roman Brujah</p> | <p>Michael invites the Follower of Set Khay'tall to found a scion family.</p> |

CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

meetings came to be known as the First Council. Guided by the example of the fallen emperor, the Three confirmed their decision to make Christianity the keystone of a new empire.

This decision was ratified when Magnus, a childe of the Lasombra Ectoris, presented his staked sire to Michael as a gift. Ectoris was dispatched and Magnus and his brood were given the responsibility of overseeing Constantinople's clergy, leaving the monastic orders to the Tzimisce. The Triumvirate could not foresee that Magnus' jealous hold on power would help widen the division between the Churches of East and West in the centuries to come, resulting a schism that would ultimately tear the Dream asunder.

THE INCONNU

We leave the Eternal City because its heart has long since ceased beating. It dies — and you, the lords of a once-glorious city, hide in its shadows, lost in a maze of your own construction. When our kind looks back to these times, to the death of yet another era, they will see your accomplishments and wonder what went wrong. But never, as you conceal yourselves, will they know who was responsible, to whom praise or condemnation should be addressed. Your deeds, both great and vile, will be lost to posterity, and all they will call you will be the Incognitus.

—Michael's last speech to the Cainites of Rome on the eve of his departure

THE FALL OF THE WEST (A.D. 476 - 518)

As the dream of Michael and his Triumvirate grew in the East, Rome was dealt blow after blow, finally falling to the barbarian Odoacer in A.D. 476.

Michael and his cohorts held the Second Council in A.D. 477 to deal with the consequences of Rome's collapse. Until that time, Constantinople, though considered the domain of the Triumvirate, had been open to other vampires. As Cainite refugees flooded in from the West, however, the decision was

made to cut ties to the past. The Triumvirate decided that only those who shared their vision for the future would be allowed to stay. They promptly closed the city to those not of their blood and exiled most others (although the Cappadocian Alexia Theusa, who had forged a friendship with both Antonius and his childe Caius, was granted protection by the Ventrue).

It was the Second Council that created the Trinity system, in which each member of the Triumvirate became the head of a family responsible for one aspect of the Dream. Based on the Christian Trinity, the system cast the Michaelite Toreador in the symbolic role of the Father, guiding the Dream with their holy vision and power in the Church. The Antonian Ventrue represented the Son, assuring the Dream's success through their pragmatic influence in the mortal and imperial spheres. The Dracon's Tzimisce — taking the name "Obertus," or "hidden" — assumed the role of the Holy Ghost, responsible for the esoteric philosophy of enlightenment that fueled the Dream, best exemplified by the monastic orders among which the Cainites hid. The Magnus Lasombra became the first of the scion families — having gained status under the Toreador — and set a precedent for others to be allowed to live in the city.

Many Roman factions petitioned for scion status, but only the Lexor Brujah lawmakers received it. Unlike others, these vampiric guardians of Roman law and tradition had committed themselves to supporting Michael's Dream. Having arrived bearing copies of the laws of Rome, their leader Tribonius pledged to formalize and organize the mortal and Cainite codes of the new capital. The Lexor were recognized as scions of the Antonian Ventrue. The others, as well as those already in Byzantium who refused to bow to the new order, were forbidden to enter the city again. With no other place to go, many surrendered to the dawn outside the city gates.

The West was allowed to rest in barbarian hands while Antonius established a firm position overseeing the halls of temporal power. The Michaelite-Obertus division of the city's religious sphere was more problematic, though. While the lovers agreed to a theoretical division of influence, with Michael overseeing clerical authority and dogma and the Dracon fostering the mystic monastic orders, the division between these realms was unclear and conflict proved unavoidable. The struggle between clergy and monks was worsened by the rise of the Monophysite heresy. This mortal movement claimed an entirely divine nature for Christ and rejected the dual nature emphasized by Orthodoxy.

BYZANTINE CHRONOLOGY

A.D. 518 Justin I becomes emperor under the guidance of his nephew Justinian and the Ventrue Antonius.

A.D. 527-555 Justinian becomes emperor and expands Byzantium's territories into North Africa and Italy. The Trinity system of families

is spread across the empire. The monasteries overseen by the Dracon's Obertus Tzimisce are severely regulated.

A.D. 537 Hagia Sophia, the greatest Christian temple, is completed in Constantinople. Michael takes up residence.

THE MADNESS OF DAWN

It is a night several months after the Second Council of which I speak. The darkness on the Egnatian Way was all-consuming and even with the gifts of Caine upon me, I heard the approach of the Romans before I saw them. As I reached out with my preternatural sight, I distinguished a motley crowd — almost fifty strong — of Cainites and ghouls ambulating toward the city gates. The mark of Malkav was in their eyes and they sang songs of pain and lamentation with a terrible innocence that chilled what was left of my soul. Rushing to the wall, I called that the gates be shut against this wave of the Damned.

The pounding lasted all night. I blocked my eyes and ears as best I could, but could well imagine the cursed wretches slamming their whole bodies against the timber of the gates. Each knock drove a spike of madness into my soul, and I waited with feverish impatience to see if my sanity would last the night.

I sought shelter in a nearby house when slumber finally graced me. As I slipped into the foggy mists of sleep, I caught but one brief paeon of the terrible wails that met the dawn outside the walls. The blood and scorch marks have long been cleansed from the gates, but they still find echoes in my mind.

— From the testimony of Petronius, childe of Michael

The heresy also served national interests, sparking anti-imperial movements in Egypt and Syria which Antonius, at least, believed to be Setite-inspired.

Michael played on Antonius' conviction in A.D. 489 when he presented to his lovers the Setite Khay'tall and requested that he be recognized as the leader of a new scion family of the Toreador. The Ventrue leader acquiesced to the demand, hoping to gain Michael's favor; the Dracon withdrew without comment or opposition. Antonius felt confident that he had won Michael to his side once and for all.

THE ERA OF JUSTINIAN (A.D. 518 - 565)

The rivalry between the Dracon and Antonius grew as the years passed — often encouraged by Michael, who relished

the sight of his lovers competing for his favor. The Tzimisce Dracon was the first to tire of these games and told Michael of his displeasure. The Toreador patriarch reacted coldly, and the city's Tzimisce found themselves isolated as the Ventrue and Toreador grew closer. Antonius, now glorious in Michael's favor, was able to advance his plan for a truly great empire to match the Triumvirate's Dream.

Antonius' instrument for growth was an ambitious politician from Thrace named Justinian. Reigning first through his uncle Justin and then as true emperor, Justinian led Byzantium to prosperous growth — North Africa and Italy were taken from the barbarians who had stripped them from Rome. Revolts in the capital and its territories were suppressed, and the Brujah completed their task of codifying the laws of mortals and Cainites alike, presenting the Codex of Legacies to the capital. The system of reigning vampiric families established in the city was spread across the empire as powerful Cainites were given imperial charters to various regions. Septima Dominica, Antonius' favorite childe and companion since the nights of Rome, acted as praetorian prefect for the Ventrue, becoming the intermediary between the provincial Cainites and Constantinople. Under her watchful eye, Gangrel warlords were granted recognition in Anatolia and the Balkans, while the Lasombra assumed positions of authority in Egypt and Libya.

The Toreador and Ventrue also collaborated in a restructuring of the Church that served the interests of both. While Michael and his progeny were allowed to continue spreading a popular religion across the land — one especially rife with stories of saints and holy men, who became the subjects of worship and admiration — monasteries were severely regulated, cutting into Tzimisce power. The greatest symbol of the new bond between Antonius and Michael was the construction of the great Hagia Sophia, the Church of the Holy Wisdom, the largest and most lavish of all Christian temples in Byzantium.

The end of Justinian's rule saw the collapse of Antonius' plans. The empire had expanded farther than its resources could support, and much of Italy was lost to barbarians while Persia rose from the East. The specter of plague also swept across the empire, decimating the population of the capital and many provinces. When the graveyards were filled, bodies were piled in abandoned temples until they reached the ceilings. Antonius, certain that the problems of "his" empire could be traced to the Dracon, refused to

BYZANTINE CHRONOLOGY

A.D. 555-565 Justinian's rule ends in chaos as Constantinople's outlying territories begin to be wrested away. Plagues weaken the empire.

A.D. 565-600 Plagues repeatedly strike Constantinople, allegedly spread by the Dracon.

A.D. 566 Antonius Embraces Belisarius, Justinian's leading general.

A.D. 579 Antonius' mortal rival Narses seeks out an Italian Lasombra and is Embraced. Narses is made responsible for the Italian territories of the empire.

CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

pay close enough attention to his own affairs. He allowed a dangerous rivalry to grow between two powerful kine functionaries: the great general Belisarius and the powerful chamberlain Narses. Both men knew Antonius as Justinian's "advisor," but the Ventrue Embraced only Belisarius. Narses was abandoned to die as all mortals do, but refused to cede eternity to his old rival. Having pierced much of the thin veil that hid the true nature of Antonius, the aged chamberlain made his way to Italy and uncovered a Lasombra enclave. Embraced and victorious, he reappeared in Byzantium in the next century to claim the charter for the portion of imperial Italy that had withstood the barbarians.

A TIME OF DARKNESS (A.D. 565 - 690)

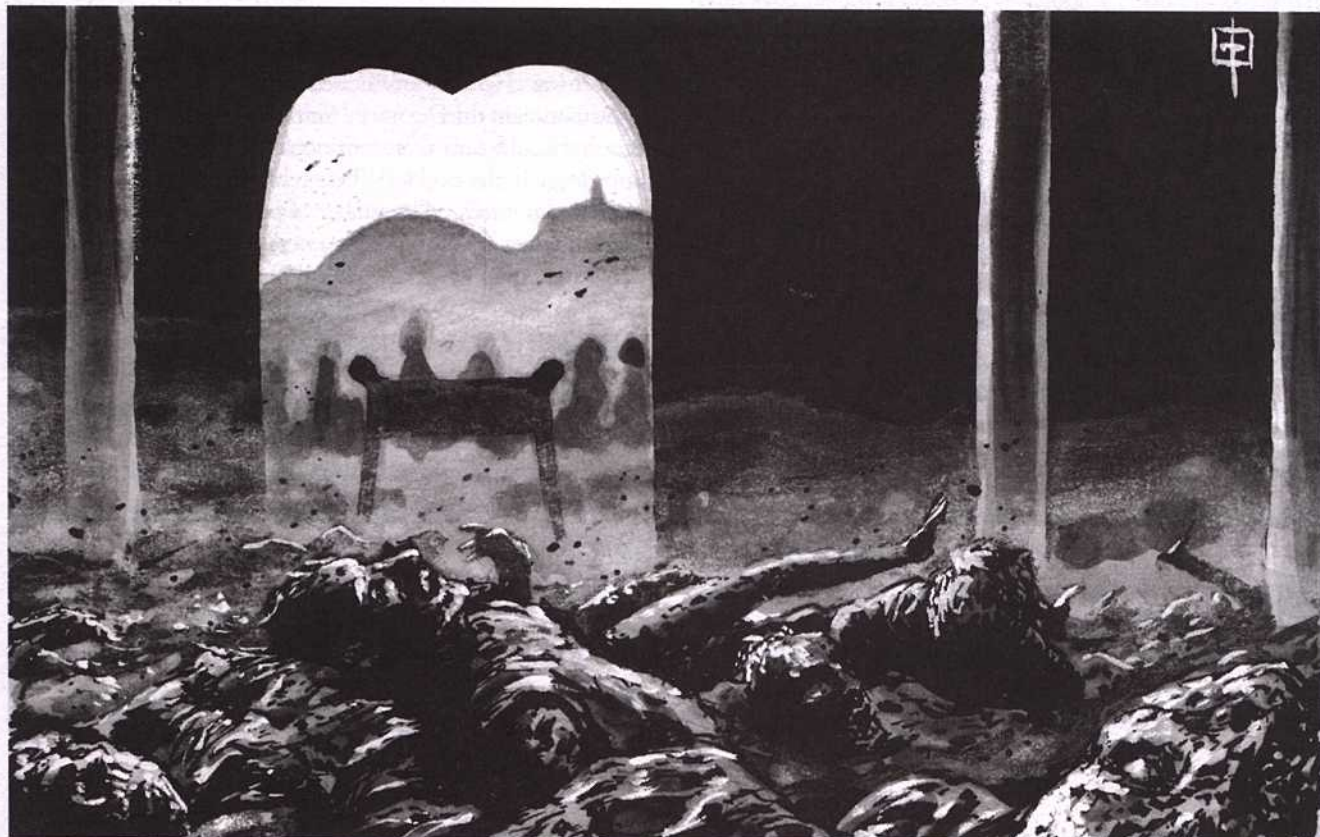
The centuries following Justinian's death were a dark time for the people of Constantinople; plagues, threats of invasion and the tyrannical reign of Emperor Phocas destroyed most of what Justinian — and Antonius — had created. The bubonic plague, which struck the city time and time again, reduced its population by almost one-half, and many survivors chose to leave the city in favor of safer settlements. These events paralleled and were often inspired by struggles within the Triumvirate.

Throughout Justinian's rule and his ambitious reconquest of the West, Michael's favoritism for Antonius forced the Dracon to take a secondary role in the city he helped create. Tzimisce-

controlled monasteries were hit particularly hard by Justinian's reforms, and this angered the Dracon. When the tides of plague swept into the city, the Fiend made his presence felt. Using the remaining power of the monasteries, he led the mortal population to believe that the disease was a sign of holy displeasure. The chaos this caused depleted the manpower that Antonius required to accomplish his imperial ambitions, stifling any further dreams of conquest. Worse still, Antonius was no longer able to guard against the rise of incompetent and mad emperors, and so a succession of weak leaders donned the purple mantle. The culmination of this was the ascension of the dreaded Phocas in A.D. 602.

Phocas' claim to the throne came by force, and in the eight years of his rule a dark and sinister shadow shrouded Constantinople. Historically remembered for his love of cruelty and violence, Phocas introduced the use of torture to the capital, sending his enemies to slow and painful deaths. As Phocas' reign continued, the empire degenerated into anarchy. Antonius tried to regain control, allowing his childer to sire progeny for the first time and keep them in Constantinople. Septima, praetorian prefect for the Ventrue, took advantage of this freedom and Embraced Nicephorus, a ghoul she had kept for several decades. Caius also took the opportunity to Embrace a magistrate named Epirus. The Dracon nevertheless maintained his grip on the city.

Although the Dracon had effectively robbed Constantinople of its glory, that was not his plan. In A.D. 610, Heraclius, a descendant of an Akoimetai monk and follower





of the Dracon, dethroned Phocas and began the slow process of recovering what had been lost. It had never been the Dracon's ambition to destroy the Trinity's Dream, but rather to help mold and contribute to it — at the same time teaching Antonius and Michael not to marginalize him.

Throughout the seventh century the empire's monastic orders grew in both power and influence. Many important men and common folk took tonsure, hoping to escape the uncertainty pervading the empire. As the influence of the Dracon and his Akoimetai grew, so did the worship of icons, purportedly mystic representations of Christ and the saints, but often images of the Tzimisce Methuselah's many forms.

The growing dominance of the monastic orders, and the Dracon's own concerns over the rise of Islam, resulted in a project that eventually became the Obertus Tzimisce's hidden Library of the Forgotten. In the first quarter of the seventh century, the

Akoimetai monks began the lengthy task of transcribing and safeguarding numerous volumes of ancient lore and knowledge, many of which came from the Great Library of Alexandria. This project was originally envisioned by the Dracon as his greatest contribution to the Dream; by transplanting the lore of Alexandria he would turn Constantinople into the greatest seat of knowledge in the world. Although his monks successfully transcribed and relocated a number of precious volumes, an even larger number of books were lost in A.D. 642 when Alexandria fell to the Arabs.

The same wave of Arab conquest that took Egypt also stripped all of North Africa and the Levant from the empire, severing ties with many of the provincial Cainite families established in Justinian's time. Antonius' childe Belisarius, by this time a Ventrue prefect in charge of much of North Africa, failed to return from his station and was thought destroyed.

BYZANTINE CHRONOLOGY

A.D. 602	Phocas becomes emperor, beginning a reign of terror.	A.D. 610	Heraclius becomes emperor and renews the power of the monasteries, ensuring the Tzimisce power base.
A.D. 604	Antonius' childe Septima Dominica Embraces her servant Nicephorus. Caius Embraces a magistrate named Epirus.	A.D. 620	The Akoimetai monks serving the Dracon begin transcribing the contents of the Great Library of Alexandria.

CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

THE FIRES OF ALEXANDRIA

It was a sad sight. I stood, unable to act, and watched from our ship as the flames licked the delicately bound leather and parchment belonging to the Great Library. Even from our distance I could see the figures of monks, some of them in flames, running in and out of the building trying to save what was humanity's greatest accomplishment. They sacrificed themselves, carrying what scrolls and bound volumes they could with their burned hands. Many of them were consumed along with their books. Above them, the night sky consumed the smoke, the only testament to knowledge forever lost. Around me gray ashes fell, bearing incomprehensible portions of thought. I knew as we sailed away, toward Constantinople, that a dark epoch was beginning. It was the dawning of the Eternal Night.

—Spoken by the Keeper of the Faith to her Watchers

When European holdings also fell during the same period, the Lasombra Narses cut ties with the capital and established himself as lord of the small trading city of Venice.

THE AGE OF ICONOCLASM (A.D. 690 - 867)

The divisions within the Triumvirate were felt most keenly by Michael the Patriarch. As his lovers fought a deadly battle for supremacy, and he watched his Dream fracture, he heard the first whispers of madness. Determined to restore his heavenly kingdom, he sought symbol of the unity that he longed for. He found it in two children. They were the young sons of a Byzantine magistrate who was preparing to take tonsure. The brothers Gesu and Symeon exemplified the best qualities of Michael's lovers. In Gesu, the divine touch of knowledge and enlightenment spoke of the ancient wisdom of the Dracon. In Symeon, a cold and powerful ambition tempered by reason and subtlety recalled the best qualities of Antonius.

Unlike the two Cainites, however, the kine children were united on a deep spiritual level; each depended on and supported the other, each a half of a greater whole. Using

mortal intermediaries, Michael became the guardian of the brothers and presented them to his companions as gifts. Each would raise his child as a successor and symbol of the unity that would ensure the success of the Dream. The beauty and eerie lack of fear in the children inspired the Triumvirate — always keenly aware of the power of omens — and for a few brief years peace reigned in Constantinople.

The first sign that harmony was not to last came in A.D. 701, one year before the eldest, Gesu, was to be Embraced. An envoy of the Tzimisce Antediluvian traveled to New Rome and pleaded with the Dracon not to Embrace his promised child, for the act was seen as an omen of ill portent by the Fiends' seers. This was a grave warning indeed; the Obertus Tzimisce's emphases on monasticism and Christianity, a human religion, were seen as heresy in the eyes of his clan, yet here he was being warned by his kind. The Dracon ignored the warning and once and for all rejected his kind, leading to a bloody war between the Tzimisce factions — a war that continues in the late 12th century.

The Dracon Embraced his promised child — and was shocked to see Gesu fall into a deep torpor. Convinced that his clan was responsible, the Methuselah hunted his brethren in the Carpathians. While the Dracon was away, Michael's sanity continued to fray and further chaos ensued. Symeon refused to leave his brother's side, despite Antonius' warnings that whatever had cursed Gesu might ensnare him as well. In A.D. 703, shortly after the Dracon's return to Constantinople, the slumbering Gesu had an angelic vision, woke from his torpor and Embraced his loyal brother — stripping Antonius of his gift. Michael called the Third Council in 704 to resolve the matter, but no conclusion was reached.

In the aftermath of the Third Council, Antonius, embittered by the loss of Symeon and sickened by the now-omnipresent worship of icons as fostered by the Tzimisce, plotted against the Dracon and his childer. To help his cause Antonius oversaw the rise of the Syrian Leo III from peasant to emperor in A.D. 717.

Neither the Dracon, Gesu nor Symeon contested Antonius' new bid for power, content as they were with the current development of the monastic ideal and icon worship in Byzantine society. All this changed in A.D. 726, however, when Leo III, after reclaiming some of the territory lost in the last few centuries, ordered the destruction of the largest icon

BYZANTINE CHRONOLOGY

A.D. 626	The Akoimetia monk Gregory is Embraced by an Alexandrian Ravnos.	A.D. 660	Narses cuts ties with Constantinople and rules independently from Venice.
A.D. 632	Gregory is adopted by the Antonian Ventrué.	A.D. 689	To mend the rift between Antonius and the Dracon, Michael presents each with one of two young brothers, Gesu and Symeon, to raise and Embrace.
A.D. 642	Alexandria falls to the Arabs and the Great Library is burned to the ground.		

in Constantinople (a vast golden icon of Christ, which actually depicted the Dracon). The act inspired the mortal Iconoclast (image-breaker) movement.

Both Leo III and his son Constantine V undertook campaigns aimed at stamping out the worship and veneration of icons, which they and certain members of the Eastern Church saw as sacrilegious. Monastic orders bore the brunt of Iconoclasm, as a number of monasteries were razed, their many beautiful icons and numerous books destroyed. Their monks were ridiculed, tortured and often killed outright. Many who partook in the Iconoclast movement did not disapprove of the worship of icons, but objected to the strength and power that the monasteries had acquired.

In the shadows, Antonius put forth his own brand of Iconoclasm which called for a rigorous concealment of Cainite nature and an end to all forms of blood-worship among the kine. This was a direct attack on the icons of the Tzimisce, but it also drove a wedge between Antonius and his childe Septima. She did not support her sire's vendetta.

The animosity between the Ventrue and Tzimisce only increased as a several Old Country Tzimisce joined in the persecution of the Akiometai monks and their Cainite lords. Isolated Akiometai monasteries in the Balkans and Greece were gutted. By the 760s, the Obertus had been dealt a harsh blow and many thought Antonius would soon put an end to his vendetta. But Antonius' hatred and conviction blinded him and he continued to take bold steps to eradicate the icons, out of repulsion for the Tzimisce and a belief that vampires should be the hidden masters of humanity, not eternal saints.

The Ventrue patriarch failed to see the consequences of banning icons. As a result of the Iconoclast dictates of Leo III and Constantine V, the rift between the Eastern and Western Churches widened, much to the delight of the Magnus Lasombra (icons continued to be venerated in the West). Even worse, Michael and the Dracon realized that Iconoclasm was tearing Byzantine society apart. Something had to be done before all was lost.

In A.D. 796, Michael and the Dracon called the secret Fourth Council to resolve the issue of Iconoclasm. Michael received the Nosferatu Malachite as a scion family of his Toreador, but most of the council concerned itself with the fate of Antonius. Septima and Caius, attending covertly, proposed a final solution to the problem: the destruction of

their sire. Michael and the Dracon were reluctant to eliminate their companion, but the younger Ventrue argued that no other resolution was possible; the division between Antonius and the Dracon was too great. The Methuselahs finally agreed and Caius staked Antonius before dawn one December morning.

Caius was recognized as the new head (or Basileus) of the Ventrue family. The mortal empress Irene, ruling on behalf of her son Constantine VI, restored religious icons soon thereafter. Septima assumed the position of Caius' advisor and Embraced her second childe Ducas as a symbol of her increased power. Not all was well, though. Michael and the Dracon both felt for the death of Antonius and retreated into isolation. Caius, who had hoped to take up a position beside Michael, was rejected and allowed a second bout of mortal Iconoclasm to rear its head. This rise temporarily snapped Michael out of his reverie. In a bold move to restore order the patriarch himself took power in the guise of Emperor Michael III, and ushered in the greatest era of his Dream.

THE MACEDONIAN GLORY (A.D. 867 - 1025)

With the conflicts of Iconoclasm finally resolved, the Trinity of families — now led by Michael, the Dracon and Caius — was finally able to cooperate to promulgate the Dream. Each family operated in its own sphere and the rivalries of the past were suppressed to allow a margin of peace in the city.

In A.D. 888, the Dracon announced to Michael his decision to leave Constantinople. Some Tzimisce claim he saw the darkness that was to come and fled from it. Others posit that he never recovered from the murder of Antonius, whom he simultaneously hated and loved. A handful of Cainite scholars now claim that the Dracon sought to preserve the greatness of the Dream by removing his destructive presence. Regardless, the Fifth Council met in A.D. 890 and recognized Gesu and Symeon as the Dracon's legitimate successors, granting them his full powers. The Cappadocian Alexia Theusa also requested and received family status under

BYZANTINE CHRONOLOGY

A.D. 701	The Dracon Embraces Gesu. Gesu falls into a deep torpor.	A.D. 717	Leo III becomes emperor under the watchful eye of Antonius.
A.D. 703	Rising from torpor, Gesu Embraces Symeon, enraging Antonius.	A.D. 726	Leo III launches Iconoclasm, calling for the destruction of all religious icons. Antonius calls for a Cainite Iconoclasm, aimed at the Tzimisce practice of blood-worship. Byzantine society is divided.
A.D. 704	The Third Council is held to resolve the matter of Symeon's Embrace, but no resolution is reached.		

CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

the Antonian Ventrue. The three families found themselves united for the first time since the fall of Rome, and their Dream prospered.

Operating with the support of his allies, Caius was able to oversee a succession of strong emperors, forming the new Macedonian dynasty and reconquering territories in the East and West. Antioch was recaptured and the Muslims pushed back from much of Asia Minor. The Balkans were also brought under imperial control, thanks to Toreador and Tzimisce efforts at Christianizing the inhabitants.

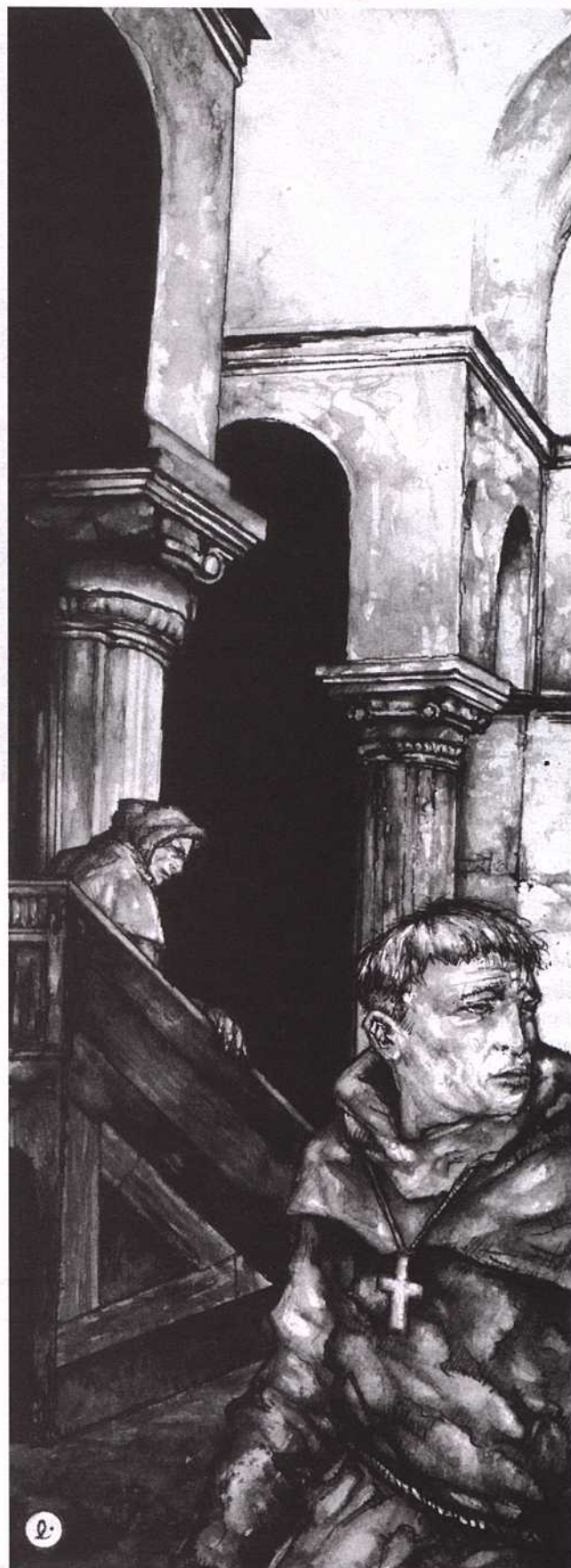
Yet all was not well. The destruction of Antonius and departure of the Dracon hastened Michael's long fall into insanity, and the Patriarch increasingly felt the call of torpor. During his increasingly frequent periods of slumber, his powerful psyche was still at work and began to capture the minds of his followers; a Cainite and kine cult of the Archangel Michael formed.

Among the Ventrue, power and prestige brought intrigue. In A.D. 1001 Septima Dominica was destroyed by witch-hunters, and Caius lost his most valuable asset in his rule of the Antonian. The family soon degenerated into a tangled mesh of competing interests, and by the end of the Macedonian period Caius barely managed to play one faction against another.

The Obertus Tzimisce, meanwhile, faced a renewed threat from their Carpathian clanmates. Those of the Old Country sought vengeance on the progeny of the Dracon and were determined to stamp out the monastic "heresy" promulgated by Gesu. To do so they incited armies of Bulgars and Hungarians to lash out at the empire.

And to make matters worse, much of the recently reconquered empire rebelled. The Cainite and mortal masters of these restored lands believed that their power stemmed from the land, not from the sanction of Constantinople. The family system of Cainite control that had spread during Justinian's rule became but a memory in most corners of the empire, replaced by an aristocratic system of independent Cainite lords.

And yet, to their credit, the original Trinity families refused to blame each other for their problems and sought to rebuild. The Ventrue set out to restore the family system and power of Constantinople by shattering the semifeudal mortal aristocracy of Anatolia and its Cainite masters. This campaign was spear-



BYZANTINE CHRONOLOGY

- A.D. 796 The Fourth Council is held. The Malachite Nosferatu are made scions of the Toreador. Caius and Septima propose Antonius' destruction. Michael and the Dracon acquiesce.
- A.D. 797 Caius becomes Basileus of the Antonian Ventrue with Septima as his second.



headed by Nicephoros' child Lyseros and a converted Anatolian Cainite known as Isaac the Hermit. The Toreador, for their part, used the new unity of their Orthodox faith to reinforce their conflict with the Western Church. The Lasombra Magnus' vision of subjugating the Western Church took hold of the Michaelites, laying the groundwork for the final schism between the two sees. The Obertus Tzimisce encouraged the evangelization of the Slavs and supported the war with the Bulgars in an attempt to lash out at the Tzimisce's Carpathian enemies.

By the beginning of the 11th century, however, each family was so preoccupied by the minutia of the Dream that the empire was again jeopardized. As Michael plunged ever deeper into torpid delusions, Caius, Symeon and Magnus (now acting for Michael) collaborated in campaigns of conquest in the West and in the destruction of the Anatolian aristocracy. Little did they realize that in so doing they exposed the empire once again to the Muslim threat

that had taken Egypt and the Levant 400 years before. With the death of Basil II in A.D. 1025, the empire's Macedonian apogee degenerated into dynastic crises and military failures.

THE FIRST DECLINE (A.D. 1025 - 1081)

The childer of the Triumvirate were unable to assure a smooth transfer of power after the death of Basil II. Byzantium suffered from a weak succession of emperors. The Antonian Ventrue bore much of the blame, as it became traditional for the family to use imperial candidates as weapons against its opponents. During this time the empire was threatened from all sides. From the north, the Bulgars and their Tzimisce leaders rose up against Byzantine authority. To the west, Sicilian Normans believed the

BYZANTINE CHRONOLOGY

A.D. 842-867 To restore order, Michael rules directly as Emperor Michael III.
A.D. 888 The Dracon leaves Constantinople.
A.D. 890 The Fifth Council is held and recognizes Gesu and Symeon as leaders of the Tzimisce. Michael begins to feel the pull of madness and torpor, leaving nightly tasks to Petronius.

A.D. 1001 Septima Dominica is destroyed by witch-hunters.
A.D. 1071 The Seljuk Turks defeat the imperial army at Manzikert, stripping Byzantium of most of Asia Minor.
A.D. 1073 The Sixth Council is held and Belisarius returns to a position of power.

CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

empire ripe for conquest. It was the Seljuk Turks, however, who crushed the imperial army and took most of Asia Minor at the battle of Manzikert in A.D. 1071.

Soon thereafter, the vanished Belisarius returned to Constantinople and petitioned to gather a council to deal with the empire's woes. The Sixth Council of A.D. 1073 sanctioned the return of Belisarius and judged Lyseros and Isaac the Hermit, who had destroyed the Anatolian aristocracy without properly preparing a defense against the Turks. The two were condemned to Final Death. This same council is also remembered by the Cainites of Constantinople as the first in which no members of the original Triumvirate were present — Antonius had been destroyed, the Dracon was gone and Michael was in torpor.

THE COMNENI AND THE CRUSADES (A.D. 1081 - 1180)

As part of his plan to restore the empire, Belisarius guided the rise of ambitious general Alexius Comnenus to the imperial throne with the support of Caius and the Obertus brothers. Unfortunately, the resources of the weakened state were not enough to fulfill Belisarius' plans and he was forced to seek aid elsewhere. In the Seventh Council of A.D. 1081, Caius and Belisarius presented their proposal to obtain the support they needed. Caius proposed an alliance with the wealthy trading city of Venice to fund the struggle with the Sicilian Normans in the West. This treaty brought the Lasombra Narses back within Byzantine boundaries, no longer as the head of a minor provincial family but as the lord of the most powerful trading city in the West. In order to garner Narses' support, Caius granted Venetian mortals valuable trading privileges and reconfirmed the status of Narses' own centuries-old family. The "Narsene" Lasombra became scions of the Antonian Ventrue.

Belisarius had reservations with the deal, but was willing to risk the alliance with his old rival to salvage the Dream of Constantinople. Caius also sought permission to seek assistance in the West against the Seljuks. The Michaelites supported these efforts and recommended that a request be sent directly from the emperor to the Pope of Rome. The Obertus threw in their support for the Ventrue plans in exchange for the recognition of their first scion family, the Baron's Gangrel, which was to act as guardian and enforcer of the Codex of Legacies.

SEPTIMA DOMINICA, LADY OF BLOOD

Antonius' first Roman childe was an ambitious senator's wife named Septima Dominica. In the patriarchal Roman world, she learned to use her husband as a front, became a powerful force in the capital and was admired by Antonius. As a vampire, Septima found the strictures on her power less confining than before and became a skilled politician among the Ventrue of Rome. She remained close to Antonius, advising him as she had her mortal husband, gaining power for herself and finally accompanying Antonius to Constantinople.

In New Rome, their relationship soured. Septima was a vampire of the old school, holding lavish blood feasts and relishing in the dread and awe she inspired among the kine. She maintained extensive mortal herds and made little attempt to hide her predatory nature. As Antonius developed his Iconoclast philosophies, he drove his childe away. Septima felt betrayed and helped plot his destruction, supporting Caius during the Fourth Council and participating in the murder of Antonius.

Septima then became Caius' advisor, content to remain the kingmaker of the Ventrue. But times had changed and the nights of the lords of blood were numbered. This became evident in A.D. 1001 when Septima's haven was burned to the ground by a witch-hunter. Caius and Septima's eldest childe Nicephorus sought out the responsible party, little realizing that it was Septima's second childe Ducas. A believer in Antonius' Iconoclasm, Ducas lashed out at his own sire as the worst example of worship-mongering.

The request for aid against the Turks was responded to with the First Crusade, which brought tens of thousands of mortal warriors and pilgrims to the empire — along with numerous Cainites. The Ventrue resisted the temptation to call a new council and gambled on their skill to preserve their position. They succeeded, moving the First Crusade through their territories with speed and efficiency. Although Belisarius could not prevent the establishment of the Latin Crusader States, he was able to use them to his advantage, retaking large parts of Asia Minor under Alexius and John Comnenus.

BYZANTINE CHRONOLOGY

A.D. 1081 The Seventh Council is held. The family of Narses of Venice is made a scion of the Ventrue and is given trading privileges. The Baron's Gangrel become scions of the Tzimisce. Alexius I Comnenus becomes emperor.

A.D. 1090-1125 Narses' childe Alfonzo serves as a Lasombra priest in Constantinople.

A.D. 1096 Soldiers on the First Crusade travel through Constantinople.

A.D. 1140 The Salubri Achmet arrives in Constantinople.

Belisarius also broke the age-old alignment of the Trinity by seeking ties with the Obertus and letting the Michaelites fend for themselves. Under Emperor John Comnenus, this alliance proved extremely strong and the empire seemed well on its way to reclaiming the East. The Latins became less and less of a concern as John focused on reacquiring the Levant. This time of prosperity brought new vampires to Constantinople, including the Salubri mystic Achmet the Dreamer, a searcher for Golconda who was sheltered by Gesu.

Unfortunately, the gains made in Asia Minor awoke the hidden Assamites. In A.D. 1143, while on campaign in the East, John was killed with the characteristic finesse and stealth of the childer of Haqim. Belisarius, realizing the danger that the Assamites posed, quickly sought a reconciliation with the Latins, who had been alienated by Alexius and John. Under Manuel Comnenus, many important posts in the imperial hierarchy were given to Westerners, and ties with the Crusader States were encouraged.

The Second Crusade was handled skillfully, but the momentum that had been lost after the death of John Comnenus could not be regained. Belisarius' plans lost the support of Caius; Ventrue, Toreador and Tzimisce alike resented the growing influence of the Latins, especially that of the Venetian Lasombra. Belisarius' influence was not totally lost, however, and he forged an alliance with Anna Comnena, an ambitious new Ventrue who had been born the daughter of his mortal protégé Alexius I. Nevertheless, Belisarius could do little to suppress the wrath that grew against the Latins.

THE SECOND DECLINE (A.D. 1180 - A.D. 1197)

The cycle of decline following the Macedonian era was rekindled by the number of debilitating concessions given to Latins and the resulting popular outrage. When Manuel Comnenus died in A.D. 1182, his cousin Andronicus led a popular revolt in which a number of Latins were killed. Andronicus claimed the throne and the Ventrue proved unable to stop him. Only three years later, as the last great Norman assault stormed across the empire and sacked Thessalonika, the mob rose again. Angry citizens and Byzantine Cainites murdered Andronicus, killed any Latins they came across, and burned the foreigners'

EPIRUS, PREFECT OF MASKS

The Ventrue domestic prefect at the time of the Latin riots of 1185, Epirus was a master of the subtle art of manipulation. Known for his practice of adopting a variety of masks on official occasions, he also presented many different faces to those under his charge. Responsible for the affairs of the city and dealings with the Lexor Brujah since the days of Antonius, Epirus had a profound understanding of the debasement that the Latins inflicted upon Constantinople. He had long argued for their expulsion and was greatly frustrated by Caius' inability to respond. He watched with pleasure as Byzantine mortals became enraged with the foreigners, and the threat of riots loomed. It was his duty to quell the madness, but he instead allowed it to engulf the city.

At his trial during the Eighth Council, Epirus showed no regrets. Indeed, he called on his fellows to support his actions and strike at the Latins once more. Those in attendance say that he seemed to expect a receptive audience among his fellow Ventrue and appeared betrayed when the Quaesitors and the whole Antonian hierarchy voted for his destruction. Epirus implied that he had been ordered to instigate the riots, but was put to the torch before he could reveal who had given the order. Most believe the claim was nothing but a desperate attempt to deflect blame from himself.

homes and churches. A number of atrocities were committed, including an assault on the Hospital of St. John and the slaughter of every patient therein. That night, hundreds of foreigners and virtually all Latin vampires met their deaths. The only survivor was Gabriella, the Lasombra envoy from Genoa, who petitioned the Tzimisce Symeon to protect her and her mortal protégé Lillian. Lillian would go on to become Symeon's lover.

As the ashes cooled, the ruling Cainites of Constantinople tried to find those responsible for the riots, and so the Eighth Council was convened. Left with no other choice, Caius and the other family heads allowed Narses and his Lasombra childer admittance to the council and occasion to voice their concerns. To satisfy the Venetians, Caius was forced to deliver scapegoats to the Western vampires. Tribonius, head of the Lexor Brujah, and Caius' own childe Epirus — both charged with overseeing

BYZANTINE CHRONOLOGY

A.D. 1143 Emperor John II Comnenus, on campaign in Asia Minor, is killed by the Assamite Shabah.

A.D. 1143-1182 Latin influence mounts under Emperor Manuel Comnenus.

A.D. 1153 Ducas Embraces former princess Anna Comnena.

A.D. 1185 Riots targeting Latin residents break out in Constantinople. All Latin Cainites in the city are destroyed save for the Genoese Lasombra Gabriella and her mortal protégé Lillian, who are sheltered by Symeon. The Eighth Council is held and the Ventrue Epirus and Brujah Tribonius are destroyed.

CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT



mortal affairs — were found guilty of instigating the riot and were executed as traitors.

Narses demanded Caius' personal apology and petitioned that Constantinople's Latin Quarter be ruled by Latins alone. Reluctantly, the council ruled in his favor, forever changing the political climate of the city. The Trinity of families no longer controlled or had any right to the Latin Quarter, which became exempt from the Codex of Legacies. Narses' childe Bishop Alfonzo arrived soon thereafter to claim lordship of the enclave.

This, however, was only the beginning of new problems for Byzantine Cainites. The sack of Thessalonika and the recent upheavals in the wake of the Second and Third Crusades resulted in large numbers of vampires being uprooted from their homes. Many of these refugees flocked to Constantinople in search of shelter. Having no right to remain in the city, these Carrion, as they came to be called, settled in the squalor of the Latin districts, which

led to a problem of epidemic overpopulation. From the West came Basil of Thessalonika (the Ventrue prefect of the region), and a circle of Caitiff Gehenna cultists known as the Chosen of Calomena which was led by the charismatic prophet Stanislav. Achmet the Dreamer also gained a star disciple in the Tremere renegade Theresa Kymena. From the East came the Nosferatu Knight of St. Ladre and Fra' Raymond, along with his brood of lepers from the Crusader States. And, finally, there came the Assamite envoy Shabah.

THE PRESENT (A.D. 1197)

The city of Constantinople teeters on the edge of destruction. A great maelstrom threatens to devour it whole, throwing it and the Dream into ruin. As far as the kine know, the city and empire are

BYZANTINE CHRONOLOGY

A.D. 1185-1197 Cainites from across Europe begin to arrive at Constantinople, crowding the Latin Quarter.

for inciting the riots; the Latin Quarter is made independent from the rule of the Trinity and is placed under the dominion of Bishop Alfonzo of Venice.

A.D. 1186

The Nosferatu Fra' Raymond and his brood arrive from the Crusader States and are hidden by the Malachite Nosferatu.

A.D. 1187

The Ventrue Basil of Thessalonika and the mad Caitiff prophet Stanislav arrive from the West.

in the hands of Alexius III Angelus, who rose to power by blinding his younger brother Isaac II. Alexius, the worst example of the Angelus dynasty to hold the throne since 1185, locks himself away in the imperial palace of Blachernae and hoards concubines and riches, caring nothing for his empire.

The Italian trading cities, sensing the emperor's weakness, busy themselves with acquiring greater and greater economic and political power. They have recently been granted complete control over the imperial navy. Loyal subjects recognize the collapse of their beloved home and either sink into depression or lash out in anger. Incidents of vandalism and violence are on the rise, and Latins in particular have learned it is no longer safe to wander Byzantine streets without guards — be it day or night.

Among the Cainites, the situation is, if anything, worse. No leader seems ready to rise to the challenge of these trying times. Michael the Patriarch is completely lost in his delusions of divinity, and almost all of his Toreador seem to have followed him into madness. The Ventrue, historically those who guide the city out of political turmoil, are equally without direction. The Basileus Caius is paralyzed by his desire to be at Michael's side and is unable to assert himself over the rival factions in his family. Without his leadership, each Ventrue struggles to gain advantage over the others, and so the family grows further entangled in intrigue and secrecy. Even the Tzimisce, long united in their pursuit of mystical knowledge and spiritual enlightenment, are divided. Gesu, in a moment of religious

vision, has Embraced Symeon's lover Lillian and melded her to himself, forever destroying the bond with his brother. Meanwhile, Symeon's child Myca Vykos works with members of the Setite family to exploit Byzantium's confusion for personal gain.

Constantinople's Cainites can ill afford the collapse of their leadership, threatened as they are by enemies on all fronts. Since the Eighth Council, the Latin Quarter along the Golden Horn has formed an independent enclave in the city. From there the Venetian Bishop Alfonzo works night after night to strip his hosts of the economic and political resources they need to maintain their Dream, while his sire Narses, from his haven in Venice, watches approvingly.

Deeper in the cramped streets of the Latin Quarter, other enemies breed. The most dangerous are the Chosen of Calomena. These mad cultists call for the destruction of all Cainites and have found willing followers among the mortals of the city and the most hopeless of vampires. Formerly limited to the Latin Quarter, the Chosen now exist across the city. More subtle still, the shrouded hand of the Inconnu grips the city's throat. Acting through hidden agents at the heart of the most powerful families, these ancient lords of Rome work to destroy Byzantium for the crime of surpassing their achievements.

Some hopeful elements have emerged from this bleak picture, however. Three prominent scion families — the Baron's Gangrel, the Malachite Nosferatu and the Lexor Brujah — have banded together in an effort to defend the Dream. Acting in secret to avoid the ire of the dominant



CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

BLOOD CULTS

The crowded conditions of the Latin Quarter make for a rich breeding ground for the worship of the childer of Caine. The many vampires arriving in the ports — attracted by the glory that was once Byzantium — are easily influenced by the aura of religious fervor that Gesu's vampiric monasticism and Michael's delusions of angelic power lend the city. Feeding on the hopelessness of the poor mortals around them, these newcomers set themselves up as saints and gods, distributing potent drops of vitae in exchange for total submission. These cults, usually comprising a half-dozen worshippers, were originally the handiwork of the Children of Judas (the Setite brood of Khay'tall). The Serpents, however, have recently been driven out of the Latin Quarter in a series of assaults, apparently perpetuated by Bishop Alfonzo's agents. The cults have since been taken up by Latins to secure stable supplies of vitae and to satisfy needs for worship. The Setites, of course, have not abandoned their ways, and cults are spreading throughout the Byzantine city.

The Chosen of Calomena, the Caitiff followers of Stanislav the Prophet, have also established a network of blood cults among Byzantine and Latin mortals. The Chosen consider themselves the emissaries of Calomena, an avenging creature that will purge the world of the vile childer of Caine. As such, they instruct mortal followers in the ways of their mistress and teach them to destroy Cainites. Bishop Alfonzo discovered just how dangerous this practice could be in A.D. 1196, when his childer Juliano and Maria were destroyed by mortal followers of the Chosen. Although Alfonzo has ordered Stanislav and his brood out of the Latin Quarter, few believe their influence can be so easily neutralized.

families, this "Covenant of Three" searches out those willing to work to preserve their home. The Malachite have also opened their havens to their St. Ladre clanmates, forging a spirit of clan alliance that is quite alien to Byzantium. And, Abetorius, an envoy of the Tremere, has recently appeared and may bring added power to Byzantine Cainites. No family

is completely devoid of these elements of renewal, but it remains to be seen whether they can act before the city collapses. Constantinople's future appears bleak indeed.

NIGHTS TO COME (A.D. 1198 AND ON)

In A.D. 1197 the hammer of destruction hangs over Constantinople. It will not be long before it falls. In only one year, Innocent III will rise to the Roman papacy, determined to launch a Fourth Crusade on the heels of the first three. Meanwhile, Alexius, son of the deposed Emperor Isaac II Angelus, will flee to Germany and then to Venice, where he will befriend the Doge. Pleading with the crusaders to help restore his father to the throne, he will pledge to make the Eastern Church subservient to the Western.

Enthusiasm will grow for a crusade aimed at the wealth of Egypt, only to be diverted by the Venetian Doge Enrico Dandolo, who is determined to save his lucrative trade routes along the Nile. The wealth of Constantinople will therefore become the true target of the crusade. To the Venetians,

THE FIRES OF GEHENNA

I had always feared that we would be destroyed by the Cainites of the West. But they did not seek our deaths, they merely wanted our power and wealth. No, our destruction would come from mortals.

Fanaticism and delusion had stalked the city streets for a decade, and these horrors reared their heads during the sack of the city. Maddened by the damned Children of Calomena, by the rapacious Venetians and by their own domination, the children of Seth struck out with fire. We all awoke surrounded by the bane of our kind as the conflagration razed our works to the ground.

Those who escaped did so through pure chance. No greatness, power or skill could have protected us. The nights when we can take the mortal world for granted, when the fear of our kind will keep them docile, are coming to an end. I see a time of retribution coming.

— From the writings of Anna Comnena, from her shelter in Nicea (A.D. 1259)

BYZANTINE CHRONOLOGY

A.D. 1188	The Assamite Shabah arrives as an ambassador from Alamut.	A.D. 1195	Alexius III Angelus becomes emperor by blinding and deposing his brother Isaac II.
A.D. 1190	Theresa Kymena, a rogue Tremere, arrives to study with Achmet.	A.D. 1196	Lillian, now Symeon's lover, is Embraced by Gesu.
A.D. 1193	The Brujah, Gangrel and Nosferatu of the city form the Covenant of Three to defend it.	A.D. 1197	Gabriella of Genoa is kidnapped by Shabah. (The year 1197 is considered "present day.")



Q.

CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

Constantinople represents their only competition for mastery of the Eastern Mediterranean, while the crusaders will not have forgiven differences over distributions of wealth, lands and military support in the previous crusades.

In 1203 the Western army will defeat Byzantine forces, deposing Isaac's brother and placing Alexius IV as the new emperor. For the remainder of that year, Alexius will rule but be unable to keep his promises to the crusaders. To make things worse, the citizens of Constantinople, led by monks, will revolt against the crusaders and depose Alexius. The crusaders, using the riots as an excuse, will take the city in April of 1204. In the madness of pillaging, a fire will be lit and the city will burn for eight days. The wealth and glory that was Byzantium will be stripped by Latin greed or consumed by ravenous flames. The dreams of those who guided the city will fall into ruins and for 60 years Latin emperors will rule the city.

Three separate contenders to the Greek imperial throne will emerge during the exodus from Constantinople, but it is finally Michael Palaeologus who will come out of his territories in Anatolian Nicea to reconquer the city. Yet the burning of Constantinople will have torn out the heart of the empire and all momentum will flounder. Michael will sell his Church to the West and be branded a heretic and traitor, while his successors will reclaim Orthodoxy but see their territories shrink.

A new group of Turks, called Ottomans, will rise in the East. A cultural revival will hit the shrinking empire in the 14th century, but it will be but a beautiful dance performed on the way to the abattoir. The Ottomans will eventually dismember the empire, taking eastern and western provinces alike. The survivors will beg for assistance from their Christian brothers, but it will be fleeting and ineffective. In the end, the greatest Christian empire ever seen will vanish.

BYZANTINE CHRONOLOGY

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|-----------|---|
| A.D. 1198 | Innocent III becomes Pope and calls for a Fourth Crusade. |
| A.D. 1202 | Crusaders gather in Venice and are greeted by Isaac II's son Alexius, who requests their aid in becoming emperor. The Venetians support his efforts in exchange for promises of riches. |

ALTERNATE HISTORIES

I wonder at times what the world would have become had not the flame of the Fourth Crusade burned our Dream to ash. Perhaps, had we been more united, had we found the dynamic forces within ourselves to break the habits of centuries, we could have managed the crisis as we had others. The Latin conquest might not have been stopped, but the senseless destruction could have been avoided.

In my most lucid moments I realize that in the end it would not have made a great difference. Surely we would have fallen to the Ottomans regardless of the burning — perhaps a year later, perhaps not. Yet, in rare moments of optimism and hope, I wonder. Could we not have recaptured the initiative by deflecting the Venetians? Could we not have learned to manage our resources better and taken advantage of the inevitable chaos rather than fall victim to it? Might not Constantinople still stand this night?

— Gregory the Ancient, A.D. 1921

The legacy of New Rome will touch all childer of Caine. The Iconoclast movement among the Ventrue will find its echo in the Masquerade of the Camarilla. The rage and spirituality of the young will rise anew during the Anarch Revolt and the formation of the Sabbat. The Fourth Crusade will mark the maturation of the Inconnu. The jealous ancients of Rome will be consumed by the guilt of having destroyed the only true successor to their dream. Their own power games will have destroyed what they found most beautiful, and they will retreat from material concerns and seek redemption in the search for Golconda.

The destruction of A.D. 1204 will haunt the childer of Caine until Gehenna silences all regrets.

BYZANTINE CHRONOLOGY

- A.D. 1203 The crusaders conquer Constantinople and place Alexius IV as emperor.
- A.D. 1204 The people of Constantinople revolt and the crusaders sack the city, starting a fire that burns for eight days. The Byzantine Empire is torn asunder and divided among the crusaders.







Chapter Three: Geography

Constantinople: More Than Its Less

Introduction

Constantinople is considered the premier city of Europe and the Middle East. To the ignorant farmer or knight, Constantinople is a rich state whose cobblestones are chiseled from gold and whose stars are cut from gems. While this amazing vision is hyperbolic, Constantinople is opulent nonetheless, much more so than any European stronghold.

Located at the tip of a peninsula, Constantinople is bordered by the Golden Horn harbor to the north, the Bosphorus to the east and the Propontis Sea (also known as the Marmora) to the south. The Bosphorus links the Pontus Eurinus (what will later be called the Black Sea) to the Sea of Marmora. The city is in a prime location as a nexus of trade routes, yet its locale is also a curse: the city and its empire are pitted between European and Islamic armies and sometimes have to contend with both.

The city covers 1,800 hectares of land between the tip of its peninsula and the Great Walls of Theodosius II, its main battlements. These natural defenses and fortifications enclose enough territory to allow the city to expand significantly yet comfortably. Constantinople is already monumental in stature, with an estimated one million people living within its walls.

Most buildings and homes are located along the two main coastlines and in the eastern half of the peninsula. The inhabitants have always prided themselves on being the inheritors of Rome's legacy, and have emulated much of that city's style and architecture. Like Rome, Constantinople is divided into 14 districts, and supposedly like its predecessor the city is built on seven hills. Only three of them, however, are impressive enough to be called such. The First Hill is crowned by the ruins of the city's Acropolis. The Third Hill is a nest for slums. The Fifth Hill lies on the northern slope of the Lycus Valley.

For the layout of the city and its districts, see the city map in the back of the book.

ARCHITECTURE AND ART LEXICON

Ambulatory: The covered walk of a cloister.

Apse: A vaulted recess in a church.

Ashlar: Evenly laid square-stone masonry.

Basilica: Originally, a Roman government building. The term later came to describe a rectangular Byzantine church with a set of three aisles separated by columns.

Breccia: A stone formed when angular rocks merge.

Capital: The uppermost portion of a column, usually highly ornate.

Cistern: A reservoir for storing water.

Colonnade: A row of columns.

Fresco: A painting made using water-ground colors on a moist plaster surface.

Frieze: A band of sculpted designs, patterns and letters on the walls of a room.

Gymnasium: A school.

Icon: The image of a religious figure painted upon a wood or ivory surface.

Mother-of-Pearl: The hard interior of certain mollusk shells that reflects a spectrum of different colors.

Narthex: The outer porch of a church.

Nave: The center aisle of three in a basilica.

Palaestra: An exercise yard, usually attached to a gymnasium.

Peristyle: A colonnade surrounding either an open courtyard or a building.

Porphyry: A hard purple-red stone with tiny crystals inset.

Portico: An adjoining structure to a building, featuring a roof and supporting columns.

DISTRICT OF HEBDOMON

Jucendiae Palace, Military Training Fields

There was a time when the old saying held true and all roads did lead to Rome. When the great legacy of Romulus collapsed, however, Rome's precious highways fell into disrepair across barbaric Europe. Yet, as one ventured east, some roads were found to be maintained and still are in the 12th century. Such is

the case for the Egnatian Way, a flagstone road that leads through the royal district of Hebdomon and up to the Golden Gate of Constantinople.

Located three miles from the Golden Gate and seven miles from the center of Constantinople, the district of Hebdomon is still considered part of the city. Unofficially, it is associated with Region 14 and Blachernae Palace, the garden residence of the imperial family. Otherwise, Hebdomon is well outside the city and self-sufficient, with its own crop fields, military barracks, churches and dwellings. The district is serviced by its own port, the Harbor of Hebdomon, less than a mile to the east of the suburb.

JUCENDIAE PALACE AND THE MILITARY TRAINING FIELDS

Hebdomon's suburb is more important than the city's others because it includes the Jucendiae Palace, an imperial retreat, and the oldest church of the region, St. John the Evangelist. The palace also serves as a military headquarters (the meadows north of the Egnatian Way are used for training and exercising troops) and as a temporary refuge for the city's populace when earthquakes strike. Several emperors were even crowned upon the fields of Hebdomon before the ceremony was officially moved to the more spectacular Hippodrome arena.

Jucendiae Palace, lacking in very little, is a three-story structure that is adorned with a marble veneer. Its entrance, flanked by a row of two-story columns that support an elevated balcony and garden, is constantly under the watch of well-armed guards. The palace exterior is marked with high-arching windows and balconies that offer advantageous views of the surrounding gardens, the countryside and the Marmora shoreline to the south. Hidden well behind the palace are the servants' quarters, a granary, stables, animal sties and a private cemetery.

Jucendiae is mainly used by mortal members of the imperial family during the summer months. Although Cainites rarely venture here, certain members of the Michaelite family are known to go Jucendiae to escape the hectic pace of city life. Petronius, the current leader of the Toreador, has been visiting the palace often of late, in order to escape the pressures of his obligations.

ENTERING CONSTANTINOPLE

Industrial Quarter, Walls of Theodosius II

The greatest battlements in Europe seal Constantinople behind five miles of stone and moat. Visible from several leagues inland, the nighttime fires of the city blaze into the sky, contrasted by the pitch-black emptiness of the surrounding seas. A scant mile from the city, however, all vanishes behind the imposing facade of the city's fortifications.

The Egnatian Way leads from Hebdomon right through the city's industrial quarter, which is located just outside Constantinople's famed Golden Gate. The scenery along the Egnatian consists of one-room farms with small cultivated fields, orchards and small groves of trees. Closer to



Constantinople's battlements huddle small collections of homes: structures whose walls are painted white, light blue or pale yellow. Lazy curls of smoke and glimmers of candlelight that escape from between the cracks of small shuttered windows are the only signs of nocturnal life within these buildings. Most residing in these homes are laborers in the nearby fields or workers in the industrial quarter.

INDUSTRIAL QUARTER

The industrial quarter, located outside the Golden Gate, poisons the air with a noxious mixture of fumes from acids, dyes and raw animal hides that lie decaying in piles behind the tanneries. It is this pungent aroma, foul even by medieval standards, that isolates the quarter from the rest of the city. Filled with one- and two-story businesses, this quarter holds butcher and tanner shops, glaziers, smithies and dye shops. Most of the shops have adjoining homes where the businessmen and their families reside.

Smoke and other vapors literally hang in the air, clouding the day with a grayish haze and sometimes burning the eyes of unprotected travelers. Although many workers cover their faces with rags, they can still be heard coughing and hacking; lung ailments will surely claim their lives within a few years. On both sides of the Egnatian Way run trenches that are filled with waste and run-off from the quarter's industries, but the smell from these ditches pales in comparison to that of the tanneries.

THE WALLS OF THEODOSIUS II

Beyond the industrial quarter stretch the Walls of Theodosius II, double-line battlements with a moat. The moat is encountered first. It is a snake of water that runs the length of the fortifications, and it is sectioned off in various spots by dam walls that stop water from spilling down to such low-lying areas as the Lycus River basin. Wide at the base, the dam walls taper toward the top to prevent enemy soldiers from gaining proper footing and crossing the moat.

Beyond the moat runs a series of open terraces and low walls, used to shield defending troops. These walls end at the city's great battlements. Thirty feet high, 13 to 15 feet thick, and lined with 96 monolithic towers, these defensive walls stretch across the five miles of the peninsula. Their towers, rising 60 feet into the sky, are also used as sleeping quarters for guards and soldiers who return from patrol and are too tired to ride the three miles to Constantinople or Hebdomon.

The battlements themselves are lined with 10 civilian and military gates, and the main entrance to Constantinople is the famed Golden Gate, located close to the Marmora. The outer wall entrance is a simple archway with glittering double doors that are flanked by two Roman columns.

Dwarfed by high walls and two towers constructed of marble blocks, the terrace between the inner and outer gates is decorated with statues and sculptures. Included are several Orthodox crosses, statues of various emperors (and one of a

crowned woman that represents Constantinople's fortune), four bronze elephants and the traditional Roman eagle which is set upon the northern tower.

The inner wall entrance consists of three archways, the central being the largest. Each of these is flanked by Roman columns and is adorned with gold. Every night, guards along the battlements can be heard calling out to one another, trying to keep each other awake.

EXOKIONION: THE LYCUS VALE

Cistern of Aspar, Cistern of Bonus, Cistern of Mokius, Citadel of Petrion, Monastery of St. John Studius, Walls of Constantine

Inside the Golden Gate, the Egnatian Way becomes the Mese, Constantinople's main boulevard. Most of the city, per Roman tradition, is divided into numbered regions (1 to 14). The region known as Exokionion, however, has always been regarded as an outside district, despite its presence within the city walls. It has never been numbered. The reason for this dates back to the proclamation of Christianity as the city's official religion, and the Church's sanctioning of the Exokionion as a place for the Greek population to practice their "heretical religion."

Over the last few centuries, the area has become home to a small number of rich citizens.

The valley in which Exokionion is located descends toward the Lycus River, northeast of the Golden Gate. The terrain rises

sharply beyond the river, forming the city's Fifth Hill where a second branch of the Mese is located. The valley is bordered by the old Walls of Constantine to the east and the Great Walls of Theodosius II to the west. Along the Mese, very few structures mar the beautiful landscape of the Lycus Valley. Proud and fashionable villas, churches with elaborate Byzantine crosses, and walled-in monasteries with cultivated fields dot the land. Otherwise, the valley is dominated by sweeping plains of wild grass and rocky outcroppings.

While the northern side of the valley — the Fifth Hill — is the coolest spot in the city, its terrain is also the roughest and steepest in all of Constantinople. The climb can often rob people of their breath, but the hill is often visited by affluent citizens seeking relief in the hot summer months. During the day and early evening, people can be found dining on the grassy stretches of the vale, accompanied by entourages of attendants who cater to their needs.

Beneath the grassy fields runs a series of aqueducts and subterranean passages — military tunnels that connect the Great Walls of Theodosius II and the city itself, and are used for communication. At the city, these tunnels fan outward like veins in the city's underbelly. The Baron's Gangrel, loyal to the Obertus Tzimisce, use these passageways to reach both the Tzimisce monasteries of Christ Pantokrator and St. John Studius, in order to ferry books from the Obertus' extensive library to safety outside the city.



CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

ROMAN VILLAS OF EXOKIONION

The large private villas for which Exokionion is known occupy the area along the southern Mese and are based entirely on Roman design. Their exteriors are painted with single solid colors — usually brick-red, light-blue, dull-yellow or white — and are adorned with sloped, red-tiled roofs, small windows and covered porticos at the front, back and sometimes sides of the houses. Each room leads directly to another through doors or open archways, and almost every chamber has an exit that leads outside. Even stairways leading to second stories are only accessible from the outside.

The chambers of some villas are built around atriums — open spaces in the centers of houses, which serve as gardens, pools or even secondary dining rooms. These areas are surrounded by porticos on all four sides, and the roofs are sloped to the outside to prevent rainwater from cascading into the atriums.

THE TWO MESES

Beginning at the Forum of Augustaion near the eastern edge of the peninsula, the Mese runs west just past the Forum of Theodosius, where it splits into two streets. (The initial portion of the Mese is discussed below.) The first street continues northwest to the Gate of Polyandriion, the southern follows the coast of the Marmora.

After the split, both Meses are lined with porticos known as the Trojan walls — row upon row of columns, some unaffected by time, others worn from neglect, broken in earthquakes or scorched by flames. The northwest Mese runs past several landmarks, including the exposed Aqueduct of Valens, the Church of the Holy Apostles and the Cistern of Aspar. Within view of the southern Mese are the steep sea bulwarks of the Marmora, fortifications that end where the sea begins.

Though most of the narrow shore between the battlements and sea is rocky, the beach near the Gate of Psamathia is sandy. Nomadic Ravnos smuggle themselves into the city through this relatively quiet and secluded portion of the coastline, where boats can beach safely.

CISTERNS OF CONSTANTINOPLE

At one time the need for water within the city precipitated the construction of elaborate underground aqueducts and cisterns. Most were covered, either hidden underground or within buildings, to shield them from the night's vapors (thought responsible for the transmission of disease). Eighty cisterns provided a more-than-ample supply of water, and some were turned into gardens after their roofs were exposed by earthquakes.

The sunken Cistern of Mokius, one unfortunate structure with roof still largely intact, is now abandoned. Portions of the 30-foot ceiling and collapsed columns litter the floor, and weeds

grow through cracks in the mortar floor. A single hole in the roof passes a shaft of light during the day — the only source of illumination within this shielded chamber — but the columns prevent the light from piercing the deepest regions of the Mokius. The cistern's darkness makes it an ideal refuge for vampires; a variety of Cainites use it for revelry and debauchery. Blood feasts, death duels, rapes and other reprehensible acts have been committed in the Cistern of Mokius.

Two major above-ground cisterns are located on the northern slope of the Lycus Vale: Aspar on the northern Mese, and Bonus further east. Aspar, a raised-block structure with an overhanging sloped roof that is supported by columns, is still in fine condition and constantly filled with water. Bonus was turned into a vegetable garden by the clergy of the nearby Church of St. John after an earthquake robbed the cistern of its roof and supporting columns.

CITADEL OF PETRION

The northern slope of the vale is under the dominion of the Baron's Gangrel. Only other Byzantine Cainite families are allowed safe passage through here; Latin Cainites are usually attacked despite any pretenses of family status. The Baron's Gangrel sequester themselves within the Citadel of Petriion on the Golden Horn Wall, controlling both its gate and adjoining quay.

Sealed away from the rest of the city by fortress walls, Petriion is an ancient castle that holds a commanding view of Exokionion and the Golden Horn. Though under the care of the Baron's Gangrel, it looks abandoned and abused. Six 30-foot towers, broken and encrusted by an overgrowth of vines and plants, straddle its walls. The citadel and its adjoining buildings are in a similar condition; weeds have broken the surface of the stone courtyard, creeping vines have taken root on building walls, and lichen colors everything a deep green. Hunting dogs roam the interior of Petriion, and the smell of animal offal, blood and innards fouls the air.

THE MONASTERY OF ST. JOHN STUDIUS

The most impressive of the holy buildings in Exokionion is the Monastery of St. John Studius, which is tended by its Akoimetai, or Sleepless Monks. Within is the University of Constantinople, a seat of high learning and knowledge compiled from the philosophers of Greece, mathematicians and astronomers of Islam, artists and calligraphers of Byzantium and lawmakers of Rome. It is an enclave of thinkers and great minds; a place where Byzantine Cainites can research information, debate topics with learned teachers, and find promising students who deserve the Embrace. The university was also a bastion for the veneration of icons during the Iconoclastic period and is still home to the monastic order that is loyal to the Tzimisce Gesu. While Gesu has closed off the monastery and Church of St. John Studius to outsiders, the adjoining buildings of the university, including its dormitories, have been left open to other Cainites.

The church was completed in A.D. 463 and dedicated to St. John the Baptist. It was built in basilica style (a rectangular building with three aisles separated by columns that lead to an apse at the rear of the church). The outside walls are made of ashlar and brick, the columns within of green breccia with white floral capitals, and the windows on both levels are framed in marble. The interior walls are sheathed in multicolored marble, as are the surrounding sculpted friezes. Attached to the church is a women's gymnasium and palaestra.

THE CENTRAL MESE

Forum of Augustaion, Forum of Constantine, Forum of Theodosius, House of Lamps, Milion

Although not a region unto itself, the central Mese has special significance. If city life revolves around the Hippodrome and Great Palace, like the two wheels of a chariot, the Mese is their axle. If Constantinople were strictly a mortal city, its human vendors would pack up their belongings every evening and sequester themselves in their homes at night. However, the city's undead quietly enthrall the citizens, keeping them awake and active. At 10 o'clock in the evening, one can meet a dozen Cainites along the city's central Mese. The clepsydra, the great water-clock of nearby Hagia Sophia, announces the time to all.

At the head of the central Mese is the Milion, or milepost, from which all distances within the empire are marked. The structure is double-arched, with a cupola resting upon four arches. Atop the cupola are statues of St. Constantine and St. Helena, the latter holding a cross turned toward Hagia Sophia. The Mese, from here down to the Forum of Theodosius, is lined with double-tiered porticoes that are supported by wide columns. In the shadow of the Milion, vendors display their wares, merchants hawk their goods and black-veined marble lions keep eternal vigil.

When evening falls, normal merchandise is often packed away in favor of curios and exotica. Many of the Mese's "night vendors," anticipating the nature of their customers, endeavor to procure strange, occult and wondrous items from around the world. Wares from India or even distant Cathay can occasionally be found on the Mese at night, and more than one ambitious Cainite has discovered a relic from the nights of the Ancients.

The roofs of the porticoes are adorned with a plethora of statues, walks and pleasant Roman terraces for those who want to avoid the bustle of the crowds. Here, commanding views of Constantinople capture the eye. The area's hilly terrain, lush greenery, breathtaking architecture and three borders of water attract lovers, thinkers and artists alike. While the marketplace crowd dwindles toward evening, people can still be found on the terraces, some walking in the night, others gathering to debate the issues of the day. The children of Caine mingle among both groups.

FORUM OF AUGUSTAION

Constantinople's central Mese begins at the Bronze Gate at the Forum of Augustaion. The forum was founded in honor of Constantine's mother Helena, whose statue is displayed

upon a porphyry column. Vendors of perfumes and fragrances do business near the palace so that they may scent the air with their wares. The forum's interior is surrounded by porticoes, underneath which columns and statues alternate in ranks. Images of Belisarius, Justinian, Theodosius II, Basil II, Alexius and many more stand prominently.

The western corner of the Forum of Augustaion is occupied by the baths of Zeuxippos. This domed establishment, adorned with festive frescoes and bright murals, caters to the nearby Senate Basilica and Hippodrome.

FORUM OF CONSTANTINE

Between the forums of Augustaion and Constantine, the Mese is crowded with dealers of meats, oils, poultry, butter, salt, flour, cheeses, vegetables and honey. Each of the two entrances to the Forum of Constantine consists of a marble archway. The forum's interior, oval and paved with large stones, is filled with vendors' stalls.

The section of street beyond the Forum of Constantine is well known for its clothing merchants, tailors and cobblers. Silk and cotton finery can be found in the shade along this stretch of the Mese. Also located here is the infamous House of Lamps.

HOUSE OF LAMPS

This one-story building, with one door to the Mese and another leading to the Grand Bazaar between the Second and Third Hills, is a frightening place. Lamps of various makes, materials and sizes can be found within. Despite the low fires that burn here, darkness seems to pervade the place, hiding corners and deepening shadows. The smoke that dances off candles almost seems to whisper in vampires' ears, and the smell of incense stays in the nostrils for days. Mortals do not seem to notice any of this, but Cainites do, and they fear it. Any vampire who has ever broken into the house has vanished, and whenever the house has burned down, the city has followed suit. Cainites have understandably left the place unmolested for several decades.

FORUM OF THEODOSIUS

The charm and mystique of the Mese dies at the Forum of Theodosius, where sheep and pigs are sold. Surrounded by colonnades, the center of the square-shaped forum is adorned by a golden statue of Theodosius. Further west, the Mese splits at the Capital Column.

THE UNDERGROUND WORLD

Constantinople's underground realm, one of the few regions not designed for the likes of humanity, is used by the Nosferatu of St. Ladre, a large group of Cainites and ghouls that resides in the city illegally. The underground is the group's kingdom and consists of three networks: tunnels, sewers and aqueducts (with their adjoining cisterns). This network is located primarily around the Great Walls of Theodosius II.

The Baron's Gangrel and Obertus Tzimisce have built more tunnels beneath the Lycus Vale, and these have remained the providence of the two families. Cut into solid rock, the families'

CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

LAYLA MADEER

The enigmatic owner of the House of Lamps is a mage who has lived beyond her years through loyal service to the Decani, an order of 36 demons of disease. Born in Alexandria, Layla was the wife of an Egyptian trader named Jiy'al who brought grains to Constantinople for trade. Having made several allies within the city, Layla's husband moved to the capital to open shop as a grain merchant. He promised that he would send for his wife later. When Jiy'al vanished and his brother sought to learn his fate, Layla managed to convince her brother-in-law to take her along. After several months in Constantinople, the two discovered that Jiy'al had become a slave to his own vices and was now a thrall to people he called Setites.

When Jiy'al revealed his fate, Setites ambushed the three and the two brothers died. Layla's saving grace was the awakening of her Avatar, and the glowing corona of light that surrounded her. Though the display of power was minor, it was enough to send the frightened Setites scrambling and gave her the chance to escape into the night.

Spending her next few days hidden, Layla eventually came upon the House of Lamps and felt a power beckoning from within. That's when she met Azzatti, a mage like herself and owner of the shop. He introduced her to her Awakened nature and to his dark masters. Ever since then, Layla has lived in the House of Lamps as a Nephandus — a demon-mage.

When Azzatti died, Layla became owner of the shop and has defended it well. She is currently 140 years old and the fifth Nephandus to take ownership of the store. The House of Lamps is important because a Node lies beneath it — a source of power for magi — and the place is a Nephandus portal to the spirit realm.

Layla has recently taken in the Baali known as Mary the Black, and is using her in an attempt to learn more about Cainites. Mary, however, is proving to be a powerful individual, and is enrapturing Layla with her own dark nature.



underground tunnels are fortified by wooden beams and are barely a shoulderbreadth in width. The ceilings are low, forcing an adult to hunch over as she walks. The Baron's Gangrel and Obertus Tzimisce have taken to sending ghoulish children and animals as messengers through the network.

Those tunnels that fall under the auspices of the Nosferatu are secret passages that connect the various villas of the Great Palace to one another, and that connect the Hagia Sophia, Port of Bucoleon, Church of the Archangel Michael and the Hippodrome. These tunnels are large enough for two men to walk abreast and upright; the floors and walls are plastered and supported by brick piers.



The Nosferatu also claim the sewer system, even though it does not span the whole city. This system runs parallel to the Mese (up to the point where the street branches), and extends into the rich communities adjacent to the road. Thus the Nosferatu have sewer access to the Great Palace, areas along Ebolos Street, the districts of the Mangana, Mauras and Arcadius, and the outlying areas of Blachernae Palace, Petron and the villas of Exokionion. (In game terms, the Nosferatu can be where they need to be, when they need to be there.)

Constantinople's sewers are located below the network of aqueducts, to prevent sewage seeping into the water supply. The dark sewer tunnels are cramped and lined with filth-stained bricks. They are less than a yard high and are filled with water that carries waste to the Sea of Marmora. Most Nosferatu traveling through the sludge must do so on hand and knee, and must resist the stench that would fell most mortals. Only a handful, even among the Nosferatu, can stomach traveling through the sewers on a regular basis.

The last of the Nosferatu's passages consist of the aqueducts and cisterns. Built from interlinking ceramic pipes, the aqueducts are barely a yard in diameter and are filled with water and inky darkness. Those pipes that extend from outside the city, underneath the Great Walls of Theodosius II, are too narrow to allow passage. Traveling through the aqueducts is far more bearable than traveling through the sewers. The

constant rush of water allows the Nosferatu to slide through the pipes at a quick rate if they travel with the flow (from west to east). Those fighting the current can expect to double their travel time. For fear of spreading disease, only those Nosferatu not afflicted with leprosy (who include a handful of the St. Ladre Nosferatu and all three Malachite members) are allowed passage through the pipes.

The multitude of aqueducts, with the obvious exception of Valens, are subterranean and connect to over 80 cisterns. Nearly 70 of these reservoirs are also underground, while about half are either neglected or forgotten. All were built in a similar fashion, with a large central storage pool for water, supporting columns, and access holes in the ceiling to a number of aboveground wells. Cisterns that have been abandoned contain half-filled pools of dirty water, toppled columns, and the occasional animal-turned-Nosferatu-ghoul. A couple cisterns have collapsed completely or are on the verge of sinking into the earth. The Malachite have shown the St. Ladre Nosferatu which abandoned cisterns may be used without danger or fear of discovery.

Most Cainites have heard of the underground world, but only the Gangrel, Nosferatu and Tzimisce know of it in detail. Only the Nosferatu use it with any regularity, and even they whisper of half-glimpsed shapes in the depths. More than one subterranean Cainite has vanished.

BASILICA CISTERN

The largest reservoir in the aqueduct system is the Basilica Cistern, located directly under the Great Palace. Built with a roof as expansive as any church's (it is supported by over 300 columns that stand 40 feet tall), the Basilica measures 470 by 230 feet, holds 20,000,000 gallons of water and is attached to a number of local wells. The capitals used in its construction were scavenged from a basilica formerly located above the cistern.

The Basilica Cistern was originally built by Emperor Justinian as one of the reservoirs for the imperial palace, but has recently become a dumping ground for waste and corpses. Several St. Ladre Nosferatu secretly forage beneath its waters, feeding off corpses and growing more bestial by the night.

REGION 1

The Great Palace Complex, Harbor of Bucoleon, Seralio Lighthouse, Suburb of Arcadius, Suburb of Mangana

One of the oldest districts of Constantinople, Region 1 occupies the southeastern portion of the peninsula and rests on the slope of the city's First Hill. Most of its estates and buildings were designed for the imperial family, as alternatives to the Great Palace, but when the royal residence moved to Blachernae, Region 1 became the center of Byzantine vampiric life.

THE GREAT PALACE

The southwestern slope of the First Hill is dominated by the haphazardly designed Great Palace. Full of villas, gardens, baths, fountains, courts, churches, halls (500 or so), golden domes, high towers and royal apartments, it is an impressive display of poor planning. Every potentate who ruled the city before the Comneni added to the palace with little regard to an overall scheme. Courts and gardens link buildings, annexes of all sizes crazily jut from palaces, and various halls and passages connect estates in a mad spider web.

The Great Palace is a motley of architectural styles. But despite its seemingly random agglomeration of structures, it is still breathtaking. Royal villas stand proudly amid gardens of colored flowers and carefully tended lawns. Numerous groves of trees, meticulously groomed and primped, hide a maze of cobblestone paths. Fountains bearing angels and saints with distinctive Roman appearance adorn small parks, while large ponds are populated by bright fish.

Michaelite Toreador, Antonian Ventrue and Lexor Brujah have all been known to frequent the gardens, walking its winding paths and losing themselves in thought.

Although the royal residence has now moved to Blachernae, the estates of the Great Palace are still well maintained and are the center of unlife for Cainites. Vampires, especially the Antonian Ventrue, hold great sway over the maintenance and

habitation of the palace. The palace is ruled by Cainite law and everything within is subject to vampire approval. Whether the city outside crumbles or thrives, Trinity families' control of the Great Palace is supreme.

The entrance to the palace, the Chalce, is a gate-building that faces the Hippodrome. The interior of the Chalce, like that of most of the palace's villas and halls, is gilded in gold and white mother-of-pearl, sealed with bronze doors, sheathed with copper roof tiles, and draped with the richest silks of the Orient. It is the epitome of tasteful extravagance.

From the Chalce, a marble-floored vestibule and discreet archway leads to the quarters of the Hicanati Palace Guard. Beyond that lies the reception room and the doors to the Church of St. Savior's and the Triclinium. The latter is a large silk-draped banquet hall that contains a fountain with a centerpiece of four bronze horses, and enough beds to accommodate 300 guests for feasts. The Toreador Petronius throws blood feasts here in true Roman style, whenever he petitions the help of one faction or another. Indeed, some feasts are so lavish that the Trinity families are forced to rely on the help of Khay'tall's Scetites to procure slaves, victims and "entertainment" — an irony which the Heaven-fixated Toreador find alternately amusing and discomforting.

Further still lie gardens where peacocks and brightly plumed fowl strut, and where the Palace of Daphne rests, named after the statue of a nymph that lies in a small court before the entrance. Even farther in is the Sacred Palace, the emperor's own private apartment, now haven to the Ventrue leader Caius. The entrance to the palace is an enclosed peristyle courtyard that is lined with mosaics between granite colonnades. Beneath its sloped, copper-tiled roof, the Sacred Palace is built in classical Roman style, with balconies, flanking columns and marble veneer. Touches of Byzantine influence are evident, however, in the arches of the windows and porticoes that line the building.

KHIDRE, THE GREEN MAN

Far older than Constantinople itself, legends of Khidre, the Green Man, predate even Islam and Christianity. He is found in the *Book of Gilgamesh*, mentioned in the Koran and spoken of in stories as a vizier to a Persian prince who was granted eternal youth. To the Sufis, he is held as a patron saint and herald of revelation. His tales have already spread to Europe and influenced a number of festivals and poets (and could possibly be the inspiration for the as-yet-unwritten *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*).

Khidre is said to be a kind of fae creature who rides a gray horse through the forests of Anatolia, and is seen for only the briefest of moments. Recently, sightings of him have increased and several witnesses — including the Ravnos Gregory — have attested to seeing him in the gardens of the Great Palace, harrying his horse through the old groves.

Further still stands the Chrysotriclinium, a large marble building with an adjoining oratory and a massive octagonal chamber where Cainites hold gatherings and balls. The Ventrue hold social gatherings twice a week and invite all Byzantine vampires to attend.

To the northeast of the Sacred Palace stands the Palace of Magnaura, a residence filled with the fantastic mechanical toys of the Ravnos Gregory and his apprentice Zoe. Once used to house foreign ambassadors, dignitaries and monarchs, this palace is perhaps the most lavish of those on the estate. Within the three-story Roman villa are bronze-and-gold palm trees, wall panels made of obsidian and onyx, jade statues from the Orient and African ivory and furniture built from Lebanese cedar and Anatolian pine.

VENTRUE GATHERINGS

A palace gathering begins in the evening with an informal visit to the Chrysotriclinium's baths. Following this, Cainites soothe their dead flesh with massages and deep oil rubs performed by Ventrue ghouls. Guests then watch the Ventrue and their ghouls play a game of polo on the field near Bucoleon. After that, they are invited to the banquet hall for a feast during which they feed from mortals who have been intoxicated with various spirits and drugs. The feast lasts for a good portion of the night as events alternate between feeding and general conversation.

Following dinner, the crowd is entertained by Gregorius the Malkavian and his troupe of actors, Gregory the Ravnos who bedazzles all with one of his new mechanical creations, or by Petronius the Toreador who displays his skill and wit as a Roman satirist.

In the late night, guests pursue individual activities: throwing around a sheepgut ball, playing card and dice games, retiring to the baths, engaging in debates or enjoying the solitude of the gardens. Most deals and temporary alliances are forged at this time of night.

To the southwest is the Palace of the Bucoleon, two villas mounted atop the sea battlements that overlook a port of the same name. Marble stairs descend to the quay below and, as befits a royal port, it caters solely to dignitaries and the emperor himself. Protected from the violent winds of the sea, Bucoleon is made of marble and adorned with a menagerie of sculpted animals. The proudest of these works is a piece called the Bucoleon. It depicts a marble lion and bull engaged in a fierce battle. This sculpture reputedly holds great magical power. When a major disaster befalls Constantinople, the heads of the two animals purportedly turn to face the city.

East of the Bucoleon is a large polo field. A game of the elite, polo was played by the emperor and his entourage before they moved to Blachernae. The field, spectator benches and adjoining stables are still used, but by the Antonian Ventrue and their ghouls who acquired a taste for the sport by watching the imperial family. The field is lined with lanterns for playing at night.

CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

ARTIFACTS OF THE GREAT PALACE

Many of Constantinople's villas and palaces, though Roman in design, were built with adjoining oratories and churches. Thirty such houses of worship exist within the confines of the Great Palace, and some are made even more grand by the presence of Christian and Judaic artifacts (or at least, what are believed to be authentic artifacts; whether they are or not is another matter entirely). Although the imperial family has moved to Blachernae Palace near the Great Walls of Theodosius II, these relics remain behind, much to the consternation of the Cainites. On Michael the Patriarch's unyielding edict, these items are to remain where they are. The palace churches and oratories, though well maintained and guarded by martially trained ghouls, are abandoned and solitary places that few vampires visit. Their holy power keeps Cainites from these places.

Within the dark interior of St. Stephen's Church in the Palace of Daphne rests the leather-bound tome containing the gospels of St. Matthew, supposedly written by Barnabas. The yellow pages have not seen the light of day for several decades. The Oratory of St. Theodore, bright and luminescent, holds a seemingly innocuous piece of ancient gnarled wood that is out of place in the grandeur of its surroundings. The appearance of the Rod of Moses is deceiving, however, and many fear the day when someone will lay their hands on it and call forth the wrath of God.

The most lavishly decorated church of the Great Palace, Our Lady of the Pharos has an interior that glitters with precious stones, gold and silver, a tribute to daylight itself. Within the church's alcoves rest four artifacts that apparently witnessed the sufferings of Jesus Christ. The worn and ancient Lance of Passion, which may have pierced the side of the Messiah, rests upon a large rectangular pillow. The head of the lance is said to still gleam with fresh blood. The last Cainite who suggested sampling the vitae was ripped to shreds by the Methuselah Michael. Next is a simple gray iron nail that could be from the True Cross. The ugly spike rests in a case, not rusted or fettered by time. In another case lies a crown of thorns, apparently as green as the day it pierced the brow of Christ. In the last alcove stands a simple boulder: large, gray and heavy. It is supposedly the stone rolled away from the Holy Sepulcher when the Apostles came to the tomb of the Messiah. It is rumored that the servants who initially placed the massive stone in the church found it to be as light as a child.

Finally, in the Great Palace's "New Church" or Nea, the girdle and a portion of the mantle worn by the prophet Elijah can be found. Threadbare and aged, the artifacts bear the wounds of time with dignity.



ARCADIUS DISTRICT

To the northeast of the Great Palace enclosure — a 30-foot-high wall that surrounds the palace — lies the tiny and haunted district of Arcadius. When the suburb of the Mangana to the north was still a military district and the imperial family called the Great Palace home, the district of Arcadius was occupied by rich families and military officers who tried to garner the favor of the royal echelons. After the emperor moved to Blachernae, many families moved as well, leaving Arcadius sparsely populated.

Many villas now lie abandoned; only a few rich families remain. While the streets are paved and homes furnished to the extent of contemporary convenience, the abandoned buildings are dilapidated and worn. Property walls are eroded like old teeth, fallen plaster leaves houses skinned, windows are stripped of shutters and stare like hollow eyes, and gardens are hip-deep in long grass and weeds. As soon as the sun sets, Arcadius' few residents cover their windows and light fires to keep the predators away. At night, the Chosen of Calomena come out of the abandoned homes that serve as temporary havens and stalk the streets.

BATHS OF ARCADIUS

To the east of Arcadius, the Seraglio Lighthouse is kept lit, warning ships away from the rocky shore. Further along the sea wall is the massive two-story Baths of Arcadius. The baths' chambers are adorned with bright murals, flowery friezes, floor

mosaics and pine furniture. All the rooms, which can be accessed by doors that lead outside, are built around an open-air atrium. The rooms are dedicated to lie steam, mineral and cold baths, massage areas, private and public saunas, lavatories, dressing chambers, and a common room for relaxing and discourse with fellow patrons.

The baths are overseen by Nicephorus, the Ventrue Caesar Magister, and are open to all Byzantine Cainites. Although closed to the mortal populace after sunset, the waters of the baths are kept hot and the smell of mineral oils and salts still hangs in the air, enticing the night's denizens. Two hours before dawn, many vampires can still be found here, soaking in hot water to chase the chill from their ancient bones.

CHURCH OF ST. SAVIOR AND THE PALACE OF THE MANGANA

The Church of St. Savior, a structure of modest demeanor, contains a fountain that is reputed to heal the infirm. The Palace of the Mangana, a small royal villa with two-tiered porticoes on the facade, overlooks the church to the west. The palace serves no real function other than to house sick emperors while servants fetch them healing draughts from the nearby fountain.

In his sane years, Michael the Patriarch was known to retire here for lengthy periods to reflect upon his unlife. Following the death of his lover, the Ventrue Methuselah Antonius, Michael spent several months brooding within the palace walls.

REGION 2

Acropolis, Church of Irene, Hagia Sophia, Kynegion Amphitheatre, Orphanage of St. Paul, Senate Basilica, Seraglio Point, Street of Tzycanisterion

One of the oldest sections of the city, Region 2 dominates the First Hill and overlooks the Bosphorus and Marmora. Some centuries ago, the region was part of the military district and was well maintained by the emperor. More recently the military has moved to the Blachernae and Jucendiae Palaces, and the areas around the Acropolis and Seraglio Point are suffering from neglect. On the other hand, sites bordering Region 1, such as Hagia Sophia and the Senate Basilica, are still regarded as centers of mortal affairs.

Tzycanisterion Street, a main thoroughfare, winds from the walls of the Great Palace, past the Acropolis and through the military district of the Mangana. Its paved surface, though old, is well preserved.

ACROPOLIS AND ORPHANAGE OF ST. PAUL

Upon the apex of the First Hill rests the remains of the venerated Greek Acropolis. Once a proud monument to paganism, the Acropolis is now a mausoleum of shattered columns, skeletal walls, smashed altars, and ruined temples once dedicated to Zeus and Athena. Crumbling stairs lead to an expansive terrace that is cracked by age and weeds. Magnus, the leader of the Orthodox Lasombra, can sometimes be found here, walking among the ruins, remembering his past.

Close to the Acropolis, on its southwestern face, stands the Orphanage of St. Paul: a series of adjoining buildings that loom over an open courtyard. Devoid of columns and other dressings, this monastery is Spartan. It is sponsored by the monks of St. Paul, and the order sees to the well-being of Constantinople's forgotten children.

For centuries, St. Paul's was decreed off-limits on pain of Final Death by Michael the Patriarch. These nights, however, Michael's attention is elsewhere, and daring Cainites occasionally raid the orphanage for a midnight draught of sweet young vitae. Use of Dominate ensures that any disappearances are conveniently overlooked.

SENATE BASILICA

Bordering the Forum Augustaion's southern wall, the Senate Basilica serves as Constantinople's senate house. It is a white, rectangular building that features 20-foot double doors, ashlar walls that are adorned with stone relief panels, and two adjoining wings. The Lexor Brujah proudly hold court in the Senate Basilica, even though they realize it is nothing more than expensive housing for glorified bureaucrats whose decisions are tertiary to the will of the emperor and the whims of the military.

CHURCH OF HAGIA SOPHIA

To the north of the Basilica stands Constantinople's most identifiable landmark, the Church of Hagia Sophia. As the third hub of life in the city — following the Great Palace and the Hippodrome — it is a massive monument to the Orthodox



CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

Church and a reminder of the power of the imperial throne. A veritable fortress surmounted by a monumental dome, Hagia Sophia threatens to dwarf the very hill it rests upon.

Constructed in the classical form of a basilica-style church with an elongated nave, Hagia Sophia is an architectural masterpiece. Its giant dome seemingly defies gravity. The central bronze doors leading from the narthex into the church are used only by the emperor; everyone else must use the side doors. The interior — despite the multitude of rectangular alcoves, semicircular niches, and windowed arches that support the vaulted ceiling — is graced with a central core that is open from the ground floor to the dome above. The four piers of large brick that support the overhead structure are mortared with lead, while the dome is flanked by two semidomes and a vaulted ceiling.

Hagia Sophia shames many imperial villas in beauty and lavish design. The walls feature frescoes against gold backgrounds. Peloponnesian green marble, Libyan yellow marble and red marble from a temple in Baalbek were used in the construction of the columns, walls, floors and window frames. Murals are bordered with onyx and ivory. Gold mosaics are hidden in the apse and other alcoves. A variety of precious metals, jewels and stones encrust the interior beyond the definition of opulence. Forty windows around the base rim of Sophia's dome permit sunlight that, beaming in at all times of the day, sets the gold interior ablaze. Unfortunately, this is a spectacle which Cainites can never see — a tragedy that the Michaelite Toreador are painfully aware of.

THE CHURCH OF IRENE

In the northeast of Region 2, the Church of Irene stands dwarfed by her larger neighbor, Hagia Sophia. Home to Magnus, leader of the Lasombra scion family, the structure is in basilica style, but with two side bays rather than three aisles constituting the nave. The side walls are lined with four levels of square windows. The vaulted ceiling at the western end of the church (the entrance) is barrel-shaped, while its dome is rimmed by bricks in which arched windows are set.

MILITARY DISTRICT OF THE MANGANA

At the northern base of the Acropolis, between the sea wall of the Golden Horn and the steep slope of the First Hill, sits the military district of the Mangana, known as Seraglio Point. Though it is no longer of preeminent importance, Constantinople's war engines are still built and stored in warehouses here, and the region does have a library on ballistics.

Unfortunately, the district has even lost its naval significance; control of the navy has shifted to the city's Latins. Indeed, the area beyond Seraglio Point has become Latin-dominated.

During the pinnacle of Byzantine might, Seraglio Point served as home to officers, soldiers and their families. After the exodus of most of the military from the area, the barracks were converted into dwellings for the poor. The emperor's gift to his people, the one-story barracks is now run-down and on the verge of collapse. Financial woes prevent the empire from maintaining

A NIGHT AT KYNEGION AMPHITHEATRE

Malachite, leader of the scion family of Nosferatu that bore his name, drifted through the district with little intent. Although he was caught in quiet reflection, the noise coming from the nearby amphitheater piqued his interest.

An ancient forum for wild animals once attached to the Acropolis, Kynegion Amphitheatre was built into the slope of the First Hill and overlooked a small sunken arena. Although thought abandoned by the mortal populace, it was still used by the childer of Caine to pit ghoul animals against each other. The walls surrounding the arena were, at one time, adorned with granite columns and statues of former emperors. Now those decorations had been torn from their moorings and thrown into the arena by vampires attending the animal duels.

Hollers and jeers could be heard as a black mastiff — the favored beast of the Baron's Gangrel — maimed a grossly mutated amalgamation of cats brought in by a member of the Obertus Tzimisce. Suddenly the cat-beast, bloody and hissing through multiple mouths, split into seven distinct felines — one of which was already dead — all linked through umbilical cords. They swarmed the poor dog. Malachite did not bother to watch the inevitable outcome and continued on his way. Anywhere was better than here.

the region, so crime is rampant and no home is safe. Bandit-squatters go from one place to the next, insinuating themselves in other people's houses, threatening families that live there, and living off them like leeches.

Although the streets in this area are paved, portions have been eaten away by wear. The sewer system is clogged with debris, and side streets fill with refuse and waste.

REGION 3

Bukanon Tower, Church of the Archangel Michael, Church of S.S. Sergius and Bacchus, The Hippodrome, Harbor of Sophia, Sigma

The very air seems to change upon entering Region 3; it is imbued with energy. This is home to one of the centers of the city: the Hippodrome, located on the Second Hill. Some of Constantinople's wealthiest citizens are residents of this region, and the presence of the Byzantine Marine Exchange in the Harbor of Sophia ensures that the area is always a hive of activity.

THE HIPPODROME

The foundations for the arena known as the Hippodrome (also called the Circus) were laid in A.D. 203 after the Roman Emperor Septimius Severus razed the city to the ground. The

arena was built to quell the populace after the destruction he wrought. Located near the now-vanished Wall of Byzantium, it was dedicated in honor of the mythological twins, Castor and Pollux. Although Septimius never completed his gift, the arena was opened on the 11th of May, A.D. 330, the same day that the city itself was inaugurated.

One of the three centers of mortal life, along with the Great Palace and the Hagia Sophia, the Hippodrome is a rectangular structure. It holds 40 rows of seats that overlook the arena floor. Above the seats is a promenade that runs the length of the Circus. The promenade is decorated with porphyry columns, bronze horses, marble lions and a variety of other precious stone effigies.

During the day, mortals cheer as charioteers whip their horses around the spina (the central backbone of the racetrack). The racers — *Inhonestae Personae* — are primarily Jews and undesirables fit only for death. The spina is known as the “axis of the empire,” and is adorned with several monuments. At either end stands a golden column. They represent the sun and moon.

Audiences are organized into groups called Blues and Greens, a tradition carried down from Roman times. Blues (the wealthy and Orthodox) occupy the northern seats. Greens (the lower class and members of the heretical Monophysite sect) take the southern seats. The races are brutal and contestants are devoid of sportsmanship. Yet, the “use of magic” during these events is prohibited by law.

On the southern face of the Circus, overlooking the track, is the Kathisma, the emperor’s box. A silk curtain shields it to keep it cool when not in use. Otherwise, the curtains are drawn, allowing the public to see its ruler. The Kathisma, a series of apartments that adjoin the Hippodrome through a private entrance is where the emperor retires, changes clothing or feasts during an afternoon at the Circus. A passage also leads from these apartments to the Chalce of the Great Palace. It is used to protect the emperor from the masses as he leaves the Hippodrome. The passage also serves as a conduit through which the Cainites of the city, or at least those on friendly terms with the Antonian Ventrue, can pass unseen.

The games are so popular that they run an entire day. Many spend their afternoons in the Hippodrome, betting on events, rooting for preferred teams, feasting, and rarely leaving their seats for fear of losing them. The Hippodrome also stages shows, performances, public executions and even imperial coronations. St. John Chrysostom dubbed the place the “Satanodrome,” a haven for vices.

At night, as mortal crowds thin out, Cainites and their ghouls prepare for late-night festivities. The Ventrue Anna Comnena and Caius often watch the nightly festivities from the Kathisma. Though performances are staged and appreciated, the most popular of the “night games” is gladiatorial combat that features condemned criminals. Such sport has been preserved by the Cainites since ancient Roman times, and sates their craving for bloodthirsty brutality.

DISTRICT OF MAURUS

At the bottom of the Second Hill, toward the Marmora, is the Harbor of Sophia. Between it and the Hippodrome rests the district of Maurus, which is dedicated to the residences of past and present Byzantine potentates and influential families. The expansive estates — though nowhere near as large as those outside the city — contain stately Roman mansions and beautiful gardens, and are surrounded by a network of paved streets. When their manors are built, owners try to outdo their neighbors by creating preposterously ostentatious homes.

Several Cainites, mostly Michaelite Toreador and some Antonian Ventrue, hold secondary residences in this area. As such, the district is far better guarded, lit and patrolled than the adjacent region of Kontoscalion. The patrol units — members of the Varangian and Scholai Guards — recognize most of the people who live in the district, and accompany visitors and guests to their destinations. Those individuals simply “passing through” are escorted out of the district.

THE HARBOR OF SOPHIA AND THE SIGMA

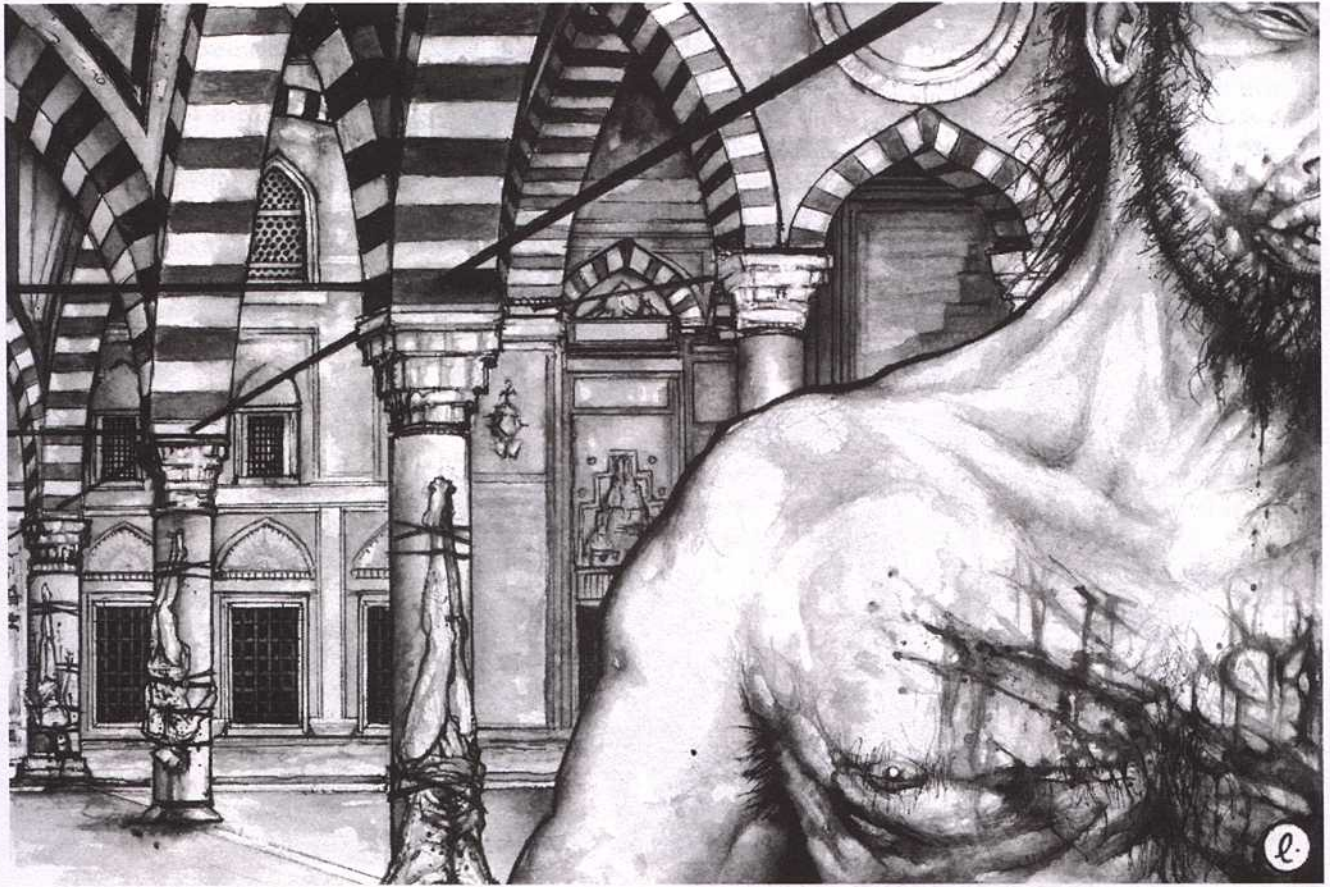
The Harbor of Sophia, named after Justinian II’s empress, is lined with statues of Justinian, Sophia and her daughter Arabia. A fourth statue, that of Narses, has been defaced by unknown parties. Surrounded by three large warehouses, this port houses a richer class of vessel than those docking at nearby Kontoscalion.

The Sigma, a green portico-styled two-story building on the harbor, is built for merchants and traders to rest, barter, change currency and report with the Marine Exchange. The Sigma is never empty; all the captains and merchants who enter or leave the harbor’s various ports (save the Latin ones) report here. Also bordering the Harbor of Sophia to the east is Bukanon Tower, a 40-foot structure of cemented blocks that offers a commanding view of the Sea of Marmora. Massive trumpets are placed in this hollow structure to herald the departure of the imperial fleet and to direct the flow of ship traffic.

CHURCHES OF MAURUS

In addition to the various churches in the district — St. Thekla, St. Thomas of Amantiou, St. Julian Perdix and St. John the Forerunner — two other houses of worship merit attention. The first is the Church of S.S. Sergius and Bacchus. It was built by Justinian I as two adjoining churches dedicated to its namesake soldier-saints (they appeared before Emperor Anastasius and pleaded on Justinian’s behalf when he lay under sentence of death).

Built on a rectangular foundation with a central dome, the front of the combined churches is adorned with an arched portico. Inside is a two-level ambulatory that dominates the entrance of the building, and a gallery overlooks the whole church. A number of minor niches and recesses are interspersed along the gallery’s sides, and there is a large apse toward the rear. Although the twin churches are admired, they lack the extravagance of others.



The second church of note is dedicated to the Archangel Michael and is the center of Constantinople's cult worship of Michael the Patriarch — a movement directed by the Magnus Lasombra. Though the Toreador Methuselah is not actually hidden here, his torpid body is brought to the church through tunnels whenever he is to appear to the faithful. Michael's house of worship is a cruciform church, surmounted by six golden domes and a peristyle narthex front. The outside walls are fine ashlar, and inner walls are covered in sheets of green marble. Four domes line the main rectangular strip of the church and end in a large silk-covered apse from which Michael appears. The interior of the three-story church is lined to the ceiling with arched marble-frame windows. In many respects, the Church of St. Michael is very similar to the Church of the Holy Apostles.

THE LATIN QUARTER: REGIONS 4-7 AND 13

From Seraglio Point, the adjacent regions along the Golden Horn comprise a world entirely different from the rest of Constantinople. Here, Europe is exemplified by Latins. Except for the Embolos thoroughfare, which connects the Golden Horn to the Sea of Marmora, the streets are unpaved. The sewage system consists of open trenches that run alongside rundown homes where children play barefoot. The houses

are small and compressed into a claustrophobic maze of lightless corridors. And, large overhanging balconies cast alleys into an even darker pallor.

The neighborhoods of the Golden Horn are slums with an estimated population of 60,000 Latins. The Latin Quarter is quietly run by the Narsene Lasombra. The unnaturally dark streets and black alleys are attributed to these vampires' particular "gifts." While Byzantine Cainites are allowed entry, their passage is not protected and few "foreign" vampires are stupid enough to tread into the quarter.

Latin merchants control the ports along this stretch of the Golden Horn. The quarter's wall and the sea are separated by a strip of shore that wider than that found along the Marmora. Fish markets dominate small quays, while smuggler corsairs dock at various harbors (for a fee, of course) without fear of reprisal from the Marine Exchange. The Latins have built and maintain their own warehouses and granaries. Even the former Harbor of Neorion, the proud Byzantine naval yard, is now under the management of the Venetians.

Although neighborhoods located between the Latin Golden Horn's slums and the Mese are Byzantine, poverty in the Latin Quarter has infested these communities as well. While the sewage systems still work in some of the outlying Byzantine areas, exposed and broken pipes vomit waste into many neighborhoods. Several cisterns that feed local ground



wells are contaminated, and money to fix pockmarked streets and deteriorating Byzantine homes has not been forthcoming from the emperor.

It comes as no surprise, then, that citizens of Greek districts which neighbor the Latin Quarter are the most anti-Latin in the city. The Latins, in turn, despise the Greeks, in particular because of the Latin Massacres of 1185. This antipathy has led to skirmishes along the Latin-Byzantine border, and has even resulted in incidents of arson, theft, rape and assault. Enterprising Cainites have used these clashes as cover for their feeding.

PISAN DISTRICT

From Seraglio Point, the first Latin district is that of the Pisans. Situated around the gates of Eugenuis and the Pora Veteris Rectoris, the district is home to the Tower of Mangana, from which a chain stretches across the Golden Horn to the Galata Tower on the opposite shore. During times of war, the chain is pulled across the water line, protecting the bay from enemy fleets.

When the Byzantine military was in possession of this district, the land kept clear and was known as the Strategion, a drill field for soldiers. Now all that remains of that name in this neighborhood of pauper-poor homes is the ill-maintained Strategion Forum. Surrounded by homes made of rotted timber, the Strategion is the unofficial center of the Pisan district. The once-proud porticoes and colonnades that surround the

large square are now chipped and eroded, and the alabaster-white floor is covered in a vile mixture of hay and dung from animals sold here.

AMALFITAN QUARTER

Built around the Gate and Port of Neorion, the Amalfitan Quarter is located in the valley between Constantinople's Second and Third Hills. This area once served as part of the imperial yards for the Byzantine navy (the other half of which was on the opposite shore of the Golden Horn). Converted by the Amalfitan and Venetian merchants into hostels for their sailors, the military barracks at one time housed 24,000 soldiers. A number of European Cainites, under the protection of the Narsene Lasombra, now use these meager accommodations as their havens. The Children of Judas — a scion family of the Setites under the Michaelite Toreador — also maintain secret safe houses in this district, and use them as spy posts.

JEWISH QUARTER

Further west along the wall of the Golden Horn, a tiny enclave of Jews nestles among the districts of the hostile Latins. The Jews control access to the Gate of the Perama Porta Hebraica, a quay holding one of the largest fish markets on the Golden Horn.

Despised by both Latins and New Romans, the Jewish community has long been besieged. Ruffians and rabble-rousers from both camps have stolen through the quarter's

CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

streets, robbing and murdering whomever they have encountered. However, these incidents recently ceased after someone in the community retaliated by killing hostile intruders. The Narsene Lasombra tried to quell whatever resistance had manifested, but to date have failed to find it.

Elijah, a powerful and enigmatic Kaballistic mage, defends his community. Uninterested in events that transpire outside his neighborhood, Elijah has remained well hidden and is constantly vigilant against intruders. The Narsene Lasombra are leaving the Jewish community alone for the time being.

THE GREAT BAZAAR

Spread across the valley and slopes of the Second and Third Hills, the Great Bazaar is one of the few areas shared by Latins and Byzantines. It extends to the House of Lamps at the edge of the Mese and is bordered to the west by Embolos Street, the only paved road in the Latin Quarter.

The bazaar is an eclectic gathering of shanty shops, crude booths, homes, store keeps, peddlers on carts and vendors seated on carpets. While the Mese's merchants cater to the luxurious tastes of the affluent, the Great Bazaar is the marketplace of the commoner. The daytime streets are crowded with local shoppers and visitors attired in foreign fashions. Children run wild, playing and thieving. Prostitutes beckon to strangers from second-story windows. And, mendicants ply a mixed craft of begging and pickpocketing.

At night the bazaar empties and is strangely devoid of noise. Predators stalk the streets; only those who are prepared to fight or die dare be outside. Guard patrols enforce a curfew of 7:00 on taverns; the streets are dangerous enough without people drinking and making even more mischief.

Some businessmen, however, know whom to bribe in order to stay open after curfew. Their establishments have become gathering places for plebeian Cainites. These are stores and inns where nobody asks after your business, information can be acquired and trades made, and people die or vanish without question.

VENETIAN QUARTER

On the eastern border of the Great Bazaar sprawls the largest and most powerful of the Latin mercantile groups, the Venetians. Their control of sea trade goes virtually unchallenged, save for the efforts of the Genoese at Galata.

Latins first took up residence in Constantinople during the rule of Alexius Comnenus in the 11th century. In dire financial straits, the imperial throne handed out trading concessions to the Venetians in exchange for an alliance. The move sounded the death knell for Byzantine merchants and the imperial navy, and provided the Latins with a portion of the city that was under their direct control.

The streets of the Venetian quarter are patrolled regularly by Narsene Lasombra ghouls. The Lasombra maintain their own warehouses and granaries, and even refuse to divulge the

SILK ROAD AND SAUT ASWAD

There are two taverns in the Great Bazaar that have been in business for decades. Both are kept open after curfew, and both are frequented by Cainites. The first is owned by the city's Setites. The Silk Road is a three-story building of nondescript appearance. Its only distinguishing characteristic is its heavy bronze door. The square windows and upper-floor balconies are heavily shuttered, revealing nothing of the interior.

Inside, the Silk Road is only slightly more hospitable and comfortable. The first floor is the tavern proper, and is kept dimly lit so that nocturnal patrons are not disturbed. Curtained alcoves and recessed booths keep many customers hidden. Prostitutes make their way around the room; dark niches serve as well as any bedchamber.

For those seeking more privacy, the second story is a maze of small rooms for rent. Male prostitutes, children and animals are readily available if the Setites are given a night's warning. The third story of the Silk Road contains an Eastern-style hashish den, complete with floor pillows and pipes. The hashish is brought in on trade routes from the Orient. Cainite customers are invited to feed off the drug-laced vitae of mortal addicts.

Unknown to most, the Setites maintain their temple to Sutekh in an abandoned cistern below the inn. The entrance to the chamber is located in the cellar and is reached through an ancient well. The temple, filled with Egyptian wall cartouches, statues, artifacts and sarcophagi, is also littered with free-roaming asps and vipers — some of which have been turned into ghouls.

The second tavern, Saut Aswad, a more respectable establishment, is considered neutral ground by Latin and Byzantine Cainites. It is a place where they may meet and discuss their differences. Located on Embolos Street, Saut Aswad is a one-story affair with a rich Anatolian pine and Mt. Lebanon cedar interior. The main floor is large and open, though there are side booths and small corridors leading to other rooms if patrons seek private meetings. After curfew, most of the mortal clientele are either in the service of a Cainite or enjoy being fed upon.

locations of their havens to the Trinity. This policy, however, limits their access outside the region, and few Narsene are foolhardy enough to step into hostile territory.

GENOESE QUARTER

Across the Golden Horn lie the shores of Galata, also known as Region 13, and the Genoese community that makes its home there. Originally, Galata was used by the imperial

navy as a construction yard for their mighty dromons (300-man warships sailed by Russian crews). Galata was also the site of the admiralty and arsenal of the Byzantine navy.

The Genoese were afforded rights along Byzantine trade routes back in the ninth century in hopes that they could challenge the Venetians who dominated the sea ways. The maneuver backfired, though, and only weakened Byzantine ship trade further; the empire's merchants now had to contend with two avaricious competitors.

In the 12th century, the Genoese have providence over the northern shores of the Golden Horn, including the Tower of Galata, a dome-mounted structure that connects the Golden Horn chain to the Tower of Mangana on the opposite shore. The once-small community of the Genoese is expanding along the shores of Galata as more and more one-story homes, quays and warehouses are built.

REGION 7

South Embelos Street, Suburb of Kontoscalion

The district of Kontoscalion is prime feeding ground for many of the city's indiscriminating Cainites. Cramped homes and overhanging balconies create a network of dark alleys and passages. It is a miserable place to die. The residences, however, are of better quality than those along the Golden Horn. Most of the people are employed and can afford decent accommodations. The streets, though crowded with traffic, are well kept, as are the local cisterns and wells.

HARBOR OF KONTOSCALION

Most of the streets around this harbor's ports are not paved. Thus, pack animals, carriages and cargoes are often drudged through muddy runoff. Yet, these conditions are bearable compared to those of the streets in the slums. The harbor's only flagstone road apart from the Mese is Embolos, a thoroughfare that connects Kontoscalion to the Latin Quarter through the Grand Bazaar. The road is invariably crowded with sailors, horses, traders, carriages, merchants and dock workers.

As one of the few active harbors along the Sea of Marmora, Kontoscalion is constantly crowded with a variety of Mediterranean mercantile vessels. The district around the port is lined with warehouses, granaries, inns of dubious reputation and hostels for sailors. Guard patrols make their presence known, though they still can't stop petty crimes.

REGION 8

Apart from the stretch of the Mese that runs from the Forum of Theodosius to Constantine, Region 8 holds no churches or monuments of interest, only homes that crowd the slope of the Third Hill. Like many of the districts adjacent to the Latin Quarter, this Byzantine neighborhood is a slum. Many of the streets in this crowded region comprise little more than labyrinthine corridors that are filled with refuse and surrounded by faceless buildings. The streets are almost impossible to patrol. Dead bodies are often discovered only after their smell begins to draw packs of dogs.

CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

REGION 9

Harbor of Heptascalon, Monastery of St. Myrelaion

As one treks up the slope of the Third Hill, homes seem to increase in quality and value. The houses closest to the city walls are hovels that are so tightly packed that a person could whisper from window to window. Homes further up the hill and closer to the Mese are blessed with more space and amenities. Residents joke that their homes actually crawl up the hill to get away from the rabble below.

To the north of the Marmora sea-battlements stands the walled monastery of St. Myrelaion, a bastion of Orthodoxy amid a sea of residences. With the exception of its size and domed church, the steep-faced building is unassuming. It does not beckon the worshippers as Hagia Sophia and St. Studion do.

HARBOR OF HEPTASCALON

The region's impoverishment is reflected in the Harbor of Heptascalon. Ever-rising levels of sand are blamed for the closing of the port. All know, however, that it was not the cost of upkeep that closed the port, but the supremacy of the Venetian fleet. Now-abandoned Alexandrian granaries and warehouses remain as testament to faded Byzantine glory.

Fishermen can be found here in the early morning, on abandoned stone piers, trying to catch meals for the day. The portico has lost most of its copper roof tiles to thieves, and several of the columns have been toppled into the water by vandals. Street children are often seen here at night, swimming and playing before patrols chase them away, if only temporarily.

REGION 10

Aqueduct of Valens, Suburb of Zeugma

As urban districts thin in this area, fields open up. Save for the isolated fishing neighborhood of Zeugma and its modest wooden shacks, this region's greenery is broken only by the raised Aqueduct of Valens.

AQUEDUCT OF VALENS

Elevated to two stories and supported by arched piers, this exposed aqueduct spans the valley between the Third and Fourth Hills. A reversal of the natural order of things, the aqueduct is a bridge between the two hills, and ferries water overland. The channeled water vanishes under the Third Hill, destined for the many cisterns beneath the city.

REGION 11

Church of Christ Pantokrator, Church of the Holy Apostles, Forum of Bous

Away from the crowded swell of buildings and hordes of humanity, Constantinople opens into the fields of the Fourth Hill, where wheat and other crops are grown. In this region, the Mese splits, one path leading into the region of Lycus, the lower following the coast of the Marmora.

Southwest of Christ Pantokrator, nearly hidden under a field of overgrown weeds and high grasses, is the Column of Marcian. This granite shaft bears the design of an eagle upon its base, and is dedicated to Emperor Marcian. The reason for its seclusion and poor upkeep is unknown, but many mortals claim to have seen the ghost of Marcian lamenting over the only legacy of his rule.

CHURCH OF CHRIST PANTOKRATOR

Christ Pantokrator Church and Monastery is a holy bastion atop the peak of the Fourth Hill. The church was built by Irene, daughter of King Ladislas of Hungary and consort to John II Comnenus. Designed to house 700 monks and 165 staff, the monastery includes a hostel, an almshouse, an asylum, three churches and a hospital.

The monks of Pantokrator harvest wheat from the extensive fields that they maintain. The monastery is easily mistaken for a castle keep given its high walls and towers. It is the perfect haven for the Obertus Symeon and his brood.

CHURCH OF THE HOLY APOSTLES

West of the Christ Pantokrator Monastery, along the Mese, stands the great Church of the Holy Apostles. Built in the same style as St. Michael's Church, Holy Apostles is a cruciform vaulted church with five golden domes. The central and largest of the domes is conical and the only one with windows around its rim. While the interior of the church is adorned with veined marble, the nave is covered by giant arches. The arches are connected to

brick piers that support the overhead domes. Between these brick columns are slim, round marble columns that line the lengths of the walls. The outside peristyle courtyard is larger than the church itself and is lined on three sides by colonnades.

FORUM OF BOUS

The Lycus River makes its way from the Great Walls of Theodosius II to the Harbor of Theodosius. Between the two the river cuts under the Forum of Bous, a mundane forum surrounded by simple red-roofed porticoes. It is used by butchers to sell meats and to slaughter animals. The animals' remains are thrown into the water of the Lycus to prevent dogs from getting at them. The river between Bous and the harbor is therefore disease-ridden and blackened. Wild dogs scout the shore looking for washed-up morsels and they make travel near the river perilous.

REGION 12

Ancient Gate of the Forerunner, Forum of Arcadius, Harbor of Theodosius. Suburb of Eleutherius

Region 12 is separated from the Lycus Valley by the Walls of Constantine, which are broken like the exposed spine of some enormous, skeletal leviathan. The Mese passes through the old battlements via the Ancient Gate of the Forerunner, a lofty door with a white marble peak that is high enough to for a ship to sail under. Before the gate — on the Lycus side of the wall — stands a statue immortalizing Byzar, Cappadocian Cainite and mythical founder of Byzantium.





The clutter of homes within the suburb of Eleutherius, which are a little more modest than the Roman villas of Exokionion, covers the landscape on either side of the Mese. Particularly crowded, however, is the strip of slope that descends from the street to the walls of Marmora. The neighborhoods here are quieter and far better tended than those of the crowded city. Gardens are more prevalent, as are small fountains and cobblestone paths between houses. Successful caravan merchants and military officers live here with their families, and enjoy the ocean view and the proximity of the city's gates.

FORUM OF ARCADIUS

The first forum along the Mese in this region is the Forum of Arcadius. Like most structures, it is framed by covered porticoes, leaving it open along its flanks and exposed to the night. The clean rush of sea air serves it well, for the smells from the horse market within are pungent; the forum's huge stone slabs are brown with manure and hay.

Even after dark, merchants can be found haggling with latecomers over horse prices. Few Cainites make their way here. The braying of panicked animals can draw unwanted attention from those who recognize the signs of evil.

HARBOR OF THEODOSIUS

Once a proud landmark and the oldest port on this side of the Marmora, the Harbor of Theodosius now lies neglected. The chief culprits for its decline are the currents of the sea and the Lycus River. Both are responsible for choking the harbor with earth and sand. The cost to dredge it to allow access for large ships became too great, and the partially filled port now serves as a market-garden that reaches to the huge concrete blocks of the old sea walls. Only shallow-draft boats can use the harbor now.

A colorful variety of fruits, vegetables and grains adorns the wooden booths and large display carpets of the local merchants. During the day, horses and carriages from all over the region park just outside the harbor while the marketplace bustles with citizens from all walks of life. At night, a guard unit patrols the area to deter thieves from robbing the booths.

REGION 13

Genoese Quarter

Region 13 is the site of the Genoese district. The region lies across the Golden Horn, on the shores of Galata. See Genoese Quarter, above, for more information.

REGION 14

Blachernae Palace, Prison of Anemas

Region 14 is almost wholly dominated by the garden-palace of Blachernae, the current residence of the imperial family. Several churches lie on the northeast end of the grounds, near the Kilomene or "Rolling" Gate. Their golden domes are surmounted by elaborate Orthodox crosses. The imperial wharf, located on the other side of Kilomene, is as lavishly adorned as the Harbor of Bucoleon, with marble quays and a plethora of statues beneath its shaded porticoes.

The Palace of Blachernae is connected to the Palace of Porphyrogenitus, an oblong building that is three stories high. Blachernae itself is an imposing structure, four stories high and surrounded by a carefully cultivated garden. Cobblestone paths, veined marble fountains, blue ponds, a maze of hedges and bushes, brilliantly hued peacocks and statues of former emperors lie hidden on the tree-shrouded land. The windows set in Blachernae's blue marble walls are arched and adorned with balconies, while friezes line the top of the palace. South of the palace is the emperor's polo field.

A prison and tower was added to the palace on the northern periphery of Blachernae, between it and the Walls of Theodosius II. The Tower Prison of Anemas, named after its first "guest," Michael Anemas, is used to imprison imperial traitors and enemies of the emperor. Many ghosts stumble through the halls of the place, as blind as the day their mortal eyes were put out.

IMPERIAL GEOGRAPHY

Constantinople is not an isolated city, but the heart of a great empire. The inhabitants of New Rome — human and Cainite alike — perceive the territories of the empire as reflections of their city.

THAT WHICH IS HOLY

There are a few holy objects and sites in and around the Blachernae Palace.

The most celebrated of the churches attached to the Blachernae Palace is the Church of St. Mary. The small house of worship contains what is held to be the old and tattered Girdle of Mary. It is surrounded by golden opulence that seemingly contradicts the origins of the humble item.

Set within Blachernae Gate, between the second and third walls of Theodosius II, is the Well of St. Nicholas, where travelers pray upon entering and leaving the city. The well is said to bestow good fortune. Southwest of Blachernae Gate, outside the walled city of Constantinople, is the simple Church of St. Mary of the Pege. Built around a healing spring said to cure mortal ills, the brick church is the site of annual pilgrimages by those afflicted with diseases and mental and physical impairments.

Unfortunately, those territories are not what they once were. In Roman times the empire stretched from Britain to the Nile, but are now limited to the lands between the Danube and the center of Asia Minor. Even this expanse is largely under dispute, as Seljuk Turks, Bulgarians, Serbs, Hungarians and Sicilians encroach from all sides.

THE WEST

The powers of Europe look upon Constantinople as the "East," but Constantinople's European territories are more numerous. As the East falls into decline, attention turns to the West to restore the empire's former glory. The West, however, is faced with problems of its own.

THRACE AND BULGARIA

This region stretches from the Black Sea to a line roughly following the Morava River, technically comprising the eastern half of the Balkan Peninsula. Thrace and Bulgaria are largely agricultural territories cut by the Balkan Mountains, which create a harsh climate in northern of Bulgaria. Thrace is inhabited by Greeks, while Bulgaria is home to the Bulgars, the latter of whom were Slavonized in the seventh and eighth centuries. The major cities of the regions are Philippolis and Adrianople.

The Bulgars are at best unhappy with the rule of New Rome and constantly seek aid from the Kingdom of Hungary to the northwest. Thrace is the hinterland of Constantinople itself and remains relatively secure, except when invading armies march through it. Such was the case in the 1180s when the Sicilian Normans made their final assault on the empire.

THE WESTERN BALKANS

Another region that is trouble for the empire is bordered by the Morava to the east, the Adriatic Sea to the west, the Sava River to the north and Macedonia to the south. The Balkans' countless valleys, trapped between sharp peaks, have sheltered many rugged and independent cultures, including the Dalmatians, Bosnians and Serbs. Almost entirely of Slavic origin, these people have remained fiercely independent of Constantinople. While imperial control is strong along the coast of the Adriatic, the river valleys of Serbia and Bosnia are Byzantine in name only. The strength of the Kingdom of Hungary, resting just over the Sava, and of Venice, sitting at the peak of the Adriatic, makes the imperial position in the Balkans all the more precarious.

The Balkans are a dangerous and mysterious place to the childer of Caine. The Carpathian masters of Clan Tzimisce nominally dominate the region, but must often act through Hungarian thralls. Cainites sent into the mountain valleys tend to disappear. Some whisper of mad Lupines that roam the crests. Others speak of dark, malevolent spirits that consume the flesh of living and undead alike.

The only native Cainites to emerge from this region to date have been the so-called Carrion. Most are Caitiff who are pledged to the Gehenna-cult of Calomena. These mad prophets now plague New Rome.

THE MOUNTAINS OF DREAD

In these times, one can never escape the looming presence of those damned Carpathian Mountains. These mist-enshrouded pestilent lands stretch north across the Danube into Wallachia and Hungary. Within them feed the masters of Clan Tzimisce, the most evil of all the damned childer of Caine. Their dark tendrils ensnare all of Bulgaria. Hungary is their terrified lackey, and it swings support toward the Bulgars in efforts to lash out at the Dream.

I have heard it said that the Fiends' greatest hatred is reserved for those of their clan who joined our Dream. I believe it. When I went to that accursed land I was told of a Gesudian monastery that might afford me shelter, and so I sought it out quickly. It was midnight when my retinue and I caught a glimpse of the monastery; it was lit by lightning and we made straight for the gates.

At first nothing seemed amiss but for a faint wail that flowed through the darkened halls. It was one of my ghoul — Isaac, by name — who made the terrifying discovery. Resting his shoulder against a wall, he screamed as the pale tapestry next to him wrapped around his back. I watched as he was sucked dry by the ravenous fabric, its cream color turning bright red. For an instant I saw a face, imprisoned and pained, in the fabric. I knew that was all that remained of the Gesudians.

They had been visited by their Carpathian cousins.

— From the testament of Andronicus of Thrace, Antonian Ventrue, given before his disappearance from Phillopolis in 1194

MACEDONIA, THESSALY AND GREECE

Macedonia, which comprises the southern half of the Balkan Peninsula, is subject to the mountainous geography to its north, but is less harsh. The region runs from the Egnatian Way — the great road from Constantinople to Durazzo — in the north, to Greece in the south, and is cut by the Adriatic in the west and Thrace in the east. Home to Slavs, Albanians and Greeks, the region is important agricultural territory. Thessaly lies to the southeast of Macedonia, an extension of the city of Thessalonika. Greece takes up the rest of the Balkan Peninsula.

These regions are prized by the empire's Toreador and Ventrue as sites of great classical civilizations. Macedonia is important to the empire because of the Egnatian Way and Durazzo, the largest imperial port on the Adriatic. Thessalonika, the empire's second city, dominates Thessaly. Prior to its sacking, Thessalonika was particularly well known for its trade fair, during which it surpassed Constantinople as a commercial center. Arab, Jewish and Armenian merchants came to deal with Byzantines and Europeans, and the fair's October nights were rumored to hum with ancient Cainite lore, including readings from the lost texts of Carthage and the fabled *Book of Nod*.

CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

Nearby lies holy Mount Athos. The richest site in Byzantine monasticism, a network of mountain monasteries rife with mystery and enlightenment, is located here. The Tzimisce brand of monasticism, however, has never taken root on Mount Athos. Gesu and Symeon, the leaders of the Byzantine Tzimisce, have both struggled to understand why and have decided that Mount Athos is one stone best left unturned. Some have whispered of mystic monks who can call down miracles at will, while others call Mount Athos the resting place of the vanished Dracon.

THE EAST

If the West is the immediate concern of the Byzantine Empire, the East is the long-term problem. Once the heart of the empire, the East has dwindled over the centuries, as Egypt, the Levant and large tracts of Asia Minor have fallen away.

CRETE AND OTHER ISLANDS

The islands of the Aegean form a maritime maze of infinite complexity. Crete, the greatest of these isles, was recaptured from the Arabs two centuries ago. The piracy for which it was known, however, continues to be a problem.

Cainites in particular sense a threat in this area. Some islands have remained undisturbed since the time of Sparta and Athens, and every few decades strange stories spread. They tell of potent Cainite lords who appear in Greek vessels on the Aegean coast. Official reports of the sudden and inexplicable disappearance of mortal coastal towns often follow these stories. Byzantines whisper that these ruins of the ancient world are shelters for demons. The wise do not put this theory to the test.

ASIA MINOR

Once the hub of the empire, Asia Minor produced more than one emperor and more than one catastrophe. The military power of the Macedonian dynasty was built here — and was destroyed here at the Battle of Manzikert. Since that ignoble defeat, the empire has fought a back-and-forth campaign for the region. As it stands, the coastal regions along the Black, Aegean and Mediterranean seas are relatively secure, but control of the interior is in constant flux.

The high, arid plateau of the contested interior is currently home to the Seljuk Turks, Muslim horsemen who invaded in the eleventh century. Resourceful and determined warriors, the Seljuks at one time advanced as far as Nicea, but now only have firm control over the eastern interior of the peninsula. The border between empires is ill-defined; Turks and Byzantines constantly travel through the other's lands. Like the Byzantines, the Turks bear little love for their Arab cousins in the Levant and have engaged in a series of nebulous alliances with the empire, when it has suited them.

In the center of Asia Minor lies Cappadocia, once an ancient kingdom and vassal state of Alexander's empire, and homeland of Clan Cappadocian. The Clan of Death shrouds



itself in mystery, but it is thought that Cappadocius himself studied here during most of the empire's rule. When the Byzantine family system was extended throughout the empire under the rule of Justinian, Cappadocia was pointedly excluded by order of Antonius. When John Comnenus recaptured

the region in the 12th century, the Cainites who traveled with him found only evidence of excavated mass graves. It is rumored that Cappadocius and his acolytes moved east into the Muslim world, but only the Ancient's close followers know for sure.







Chapter Four: Alliances

Background

Save for those in the Latin Quarter, the Cainites of Constantinople live under an order developed to preserve the strengths of the Roman system while supposedly avoiding its pitfalls. Until recently, every Cainite in New Rome was a member of a recognized blood family, either by Embrace or through adoption. It was, and largely still is, family status that conveyed both rights and responsibilities onto a Byzantine vampire. The system of blood families was agreed upon by the Triumvirate in the Second Council of A.D. 475, during which the Methuselahs decided that their city could not be allowed to fall to the level of Rome.

The Triumvirate borrowed the Roman tradition of vampiric broods based on the concerns of single, powerful figures. And yet different Roman Methuselahs had constantly grappled for power, letting it slip from Ventrue to Lasombra to Malkavian in a cycle of collapse and corruption. To save Constantinople from a similar fate, its Cainite founders decided that each family must have a defined role that contributed to the overall Dream. Each member of the Triumvirate founded a family that bore his name

BEYOND THE WALLS

During the reign of Justinian (A.D. 527-565), as the empire grew anew and spread across the Mediterranean world, so did the family system. Those who no longer wished to live in tribute to one family or another in distant Constantinople were given sanction to establish their own recognized families in outlying areas. Powerful vampires native to the provinces were also given sanction as long as they agreed to pay tribute to the Trinity. Those who created their own families included a number of Cappadocian elders in Anatolia, Gangrel warlords in Europe, Lasombra kings in North Africa and Toreador potentates in Greece. Those Cainites who turned their backs on Constantinople and the Trinity soon found themselves forgotten and pushed aside.

As plagues and barbarian and Arab conquests stripped away much of the empire, the provincial family system suffered severe blows. Constantinople also experienced its own difficulties, such as the Iconoclast struggles, and the city's Cainite leaders could only watch as their influence in distant lands dwindled to nothing. In the twelfth century, only the regions of Thrace and Thessaly still hold prominent families that are intimately linked to the Trinity and empire.

(save the Dracon, who named his brood "Obertus," meaning hidden), and each took upon his shoulders one of the critical duties of building the Dream. They then named their collective families the Trinity. Other families were added, but each of secondary stature and each owing tribute to one of the Trinity members. These adopted children became known as scions.

THE TRINITY

The Trinity comprises the broods of Michael, Antonius and the Dracon, who, inspired by the Christian model of the Holy Trinity, took upon themselves the roles of Father, Son and Holy Ghost in regard to Constantinople. The Michaelite Toreador are the city's Father, overseeing the structure of the Dream and the Orthodox faith and its core. The Antonian Ventrue are the Son, regents of the mortal and pragmatic world, guiding the political and military spheres. The Obertus Tzimisce stand as the Holy Ghost, scholar-monks responsible for the spiritual heart of the Dream by keeping it from stagnating. The Obertus Tzimisce also keep a written testament of the city's greatness.

THE SCIONS

The Trinity has granted several families status in the city because they contribute to the Dream. Each family exists under one of the members of the Trinity and is known as a scion. Tribute is exacted almost exclusively in the form of

FAMILY AND CLAN

The difference between family and clan in Constantinople may seem obscure at first. Almost all members of a family are members of the same clan, and family names feature clan names, yet important differences do exist. Save perhaps for the Assamites, Setites and Tremere, most Cainite clans do not share a common goal or organization; they are merely the various childer of an ancient and departed vampire. Families are structured groups that recognize not only the blood, but the spiritual heritage of a founder. All family members share the bond of their station in Byzantine society and are dedicated — to one extent or another — to the advancement and honor of their respective families.

Family and clan do not always interact peaceably in terms of blood, either. Byzantine families can adopt members of other clans as official constituents of their brood. Those adopted are not usually allowed to sire childer, but traditions vary from family to family.

service, and the members of the scion families are expected to fulfill duties that aid the Trinity in the accomplishment of its tasks. There are currently six official scion families in Constantinople. The Magnus Lasombra, Malachite Nosferatu and Setite Children of Judas are scions of Michael. The Lexor Brujah and the Cappadocian Lady Alexia exist under the auspices of the Antonian Ventrue. The Baron's Gangrel are pledged to the Obertus Tzimisce.

DISPUTES AND JURISDICTION

In theory there is no absolute ruler of Constantinople's night, no true equivalent to the Western prince. Yet Michael the Patriarch has always exerted a powerful influence over the city's affairs.

Officially, when a member of one branch of the Trinity intrudes on the affairs of another, each family sends its judge — called a Quaesitor — to rule on the infraction. In grave times, when serious decisions involving the whole city must be made, a council is called. Only eight of these councils have been held since the founding of New Rome (see Chapter Two: History), each time bringing together members from all of the recognized families — Trinity and scion. Although the Codex of Legacies, the Cainite laws written for Constantinople, states that only the Trinity need reach an agreement to conclude a council, most decisions are delayed until all attending can agree on a course of action.

This system worked fairly well when backed by the compelling Michael, who was a master of playing one faction against another. But Michael has since grown distracted and has not



attended a council since the Fifth in 890. Without him, the city has fallen into a morass of intrigue. The Trinity families now carefully guard their areas of influence and often refuse to acknowledge their supposed partners.

THE FATHER: THE MICHAELITE TOREADOR AND THEIR SCIONS

THE MICHAELITE TOREADOR

Always the passionate creators, the Toreador, alongside their mortal counterparts, sponsor and oversee the beauty for which Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire are renowned. When they first arrived from the ailing Rome, the Toreador made a deliberate attempt not to emulate Rome in everything. Michael the Patriarch encouraged his brood to forget Rome's culture and to embrace the new world that surrounded them. Constantinople was to be Michael's greatest creation, a synthesis of everything he had seen and wanted in the world.

STATUS IN CONSTANTINOPLE

The Status Background listed in the *Vampire: The Dark Ages* rulebook (page 130) uses the Western system of the prince as a model. In New Rome, the Background determines a vampire's position in the family system, as outlined in the table below. Storytellers may wish to give characters free Status points or set maximum ratings, depending on their chronicle concepts. Visiting vampires may retain traditional Status dots from their home regions, but they will not be recognized in Constantinople.

- Known: You are a minor member of a scion family.
- Respected: You are a known member of a scion family or a minor member of a Trinity family.
- High status: You are a prominent member of a scion family or a known member of a Trinity family.
- Powerful: You are a celebrated member of a scion family or a prominent member of a Trinity family.
- Luminary: You are a scion family leader or a celebrated member of a Trinity family.

Michael, Gesu, Symeon and Caius, the leaders of the Trinity families, are considered to have Status ratings of 6.

As Constantinople grew, Michael's vision for the city took on greater religious undertones. Many Roman Toreador, feeling uncomfortable with this new direction and the creative control that the patriarch was beginning to exert, left the city. Undaunted, Michael began embracing new muses of the arts, taking those who would understand the beauty of his vision, his Heaven on Earth.

Michael's Dream devolved into delusional fervor following the first Iconoclast controversy. His grip on reality became tenuous, a situation aggravated by his decision to betray his lover and friend Antonius. A growing insanity began to manifest in his dreams, and he began envisioning himself as a divine servant of the Heavenly host. Michael wisely chose to ignore these visions, and might even have succeeded in doing so were it not for the vengeful manipulations of the Malkavian Muse of Performance, Gregorius Dimities.

In the wake of Antonius' death in the ninth century, Michael was forced to enter the political foray for the first time and put an end to the hostilities between the Tzimisce and Ventruie. Michael ruled openly as a mortal emperor, under the guise of Michael III. Throughout his rule — his final decades of lucidity — the patriarch was responsible for stabilizing the Byzantine Empire.

After feigning his own assassination at the hands of Basil I some 20 years later, the patriarch returned to the shadows. Unfortunately, through Gregorius' manipulations, reality finally left Michael adrift. He plunged into fits of melancholy and torpor which only reinforced his idea that he was none other than the

Archangel Michael himself. Many of the patriarch's followers slowly deteriorated because of their shared Blood Oath with their sire, and were eventually felled by the same delusion that cast Michael in the role of God's chief angel.

Even the subordinate Magnus Lasombra, though they did not believe in Michael's archangel status, were affected in their own way as the makers of kings. Believing they could be the makers of angels as well, they promulgated the cult worship of Michael as an angelic divinity among the local populace. This only strengthened Michael's insanity, leaving Constantinople bereft of its last remaining founding father.

ORGANIZATION

Michaelite family structure centers on various artisan guilds and their respective mediums. Each guild has a muse, one Cainite of exemplary talent in the guild's particular craft who sponsors the efforts of promising individuals. Above the muses reigns Petronius, the second-eldest Toreador in the city, and family head when Michael the Patriarch is in torpor.

The most important guilds are those of the architects, stone sculptors and painters. Their mediums are believed to best enhance the image of Constantinople. Other guilds, including glazing, metalworking, textiles and literature, are classified under the "minor arts," for which Petronius is the overall muse.

The only exceptions are entertainers. They maintain their own muse, the Malkavian Gregorius Dimities, because they are regarded as having some intermediary importance. In



CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT



Michael's eyes, however, entertainers are not as valued as those who build his Dream.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER FAMILIES

At present time, relations with the other Trinity families are at their worst since the Iconoclasm feud. The Ventrue have grown imperious and haughty, seeing themselves as the sole saviors of Constantinople. The Tzimisce, ever guarded, have ventured deeper into their own concerns, abandoning Petronius. The other Toreador, no longer caring for much more than Michael's Dream, do little to foster amiable relations with their former comrades.

By all rights the Toreador should be bereft of all allies, but they are not. Though the Magnus Lasombra, the family's first scions, serve their own needs, they still guard the Michaelite Followers out of pride and fear of losing face before the Ventrue. The Malachite Nosferatu, scions of the Toreador, no longer support their patrons, but still live by their word to Michael himself. As such, whatever the Nosferatu do for him, they invariably do for his family. The same can be said for the St. Ladre Nosferatu, the Baron's Gangrel and the Lexor Brujah in their secret alliances with Michael and his family.

CURRENT CONCERNS

The Michaelite family is spiraling into chaos. Petronius attempts to maintain the family's interests in the city, but is constantly hampered as Michael slips in and out of torpor. The Magnus Lasombra help him with advice and suggestions that

THE MUSES

Michael the Patriarch: Muse of Constantinople
Petronius: Second-in-command, Muse of the Minor Arts and Michaelite Quaesitor
Anthemios of Tralles: Muse of Architecture
Pakourianis the Dove: Muse of Painting
Paul Bathalos: Muse of Sculpture
Gregorius Dimities: Muse of Performance

invariably strengthen their position and further the worship of Michael through various cults. Petronius is aware of the Lasombra's manipulations, but desperately needs their assistance and will not confront them about their self-serving ways.

The only resource Petronius has available is the unerring loyalty of the Scholai, the private guard of the Toreador. Although they support the Michaelites as a whole, these ghouls remain dedicated to Michael and Petronius alone. They watch over the sleep of the patriarch, spy on the Latin Quarter and maintain secret vigils across the city, reporting to Petronius.

RELATIONS WITH OUTSIDERS

Most of the Toreador are too enraptured with the worship of Michael to be bothered with anyone save the patriarch. Except in the case of procuring more devotees to the archangel's



growing cult, other vampires, including strangers to Constantinople, are generally ignored by the family muses.

The only exception is Petronius. Having lost the support of his brethren, Petronius is eager to solidify alliances with outsiders, especially Toreador newcomers.

An unaffiliated coterie trying to gain recognition in Constantinople would do well to start with the Michaelites. Although newcomers may not gain immediate status within the family, Petronius is likely to reward those he deems loyal by officially admitting them into the family. Toreador characters who prove particularly useful to the family may even be awarded muse status, replacing the Cainites who previously oversaw art forms in question. Of course, the muses may not appreciate being ousted from power.

MAGNUS ORTHODOX LASOMBRA

Before the arrival of Michael the Patriarch and his Triumvirate, the Lasombra ran Byzantium under the guise of a pagan cult dedicated to the Greek goddess Aphrodite. While they claimed to be the city's eldest clan, the Lasombra were known among Cainites to have merely stepped in after the disappearance of the ruling Cappadocians.

Ectoris and his Lasombra brood ruled the Roman colony for a brief period before the more powerful Methuselahs arrived. In

an ill-managed ploy to maintain power, Ectoris lost everything to Michael and his lovers, who were uninterested in bargaining for control. When the Triumvirate began excising those vampires not affiliated with the three families, Magnus, Ectoris' eldest child, betrayed his own sire. In a show of allegiance and solidarity to the new ruling families, Magnus presented the staked body of Ectoris to the Triumvirate and asked for recognition of a family of his own creation. As part of the deal, the Lasombra, as former cult leaders, would assist in the evangelization of Constantinople's pagans. The Michaelite Followers accepted the Lasombra as their wards and awarded the Magnus family scion status at the Second Council of 475.

Under the new banner of Christianity, Magnus noticed that while the Dracon's Obertus controlled the reclusive monastic orders, they left the ecclesiastic powers of the Orthodox Church unattended. Into this religious vacuum stepped the Lasombra, changing affiliations from the cult of Aphrodite to the Church of Eastern Orthodoxy. It was at their behest that ties with the Church of Rome were weakened and eventually sundered, thereby securing their power base away from the Lasombra of Rome.

ORGANIZATION

The Magnus Lasombra officially number three members at all times. Michael insisted that they not deviate from that count, though Magnus occasionally sires hidden progeny. When Magnus betrayed his own sire, he destroyed his clan

brethren as well, choosing to Embrace new family members rather than contend with those who considered themselves his equal. Obeying Michael's edict, Magnus Embraced two children and exacted a lasting Blood Oath with both.

Magnus, who is charged by the patriarch with tending to the Church's wealth, still leads his family. His children, Sarah the Chaste and Peter the Humble, oversee the daily rigors of Church operations and worship. In addition, Sarah is responsible for cultivating the cult worship of Michael the Patriarch among mortals.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER FAMILIES

The Magnus Lasombra are an introverted clan, preferring their own counsel (and the company of the easily swayed Toreador) above all others. They guide the Michaelites through advice and by manipulating mortal thralls. The Magnus are generally distrusted, and despise the Malachite Nosferatu and the Narsene Lasombra as greatly as they themselves are despised. Otherwise, the Orthodox Lasombra engage in regular discourse with the two other primary families in an effort to keep the Toreador's interests alive.

CURRENT CONCERNS

Magnus and his two known children are swayed by Michael's insanity in an ephemeral way. While they do not believe that the Patriarch of Constantinople is an actual angel, they believe that they can elevate him to that status. As such, Magnus helps Petronius keep his house in order to protect Michael's position

as patriarch, while Sarah supervises the growing mortal cult of the archangel's faithful. Peter the Humble, partially ostracized from his family, has taken it upon himself to help Michael find a suitable demonic "foe" to overcome in order to guarantee his deification. He has secretly brought Mary the Black — a potent Baali (an infernal vampire) on the verge of usurping her demonic keeper — into Constantinople.

RELATIONS WITH OUTSIDERS

The Magnus Lasombra are too disparate in their interests to indoctrinate a foreign Cainite through general consensus. Sarah the Chaste is too busy currying the favor of the Narsene Lasombra to care about her coterie — save for when she can use it — and Peter the Humble is too enraptured with the prospect of Michael's inevitable "ascension" to deal with newcomers — unless, of course, he is trying to convert them to the cult of the archangel.

Magnus, however, might become interested in foreigners if he thinks he can easily manipulate them. Rather than approach recent arrivals as a group, Magnus is more likely to approach that "one bright and learned protégé" who can replace Peter the Humble. Those who choose to join the Magnus Lasombra gain far more enemies than they probably care to have.

If his efforts to encourage a Cainite to join his scion family are spurned, Magnus does his best to spread disfavor for the vampire and any of her comrades, using contacts in the Church and influence with Petronius to make the vampire's unlife hellish.



CHAPTER FOUR: ALLIANCES

MALACHITE AND ST. LADRE NOSFERATU

If legends of noble monsters ever held true, Constantinople's Nosferatu are proof of those legends. Beneath the Cainites' deformed visages lie many of the virtues forgotten by Constantinople's other vampires. Most consider these beasts nothing more than scavengers of blood and information. In Constantinople, however, the Nosferatu do more than hoard secrets — they use them to try to avert the coming doom that they see. They, along with two other scion families, have become the unlikely champions of Constantinople, hidden by necessity from adversaries who would destroy them.

Constantinople's Nosferatu consist of two distinct groups brought together by circumstance and a sense of clan loyalty. The Malachite Nosferatu, though few in number, hold status as scions of the Michaelite Toreador. The second group consists of urban stowaways who have no political voice. They are the St. Ladre Nosferatu and they represent one of the few means left by which Constantinople may avoid disaster.

The Malachite Family was born amid the Iconoclast controversy of the eighth century. The empire's monastic orders were disbanded by imperial edict, putting the three core families and their adopted kin at odds with each other. Even the Michaelite Toreador, who supported the veneration of icons as symbolic and not literal, stood against its subordinate family, the Magnus Lasombra. Yet, as stout supporters of ecclesiastic and imperial authority, the Lasombra quickly quashed dissension over the issue of Iconoclasm within their own ranks.

One hapless individual undone during the clashes was a Byzantine prelate named Maleki who — though he did not support the veneration of icons — did not agree with the manner in which the monks were treated. Though Maleki had been promised the Embrace by the Lasombra, his outspoken views instead earned him their cruel enmity. Through an outside ally, the Magnus Lasombra had Maleki endure the kiss of a Nosferatu as punishment for his insolence.

The Patriarch Michael was outraged over the matter; he respected the Nosferatu and would brook no insult to their name by having someone Embraced as a form of corporal punishment. He immediately recognized Maleki as a proper kinsman and gave him family status under his protection. The Magnus Lasombra, though infuriated over this slight, were powerless to pursue the matter further.

Maleki was taught by Michael to appreciate his new form, for it was one of honor, not horror as originally taught. The patriarch christened the Nosferatu "Malachite," after the beautiful banded green stone that he favored, and in appreciation of the unlikely places where he found beauty. Some believe it was also a slight play on words with "Michaelite." Regardless, the proud Malachite family was born that night.

The Nosferatu of St. Ladre or St. Lazarus, on the other hand, came about in a different fashion. The third military order to come of age after the Templars and Hospitallers of St. John the Baptist was the Hospitallers of St. Ladre. The order consisted of knights from other orders who were afflicted with leprosy, a scourge rampant throughout Syria. The tenets of the Templars and Hospitallers required that all afflicted with the contagion leave those order and join that of St. Ladre. Those brethren who had been "retired" in this manner, however, could still be called upon to fight as knights in defense of the Holy Land.

The Order of St. Ladre established a network of lazar houses throughout Syria and Europe. These places quickly became secret havens for Nosferatu, many of whom could pass themselves off as victims of leprosy. In order to protect his secret, one Nosferatu took it upon himself to reveal his existence to the order's master, Fra' Gerard, hoping that the master, being a leper himself, would understand the Cainite plight.

Fra' Gerard did indeed sympathize, and agreed to shelter the Nosferatu as he would have other victims of physical suffering. In gratitude, Fra' Gerard was Embraced upon his deathbed in 1120 and allowed to carry on his work as a Cainite. When it came time for Fra' Raymond — Gerard's successor as master of the order — to pass on in 1158, he too was Embraced.

With the deterioration of the Latin Empire, the Nosferatu were forced to find new places to hide. Under the wing of Fra' Raymond, and guided by the visions of three Nosferatu childer, a small group of knights fled to Constantinople.

After successfully insinuating himself in the East, Fra' Raymond called to his brethren to join him in the hidden cisterns and sewers of the huge city. Since that time, knights of St. Ladre have been arriving in the city, and their underground network is now cramped with Nosferatu and leprous ghouls. Only a handful of Byzantine Cainites, including Malachite, know of the group's existence, and Malachite is honor-bound to protect their secret.

ORGANIZATION

Both groups of Nosferatu operate in the same manner. They are expected to pull their own weight in achieving the Dream, whether working openly or secretly among the city's vampires, and neither is allowed to hold greater station than the other. The only two Nosferatu who wield considerable power and influence in the city are Fra' Raymond (who leads the St. Ladre Nosferatu) and Malachite (who leads his scion family). Their word is canon to all Nosferatu.

The Malachite Nosferatu consist of three members — a number that Michael the Patriarch insisted upon — while the St. Ladre Nosferatu are certain that their membership exceeds 15 Cainites and over 50 leprous ghouls.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER FAMILIES

The Malachite Nosferatu remain loyal only to Michael. Because Michael is well spoken of by their brethren, the St. Ladre have dedicated themselves to him as well. The other

primary families of the Trinity, including most members of the Michaelites, are regarded with suspicion. Both groups of Lasombra are hated equally, though the Latins are monitored more closely because the Nosferatu sense changes festering in their quarter of the city.

Of the remaining scions, the Nosferatu have approached and secured alliances with the Baron's Gangrel and Lexor Brujah. All four factions share the common goal of trying to save the city and do service to the Dream.

CURRENT CONCERNS

Disaster looms while the families of the Trinity argue, and the Nosferatu know it. The two Nosferatu factions have therefore formed a unified front to save the city despite itself. Along with the Baron's Gangrel and the Lexor Brujah, they scramble to uncover and destroy those who have malicious intent toward Constantinople.

The Nosferatu also eye the Latin Quarter with growing concern, particularly given the many new Cainite faces they have seen in the region.

RELATIONS WITH OUTSIDERS

The Malachite and St. Ladre Nosferatu are very insular; they trust very few Cainites, especially strangers. The vampires work with the Lexor Brujah and Baron's Gangrel, and individuals of either clan are trusted only when they actually belong to those families. Outsiders are watched and regarded with the same skepticism that members of the Lasombra are. Winning the acceptance of the Nosferatu factions is a long and difficult task.

Even foreign Nosferatu are watched carefully, unless somehow affiliated with either family or their members. The St. Ladre clan has a loose organization and any number of Nosferatu can join it. The Malachite Nosferatu, however, currently have only one opening in their ranks.

CHILDREN OF JUDAS

In every garden there is a serpent. Most Cainites in Constantinople are at a loss to explain why the Setites, under the protection of Michael himself, are valued by the patriarch and of equal status with other scion families. Many believe that Michael's insanity is partly, if not fully, the work of the Setites.

The Children of Judas take their name from the legend that all progeny of the traitor Judas were red-headed and cursed to live as vampires. The Setites prize red hair and all family members dye their hair red with henna.

Khay'tall, the high priest of the Setites, was the first of his brood to be welcomed to the city. Before the fifth century A.D., the city had been off-limits to his clan. When Khay'tall arrived aboard an Egyptian grain ship from Alexandria, however, Michael took immediate responsibility for him. This touched off furious infighting among the Triumvirate, which threatened the peace of the city for several nights. Then all went quiet. Soon afterward, the patriarch announced the



CHAPTER FOUR: ALLIANCES



charter of the Setites as an official scion family under the Toreador, supported grudgingly by Antonius and by the abstention of the Dracon. The Cainites of the city were stunned.

Since then, the Children of Judas, though they hold no official duties in the Dream, have proven to be a constant foil to all of New Rome's vampires. Their primary interest lies in the nurturing of mortal vices, but they also enjoy playing games of intrigue in Cainite courts and halls of worship. The Setites have manipulated human pawns to thwart various Ventrue plans, corrupted assorted members of the monastic orders to upset the Tzimisce, and wreaked havoc in the Church of Constantinople just to accentuate the Magnus Lasombra's ineptitude.

The hardest hit of the Cainites, however, have been the Toreador, whom the Setites take particular pleasure in upsetting. Great artists have been lost to wine and hashish, writers overwhelmed in their indulgences, and works of beauty tarnished through last-minute changes suggested by Setite patrons. At one time Michael had enough presence of mind to undo the damage wrought by his unlikely guests, countering them move for move in a grand Byzantine game of chess. As his grip on reality slipped, however, so did his control.

What upsets the city's Cainites most is the fact that the Setites seem to engage in their actions for the sheer malicious

pleasure of it. What few realize is that they pursue their agendas with Michael's blessing.

Having met a century prior to the settlement of Constantinople, Khay'tall and the patriarch engaged in a series of debates that lasted several months. The root of their arguments was the necessity of evil. Khay'tall argued that Michael's Dream of a Heaven on Earth was inherently flawed because of his need to rely on imperfect mortals as the focus of his perfect city. Even God required evil to determine who would succumb to temptation and who would not, to ascertain who would be admitted to Heaven and who would be denied. If Michael's Dream were truly the work of divinity, then it should be able to withstand any test—and the Setites were nothing if not capable of testing the honesty of others. Presented with this argument, the patriarch accepted the challenge of the Setites—to see if the Garden of Eden could once again flourish despite its serpents.

While Michael viewed this test as an opportunity for good and invited Khay'tall to Constantinople when he believed the city was ready, the Setites have taken the opportunity to gain control of the mortal populace and entrench themselves. Khay'tall plays the ultimate game, trying to corrupt a would-be angel. For him, Lucifer's fall from grace will be as nothing compared to Michael's plummet.

ORGANIZATION

Khay'tall acts as the high priest of the Setites, and oversees the worship of Sutekh. His minions control the vice trades of the city. The Children of Judas' hierarchy is fluid. With Khay'tall at the top, all Setites beneath him jockey for position. To retain their good standing, the Setites are driven to outdo each other in the eyes of their leader. Most Setites come and go as they please, adding to the frustration of the city's other Cainites; the only other member of this clan with semipermanent status is Sarrasine, Khay'tall's trusted advisor.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER FAMILIES

Hated for who they are, but in power because of their advocate, the Children of Judas are widely believed to have Michael's ear. Officially, the Antonian Ventrue and Obertus Tzisce are at odds with this supposed "lesser" scion family. However, many Cainites who belong to the Trinity secretly meet with the clan because of what it can provide: regular feeding stock from the Setites' huge stable of mortals (necessary to avoid detection, given the city's Cainite overpopulation), the fulfillment of interests and desires too shameful to mention publicly, the promise of Michael's support, and the dirty secrets of others.

The strongest rivalry, however, exists between the Children of Judas and the Michaelites. The Setites have taken it upon themselves to test the Toreador the hardest because they are all childer of the patriarch. Since the Toreador have largely

succumbed to Michael's insanity, Khay'tall has chosen to strike at their Achilles' heel, their stable of mortal artists.

CURRENT CONCERNS

The Children of Judas ply their craft against the almost hapless Toreador. With only Petronius and Magnus to oppose their efforts, the Setites have successfully insinuated themselves into the Michaelites' artisan guilds. Mortal artists of potential are now being lost to vice. Even Toreador outside the family structure, such as Gallasyn, are being corrupted. The Setites exert such an influence over the Toreador in Constantinople that the Cainites' efforts may well lie at the root of the debauchery and degeneration for which the clan as a whole is later known.

Despite appearances, however, the Setites have lost some of their control over the city in the wake of Michael's spiraling sanity. Where subtle-handed manipulation, blackmail and addiction once served to keep mortals under their control, the Children of Judas have become forced to rely more heavily on Dominate, Blood Oaths and threats of murder to keep their thralls in check. The Antonian Ventrue no longer provide the Setites with the challenge they need to hone their manipulative skills, and the presence of the Narsene Lasombra has proved to be more troublesome than anticipated. The Setites have already lost many of their contacts through a series of bizarre murders in the Latin Quarter. (The murders have been committed by Magnus, who is attempting to pit the Setites against the Narsene Lasombra.)



RELATIONS WITH OUTSIDERS

Despite the Setites' intrinsic desire to corrupt anyone who comes along, they have recently found the need for allies. Whether as individuals or members of a coterie, newcomers could be of great service to the Children, who find their control waning given Michael's madness. The other families barely trust the Children of Judas, and do their best to monitor their activities. With the recent deaths of the Setites' mortal contacts in the Latin Quarter, an outside group of Cainites may be of service as investigators or as agents in meetings with vampires who do not wish to be seen with the Serpents.

If a vampire or coterie is already entrenched in the politics of the city, the Setites might try to court their favor by discovering and encouraging their vices, appealing to their senses of greed or forcing servitude through blackmail. Although allying with the Setites involves grave risk, Cainites who do can reap substantial wealth.

Allies and contacts outside this family are meant to be used and discarded. Its hierarchy is open enough to include at least two Setites from any coterie. Anyone discovered working with the Children of Judas is regarded with suspicion by nearly every Cainite in the city.

THE SON: THE ANTONIAN VENTRUE AND THEIR SCIONS

THE ANTONIAN VENTRUE

The Antonian Ventrue, masters of politics and temporal powers, are the childer of Antonius the Gaul. It was he who helped Michael mold his Dream of a new and powerful empire into the reality of Constantinople. Antonius knew that Michael's vision would need tempering and direction if it was to become reality. From the heady dreams of philosophies and religions, Antonius helped craft the unity of the empire and the power of the emperor. He sought to ensure that Byzantium had the means to thrive and the will to govern, without the chaos and intrigue that had characterized Rome. Antonius and his family were only partially successful. Intrigue and betrayal plagued the family from the beginning. Early conflicts stemmed from the increasing rivalry and distrust between Antonius and the Tzimisce Dracon, while Michael the Patriarch took great pleasure in playing his companions against each other. As the Dracon promulgated the worship of his creations as holy icons, Antonius came to hate the practice.

Michael's efforts to mend fences only made things worse. He sought to restore the Trinity by bequeathing a gift of two brothers to his companions, but the Dracon's delusional childer

THE ANTONIAN HIERARCHY

Caius: Basileus

Nicephorus: Caesar Magister

Anna Comnena: Quaesitor and Chamberlain

Irene Stellas: Domestic Prefect (responsible for the city of Constantinople)

Ducas: Palace Prefect (responsible for the imperial family)

Belisarius: Military Prefect (responsible for the security of the empire)

Helena the Armenian: Eastern Praetorian Prefect (responsible for Asian territories)

Basil of Thessalonika: Western Praetorian Prefect (responsible for European territories)

Gesu Embraced Antonius' promised Symeon. Enraged, Antonius took advantage of mortal Iconoclasm and attacked the Tzimisce power base.

Michael was incensed by Antonius' actions, and the Trinity seemed shattered until Caius and Septima Dominica — two childer of Antonius — secretly approached Michael and the Dracon. In the secret Fourth Council, the two argued for the destruction of their sire for the sake of the Trinity — and their own desires for power. The two Methuselahs eventually sanctioned action and Antonius was put to the stake; Caius became the leader of the Antonian Ventrue, with Septima as his second.

The crime drove a wedge between the Ventrue and Toreador, though, and Caius — secretly longing for Michael's company — withdrew, leaving Septima in effective control. In 1001 another intrigue claimed her life and Caius was left completely alone, only able to play the factions of his family against each other rather than provide the strong leadership they needed.

ORGANIZATION

At the top of the Antonian Ventrue order sits Caius, basileus (emperor) of the family. The family's nightly affairs are directed by his caesar magister (second-in-command), the conservative Nicephorus. Anna Comnena serves as the family's Quaesitor and chamberlain; she rules on interfamily conflicts and oversees family members. With so much influence, she is almost as powerful as the family's two leaders. Both Anna and Nicephorus report directly to Caius.

Below these top-ranked officials is a series of prefects, each of whom is responsible for an area of Antonian jurisdiction. Prefects supposedly take their daily orders from the caesar magister and are overseen by the chamberlain — all in service of the basileus. But in reality, the prefects are caught up in their own intrigue. They generally deal with Nicephorus or Anna, depending on whom they support, while others ignore both as best they can, seeking to gain power directly from the basileus.



RELATIONS WITH OTHER FAMILIES

The Antonian oversee two scion families. The first “family” consists of the Cappadocian Alexia Theusa, who has never sired or adopted, but remains Caius’ trusted advisor. Her ability to remain close to the evasive basileus amazes some Ventrue and infuriates others. The second scion, the Lexor Brujah, are keepers of the Codex of Legacies, the laws of Constantinople, and are overseers of the mortal sphere. They are looked upon favorably by the Antonian, but the Latin riots of 1185 and the resulting executions of the Ventrue Epirus and Brujah leader Tribonius strained the alliance.

Relations with the other members of the Trinity are extensive and complex. The Antonian and Obertus have been rivals since the families were formed. The Ventrue still perceive the Tzimisce as fiendish, incomprehensible creatures, and look upon their use of icons with distaste. Yet, an unlikely *détente* recently formed between the Antonian and Obertus after the Ventrue and Toreador parted ways. When Michael rejected Caius, the Ventrue as a whole felt abandoned. The Toreador seemed oblivious to the dangers threatening the empire and were unwilling to make the necessary sacrifices. The Obertus recognized the Trinity’s problems, though, and the Ventrue found themselves of a like mind with their old rivals. The two now try stay out of each other’s affairs and concentrate on outside enemies.

More than any other family, the Antonian despise the outsiders who have flocked to the city in the past few centuries. To them, the Latins represent the degenerate bastards of Rome and the barbarian West. The commercialism of the Lasombra and the other Latin wretches leaves a foul taste in the mouths of the proud Ventrue, made all the more bitter by the knowledge that it was their family that first granted the Latins access.

CURRENT CONCERNS

These are difficult times for the Antonian. The imperial throne, which has always been the source of their strength, is now their greatest weakness. The mighty Comneni emperors have given way to the mad Angeli dynasty, and the Antonian are paralyzed by internal intrigue and hatred. Each Ventrue has a hidden agenda and supports a different imperial candidate, while Caius refuses to act decisively. For the first time in centuries, mortals are finding themselves in command.

RELATIONS WITH OUTSIDERS

The members of the Ventrue hierarchy are presented above and detailed in Chapter Five, but the Antonian family is larger still. Many minor members haunt the surrounding regions and all of Byzantium. New Cainites can easily find their way into this great family. Coterries that have Antonian Ventrue among them are slowly drawn into the family’s intrigue. Cainites may be forced to support the leaders Anna Comnena and Nicephorus, or may find themselves compelled to join some Ventrue dark horse.

THE LEXOR BRUJAH

While the Antonian Ventrue have ruled Byzantium through its emperors, the Lexor Brujah have overseen the mundane administration of the empire. Interested most in the plight of those who live under the weight of Ventrue and imperial ambition, the Lexor Brujah have inspired the creation of a unique and complex bureaucracy, without which life in Constantinople would grind to a halt. Led by Tribonius, a survivor of the catastrophe of Carthage, the Brujah family of Constantinople has become an indispensable tool of the Ventrue.

The origins of the family date back to the Second Council of A.D. 489, when Tribonius and his childer (Theophilus and Dorotheus) were given charter to codify the old and obscure *Lex Regia* — Roman Law — into what eventually would be known as the Justinian Code in A.D. 530. They were also assigned the task of codifying the ruling principles of the Trinity, and so established the Codex of Legacies. The Lexor Brujah have since added to the already lengthy code of Justinian, and are responsible for its contemporary incarnation.

ORGANIZATION

The Lexor Brujah collectively refer to themselves as the Senate. Their leader assumes the title autokrator and is held responsible for coordinating family activities. Below him are the senators, whose number constantly changes. Each senator assumes responsibility for some of the administrative branches of Constantinople, including law, trade and finance, construction and ceremony. Senators' roles also include a number of lesser duties that change hands constantly, adding to the complexity of an already involved bureaucracy. The various codices that serve as the template for Constantinople's bureaucratic and legal system number in the thousands. Only the late Tribonius knew them all by heart.

GESUDIAN COMMANDMENTS

Vicissitude is seen as the manifestation of the Within and the key to attaining transcendence. Whereas other Tzimisce see Vicissitude in a detached, utilitarian way, Gesu and his followers consider the Discipline to have sacred significance. Seen as the touch of God, no follower of Gesu may voluntarily use the Discipline — only through prayer, fasting or torture can the Within be manifested on the flesh. This ritualized use of Vicissitude, called the Communion Within, is the most sacred tenet of the order.

The Communion Within often results in strange and haunting effects. That is why most of the Tzimisce never travel outside the monastery; if circumstances force them outside, they make use of special cloaks and habits to conceal their "divinity."

THE IMMACULATE UNION

To Gesu, the human body is fragmented and incomplete. He believes that the only manner in which transcendence can be achieved is by making the human body whole and pure. God made Eve from one of Adam's ribs, and this division is what led to humanity's fall. To unlock the Within, the human race must be reunited as one.

To this end, Gesu's love for Lillian prompted him to undergo what he termed the Immaculate Union. In a sacred ritual, he drained Lillian and, as he Embraced her, used Vicissitude to meld her to him. The only remaining mark of her existence is the impression of her gentle face on Gesu's chest.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER FAMILIES

Although the Lexor Brujah are an indispensable asset to the Antonian Ventrue, they were traditionally overlooked and taken for granted. Tribonius understood the role his family played in the grand scheme of Constantinople, but the new autokrator, a Russian Brujah by the name of Natalya, refuses to remain a meager Cainite servant. Over the last few years she has proven outspoken and opinionated, qualities which have not endeared her to the Ventrue. Only Baron Thomas and the Nosferatu recognize the Brujah as potential allies in the coming years.

CURRENT CONCERNS

The execution of Tribonius after the Latin Riots sent the Lexor Brujah into disarray. Dorotheus and Theophilus have fallen into deep depression, leaving Natalya with the near-impossible task of deciphering Tribonius' countless ledgers and notes. Meanwhile, the family's control of the city's bureaucracy is slipping, making it difficult to exert influence over key departments. Natalya knows this, but blames it on the inefficient control of the three ruling families, and is debating whether to make a bid for leadership of the city.

RELATIONS WITH OUTSIDERS

For centuries, the Lexor Brujah was a quiet family. It diligently devoted its time to precious tombs of laws and legacies. Natalya knows that the time for change is approaching, though, and is searching for allies to help weather the coming storm. The autokrator has never Embraced, but this is sure to change after she becomes more active in the city and finds a need for progeny to aid her.

Dorotheus and Theophilus, on the other hand, might see newcomers and individual vampires as potential tools of the Caitiff Stanislav, and use them to further the interests of the Chosen of Calomena. The dangers inherent to this are evident, for the pawns might face the wrath of the Caitiff once they outlive their usefulness.



THE SOLITARY CAPPADOCIAN

Though the Cappadocians were granted family charter during the Fifth Council, Lady Alexia Theusa has refused to sire or even acknowledge her status as a scion family under the Antonian Ventrue. At best, the Cappadocian's presence is enigmatic; none know the whereabouts of her haven or the nature of her actions during the periods when she disappears. Caius, however, has come to rely on the advice of Lady Alexia, whose knowledge at times rivals that of the Tzimisce. The Tzimisce believe her to be a progeny of Cappadocius himself, though she has never revealed her history to anyone.

ORGANIZATION

Being the sole member of her family, Lady Alexia does not wield considerable power, but is respected and at times feared. Some claim that she has been biding her time before Embracing, but six centuries seems excessive even for a Cainite.

Recently, Markus Musa Giovanni, a Cappadocian of Venetian descent, has arrived in Constantinople and established himself in the Latin Quarter. Lady Alexia has met with him once. The meeting ended in a verbal disagreement and a distrust between the two.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER FAMILIES

Alexia Theusa, a strong believer in order, has always been closely associated with the Antonian Ventrue, and is protected by them. Even though they rarely see eye to eye, Gesu and Lady

Alexia meet regularly to discuss esoteric and mystical matters. In recent years, she has distanced herself from the Michaelite Toreador and is beginning to sense Michael's madness.

CURRENT CONCERNS

Markus Musa Giovanni has been gaining support with the Narsene Lasombra, and is rumored to have designs on Lady Alexia's position as head of her "family." Although Alexia is protected by the Ventrue, Markus has been contemplating siring in hopes of being named Constantinople's leading Cappadocian. The current chaos within the imperial family has made it difficult for Alexia to maintain constant influence over the emperor.

RELATIONS WITH OUTSIDERS

There are only two Cappadocians in Constantinople, and both have the potential to create a new coterie. Markus could appeal to his Venetian masters for assistants, but would more likely look for supporters in Constantinople itself. His goal is to discover all he can about Lady Alexia and use that information to supplant her in the Antonian's eyes. He is unwilling to side openly with the Latins. He will contact select vampires should he need contacts either in- or outside the Latin Quarter.

Lady Alexia's fading memories of her lover could lead her to grow attached to an attractive Cainite. Indeed, such a romance could become quite passionate, but, sooner or later Alexia will grow bored or disappointed with her mate and condemn him to torpor.

CHAPTER FOUR: ALLIANCES



THE HOLY GHOST: THE OBERTUS TZIMISCE AND THEIR SCIONS

THE OBERTUS TZIMISCE

Nestled within the folds of the southern slopes of the Lycus Valley, between the walls of Constantine and those of Theodosius, lies the secluded monastery of the Akoimetai, or “sleepless” monks. It is from this enclosed sanctuary that the Tzimisce of Constantinople have, for centuries, practiced and followed their own form of Cainite monasticism.

The Dracon Obertus, childe of the Tzimisce Antediluvian, came to admire and respect the monastic lifestyle. Monks’ rigorous and strict regimen, their veneration of prayer and meditation, and above all their interest in knowledge endeared these holy men to him. The Dracon set out to create his own order in his clan’s image. Its ultimate goal was to find the divinity within.

In the years since, however, the Dracon’s childer Gesu and Symeon have been responsible for reshaping the order. The mortal followers and families loyal to the Tzimisce are no longer called Akoimetai, but Gesudian monks, in veneration of their Cainite saint Gesu.

Indeed, Obertus Tzimisce influence has been substantial throughout the ages of Europe. Responsible for the widespread worship of icons — many of which are representations of Tzimisce vampires — and for the influence of the monastic orders, they have shaped the course of history in many ways.

Their greatest accomplishment as a family has been the creation and founding of the Library of the Forgotten. During the seventh and eighth centuries, the Dracon and his ghoul monks began collecting knowledge and information and assembled one of the finest libraries in the world. In the years before the destruction of the Library of Alexandria, the Dracon sent his monks to transcribe some of the most precious scrolls, saving a number of tomes and books thought to be lost forever.

ORGANIZATION

The Obertus are organized around their spiritual leader Gesu. Although many of their precepts were established by the Dracon, it was Gesu who melded the worship of vampirism with that of Christianity, using a number of Christian rituals

and beliefs to unlock the divinity within. The Obertus believe that only through the strict veneration of the Nailed God can transcendence be achieved. Under His enlightened rule, the Obertus follow a regimented existence aimed at understanding their vampiric nature and, more importantly, the divine essence that rests within, which only God can unlock.

Gesu protects his mortal followers out of love and necessity. Given the somewhat inhuman appearance of the Tzimisce, mortal followers are needed to maintain contact with the outside world. Since the founding of the order, these mortal families have partaken in Communion with the Tzimisce by drinking their blood, becoming ghouls and often living for hundred of years. In the last two generations, Obertus children have been born ghouls, a development which Gesu claims is the evolution of the Within.

Cainite monks subject themselves to grueling periods of privations and fasting. They hang suspended in iron cages for 40 nights, imbibing only enough blood to prevent torpor. The effects are devastating; while still strong, the Tzimisce thrash and scream in agony as the deprivation of blood sends them into frenzy. As time passes they become emaciated and motionless, haunted by enlightening visions that lead to an understanding of the Within. Other practices include ceaseless prayer, chanting and ritualized torture.

Not all of Constantinople's Tzimisce are followers of Gesu. Symeon (the family's Quaesitor) and his child Myca, although maintaining very close ties to the Gesudians, are more interested in preserving and protecting the Library of the Forgotten. It is they who ensure the continuity of the Tzimisce family.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER FAMILIES

The Obertus Tzimisce, with the exception of Symeon and Myca, rarely venture outside their monastery. The resulting distance from the other families has led to a degree of distrust of the Obertus. Constantinople's age-old animosity between the Ventrue and Tzimisce, though not as strong as during the Iconoclast years, still colors relations between the two families. The Michaelite Toreador, on the other hand, have always welcomed the Cainite monks with open arms, and respect Gesu and his followers for their devotion.

After centuries with no scion family, the Obertus finally granted charter to the Baron and his Gangrel, balancing their physical prowess with Gesu's spirituality.

CURRENT CONCERNS

The recent influx of Cainites to the city — including a small band of Malkavian flagellants who have petitioned to be allowed to join the order — has prompted Gesu to close the gates of the monastery to all. Symeon has tried to reason with Gesu, but the Cainite saint will not heed him. As a result, the Tzimisce have become isolated from the rest of the city, and Symeon is left alone as one of the few Tzimisce with any real contacts.

A darker cloud than isolationism looms on the horizon, though. During the Latin riots of 1184, a Genoese Lasombra pleaded with Gesu and Symeon to be granted sanctuary for

herself and a mortal child named Lillian. The two brothers gave it, but only after Lillian was given to them as a gift. As she grew older, Lillian displayed not only an unearthly beauty, but also a unique essence.

Both brothers fell in love with the mortal woman, each for his own reasons. Following the tragic events of the Immaculate Union (see sidebar), the bond between Symeon and Gesu weakened and a rift eventually developed between them. The greatest strength of the Obertus Tzimisce was the love the brothers shared. Now that Symeon feels betrayed by his brother, dark thoughts of murder turn in his mind as he laments Lillian's fate.

RELATIONS WITH OUTSIDERS

Any contact that vampires have with the Obertus Tzimisce is an enigmatic and unnerving experience. Their power and influence throughout the city is subtle and mysterious, but unmistakable. Gesu has grown weary of the world beyond his monastery walls, but is in need of outside contacts. Those Cainites who display a desire for knowledge and insight might be invited by Gesu to join the order and gain further understanding of themselves. This, however, is only after they have recognized Gesu as their saint.

Myca is interested in those vampires who show temporal potential, and who are willing to take risks for a greater cause. The ultimate manipulator, Myca is a dangerous individual, and the characters should never know where they stand with him. Symeon has recently dedicated himself to running the Christ Pantokrator Monastery, and Cainites with an interest in science and medicine might attract his attention. Symeon's feelings of despair and betrayal over the loss of Lillian could lead to acts of revenge that involve other vampires, whether in support of or opposition to Symeon.

THE BARON'S GANGREL

A storm gathers about Constantinople. The Gangrel family led by Baron Thomas Feroux has sworn to protect the city, and to ensure the safety and prosperity of the family's patrons, the Obertus Tzimisce. Since the Baron's arrival over a century ago, the Gangrel have become indispensable. Their contacts among their clan, both in the East and the West, allow them to transport Cainites from one end of the Byzantine Empire to the other, while simultaneously ensuring the safety of Constantinople.

ORGANIZATION

Recognized as scions of the Obertus during the Seventh Council, the Baron's Gangrel make up one of the largest families. Many of them, however, do not reside in Constantinople. Instead, they travel across Europe on various missions. The Baron grants his childer freedom, yet upon the Embrace each shares blood with Symeon in a baptismal ceremony. The Baron's network of Cainites keeps him informed of developments inside and outside the Byzantine Empire.



The family's primary responsibility, however, is the protection of Gesu and the Tzimisce monastery, a task it fulfills with almost religious fervor. Contrary to their barbaric reputation, the Gangrel look with awe upon the wealth of knowledge they guard. The Baron also enforces the Codex of Legacies throughout the city.

In keeping with the Baron's Norman background, his family is feudal in organization. Thomas is the ruler of his clan and he grants titles to his childer, assigning them places within the family's hierarchy. Once every three years, his childer travel to Constantinople to share news and stories. Thomas is the only Gangrel normally allowed to sire in Michael's city (though on special occasions the deserving are allowed to Embrace as a reward for their actions). So far, the feudal order that the Baron applies to his family has served him well, mainly for its ritualized traditions and oaths of fealty.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER FAMILIES

Due to the pressure the Latin Cainites exerted during the Eighth Council, the Baron and his Gangrel lost power in the city's Latin Quarter. This angers Thomas and he believes the weak Ventrue are responsible for Constantinople's current woes. Not wanting the city to fall to Westerners, he has been instrumental in forging a new alliance with the Nosferatu, Gangrel and Brujah clans — in effect, a new Trinity.

CURRENT CONCERNS

A number of Gangrel abroad have reported the possibility of a Fourth Crusade, and its passage through Constantinople. The Baron takes these rumors seriously and has begun urging the ruling families to prepare. Their reaction, however, has been halfhearted. Furthermore, the Gangrel no longer have the freedom to persecute and try all Cainite offenders, a stricture that, with the increase of new vampires into the city, jeopardizes order.

Fearing the worst, the Baron has pleaded with Symeon to convince his brother to leave the city or move the contents of the Library of the Forgotten to a safe place. Symeon, trusting his old friend, supports Thomas' position, but Gesu refuses to acknowledge his wishes. The Gangrel have therefore begun smuggling tomes out of the city against the saint's orders, but with the tacit approval of the Keeper of the Faith.

RELATIONS WITH OUTSIDERS

The Baron's Gangrel have always attracted those Cainites with a sense of honor and bravery. The family's feudal nature promotes a strong sense of belonging, and its duty to protect the Cainite monks only furthers this sense of community. Gangrel who originate outside the city could belong to the Baron's extended family, and be called to Constantinople to aid it in ferrying books or establishing contacts with the Seljuk Turks.

The Latin Cainites are the Baron's principal foes, and vampires could become involved in a shadow war between the two factions — or, even worse, be caught between them.

OTHER GROUPS OF INFLUENCE

THE LATIN

Since the fall of Rome to Odoacer's barbarian hordes, the Cainites of Constantinople have harshly judged their cousins from the West. Byzantines see these Latins — as opposed to Byzantine Greeks — as uncivilized children who don't know their place. The Latins have responded in kind, considering Constantinople's locals to be pompous, self-inflated fools. As the tide of Mediterranean trade has shifted from Constantinople to Venice and other Latin ports, tensions between East and West have risen; the proud Byzantines have increasingly been forced to turn to Venetians and their Lasombra overlords for economic and political support.

This transition of power has played right into the hands of Narses, the Lasombra doge of Venice and an ancient subject of the Byzantine court. He has helped create enclaves of power in Constantinople, free from the Trinity's control, and has arranged for Venetian mortals to seize the city's trade. He has

used the independence granted him by the Eighth Council to open the Latin Quarter to all manner of Cainites, including the mad Chosen of Calomena. Narses plans to steal the wealth of the East through his childe Bishop Alfonzo.

Meanwhile, Alfonzo considers his appointment to be his chance to grab real power. He manipulates his sire and followers into delivering the city into his hands. Unknown to all, the bishop has the assistance of the enigmatic Inconnu.

ORGANIZATION

The Latin Cainites of Constantinople do not comprise an organized whole; they form a series of enclaves that are bound by the limits of their territories. Alfonzo stands at the top of this loose hierarchy as bishop of the Venetian sector, overlord of the Latin Quarter, and representative of the Narsene Lasombra family (which is grudgingly recognized by the Trinity). He rules from a guarded enclave and keeps an eye on the affairs of the Venetian traders that are his power base. Other Italian trading cities also have representatives in the quarter, the most prominent being Bishop Gabriella of Genoa, but none has as much authority as Alfonzo.

The other Latins are a motley crew — the lost, the desperate, each vying for his own measure of security. They are united only by the scorn and hatred they receive from Byzantines, and by the burning resentment they feel in return.





The only major events to which all Latin Cainites are normally invited are the blood feasts of Alfonso. Held in his compound in the Venetian quarter, these celebrations feature lavish costumes and the offering of several mortals as nourishment. The poor victims are sometimes Latin wretches, but Alfonso far prefers the taste of Greeks who are foolish enough to stumble into his clutches. Feasts usually begin with an air of ceremony and ritual, but quickly degenerate into bloody slaughters. Some adventurous Byzantine Cainites have begun attending the feasts, and enjoy the release of surrendering to their predatory desires.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER GROUPS

Most vampires outside the Latin Quarter view the invaders with distaste. The independence granted to the district and the powers invested in the Narsene Lasombra during the Seventh and Eighth Councils are particular affronts to the Lexor Brujah and the Baron's Gangrel. The Ventrue are also embarrassed by the power they granted to the Latins. Most other families look upon the Latins with disdain or thinly veiled hatred. Only the Malachite Nosferatu, tied to the Latin St. Ladre, have some respect for the foreigners — with the noted exception of the Lasombra. The Setite Children of Judas were once the only Byzantine family truly at home in the quarter, the Serpents being masters of the corruption and depravity that ran rampant in the its streets. The recent destruction of several Setite thralls, however, has temporarily forced the Children out. Even so, the tendrils of their influence are felt indirectly.

CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

CURRENT CONCERNS

Bishop Alfonso's plan to loose chaos into the city by allowing all manner of Carrion into the Latin Quarter seems to be working, even though the Latins are also paying the price. The bishop's childer Juliano and Adrianna have been destroyed by Calomenan witch-hunters; several mortal followers of the Setites have been killed in the quarter without Alfonso's knowledge or consent; and Bishop Gabriella has recently vanished. While Alfonso is more than happy to be free of the Genoese bishop, he is bothered that he is ignorant of those responsible for the disappearance. Similarly, he sheds no tears for the recent loss of Setite pawns, but is aware that Khay'tall suspects him of the deed. Alfonso has begun to employ mortal spies among the Venetian traders to keep track of the Cainites under his charge, and his ghoulish guards have taken to patrolling the streets at night. They enforce no laws, but report faithfully to the bishop.

RELATIONS WITH OUTSIDERS

The Latin Quarter is open and ready to receive any and all newcomers to the city. A coterie of Western European Cainites could easily find a home amid the squalor and wealthy traders of the sector. Bishop Alfonso does his best to keep an eye on newcomers, but also encourages them to pursue any and all destructive behavior aimed at the Byzantines, and invites foreigners to his blood feasts.

Greek vampires look down upon yet more Latin "wretches," but as the threat of the Fourth Crusade looms closer, alliances may form between local Greeks and Latins.

THE COVENANT OF THREE

In A.D. 1197 few have the foresight to recognize Constantinople's fate; most believe the city will last forever. Yet some have taken note of ill omens and prepare for the worst, hoping to avert whatever the future has in store. In the last few years, members of the Lexor Brujah, the combined Nosferatu of Malachite and St. Ladre, and the Baron's Gangrel have formed a loose alliance. Members of this young Trinity — called the Covenant of Three — see the Dream as a reality and not, like so many others, an unattainable prospect. Each member of the Covenant owes something to the families of the Trinity, but more importantly to the Dream that the Triumvirate created so long ago.

ORGANIZATION

The Covenant of Three is an informal but strong alliance formed by Natalya, Fra' Raymond, Malachite and the Baron Thomas. Although not a member of the Covenant, the Tzimisce Keeper of the Faith also has a vested interest in the fledgling union and lends her support whenever she can.

The Covenant was formed a little over three years ago by Natalya, who saw Constantinople's growing confusion as its greatest weakness. She proposed a secret partnership with the Baron. The Gangrel agreed only after Fra' Raymond and Malachite were invited to join as well. On November 13th, 1193, in a ruined portion of the Walls of Constantine, the Cainites formed the Covenant, pledging their undying service to their city and the Dream.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER GROUPS

The Baron, Natalya, Fra' Raymond and Malachite have kept their relationship secret even from other members of their families. Only the Keeper of the Faith knows of the Covenant, but has given the Baron her word to remain silent. Though they see the need to circumvent the Triumvirate of families, the Cainites still respect and admire the families since they represent true vampire nobility.

The Setite Sarrasine has recently shown interest in Natalya's secretive activities and senses that the Brujah is up to something.

CURRENT CONCERNS

So far the Covenant has preoccupied itself with forming a stable power base. Natalya uses her contacts in the imperial court to allow her access to the city's resources. The Baron has enlisted the aid of Fra' Raymond in concealing a number of books within the cisterns of Constantinople before they are moved out of the city. But, ultimately, the group as a whole has taken little direct action toward saving the city, unaware that the invasion of Constantinople is only a few years away.

THE INCONNU

Beneath every major European city, within narrow and dimly lit catacombs, and in dark and somber castles rest those Cainites whom the young have labeled the Inconnu. From

their secluded havens, these vampires dream of their vanished heydays, of an empire that stretched the length of the known world, but which now lies in ruin and memory.

As ancient as these Cainites are, they forget little, especially when they feel they have been wronged. The members of the Inconnu have waited countless centuries to strike back at Michael, whom they resent for turning his back on Rome and eclipsing their fabled city. In the last century, they have moved their pawns — both within and without Constantinople — with the sole purpose of showing the patriarch the same pain they felt when their empire crumbled about them. As the Fourth Crusade nears, so too does the Inconnu's revenge.

ORGANIZATION

The Inconnu currently have three agents in Constantinople: the Malkavian Gregorius, the Ventrue Caesar Magister Nicephorus and, most recently introduced, Bishop Alfonso. Each is carefully planted to weaken the city.

Although Gregorius had been by Michael's side for centuries, slowly driving the patriarch insane, the Roman Inconnu decided that he was too erratic and that another agent was needed. After months of careful deliberation, the Romans chose Nicephorus as their new pawn. Bishop Alfonso, though not a member of the sect, has been given support too, but the ancients will probably leave him to the fires of the Fourth Crusade.

CURRENT CONCERNS

The Inconnu's plan is to fan the flames of dissension in the city, making it an easy target for destruction. Unfortunately, Gregorius' insanity has become a major drawback, and he has become difficult to control. The growing weakness of the Ventrue family is also a major worry, since Nicephorus' connections to the sect may be exposed and its hopes for revenge dashed.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER GROUPS

The Inconnu have no friends in Constantinople, only tools. Each family is a potential "accomplice." Through their agents, the ancients maneuver to weaken the city and pit one faction against another. Nicephorus and Alfonso have agreed to increase tensions between Latin and Byzantine Cainites, and they recognize the Baron's Gangrel as their principal foes. The pair hopes to lure the Gangrel into attacking them so that the caesar magister can brand them as renegades. Ironically, a few within the Inconnu hope to preserve the wealth of knowledge stored in the Library of the Forgotten, and may approach the Keeper of the Faith with invitations to join the Inconnu in return for her books.

THE DREAM CIRCLE

The most diverse of Constantinople's vampire cults is the cabal of "dreamers" that has formed around the Salubri mystic Achmet. This Cainite — a distant childe of Saulot, the Antediluvian who was diablerized by Tremere — guides his

disciples into a rediscovery of the vibrant nature that was theirs during their breathing days. The secret to this renewal, Achmet says, is an exploration of dreams and torpor, states in which the Curse of Caine is lifted as the body no longer gorges on blood. The ultimate goal of the Circle is mythical Golconda. None know if it truly exists, but the cultists continue their quest nonetheless.

For many centuries, Achmet pursued his destiny alone and traveled the empire and beyond. The murder of Saulot, however, sent a shock through him and he sought shelter from the dark times to come. An acquaintance of Gesu from centuries back, Achmet returned to Constantinople in A.D. 1140 and found protection in the monastery of the Akometai. He fasted there, and tried to reach the next destination of his journey through the prolonged deprivation espoused by the Tzimisce monks.

Achmet has learned many secrets since coming to Constantinople, and even when he is in deep slumber his influence can reach out to those who seek enlightenment.

The Circle gathers in the monastery to fast and meditate at its master's side, and to share knowledge. Although members are bound by the quest for enlightenment, their different desires tear at the cult and threaten to leave a legacy of nothing but ash.

ORGANIZATION

The Dream Circle has no real structure or hierarchy. Achmet remains at its center and his influence is felt throughout. When he is in torpor, however, his spiritual touch is light, and most dreamers must find their own way. The cult meets at least once a month and its activities are usually directed by whoever has a project or proposal for her peers. The oldest dreamer is the Ravnos Gregory, who met with Achmet long before his arrival in Constantinople. The Tzimisce Myca Vykos wields the most political power. The rogue Tremere Theresa Kymena seems to share the closest bond with Achmet and has gained further status by sharing her Thaumaturgic arts with her fellows. Finally, the Tzimisce Gesu watches over gatherings, casting his unmistakable presence over the Circle.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER GROUPS

The Dream Circle has close ties to the Obertus Tzimisce and their allies, underlined by the patronage of Gesu and the membership of Myca. Other groups in the city are less enthusiastic about the Circle. The Toreador worshippers of Michael, in particular, tend to perceive cults as heresies. Most Ventrué do not distinguish between the Dreamers and the Gesudians who protect them, but Alexia Theusa has been known to make appearances at Circle gatherings, and her influence over the Ventrué leader Caius garners the Dreamers a voice at court.

The Circle is open more to Latins and other outsiders than it is to Byzantine Cainites. The cultists' quest for enlightenment involves learning from others; affairs of status are considered irrelevant. The Tremere envoy Abetorius, how-

ever, is considered a threat because of the testimony of Theresa. The Chosen of Calomena are also looked upon with concern, not only because of their destructive actions, but because their nihilism has a dangerous appeal for those who are waylaid on the road to Golconda.

CURRENT CONCERNS

The members of the Dream Circle are aware of the omens of doom that surround them. While others in the city seek recrimination and revenge, the Circle envisions the coming invasion. This is a dangerous time for the Dreamers. As Theresa assimilates information about her mentor, she begins to understand the appeal of her clan-father's crime of diablerie. She and Myca have spoken of seeking more direct paths to power. Gregory seems to have decided to leave the city, remaining only to complete his studies and watch over a mortal protégé. Only Achmet seems content to embrace the future — just as his clan father Saulot did.

THE CHOSEN OF CALOMENA

As the Byzantine Dream draws to a close, Cainites search for any new philosophy that will shelter them from the coming storm. The most desperate turn to the Chosen of Calomena.

Born in the shrouded peaks of the Western Balkans, this cult seems to be loosely derived from the Bogomil heresy which has implanted itself in the mountain region. The Chosen believe that Caine was the child of the devil and that his children are the most vile manifestations on earth. Calomena — Caine's twin sister — is believed to be preparing to return and destroy the vile Cainites, cleansing the world for the glorious spirit of God. The Clanless are her chosen instruments.

The Chosen came to Constantinople in the 1180s, guided by their founder, the mad prophet Stanislav. They first found shelter in the newly independent Latin Quarter and from there established their cult. Each Chosen attracted a cabal of mortals, inoculating the kine with Cainite blood and teaching them the ways of their mistress. In the process the Chosen have created a formidable army of fanatic witch-hunters.

Bishop Alfonzo, overlord of the Latin Quarter, realized the danger of the Chosen too late and, in A.D. 1196, paid for his blindness with the destruction of his childer Juliano and Adrianna at the hands of Calomenan mortals.

ORGANIZATION

The Chosen are organized according to a three-tiered system. In the center are Stanislav and the six other Caitiff who emerged from the Balkans in A.D. 1187. These are the true children of Calomena, each driven by the belief that he is to ignite the fires of Gehenna. Stanislav leads with equal amounts of fanaticism and charisma, but each Caitiff has established a cult of his own among the mortals of the city, and dissension has begun to spread among cult members.



The second tier in the cult's hierarchy consists of the mortals that each Caitiff gathers about him. Each of the Chosen recruits from three to 10 followers and instructs them in the ways of Calomena. These mortals often become ghouls, their Blood Oaths cemented with religious fervor. These followers help the Chosen hide in Constantinople.

The final tier in the group is made up of those Cainites who are mad or lost enough to be drawn into the cult. Stanislav has a keen sense for those who are starving for purpose, even one as twisted as his own. These cultists worship Stanislav as a prophet and would gladly surrender their unives to redeem themselves in his eyes. The Ventrue Basil of Thessalonika was the first such convert, but Stanislav has also turned the Brujah Theophilus and Dorotheus.

Stanislav holds gathering in the dilapidated private Monastery of St. Luke in Arcadius. There the three tiers are brought together for dark and cruel rituals in which their despicable physical forms are purged by self-inflicted wounds.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER GROUPS

Since the destruction of Juliano and Adrianna, the Narsene Lasombra have attempted to cleanse the Latin Quarter of the Chosen, but are gravely hampered by their own open-door policies. The Quarter swarms with unknown and unattached Cainites, which allows the cultists to elude capture.

The Trinity families underestimate the threat of the Chosen. The Ventrue are unaware of the presence of Stanislav's disciples, while the Toreador and Tzimisce remain too lost in their own contemplation to acknowledge the cancer growing in their midst. The Lexor Brujah and Baron's Gangrel, dealing more directly with the mortal world, sense the threat of the blood cult but even they do not understand the scope of the problem. Only the Setite Children of Judas know the true danger of the Calomenans, but they guard the knowledge with secret pleasure.

CURRENT CONCERNS

Stanislav senses that the time of reckoning will soon be upon the Cainites of Constantinople. He fully expects his mistress Calomena to walk the night streets, breathing baleful fire into the havens of her nieces and nephews. In preparation for this night, Stanislav is busy energizing his mortal and vampiric followers to a fever pitch. The prophet plans to send his mortal worshipers against the Cainites in a campaign of witch-hunting and haven-burning.

Stanislav himself, however, is most concerned with those who have thus far slipped from his grasp. The Toreador Gallasyn fascinates him as a prime example of the vileness of Cainite nature, and he is determined to convert the vampire.





Chapter Five: The Damned

Byzantium is probably home to more Cainites than any other city in Dark Medieval Europe. Close to 50 vampires reside in the city on a more or less permanent basis, with half that many again visiting or passing through from time to time.

Not surprisingly, Constantinople is dangerously overcrowded. Even beyond the slave rings of the Setites and the city's prevalent blood cults, Cainites conflict over feeding grounds and domains. Perceptive members among the Trinity families wonder whether it is time to forbid immigrants or visitors altogether.

Notes: Long-time followers of White Wolf products will notice a new listing for major characters in the profiles that follow: a Destiny heading. This tells what will likely happen to the character given time, provided the players' characters don't interfere. The Storyteller is by no means required to adhere to this destiny, though certain characters (Wyca the Tzimisce and Sarrasine the Setite, in particular) go on to play roles in White Wolf's "modern" continuum.

ASSAMITE

SHABAH, ENVOY OF ALAMUT

Background: Assamites are commonly thought to never Embrace women, that they believe it improper to afflict women with the Curse, but some exceptions are made. The woman who would become Shabah was Embraced by an untraditional Assamite who saw in her a spark of greatness. A member of a trading clan in the Atlas Mountains of North Africa, she was abandoned by her sire and soon afterward seen staggering across the landscape by her family, who had believed her dead. They fled from her “shabah” (Arabic for ghost), and in the process gave her a new name.

Angered by her fate, Shabah tracked her sire through the mountains—thus passing his test—and was brought to Alamut for training. The Old Man himself sanctioned her existence as an “experiment” and bid her to journey to the West to learn the ways of the other descendants of Caine. During her journey, Shabah met the Byzantine Ventrue Belisarius, at the time a traveler as well. The two became friends and eventually lovers, sharing a mutual Blood Oath and traveling as vampiric husband and wife for most of the ninth and 10th centuries. Eventually, however, Shabah was recalled by her clan, and the curse of tainted love drove the companions apart.

Shabah’s familiarity with the West and the disguise provided by her gender (others believing all Assamites to be male) made her an excellent choice to perform assassinations in the European world. She killed the Byzantine Emperor John II Comnenus in 1143, not knowing that he was Belisarius’ protégé.

More recently she petitioned to travel to Constantinople. Her clan was faced with the challenge of Salah ad-Din and by the Toreador and Baali lords of Damascus. She argued that the

Byzantine court would be a useful tool against the clan’s Muslim and crusader enemies. Since her arrival in the city in 1188, Shabah has been trying to find common ground with the paranoid and insane vampires of the city. She has also had to restrain several Assamite visitors from hunting Byzantine Cainites for their potent blood.

Shabah’s greatest joy has been a reunion with Belisarius, who is now a Byzantine prefect. Their love has been rekindled, but Shabah feels guilt over John II’s death. Helena, a child of Belisarius who witnessed the killing, has recently begun blackmailing the Assamite and has ordered her to eliminate the Genoese Lasombra Gabriella. Playing her own political game, Shabah has kidnapped Gabriella rather than kill her, and the women are negotiating a solution to the problem of Helena.

Image: Unless solely in the company of women or her “husband” Belisarius, Shabah wears a full-body black veil that is embroidered with gold. It leaves only her jet-black eyes visible. Beneath her veil, Shabah bears the combined beauty of the predator and artist.

Roleplaying Hints: You are a silent assassin and a perceptive diplomat, and you use the mystery of your appearance to your advantage. Your heart, however, calls out to Belisarius. You fear that your love will sour as it did in the past, but your souls are bound nonetheless.

Haven: Shabah maintains simple quarters near Constantinople’s only mosque, which is tucked away near the Church of St. Irene.

Secrets: Shabah, through conversations with her “guest” Gabriella, has learned of the Venetian Alfonso’s meetings with the Malkavian Gregorius.

Influence: Shabah is looked on with a mixture of scorn and fear by the proud and paranoid Cainites of Constantinople. Belisarius values her opinion above all others.

Destiny: Shabah must choose between her heart and clan. If she chooses the former, she may find happiness, but all her service to Alamut will have been for naught. She may gain the undying loyalty of Belisarius, but in Assamite eyes she will no longer be an assassin, only a target. In any case, she will probably not survive the Inquisition and the Anarch wars of the 14th century.

Clan: Assamite

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Defender

Generation: 6th

Embrace: A.D. 762

Apparent Age: early 20s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 7, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4

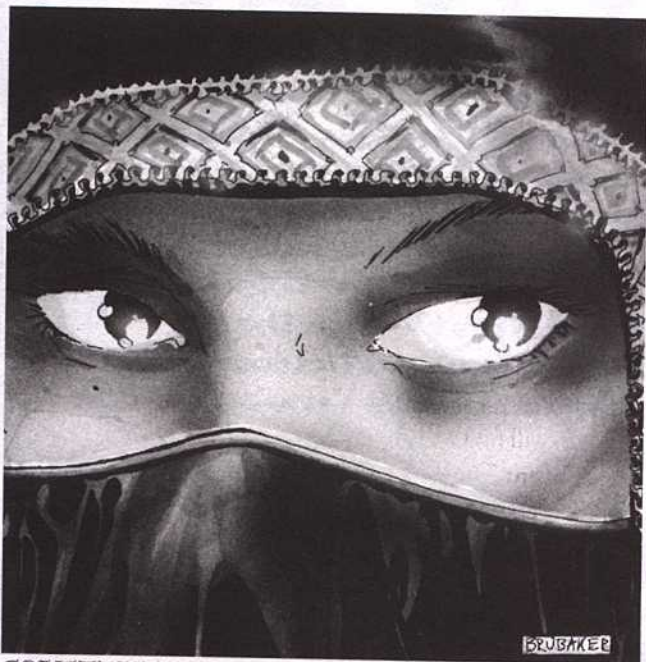
Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 6

Talents: Acting 3, Alertness 6, Athletics 5, Brawl 7, Dodge 6,

Empathy 3, Intimidation 3, Leadership 2, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Archery 5, Craft (weapons) 5, Etiquette 4, Herbalism (poisons) 5, Melee 6, Ride 4, Stealth 7, Survival 4

Knowledges: Academics 2, Investigation 4, Linguistics 4,



CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

Medicine 2, Science 2, Seneschal 5

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Celerity 6, Fortitude 2, Obfuscate 5, Potence 4, Presence 3, Quietus 6

Backgrounds: Allies (Belisarius) 4, Retainers 3

Virtues: Conviction 3, Instinct 4, Courage 5

Road: Road of Blood 6

Willpower: 8

BAALI

MARY THE BLACK

Background: The woman who would become known as Mary the Black came into the world as the mortal Ma-ri, the daughter of a powerful *lugal*, or ward boss, in the city of Ebla. A beautiful young woman by the time Mi-ka-il was Embraced, Ma-ri became one of his first adherents and worshippers, truly believing that he was the god he claimed to be.

Ma-ri became Mi-ka-il's most loyal disciple. In return he rewarded her with his blood, preserving her beauty as his ghoul. He also taught her how to read and write Eblaite script. Ma-ri was foremost among Mi-ka-il's lovers for several decades — but this was still not enough to save her.

When Ebla was besieged by the Akkadians, Mi-ka-il vanished. Trapped in the city, Ma-ri spent the last days of her life inscribing her history, knowledge and newfound hatred of her false benefactor on clay tablets. When the invaders finally breached the walls of Ebla, Ma-ri gutted herself with Mi-ka-il's sword, spilling her blood on the tablets.

The tablets were forever preserved when flames from the burning city baked them hard. They were lost during the invasion, but were rediscovered in the ruins of Ma-ri's unearthed home some three centuries later. After the city fell a final time in the 18th century B.C., Ma-ri's scripts were scattered. In the hands of refugees, some found their way to the coastal town of Ugrit, a Cainite stronghold. One of the tablets' impoverished carriers tried to sell them to a scribe who was versed in Eblaite. The scribe, a mortal servitor of the Baali, recognized Ma-ri's words as descriptions of a ghoul and brought them to his master, a Baali priest named Anaduk.

Upon further investigation, Anaduk discovered that the tablets contained more than just Ma-ri's memories; they held her emotions as well. Using Auspex, Anaduk wallowed in the hate and destructive passion captured in the script. He could taste Ma-ri's vitae, sense her presence, and quickly realized that he wanted her like no other. Desperate to find a way to bring her back to life, he sought aid from his demonic master Anoster, a member of a disease-ridden host of 36 demons known as the Decani.

In an effort to restore the long-dead woman, Anaduk bartered himself to Anoster, selling what remnants of his soul remained. Anoster responded by sending Anaduk a succubus who could subsume the tablets and become the product of whatever was contained within. Anaduk had made a fool's bargain.



The tablets were woefully incomplete and Ma-ri was only partially recreated. Though beautiful, she was as black as the fire-scorched tablets, full of disjointed and partial memories and corrupted by hate. She slew Anaduk upon awakening and gorged on his blood, becoming Baali with the vitae she took. Ma-ri then fled into the night and began searching for her other tablets, hoping to recreate her shattered memories.

Down the centuries Ma-ri searched for the pieces of her identity, following an inner sixth sense to locate the remaining shards. She had remarkable success: All the tablets were recovered and subsumed. Mary the Black now wields the very same sword she committed suicide with. She has also discovered the whereabouts of Michael, the last piece of her life that she must deal with before she can find peace.

Image: Mary is a young woman of 15, but her eternal years and hellish nature prevent an observer from appreciating her finer features. Her eyes are rimmed with red from the flames of Ebla; her skin is as black as pitch; and, though she appears burnt, her visage betrays no blemish or damage. She conceals her sinister countenance under a dark hood.

Roleplaying Hints: You are patient in your own manner, but not with the games of mortals or Cainites; you have little time for such frivolity. You have a task to complete. Constantinople is a difficult place for you. The presence of so many damned icons of the singular God harrows you at every turn. You will not allow that to deter your course, however, for vengeance is close at hand and you will find Mi-ka-il.

Haven: The House of Lamps

Secrets: Her entire past.

Influence: She has found a foolish ally in Peter the Humble and can call upon the help of Layla Madeer, the Nephandus mage who runs the House of Lamps.

Destiny: Mary the Black succeeds in her goal, but only because Michael allows it. When Peter the Humble finally leads her to Michael, she slays both Cainites and commits diablerie on the patriarch. Upon assimilating his memories, she discovers that he never intended to abandon her in Ebla, and that she only reached him because he willed it. Infuriated over these revelations, she rampages through the city, killing any of Michael's brood that she can find. Finally, she turns her attention to Anoster, her demonic keeper, and begins plotting to overthrow him. By the eighteenth century she amasses enough power and infernal allies to usurp Anoster and become a full-fledged member of the Decani.

Clan: Baali

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Fanatic

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 18th century B.C.

Apparent Age: 15

Physical: Strength 6, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6

Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 6, Wits 6

Talents: Acting 3, Alertness 5, Brawl 3, Dodge 4, Intimidation 6, Larceny 3, Subterfuge 5

Skills: Archery 4, Crafts 3, Herbalism 6, Melee 4, Ride 2, Stealth 2, Survival 3

Knowledges: Hearth Wisdom 4, Linguistics 5, Occult 6

Disciplines: Celerity 4, Daimoinon 6, Dominate 3, Fortitude 2, Obfuscate 4, Potence 5, Presence 6, Protean 3

Backgrounds: Allies 2

Virtues: Conviction 5, Instinct 5, Courage 3

Road: Road of the Devil 10

Willpower: 8

BRUJAH

Clan Brujah is respected in Constantinople, and all the families realize the debt they owe the Zealots. In recent times, the Brujah's long-suppressed anger over the destruction of Carthage has resurfaced, and clan members have begun lashing out at their enemies. Some wounds never heal. A number of Brujah elders have traveled to Constantinople — many of them bitter and resentful, others plagued by melancholy — and settled throughout the city to wait for the end they sense coming.

NATALYA SVYATOSLAV, AUTOKRATOR

Background: Natalya was born to a noble family just before the Russian prince Vladimir converted to Christianity. Natalya, benefiting from Vladimir's appreciation for education, was sent to study at the University of Constantinople at an early age. She fell in love with everything that was Byzantine. The differences between her rustic homeland and the beauty and opulence of Constantinople were enough to convince even her parents to relocate to the city.

CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

As Natalya grew up her love of learning proved insatiable, and she showed great potential as a future administrator. When her studies were complete, she was offered a magistrate post, which she eagerly accepted. Although it was common for a woman to be a part of the imperial bureaucracy, her gender and attractiveness still caused a number of problems. These only propelled her to greatness, though, as if in an effort to prove her detractors wrong.

Natalya rose rapidly through the bureaucracy's ranks, and by the age of 23 had attracted the attention of Autokrator Tribonius. Over the next two years the old Brujah watched Natalya as she implemented a number of changes and additions to Byzantine law and administration. Tribonius saw in Natalya the passion he possessed before the fall of Carthage, and decided to Embrace the young bureaucrat.

Natalya accepted the Embrace and was effused with the Brujah dream of building a new Carthage. For the first decades of Natalya's unlife, Tribonius had her travel the known world and learn from notable Brujah. In her journeys the young Cainite explored the ruins of Carthage and encountered the Arabs who ruled the area, which gave her new insights and perspectives. She also sojourned to Spain.

The marshaling of the First Crusade prompted Natalya, now homesick, to return to Constantinople. She found that her beloved city had lost some of its luster. It was still home, though, and she rejoined her Brujah family as Tribonius' second-in-command, assuming an active role as her sire spent his nights updating the Codex of Legacies.

Natalya was careful not to alienate her clanmembers, but a seed of jealousy was still planted in the hearts of Theophilus and Dorotheus. With the approach of the imperial Comneni dynasty, Tribonius orchestrated a massive expansion of Byzantine bureaucracy, at times eclipsing the comprehension of



BILBAKER

even the Brujah Senate. The body urged him to restrain himself or at least codify his changes. Then disaster struck in the form of the Latin riot of 1184.

Had the Senate been kept abreast of Tribonius' changes, it might have been able to prevent the slaughter of the Latins. Dorotheus and Theophilus were slow to act and refused to aid Natalya as she attempted to control the situation. When the dust settled, Tribonius and Epirus (the Ventrue domestic prefect) were singled out and destroyed for not preventing the slaughter.

The following years were dark for the Lexor Brujah. It took Natalya over a decade to piece together the hundreds of hastily scrawled ledgers and treatises that formed the machinery of Byzantine bureaucracy. With time, the majority of civil institutions fell from Brujah control as both Theophilus and Dorotheus proved pathetic leaders.

With her recent assumption of power, Natalya has managed to restore a number of crucial departments. Brujah control over the city's administration, however, is not solid. While trying to reestablish her family's domain, Natalya, recognizing the apathy of the other Cainite families, has taken steps to control key mortals in the imperial palace and Church. She prepares to take extreme steps to save Constantinople.

Ironically, the Lexor's bureaucratic machinery might be the greatest obstacle facing Natalya. Tribonius and Michael created the city's political institutions long ago. The only way for her to seize control and reorganize them is to sever Michael's influence over the city — something that is not likely to happen.

Image: Natalya's face has a soft beauty; she has delicate bones, supple skin and blond hair. Her crystal-clear blue eyes sparkle with intensity. Natalya prefers long flowing dresses that accentuate her figure.

Roleplaying Hints: In many ways you are the only person who can keep Constantinople together, at least for now. Its many threads are fraying and you can only hold onto so many. Just which ones you save will determine Constantinople's fate.

Haven: Senate Basilica

Influence: Significant in the mortal sphere, though certain government departments have recently become difficult to control.

Destiny: Natalya may soon come to hold the fate of Constantinople in her hands; it all depends on whether she drowns in Constantinople's bureaucracy or not.

Clan: Brujah

Sire: Tribonius

Nature: Innovator

Demeanor: Judge

Generation: 7th

Embrace: A.D. 1002

Apparent Age: mid 20s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 1, Empathy 4, Leadership 4, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Etiquette 4, Melee 3, Ride 3

Knowledges: Academics 4, Bureaucracy 6, Law 6, Linguistics 5, Occult 2, Politics 3, Seneschal 6

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

Backgrounds: Allies (clerks and magistrates) 4, Contacts 5, Influence (administration) 4, Resources 3, Status 3

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

Road: Road of Humanity 7

Willpower: 7

OTHER BRUJAH OF NOTE

THEOPHILUS AND DOROTHEUS

7th generation, childer of Tribonius

Nature: Penitent/Autocrat

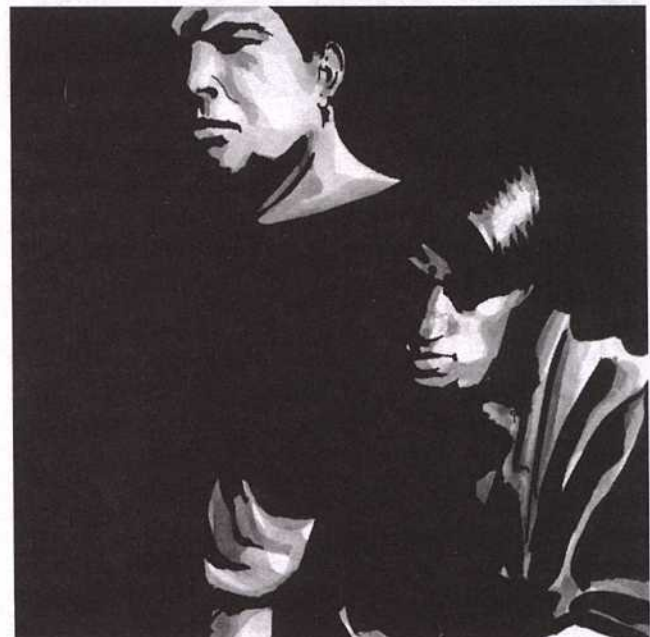
Demeanor: Conniver

Embrace: A.D. 234

Apparent Age: Both men are in their late 60s.

Dorotheus and Theophilus were once accomplished scholars in Constantinople, but always paled in comparison to Tribonius and Natalya. Both senators were resentful of the upstart Natalya's status, and assumed their tasks with nonchalance, putting the burden of Constantinople solely on Natalya's shoulders.

Upon Tribonius' death, the pair lost the person who gave their existence meaning. They have since become melancholic and manic-depressive, reading signs of Gehenna into everything that happens. Stanislav, the Caitiff Heretic, has recently taken the bureaucrats under his wing and has taught them the glory of Calomena. Finding little joy in their mundane tasks, Dorotheus and Theophilus have adopted this new faith with great fervor and aid the Caitiff in any way they can.



CHAPTER FIVE: THE DAMNED

NEREA OF SPAIN

10th generation, childe of Gusman Bravo

Nature: Penitent

Demeanor: Loner

Embrace: A.D. 1167

Apparent Age: early 20s

Nerea wants for nothing but atonement, which is why she has traveled to Constantinople. Having destroyed her sire and lover in a fit of jealous anger, she fled a Blood Hunt in her native city of Barcelona. Since her arrival in Constantinople she has gained recognition among the Latin Cainites, becoming known for keen observations and a quiet, contemplative nature. She also attends Bishop's Alfonzo's blood feasts.

A pall of sadness hangs over Nerea; she knows that Constantinople's days are numbered and is waiting for the flames to envelop her. She hopes that through her sacrifice, her sire will forgive her. Deep down, she also dreams of finding true love again.



CAITIFF

The Latin Quarter harbors several Caitiff, the number depending on the time of year. They are despised — and feared — by Byzantine Cainites.

STANISLAV, PROPHET OF CALOMENA

Background: Stanislav is one of the most dangerous Cainites in Constantinople, at least to its other vampires, whether they know it or not. The prophet was a mortal follower of the Bogomil heresy that even now plagues the Orthodox Church. According to the heretics, the world is the

construct of Satan and — of interest to vampiric scholars — Caine was the child of the Devil. Bogomils also maintain that Caine had a twin sister named Calomena.

Embraced by an unknown sire in the Balkans, Stanislav made his way south to Constantinople in the late 1180s. There he gathered mortal and undead followers and was guided by visions of Calomena. She supposedly informed Stanislav that the childer of Caine were the personification of material evil and that they must be destroyed. The Caitiff, on the other hand, were said to be chosen by Calomena, placed among the undead to prepare for her return and herald the coming of Apocalyptic fire.

Bishop Alfonzo of Venice, confident in the chaos that the Chosen would create, was more than happy to give them shelter in the Latin Quarter. Under this protection, the Chosen established a preaching base and promptly went underground. Now the Chosen instruct their fanatical followers that the demonic vampires in their midst must be destroyed, and they identify Hagia Sophia as the principal dwelling place of evil. The cult is organizing a direct attack on Michael and his brood, although all Cainites are legitimate targets.

Incidents of witch-hunts have erupted across the city since the Chosen's arrival, and no Cainite sect has gone untouched. Ironically, the Narsene Lasombra who first protected the Caitiff have suffered the most; Bishop Alfonzo has lost his eldest childer Juliano and Adrianna to Calomenan witch-hunters. Unknown to the Bishop, the locations of Lasombra havens were revealed to Stanislav while he stayed with the St. Ladre Nosferatu. The Venetians have recently declared war on Stanislav and his followers, but the Chosen are infamous for their skill at hiding among the masses.

Image: Dressing in simple robes and rejecting all physical adornments, Stanislav is a classic Slavic beauty. His shoulder-length black hair frames a round face that features full rich lips and a strong chin. His deep black eyes often gleam with tears of blood, shed at the thought of the evil surrounding him.



CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

Roleplaying Hints: It is your holy duty to convert those about you to the cause, and no price is too high to pay to achieve this goal. You speak with a simple passion that infects your followers and frightens your enemies.

Haven: Monastery of Saint Luke amid the ruins of Arcadius.

Secrets: Stanislav knows little of Constantinople's Cainite society, but often crosses paths with other prophets and heralds of judgment. He has spent time with the Nosferatu of St. Ladre, but they rejected his tenets.

Influence: Stanislav's teachings have won him the enmity of Constantinople's Cainite masters. Ironically, Stanislav's teachings have also inspired the Toreador Gallasyn, who views the Bogomils' beliefs as justification for hedonism and violence.

Destiny: Stanislav's dream of cleansing fire is but a few years away. His followers, mortal and Caitiff alike, are more than willing to transform the mercenary Fourth Crusade into an instrument of Byzantine destruction. In a final irony, Stanislav dies in a fire set by his own minions.

Clan: Caitiff

Sire: Unknown

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Fanatic

Generation: 11th

Embrace: A.D. 1132

Apparent Age: mid 30s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 2, Empathy 5, Intimidation 3, Leadership 5, Subterfuge 5

Skills: Stealth 4, Survival 4

Knowledges: Hearth Wisdom 3, Linguistics 3, Occult 3, Theology 2

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Chimerstry 4, Dementation 4, Presence 4

Backgrounds: Allies (Chosen of Calomena) 3, Herd (Cultists) 3, Influence (Cultists) 2

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

Road: Road of Heaven 9

Willpower: 9

CAPPADOCIANS

LADY ALEXIA THEUSA, MISTRESS OF DEATH

Background: Lady Alexia's history combines tragic love and eternal hope in equal measure. Born in the late fourth century B.C. in Athens, she lived a pampered life. Raised like a princess, she came to fall in love with one of her father's slaves, Andreas, and for years they kept their passion secret. They both knew their love, no matter how strong and perfect,

was never meant to be. Knowing that to live apart was too much for them to bear, they agreed to commit suicide in hopes of being reunited in the world beyond.

On the night of their suicide they met in a secluded garden, enjoyed the warm summer evening — the last of their lives. As morning approached, Andreas opened a small vial of poison and took a sip. The poison still on his lips, he reached out to kiss Alexia, but at that moment her father, warned by another servant, bolted into the garden and pulled Alexia away. Caught in her father's arms, she watched helplessly as Andreas died. Alexia was severely punished: Her head was shaved, a few precious belongings were packed and she was exiled.

Devastated, she tried to commit suicide again but stopped herself when she had a vision of her lover, who begged her not to proceed. In the vision, Andreas claimed that he would return not as a slave or servant, but as emperor of the city of Blinding Gold. With new hope, Alexia began traveling the known world in search of this fabled city and in the process learned as much as she could about death.

Her travels took her to Egypt and the Far East, where she studied the dark arts with whomever would teach her. All her knowledge, however, proved useless; she gradually grew to believe she would never find Andreas. She then decided to travel back to Athens and spend her last days in the garden where Andreas died.

On her journey back she traveled through the colony of Byzantium. Byzar, the Cappadocian founder of the colony, discovered Alexia. In the guise of an oracle, he heard her story and was impressed by her knowledge of death. On her final night in Byzantium, as she and Byzar discussed death while standing on the shore of the Bosphorus, he offered her the Embrace, telling her that by accepting immortality she could await her lover until the end of time. What he did not tell her was that in the short time that he had been with her, he had fallen in love and hoped that the Embrace would make her forget about her departed paramour and join him.

Unfortunately for Byzar, the Embrace only strengthened Alexia's love for Andreas. She saw another vision: a cross rising from the ashes of Byzantium; a city of gold would be built on the shores of the Bosphorus. As time passed, she came to understand that Byzar and his city must crumble or her lover would not return. One night she therefore incapacitated Byzar and his followers and, using her powers, placed them in torpor. She then began planning the destruction of Byzantium, which finally occurred in A.D. 196.

Lady Alexia has never stood far from the emperors of Constantinople, acting as — or having influence over — their personal physicians. She awaits the return of her lover, and as each emperor nears death she uses her influence to have him secretly Embraced. She hopes that by binding imperial souls to vampiric bodies, she increases the chances of Andreas' spirit reincarnating.

Through the ages, some potentates have escaped her care and vanished into the afterlife, but Alexia has been remarkably successful. And so, in the deepest recesses of

CHAPTER FIVE: THE DAMNED

Constantinople lies Alexia's haven, a crypt where the bodies of the emperors and Byzar himself lie in torpor. There they endure a Cappadocian's greatest fear: never knowing the comfort of true death.

Image: Though Embraced in her later years, Alexia's former beauty is still apparent. Offset by her deathly pallor, her sharp, classical features give her a dignified and conservative appearance, lending her a certain charm.

Roleplaying Hints: Outwardly, you are the epitome of the calm, pragmatic advisor. You radiate a serenity that borders on dreaminess.

All other concerns, however, are secondary to Andreas' return. Even the few lovers you have taken through the ages have been mere substitutes for him, and once you tire of a companion you inter him in your crypt where he remains your lover for eternity.

Haven: A crypt, built by Byzar as his haven, that is located deep beneath the Acropolis.

Secrets: Alexia is the only Cainite who is aware of the true fate of Byzantium's emperors. Upon their deathbeds she Embraces them and uses Vicissitude to replace their bodies with others.

Influence: Minor, but given her contacts and allies in the imperial palace, she could wield substantial power if she chose to. Caius has come to rely on Alexia's advice.

Destiny: Alexia meets her fate with the rest of her clan when the Giovanni make their move. Byzar and the emperors lying in torpor might be the last of the Cappadocians to survive, assuming Markus does not discover the location of the crypt first.

Clan: Cappadocian

Sire: Byzar

Nature: Caretaker

Demeanor: Loner

Generation: 5th

Embrace: 308 B.C.

Apparent Age: late 50s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 6, Intelligence 6, Wits 4

Talents: Acting 2, Alertness 3, Empathy 6, Intimidation 4, Larceny 2, Subterfuge 6

Skills: Animal Ken 3, Crafts 3, Etiquette 3, Herbalism 7, Music 2, Stealth 5, Survival 5

Knowledges: Academics 6, Hearth Wisdom 4, Investigation 3, Medicine 4, Occult 6, Politics 3

Disciplines: Auspex 6, Dominate 3, Fortitude 4, Mortis 7, Obfuscate 3, Presence 4, Vicissitude 2

Backgrounds: Allies (mortal physicians) 3, Influence (imperial physician) 5, Status 2

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

Road: Road of Humanity 5

Willpower: 8



OTHER CAPPADOCIANS OF NOTE

MARKUS MUSA GIOVANNI

7th generation, childe of Guisseppi Giovanni

Nature: Autocrat

Demeanor: Gallant

Embrace: A.D. 1115

Apparent Age: late 30s

Markus Musa, Claudius' youngest great-grandchilde, was inducted into the clan for his acute sense of curiosity and keen intellect. Once Embraced, Markus Musa proved to be an exceptional scholar, and above all else an excellent historian (a dangerous mix when combined with the Giovanni's deep-rooted sense of ambition).

Sent to Constantinople to help the Latin Cainites establish a presence, Markus was also instructed to gather as much information as possible on the elders of his clan, namely the location of Cappadocius and his progeny. To this end, he has repeatedly petitioned the Tzimisce to be allowed access to the Library of the Forgotten, but has been refused. At the same time, Lady Alexia has grown weary of Markus, prompting him to devise a plan by which he might supplant her as head of the Cappadocian "family," thereby gaining access to the library.

FOLLOWERS OF SET

The Setites of Constantinople normally number between three and five, and all are under the dominion of High Priest Khay'tall. There are no known independent Setites operating in the city; Khay'tall assassinates the ones he finds for fear that they will interfere with his family's goals.

KHAY'TALL, SNAKE OF EDEN

Background: Khay'tall, a Nuerian tribesman, was a slave to a Roman garrison commander stationed in Jerusalem and was present when the Christian Messiah was nailed to a cross on a hill outside the city. He watched as the man hung there, suspended like a banner of flesh against a wooden standard, and wondered what sort of god would demand such a sacrifice from his children. He would soon have his answer.

Khay'tall's master, Comus Setevrius, was well known for throwing extravagant feasts and orgies. The young slave, always forced to serve at these events, quickly realized that some of the visitors were more than human. He watched as some fed in an almost frenzied manner on other guests and, though he remained silent, he was aware of the almost slavish devotion others paid to their vices.

One evening, Khay'tall approached one of the regular guests, an Egyptian man named Nehsi — who he knew was one of these supernatural beings — and petitioned to be made like him. When the Egyptian amusedly asked why, Khay'tall stated that he realized that nobody was truly free. Everyone was a slave to something, whether it was vice, religion, hunger or other men. If he was to be a slave to something, he wanted to be a slave to something of his own choosing. Stunned by the perception displayed by the servant, Nehsi took Khay'tall as his own and taught him the ways of the Setites.

Khay'tall was kept as a ghoulish for nearly a century, learning all he could about the shackles of mortal vices, before Nehsi embraced him. He was then sent to serve at the Temple of Set in the Roman-conquered city of Carthage. It was in North Africa that Khay'tall met the recently Christianized Michael, and discoursed with him on the necessity of vice. Khay'tall convinced the ancient Toreador that anything worth building had to be able to withstand the temptations of corruption — otherwise it would be a slave to something greater. During the debates, Khay'tall felt that he had already won, for he heard the passion in Michael's words and knew that the patriarch was already a slave to his own dreams.

In later years, when Constantinople became home to the Triumvirate, Khay'tall began a secret correspondence with Michael to determine the best time to visit the city. When the word was finally given, Khay'tall entered Constantinople under the protection of Michael, to the surprise of everyone, and even gained scion family status. Since then, Khay'tall has been doing his best to prove to Michael that everything is corrupt, and that the snake of Eden is not an outside force that interferes, but is the inner weakness intrinsic to all.

Image: Bearing the tribal scars of the Nuer (several aligned rows of dots that extend from one cheek to the other across his nose), Khay'tall's skin still retains its dark luster while his black pupils seem to fill his entire eyes. His hair, braided and groomed, is dyed red with henna. His powerful figure is mostly hidden beneath dark robes that are inlaid with intricate patterns, but his build is betrayed by his broad

shoulders. He delights when Toreador become entranced by the serpentine patterns on his garb.

Roleplaying Hints: Stare, always stare. Judge, always judge. Silent, always silent.

Haven: The Silk Road

Secrets: Khay'tall is aware, through a St. Ladre Nosferatu in his employ, that Bishop Gabriella of Genoa is alive and under the "care" of the Assamite Shabah.

Influence: Khay'tall does not have dominance over any specific area of the city, but his insidious influence taints almost every facet of Byzantine life. The artisan guilds are where his corruption holds the greatest sway.

Destiny: Khay'tall has proved to be his own undoing. In demonstrating to Michael that nothing is perfect, he has become influenced by the patriarch's subconscious death wish. The Setite's corruption weakens the very structure of the city. During the upcoming rule of Alexius IV Angelus — the Byzantine emperor whose power is temporarily backed by the crusaders — Khay'tall is diablerized by his progeny, Sarrasine, for losing control of too many mortal pawns and weakening the Setite power base in Constantinople.

Clan: Setite

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Tyrant

Generation: 6th

Embrace: A.D. 104

Apparent Age: early 20s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 6, Manipulation 7, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Talents: Acting 4, Alertness 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 5,

Intimidation 3, Leadership 3, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Etiquette 3, Herbalism 4, Melee 4, Ride 2



CHAPTER FIVE: THE DAMNED

Knowledges: Academics 3, Hearth Wisdom 2, Linguistics 4, Occult 4, Politics 6

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Celerity 2, Dominate 4, Fortitude 1, Obfuscate 3, Potence 2, Presence 4, Serpentis 5

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Contacts 5, Herd 5, Influence 3, Resources 4, Retainers 5, Status 3

Virtues: Conviction 4, Instinct 2, Courage 4

Road: Road of Typhon 8

Willpower: 6

OTHER SETITES OF NOTE

SARRASINE, THE FAVORED SON

7th generation, childe of Khay'tall

Nature: Autist

Demeanor: Confidant

Embrace: A.D. 532

Apparent Age: 15

A young page in the court of Justinian the Great, Sarrasine noticed that the mortal emperors were not ruled by the Orthodox religion they professed, but by secret puppeteers far more powerful than the likes of mortals. His awareness of these beings' machinations and his probing questions brought him to the attention of Khay'tall, the newly arrived leader of the Children of Judas. Recognizing the same spark of intuitive brilliance that he himself had as a slave, Khay'tall took young Sarrasine under his wing.

In the centuries since, Sarrasine has managed to turn the tables on his sire, becoming chief confidant to all his master's secrets. He has come to understand that Khay'tall's interests in the city may not be what is best for the clan. The time to act and surpass the teacher approaches, and Sarrasine seeks to build power and a web of allies.

GANGREL

The Gangrel, more than any other clan in Constantinople, is a varied and diverse lot. Some members are typically isolated, but others have taken their roles as protectors to heart, performing their duties with ambition, determination and, above all, pride.

BARON THOMAS FEROUX

Background: Born in northern France as the only son of a minor nobleman, Thomas was raised in relative comfort until the day that his parents were attacked and killed by a pack of wolves. Thomas spent the following years living with his dour and cynical uncle. He was never tutored; his only escape was hunting. In truth, Thomas found a strange comfort in the dark woods that surrounded his family estate.

Thomas was 17 when his uncle died and he inherited his father's estate. He wanted nothing to do with its memories, though, and left on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. En route, angry and resentful at the world, he stole, lied and tricked his way from one inn to the next. Within a few short months Thomas was as dour, cynical and, above all, cruel as his uncle.



It was in a small Slavic town that his life changed forever. Having spent the better part of the day drinking, Thomas brought a young woman to his room. When she refused to give herself to him, he became enraged and beat her to death. Her blood was still warm on his hands when the shutters burst open and a wolf pounced in. Before Thomas could do anything, the beast was on him and took his life.

Unknown to Thomas, the truth of his parents' death was far darker than he ever imagined. His mother and father were killed, not by a pack of wolves but by a starving Gangrel, who Embraced Thomas' mother. The Beast would have taken her completely if not for her love for Thomas. He became her last hope for saving her soul. At night she would sneak into his room and gaze upon him, leaving before the sun rose.

When Thomas left his ancestral home, his mother followed, but looked on his actions with alarm and dismay. With every woman he raped, with every man he robbed, she felt the Beast claw at her soul. Finally, on the night he killed the woman, the Beast finally claimed her. She killed her son in a bloody frenzy. Yet, as his broken body lay under her, his blood staining the wood floor, pity and sadness touched her heart. Raging against the Beast, she dragged his body to a field and Embraced him, burying him in the soft earth. Wracked by guilt and shame, she lay on his makeshift grave and awaited the dawn, hoping that her sacrifice would mean Thomas' salvation.

When Thomas awoke and clawed his way to the surface, the only thing he found was his mother's pendant amid a pile of ashes. Unsure of what had happened, Thomas, confused and hungry, returned to the village where he was staying. There he hid as the Beast whispered to him. Finally, his hunger proved too much for him. Storming into the inn, he tore into the villagers, sating his craving on their warm blood. But, his rampage was stopped by the soothing words of a monk.

CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

Theoleon, a Gesudian monk on his way back to Constantinople, recognized Thomas for what he was. Calming him, he spent the night with the young man, trying to save his soul from the Beast. On the following night, Theoleon and Thomas left for Constantinople. The journey took a few weeks, during which the monk instructed Thomas in the glory of Gesu, and began the long process of teaching the Cainite of his true nature.

In Constantinople, Thomas was admitted into the order and quickly befriended Symeon. The Norman's sharp intellect soon blossomed, thanks to the Tzimisce. During the years that followed, Thomas learned Latin, Greek and Arabic and spent most of his time in the library. His reverence for the Obertus Tzimisce became known to all when he pledged to forever protect the monks and Constantinople. As a reward, Symeon approached the other Quaesitors and asked permission to grant the Gangrel family charter. With the passing of the Seventh Council, Thomas was given his charter and was charged with the protection of the Obertus Tzimisce and the city.

Image: Thomas is not imposing for a Gangrel. His frame is slender and well proportioned, and his catlike eyes betray the sadness he feels at times. What gives Thomas a commanding presence is the large scar that runs the length of his face and over his right eye. Slightly tufted ears protrude through his medium-length golden hair. Thomas wears a suit of mail armor that displays his rank.

Roleplaying Hints: Despite your learned ways, the Beast calls every night; it howls to be set free, to roam the darkness as your master. Only your responsibilities allow you to keep it at bay. You immerse yourself in duties and prayer, sacrificing yourself for others and protecting the Tzimisce.

Haven: Petriion Citadel

Influence: The Gangrel enforce the Codex among Byzantine vampires. Latins who fancy themselves immune from its laws learn otherwise.

Destiny: When the ashes have cooled, no one remembers Thomas and his crusade to protect Constantinople's Library of the Forgotten. As the Camarilla and Sabbat are formed, Thomas recedes into the darkness, eventually becoming one of the Inconnu, oblivious to his brethren's involvement in the Fourth Crusade.

Clan: Gangrel

Sire: Marie Feroux

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Judge

Generation: 7th

Embrace: A.D. 1076

Apparent Age: early 20s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 6, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 4, Brawl 5, Dodge 4, Intimidation 6, Larceny 3, Leadership 5, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Animal Ken 3, Herbalism 2, Melee (bastard sword) 5,

Ride 5, Stealth 5, Survival 5

Knowledges: Academics 1, Hearth Wisdom 3, Investigation 4, Linguistics 4, Occult 2, Politics 4

Disciplines: Animalism 5, Celerity 2, Dominate 2, Fortitude 5, Obfuscate 2, Potence 2, Protean 5, Vicissitude 1

Backgrounds: Contacts (Gangrel) 4, Influence 3, Retainers 4, Status 2

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

Road: Road of Chivalry 7

Willpower: 8

OTHER GANGREL OF NOTE

VERPUS SAUZEZH, CRESCENT KNIGHT OF THE GANGREL

8th generation, childe of Hectorous

Nature: Defender

Demeanor: Survivor

Embrace: A.D. 1145

Apparent Age: late 20s

Verpus' Turkish descent is unmistakable. Embraced without permission, he and his sire were hunted down by the Baron. In the end, Thomas was impressed by Verpus' tenacity and spared his unlife, although the sire perished for his transgression.

Verpus Sauzezh has been a key advisor to the Baron when dealing with the Turks, but, unknown to Thomas, Sauzezh has divided loyalties. Though he has sworn a Blood Oath to the Baron, his Turkish roots tug at him and may one day lead him to betray his city and family.

ISABEL MANARA, CARRION THIEF

12th generation, sire unknown

Nature: Rogue

Demeanor: Rebel

Embrace: A.D. 1191



CHAPTER FIVE: THE DAMNED

Apparent Age: early teens

Isabel's youthful appearance conceals a sharp intellect and vicious nature. One of the many Latin children who was orphaned after the riots of 1184, she grew up on the streets using her natural talents as a thief to make a living. Embraced by one of the Baron's Gangrel during frenzy, she was left to fend for herself in the Latin Quarter. Since then she has attracted a small gang of other so-called Carrion. A number of Latin bishops have used her services in return for protection, yet she is largely ignorant of the Cainites outside the Latin Quarter and believes that the Trinity is a myth. Thomas has caught wind of her activities and wants to bring her into the fold, but her resentment of authority may prevent this.

LASOMBRA

Clan Lasombra is divided in Constantinople. The Magnus family stands as part of the Byzantine Dream, its roots dating back to the dawn of the Roman Empire. By contrast, the rapacious Narsene Lasombra of Venice are voracious merchants who seek only to strip the city of its wealth.

MAGNUS, CUSTODIAN OF ORTHODOXY

Background: Any Lasombra who is a master of his craft knows the difference between control and manipulation. Both entail similar goals; the latter, however, is attained through subtle measures. Magnus of Byzantium, in all his years as a Lasombra, has had trouble with this distinction.

When Michael and his cadre first arrived in Byzantium, the Lasombra — under the poor guidance of Ectoris — controlled the city through cults. One of Ectoris' children, Magnus, saw the Triumvirate of ancient Cainites as an opportunity, not the threat his sire believed it to be. While Ectoris scrambled to retain his fleeting power, Magnus turned on his creator and staked him. This gift to the Triumvirate, accompanied by a promise to help steer the various cults toward Christianity, earned him the leadership of a scion family.

Having betrayed the remainder of his brood to Michael, Magnus created two to serve him. It did not take long for the Judas Cainite to realize that he would need to control some aspect of Byzantine life to justify his status in the city. With the Tzimisce gathering the harvest of the growing monastic orders, Magnus saw his destiny in the ecclesiastic divisions of the Church.

His plan was simple. Magnus knew that his Lasombra brethren who controlled the churches of Rome would try to cast their influence over Constantinople as well. He therefore cut off their avenues to the city to claim his own domain. Magnus encouraged separation between the already divided centers of the Christian Church, and took control of the Eastern branch.

If not for Magnus' errors in judgment, greater things might have been in store for him and his family. He believes in obtaining his goals through domination. While his methods

occasionally work, his grip often becomes too tight and strangles the life from his plans. His outrage at Maleki's show of independence, his lack of promising students, and the ineptitude displayed by his child Peter the Humble can all be traced to Magnus' heavy-handed approach.

Given Michael's insanity, Magnus spends the majority of his time trying to help Petronius guide the Triumvirate. His own ambitions, however, are steering the city's leadership in the wrong directions. Rather than unify the families, he attempts to play them against each other. Rather than seek assistance, he attempts to handle everything himself. Magnus, however, does not see the error on his ways; he sees only the glory that evades him.

Image: Magnus looks haggard and old. He is overweight, has sickly pouches beneath his tiny eyes, sports a peppered beard and mustache that hide his jowls, and lists from side to side as he walks. He is always seen in the rich garb of the Orthodox Church.

Roleplaying Hints: You rarely feel sympathy for others. You speak as though inconvenienced; you practically huff at any question asked and then respond with inadequate answers (which prompt even more questions). Blame everyone else when mistakes occur and chastise those beneath you. Time grows short and you have little patience for what you believe to be extraneous matters.

Haven: Church of Irene

Secrets: Magnus knows that the Malkavian Gregorius Dimitis is affecting Michael, but believes that the muse of performance is awakening the divinity within the patriarch. It is Magnus who brings Gregorius past the Scholai Guard to see Michael while the patriarch rests.

Influence: Almost all of Magnus' influences pertain to the ecclesiastic branch of the Orthodox Church. Any control he seems to exert over the cults of Michael is superficial. Sarah possesses real authority over the cults.

Destiny: Magnus meets an ironic fate. On the eve of the Fourth Crusade, Sarah the Chaste stakes Magnus as he strolls one last time through the Acropolis, and delivers him to the Narsene Lasombra. His Final Death is prolonged over the eight days that it takes the city to burn.

Clan: Lasombra

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Tyrant

Generation: 8th

Embrace: A.D. 76

Apparent Age: early 40s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 2

Talents: Acting 5, Alertness 3, Dodge 2, Intimidation 4, Leadership 1, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Archery 2, Etiquette 4, Herbalism 3, Melee 2, Ride 4

Knowledges: Academics 4, Linguistics 3, Occult 4, Politics 5,

Seneschal 3, Theology 4
Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 1, Dominate 5, Obtenebration 3, Potence 2, Presence 4
Backgrounds: Allies 1, Contacts 3, Herd 4, Influence 5, Resources 5, Retainers 5, Status 5
Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 2, Courage 3
Road: Road of Humanity 2
Willpower: 6

BISHOP ALFONZO OF VENICE

Background: The overlord of the Latin Quarter, Alfonzo is one of Constantinople's greatest enemies. Under orders from his sire Narses of Venice, Alfonzo works to undermine New Rome. An ambitious merchant in life, Alfonzo attracted Narses' attention by arranging for the convenient disappearance of a rival named Leonardo, who was hindering the establishment of lucrative trade rights with Norman Sicily. Narses watched over the trader and Embraced him when the Normans threatened Venetian passage in the Aegean. Although Alfonzo spent years as a Lasombra priest in Constantinople, he was only made bishop after the Narsene envoys were slaughtered in 1185.

Narses has charged Alfonzo with taking Byzantine's wealth for Venice, not knowing that the new bishop has plans of his own. He has been in contact with members of the shadowy Roman sect known as the Inconnu, whose members resent the Byzantine Dream. It was they who arranged the 1185 riots to put Alfonzo in power as an instrument of vengeance. The bishop plans to use Inconnu support to establish his own power base in the city, apart from the dominion of his bitter sire.

To destroy the Trinity's hold on Constantinople, Alfonzo has opened the Latin Quarter to a wide variety of elements, collectively known as Carrion. He has paid the price, however; Calmenan witch-hunters have destroyed his favorite childer, Juliano and Adrianna, who served as his principal priests. His sadness is only superficial, though; Alfonzo's self-mastery, so prized by the Lasombra, ebbs nightly. His Beast is attracted to the chaos that grows in the city, and the blood feasts he hosts for his allies sometimes take the form of refined orgies.

Image: Alfonzo always wears the finest robes and costumes, evoking the wealth and sophistication of Venice while trying to compete with the grandeur of his enemies. Only his fleeting smile — appearing at times of great stress and disorder — hints at his rapacious soul.

Roleplaying Hints: You must play the dignified role that your station demands, but true enjoyment comes from the Beast. You are the consummate host and your blood feasts are becoming infamous even among Greek Cainites.

Haven: Alfonzo rests in a fine house in the protected enclave near the Gate of Saint John de Cornibus. Ghouls and allies guard him and provide hapless victims for his insatiable hunger. His parties take place in a series of ballrooms. He sleeps in a hidden vault below.

Secrets: Alfonzo is aware of most things that transpire in the Latin Quarter. Only the Chosen of Calomena remain hidden to him, despite his instructions that they be found and destroyed. His knowledge of Greek sections of the city is limited, although his alliance with the Inconnu agent Gregorius has given him a frank perspective on Michael's madness.

Influence: Backed by the wealthiest Lasombra city-state, the shadowy support of the Inconnu and the Eighth Council, Alfonzo's hold on the Latin Quarter is secure. He is widely hated by members of the Trinity, but the status of his sire gives him influence even among his opponents.

Destiny: Alfonzo acquires real power when he rules the Latin Kingdom of Constantinople, which is born after the Fourth Crusade. The support of the Inconnu proves fleeting, however, as they slowly realize the crime they have precipitated in destroying the New Roman Dream. Abandoned, Alfonzo faces the wrath of his sire and the resurgent Greeks in Nicea.

Clan: Lasombra

Sire: Narses

Nature: Tyrant

Demeanor: Survivor

Generation: 7th

Embrace: A.D. 895

Apparent Age: mid 40s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Acting 4, Alertness 2, Empathy 3, Intimidation 4, Larceny 4, Leadership 3, Subterfuge 5

Skills: Etiquette 4, Music 2, Ride 4, Stealth 2, Survival 2

Knowledges: Academics 3, Investigation 2, Law 4, Linguistics 4, Occult 3, Politics 5



CHAPTER FIVE: THE DAMNED

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Dominate 5, Obtenebration 4, Potence 2, Presence 5

Backgrounds: Allies (Narses) 5, Contacts (Inconnu) 5, Influence (in Venice) 3, Resources 5, Retainers (traders) 4

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

Road: Road of Humanity 3

Willpower: 8

OTHER LASOMBRA OF NOTE

SARAH THE CHASTE

9th generation, childe of Magnus

Nature: Rebel

Demeanor: Survivor

Embrace: A.D. 402

Apparent Age: late teens

Sarah, a nun, was Embraced by Magnus, who was in need of bright, loyal followers. Yet 600 years of existence has a way of altering loyalties. This change, however, did not occur until Sarah was charged with leading mortals into the cult of Michael. She initially succumbed to Michael's angelic delusions, but then seemed to recover her faculties.

Unbeknownst to her, Michael is using Sarah to replace Magnus as leader of the Lasombra family. She is to be responsible for her sire's death (even though she does not yet realize it), bringing Magnus' life full circle (the prodigal son, who becomes the father by betraying his sire, falls victim to his own sin).

Sarah, believing she has broken away from Michael's madness, realizes that everything around her is crumbling. Magnus obviously has no skill to maintain what he holds, Michael is in no position to help anyone, her brother Peter is as inept as his Cainite father, and the other families are caught up in their own struggles. Disgusted by the way other vampires are so easily felled by their own dilemmas, Sarah has turned to the Narsene Lasombra. Although she has retained her position as cult leader and confidante to Magnus, she now spies for her Latin brethren.

PETER THE HUMBLE

9th generation, childe of Magnus

Nature: Child

Demeanor: Autocrat

Embrace: A.D. 407

Apparent Age: late 30s

Never certain of where he belonged, Peter spent most of his mortal life flitting among various religious vocations. Magnus mistook Peter's actions as those of someone well versed in a variety of fields and Embraced him on this false assumption. Peter has since proved a great disappointment.

Constantly failing at tasks or never completing them because Magnus grows impatient or intercedes, Peter is not adapting well to his newfound power. On a number of occasions, Magnus has tried to phase him out of the family by indoctrinating new vampires, but something always manages to disrupt his plans.



Most recently, Peter has fallen into Michael's insanity and seeks to confront the patriarch with an adversary worthy of his ascension. Peter knows of the Baali Mary the Black and awaits the moment when he can lead her to Michael.

BISHOP GABRIELLA OF GENOA

8th generation, childe of Isabelle

Nature: Rogue

Demeanor: Autocrat

Embrace: A.D. 936

Apparent Age: late 30s

The only Latin vampire to survive the slaughter of 1185, Gabriella is distrusted by her fellows. She in turn has very little confidence in Alfonzo of Venice, who sits above her by grace of the Eighth Council. Ambitious and driven like most of her clan, Gabriella sees Constantinople as a rich but fractured resource. She believes that her clan should be assisting in its reconstruction rather than robbing it of its wealth. A newly resurgent Byzantium — with Genoese allies, of course — could prove a source of infinite riches. Gabriella has tried to establish good relations with Byzantine Cainites, and grew particularly close to the Tzimisce Symeon, with whom she and her mortal favorite Lillian found sanctuary during the Latin massacre. However, the death of Lillian at the hands of Symeon's brother Gesu dealt a blow to the alliance.

Gabriella now finds herself in a very precarious position. The Assamite Shabah, acting on orders of the Ventrue Helena the Armenian, has kidnapped Gabriella. Held in the Saracen's haven, Gabriella is doing her best to take advantage of the assassin's uncharacteristic reluctance to kill her. The bishop has already provided information about Alfonzo, in the hopes of simultaneously regaining her freedom and ending his miserable existence.

CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

MALKAVIAN

Aside from occasional appearances throughout the ages, the childer of Malkav traditionally shunned the city of Constantinople. When they did visit, few ever remained for long; they tarried in order to observe goings-on and then vanished. Legends persisted that visiting Malkavians were looking for something — a relic of the past — but none were able to confirm these rumors.

That all changed 50 years ago. For no apparent reason Constantinople's Malkavian population swelled. Settling in the squalid and largely lawless Latin Quarter, the Malkavians frequent seedy establishments and pose as entertainers and charlatans. They also rob unsuspecting mortals of more than just their change. Others wander the streets as penitent flagellants, their tortured screams echoing throughout the city as they share visions of doom and madness with those they meet.

Unknown to all, Muse of Performance Gregorius Dimities, a Malkavian, is using the sudden influx of his kind to create disorder. His goal is to turn Michael's Heaven on Earth into Hell.

GREGORIUS DIMITIES, MUSE OF PERFORMANCE

Background: Gregorius' past is, at best, a vague memory that haunts him. Voices, feelings, and visions of places he has never visited torment him as he sleeps. The only solace he has found is in writing about his dreams. To him his written works are the tortured ramblings of his frail psyche. To others they are wonderful tragedies.

In truth, Gregorius was Embraced by one of the Inconnu in the late fifth century, as Rome fell. After he was taken, he escaped from his sire and wandered the dark streets of the Eternal City. Amidst the winding, crooked paths, Gregorius' sanity fragmented and finally shattered.

In a frenzy, he stumbled into the vast underground catacombs of Rome and eventually wandered into a secret chapel that had once served as Michael's shrine. There, the young Malkavian felt the presence of Michael — his power and ambition. For hours he traced the delicate mosaics on the walls and understood their pattern. For a fleeting moment Gregorius' world became whole and united; he understood the nature of God, and knew complete and absolute peace. Then the moment passed and left the Malkavian obsessed. Michael had shown him peace, tormenting him with what he would never know again.

Gregorius' sire did find him again, and for the next few years nursed the child's unique psyche. Gregorius never recovered, of course, but came to appreciate his insanity. The hatred he felt for Michael inspired him.

When he heard of Michael's Constantinople, Gregorius pleaded to be allowed to travel there, to take revenge against Michael. The Malkavian's sire and the other Inconnu agreed, hoping that Gregorius would be the tool with which to strike

back at the patriarch. After Gregorius arrived in Constantinople he demonstrated his talent for performing tragedy before Michael. The patriarch fell in love with Gregorius' work.

Since that night, Gregorius has ensnared Michael in a web of madness. He hopes to twist the Methuselah's perceptions and views until the city and Dream are as fragmented and ruined as Gregorius' sanity.

Image: Gregorius appears frail and sickly; his limbs are bone-thin and his eyes carry a tinge of sadness. His thinning gray hair frames his head like a crown, giving him a defiant Roman appearance. Unlike other muses, he loves to offset his delicate frame with the most ostentatious clothing, at times using his wardrobe to actively display the insanity from which he suffers.

Roleplaying Hints: Your hatred of Michael is overpowering, yet at times you feel that you have forgotten why you hate him so. It doesn't matter, though. In the end you and he will be ashes.

Haven: Varies

Secrets: Gregorius knows that the Inconnu despise Constantinople for surpassing their masterpiece. He is more than happy to aid them in the city's destruction. He is also responsible for the roving bands of Malkavian flagellants that terrorize the city, and he has influence over them.

Influence: Gregorius has Michael's ear and loves making the Toreador do foolish things, reinforcing both of their delusions. Gregorius also advises the Narsene Lasombra Alfonso, who has forged an alliance with the Inconnu.

Destiny: Gregorius perishes after the Fourth Crusade at the hands of the Inconnu, when he tries to atone for serving them.

Clan: Malkavian

Sire: Demtius

Nature: Monster

Demeanor: Celebrant

Generation: 6th



BRUBAKER

CHAPTER FIVE: THE DAMNED

Embrace: A.D. 367

Apparent Age: late 40s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 6, Appearance 5

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 3

Talents: Acting 5, Alertness 4, Artistic Expression 5, Brawl 3,

Dodge 2, Empathy 5, Intimidation 5, Larceny 3, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Crafts 3, Etiquette 5, Herbalism 3, Music 4, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Academics 3, Investigation 3, Linguistics 4, Occult 4, Politics 4

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Dementation 6, Dominate 3, Presence 3, Obfuscate 3

Backgrounds: Allies (Inconnu) 2, Herd 2, Resources 2, Retainers (other Malkavians) 3, Status 3

Virtues: Conviction 5, Instinct 3, Courage 3

Road: Road of Typhon (equivalent) 6

Willpower: 7

NOSFERATU

Unbeknownst to many, the Nosferatu is the largest and most powerful clan in Constantinople. However, because most of these vampires live in the city illegally, the clan cannot overtly manifest its strength.

The Nosferatu are divided into two allied groups, those of the Malachite Family and those of the Order of St. Ladre. The former group, with only three members, holds official family status; the latter is forced to remain hidden. What the Nosferatu lack in political sanction, they make up for in numbers, not to mention mortal agents and pawns.

MALACHITE, THE ROCK OF CONSTANTINOPLE

Background: Malachite is the chosen name of Maleki, a former prelate in the Orthodox Church of Byzantium. As one of the more talented members of the ecclesiastic order, Maleki made a Blood Oath to Magnus himself and was promised a place within the trinity of the Magnus Lasombra, replacing Peter the Humble. Unfortunately, Maleki made a grave error when he publicly contradicted his sponsor, a deed that would not go unpunished.

Amid the Iconoclast controversy of the eighth century, the monastic orders were disbanded and their members ridiculed for supporting the veneration of icons. Not privy to the machinations behind the scenes, Maleki, though a staunch supporter of Iconoclasm, believed that the harsh treatment of the monks was nothing more than an attempt to usurp their financial position in the Church. He spoke out against their ill treatment in a move that damaged Magnus' standing with the other families. "If Magnus cannot control his apprentice," they inquired, "how can he run a family?"

Magnus swiftly retaliated, not by killing Maleki (for no lesson would have been learned), but by having him Embraced by a Nosferatu named Vasilli the Penitent Dog. Michael was outraged by

the act and quickly took Maleki under his wing, trying to undo the psychological damage wrought by Magnus' treachery. Maleki, renamed Malachite, was given family status and the right to Embrace two others. From that time since, the Nosferatu and the Magnus Lasombra have dealt with each other indirectly whenever possible.

Malachite is unlike many of his clanmates in that he is not ashamed to show his face by firelight. He regards his position as important and believes he should act in an appropriate manner. To do otherwise would be to admit defeat to both Magnus and, more importantly, Michael.



Image: Malachite's dead, dry skin is tightly drawn over his bones. It cracks and splits whenever he moves or contorts his face. He lacks hair, even eyebrows, and his nose is knife-thin. Yet the scars of Malachite's Embrace fade in contrast to his bearing. Despite a touch of rictus, he is noble and tall, thin and regal. He never avoids eye contact and stares at people with meaningful intensity.

Roleplaying Hints: You know who, what and why you are. You enjoy making people uncomfortable, but do not let them forget that you are a man — one of honor, distinction, fairness and deliberate action. There is a purpose to everything that you do.

Haven: Palace of Daphne

Secrets: Malachite is one of the Cainite leaders who is trying to save the city. He is the instigator of the alliance between the Baron, Lexor and St. Ladre families. He knows of the books being smuggled out of the city, and senses darkness for Constantinople should no one act to ensure otherwise.

Influence: Malachite has influence over the merchants of the Mese and the attendants at the Baths of Arcadius; interesting bits of gossip surface in these places first. Malachite is known and respected by most Cainite families. His Ventruue ally Belisarius has even asked him to take the reins of the Michaelites from Petronius and lead the city himself.

CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

Destiny: In the final year of the city, Michael sees the fall coming and, in his last moment of lucidity, Dominates the Nosferatu into fleeing. Though the names of the Malachite and St. Ladre Nosferatu eventually fade, their legacy spreads to their brethren and unifies the clan. Malachite himself vanishes, but rumors persist that he is in Damascus, hunting Baali.

Clan: Nosferatu

Nature: Defender

Demeanor: Judge

Generation: 7th

Embrace: A.D. 842

Apparent Age: early 20s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 6

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 6, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 4, Dodge 3, Empathy 5, Intimidation 2, Leadership 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Animal Ken 1, Crafts 2, Etiquette 3, Melee 3, Music 2, Stealth 4, Survival 3

Knowledges: Academics 4, Law 2, Linguistics 4, Occult 4, Politics 3

Disciplines: Animalism 1, Auspex 1, Celerity 2, Fortitude 2, Obfuscate 4, Potence 4, Presence 1, Protean 2

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 4, Herd 1, Resources 2, Status 4

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

Road: Road of Chivalry 7

Willpower: 8

OTHER NOSFERATU OF NOTE

FRA' RAYMOND, LEPER KNIGHT OF ST. LAZARUS

8th generation, childe of Fra' Gerard



Nature: Defender

Demeanor: Caretaker

Embrace: A.D. 1158

Apparent Age: early 60s

As the second Hospitaller to take the mantle of office for the Order of St. Ladre, Fra' Raymond accepted the position as a leper and was fully aware of the Nosferatu living within the lazar houses. He accepted the Embrace without hesitation; the temptation to help others from beyond death's confines was too much to resist. Now he uses his skills to heal the spirit of Constantinople.

Fra' Raymond has discovered a kindred spirit in Malachite. Unlike many of his penitent brethren, he senses a nobility in Malachite that could inspire other Nosferatu to hold their heads high. Perhaps Constantinople has the potential to rejuvenate the clan. Time and circumstance will tell.

THE THREE

7th generation, childer of Malachite

Nature: Loner

Demeanor: Survivor

Embrace: A.D. 1096

Apparent Age: late childhood

Very little is known of the Three, save that the boys are triplets and were all Embraced by a Nosferatu. Identical down to their very deformities, there is nothing that distinguishes one from another, not even voice.

The Three, discovered wandering with amnesia through the city of Acre, were mistaken for lepers and brought to the Infirmary of St. John's, where the Nosferatu recognized them for what they were. Each displayed the ability to have visions and see what the other two were doing; it was they who had dreams about the "city of hope," which guided Fra' Raymond to Constantinople. The Three have been with the clan for about a decade now, under the tutelage of Fra' Raymond himself.

Unknown to all save Michael and Malachite, the Three were part of Peter the Hermit's entourage when he passed through Constantinople on his way to the Holy Land in 1096. Malachite found the children as he spied on their camp, and informed Michael of them. He was told to Embrace the Three without being seen and to place them in torpor. The triplets, kept within the Basilica Cistern, shared Michael's Dream and began to see Constantinople as Heaven. They were Michael's cherubim.

When the time approached for the Three to "awaken," they were smuggled into Acre and arrangements were made for them to be taken to the Infirmary of St. John's — where Michael knew there to be a Nosferatu haven. The patriarch believed that because Constantinople would become Heaven on Earth, the weak and downtrodden should be accorded a place in the new kingdom. He considered the Three his shepherds who would lead the Nosferatu of Acre to Constantinople, and who would introduce Malachite — a figure they constantly dreamt of — to Fra' Raymond.



Because of their shared mental link, one of the Three always remains with Fra' Raymond, one stays hidden with Malachite, and the last watches the cisterns and sewers. This way, the two Nosferatu leaders know of each other's whereabouts and can communicate through the children.

RAVNOS

Only one Ravnos has status in Constantinople: Gregory the Wonder Maker, an adopted member of the Antonian Ventrue. Others arrive in the city on an irregular basis to ply their wares and perform tricks for the "spiritual adjustment" of the pompous Byzantine Cainites.

GREGORY THE WONDER MAKER

Background: In 623, Gregory Lakeritos was among the Akoimetai monks sent to Alexandria to duplicate important records from the Great Library of Alexandria. A believer in the Tzimisce quest for enlightenment beyond the physical plane, he was attracted to the most esoteric and mystic of tomes. Gregory unearthed from among the countless books a manuscript called "The Book of the Fifth Essence," which he discovered to be a Greek translation — by Aristotle, no less — of an ancient Trojan text by Aretus. The work postulated the existence of a dynamic natural element known as "ether" and the possibility of using it to shape the world and create unimaginable wonders. His mind became filled with the possibilities of a new facet of natural science and the marvels it could create.

Wandering the night streets clutching his copy of the text, Gregory attracted a troupe of Alexandrine Ravnos and was Embraced. Gregory spent several years with the Ravnos caravan as it slowly traveled about the empire. When the

troupe arrived at the gates of Constantinople, Gregory realized that the city was still his home. The wanderlust of most Ravnos was not his — his journey would continue in his mind.

The Tzimisce, however, were less than pleased with their ghoul's disappearance, and the Dracon himself felt that Gregory had abandoned the true path. He was going to be ejected from the city until he presented a small mechanical bird that he had created by extrapolating from Aretus' text. The Ventrue Caius saw it as a work of art that would please Michael and convinced Antonius to afford Gregory the protection of the Ventrue family. Caius planned to use Gregory as proof that he understood Michael, but the patriarch rejected all who were associated with the murder of his lover Antonius.

For his part, Gregory has spent the centuries developing his skills after the manner of Aretus, and has created wonders known throughout the East. Caius, still clinging to a desperate hope that Michael will one night appreciate Gregory's toys, has had Gregory send many of them to Hagia Sophia. It was Petronius, however, who received the gifts. Enraptured, the Toreador satirist sought out Gregory's friendship and the two have been allies ever since. Gregory has also become a member of the Dream Circle, pursuing understanding of the ways of Aretus through the dream techniques of the Salubri Achmet.

Gregory currently sponsors a protégé, a young girl of vast talent named Zoe. The girl has already created a series of bronze cats that seem to have lives of their own.

Image: Gregory wears long robes of red and gold and adorns himself with small examples of his crafts. Brooches move of their own volition, rings glimmer with invisible power and torchlight dances about his body. These amazing creations hide the twisted body that is Gregory's Tzimisce heritage.

Roleplaying Hints: Wonder and spectacle are your arts. Most seek darkness in all they do. You pursue the simple pleasures that bring light to even the blackest of souls.



CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

Haven: Gregory and Zoe live in the Palace of Magnaura, surrounded by their magical creations. Flocks of golden birds nest in bronze trees. Silver-and-onyx panthers and lions stalk each other on the palace grounds.

Secrets: Gregory occasionally sends his metallic birds to spy on the vampires of the city, and shares what he discovers with Petronius. He has recently learned of a series of secret meetings between Helena the Armenian and the Assamite envoy Shabah. Gregory is also aware of the St. Ladre Nosferatu's presence, which he learned of from the small Nosferatu child who occasionally comes to watch Zoe's creations at play.

Influence: Only Petronius and the followers of Achmet the Dreamer understand the importance of Gregory's wonders in releasing the vampiric mind from its prison of darkness.

Destiny: Gregory understands that Michael's ultimate wonder — Heaven on Earth — is profoundly flawed. He sees destruction on the horizon and is prepared to leave with Zoe.

Clan: Ravnos

Sire: Icarus the Fool

Nature: Caretaker

Demeanor: Loner

Generation: 9th

Embrace: A.D. 626

Apparent Age: early 30s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 6

Talents: Acting 3, Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Empathy 5, Larceny 3

Skills: Animal Ken 4, Crafts (metal work) 7, Music 3, Survival 1

Knowledges: Academics 5, Hearth Wisdom 3, Investigation 3,

Linguistics 5, Medicine 3, Occult 6, Science 5

Disciplines: Animalism 3, Auspex 5, Chimerstry 5, Fortitude 2

Backgrounds: Allies (Constantine) 5, Resources 3

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

Road: Road of Humanity 6

Willpower: 6

TOREADOR

Only a handful of Toreador reside in Constantinople. Many more, however, are said to be making their way to the city following the collapse of the Latin Outremer. These refugees will become targets of the Setites and many will fall to Serpent manipulations. The Toreador who leave the city after the Fourth Crusade are the progenitors of the debauched Cainites who weaken the clan. The Toreador legacy of Constantinople fades quickly, and young Toreador do more to tarnish the city's memory than preserve it.

MICHAEL THE PATRIARCH

The Wanderer, Muse of the Michaelite Family and Self-Proclaimed Archangel

Background: Born as Mi-ka-il in the 22nd century before the birth of the Christian Messiah, the future Patriarch of Constantinople spent his mortal life in the Mesopotamian city

of Ebla, a powerful city of a quarter-million people that was thought to be the Rome of its era. Skilled in words and writing in a world where words were power, Mi-ka-il was eventually made the king's scribe. This brought him to the attention of the Toreador Antediluvian who Embraced him as one thrice removed from Caine. Mi-ka-il spent the remaining 50 years of Ebla's existence enjoying the fortunes of godhood and the adulation bestowed upon him by his lover, Ma-ri.

When Ebla fell to the Akkadians, Mi-ka-il was secreted out of the city during the day and taken to Kish, on the Euphrates. By the time he awakened it was too late to save Ma-ri, who had been left behind. It was a loss from which Mi-ka-il never fully recovered.

As Mi-ka-il traveled along the Fertile Crescent, he changed names after discovering that Akkadian vampires were hunting him. Unfortunately, Beshter, as he called himself, had developed a taste for being worshipped and gained adherents wherever he went. Even though he escaped his enemies many times, his craving for adulation put him in constant danger.

Beshter finally struck out into the world on a quest for self-discovery. Foreign lands passed under his feet as he spent his first millennium observing various cultures. By 550 B.C., Beshter came upon Byzantium, a colony on the Bosphorus built by Byzar the Megarian. The fledgling outpost and coastal paradise captured his heart. After a year or so in Byzantium, he continued his journey to the uncivilized West and sought a place to settle that was not already dominated by his ilk. He eventually came to the Seven Hills and the nascent city of Rome. Beshter chose to settle there.

Recounting the centuries that passed during the life of Besther and Rome would be a monumental task. Simply put, Besther was one of the most potent Cainites in the region and he stood by the city and helped it grow. As a Toreador, his concerns lay with the arts, not politics.

Beshter also spent time traveling to the territorial acquisitions of his empire, studied the conquered peoples and assimilated the cultural qualities that he approved of. Whenever he left Rome to wander, his friends Antonius the Ventrué and the Dracon of the Tzimisce guarded his childer and assets. He returned the favor by supporting their endeavors in the city. The Triumvirate, as they were later called, were steadfast friends and lovers.

It was during his travels in North Africa that Beshter encountered adherents of the fledgling religion known as Christianity. Curious about their tenets, he returned to Rome and had the city's Nosferatu spy on cells of Christians hidden in the local catacombs. Many of the Nosferatu were attracted to the doctrines of the religion, and converted.

Beshter's spies returned and convinced him to join the religion of Christianity. Still striving to fill the void in his life, Beshter agreed and took the name Michael, after the religion's premier and most potent angel. In truth, the move was made partially out of hubris; he saw himself as the protector and savior of these downtrodden people. Mi-ka-il's ancient vice was surfacing again.



As Rome began to deteriorate, Michael realized that it was time to leave. He asked his two lovers, Antonius and the Dracon, to escape with him and forge a new destiny. After some debate they assented and left for Michael's fondly remembered Byzantium.

The remainder of Michael's story is recounted in Constantinople's past and his family's history. The only tale left to tell is that of the insanity that embraces his soul. Between the loss of both Antonius and the Dracon and the manipulations of the Malkavian Gregorius, Michael has regressed to the old ways of his character, only with greater conviction. He no longer wishes to be regarded as an angel, he actually considers himself one. Michael plans to make Constantinople his chariot as he makes his ascension to Divinity.

Image: Michael, through a union of Chimerstry and Presence, appears in the guise of a stained-glass angel. Light shines through his form, his face is unchanging in its calm benevolence, emotions play off the shimmer of his halo, and his winged body sparkles. Above all, his presence demands immediate supplication.

Roleplaying Hints: You never speak; your very actions are your words. All beneath you need nurturing, guidance and understanding, and you are here to provide. Heaven awaits the righteous and you shall be the one to lead your followers to glory. You are an angel, the chief angel, Michael.

Haven: Hagia Sophia

Secrets: Constantinople is rife with the workings of Michael's mind.

Influence: Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire.

Destiny: Michael is destined to sacrifice himself. He decides that the Trinity he always sought to be a part of should

manifest within himself. He has always been the Patriarch, the Father; now he must become the Son and the Holy Ghost in order to ascend.

On the eve of the Fourth Crusade, Michael allows Peter the Humble to bring Mary the Black to him. He lets her diablerize him, fulfilling his role as the Son through his sacrifice, and is freed to complete his journey as the Holy Ghost.

Clan: Toreador

Nature: Innovator

Demeanor: Judge

Generation: 4th

Embrace: 22nd century B.C.

Apparent Age: early 20s

Physical: Strength 6, Dexterity 8, Stamina 7

Social: Charisma 9, Manipulation 8, Appearance 9

Mental: Perception 8, Intelligence 7, Wits 8

Talents: Acting 3, Alertness 7, Brawl 6, Dodge 7, Empathy 9, Intimidation 7, Leadership 8, Subterfuge 6

Skills: Animal Ken 4, Crafts 9, Etiquette 5, Melee 7

Knowledges: Hearth Wisdom 7, Linguistics 8, Occult 8

Disciplines: Animalism 4, Auspex 8, Celerity 6, Chimerstry 6, Dominate 7, Fortitude 3, Potence 6, Presence 9

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Herd 5, Influence (Guilds) 3, Resources 5, Retainers (Scholai Ghouls Guards) 5, Status 6

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

Road: Road of Chivalry 9

Willpower: 10

OTHER TOREADOR OF NOTE

PETRONIUS THE ARBITER

Muse of the Minor Arts, Leader *pro tem* and Quaesitor of the Michaelite Family

5th generation, childe of Michael

Nature: Celebrant

Demeanor: Loner

Embrace: A.D. 65

Apparent Age: early 30s

The rule of Nero, in the century following the death of Christ, was marked by great turbulence as various Cainite clans vied for power. Manipulated by the Setites, Lasombra and Malkavians, Nero became known as a mad despot who eventually burned Rome to its foundations. During his reign, he heaped both favor and scorn on those who crossed his path. Celebrated one day, a citizen could find himself drinking from a poisoned goblet the next.

One such citizen was Petronius, a Roman satirist known for his extraordinary taste, elegance, luxurious lifestyle and shameless hedonism. Nero had him named "arbiter" in a show of approval that lasted only briefly. Petronius penned the *Satyricon*, a renowned body of work that included the "Dinner of Trimalchio," in which tales involving a werewolf and

vampire were recounted. Though Petronius had no knowledge of the Cainites that infested Rome, Michael and the other Toreador took notice.

When Petronius later fell from grace, he attempted to commit suicide rather than face the brutal death that undoubtedly awaited him. Michael intervened and brought the satirist into the Toreador fold. The Embrace was enough to change Petronius. He was entranced by Michael's beauty and abandoned his hedonistic ways.



When the decision to leave for Byzantium was finally made, Petronius was one of the few Toreador who joined Michael. Since that time, Petronius has been Constantinople's muse of the minor arts. With Michael's deepening insanity, he has retaken his old title of arbiter as well, and assumed the positions of Quaesitor and family leader. Petronius believes in the patriarch's divinity and considers himself Michael's *major-domo*. Unlike the other Toreador, Petronius is aware that adulation of the archangel must be tempered in order to fulfill family obligations. To fail the Michaelites is to fail Michael.

Duty has begun to take its toll on Petronius; none of the other Toreador feel the need to involve themselves in the city's bureaucracy. Petronius has therefore begun to rely on the Magnus Lasombra for help, even though they are gaining power over the Toreador. Of all the Cainites in the city, Petronius' sole confidant and best friend is the Ravnos Gregory. Petronius has repeatedly petitioned the Antonian scion to join the ranks of the Michaelites, where his talents would be fully appreciated, but Gregory has declined.

ANTHEMIOS OF TRALLES

Muse of Architecture

5th generation, childe of Michael

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Autocrat

Embrace: A.D. 537

Apparent Age: late 30s

Anthemios, an accomplished mathematician, was Embraced by Michael and became the muse of architecture following his successful completion of Hagia Sophia. In the last century, Anthemios' genius has succumbed to Michael's delusions. He now brings promising architects before Michael, hoping to inspire them and restore Constantinople's beauty, but the artists are only driven insane in Michael's presence. Anthemios' actions have resulted in the construction of lackluster and unoriginal churches.



PAKOURIANIS THE DOVE

Muse of Paintings

5th generation, childe of Michael

Nature: Child

Demeanor: Fanatic

Embrace: A.D. 567

Apparent Age: early 20s

Michael followed the development of the talented painter Pakourianis from the mortal's adolescence, and Embraced him. Always subject to the patronage of his sire, Pakourianis has recently felt Michael's guiding hand fall lax and has been affected in turn. Pakourianis fears that Michael will leave him to go to Heaven, so the muse is trying to learn how to fly.

Pakourianis spends his nights studying birds, painting them and making space for them in his chambers (his windows are flung open and his haven becomes a nocturnal aerie for his winged friends). He has one of Gregory the Wanderer's mechanical birds, but in studying it he broke it and now keeps it on his worktable. Its gears and springs lie exposed while he tries to fathom their magic. Pakourianis can be found in his haven on any night, and weeps over all the beauty that seems to elude him.

Sometimes, when Pakourianis' fears are too great to bear, he purges them in a cathartic leap from the battlements of Seraglio Point into the ocean below. His screams of frustration over futile efforts to fly can be heard for some distance.

PAUL BATHALOS

Muse of Sculpture

5th generation, childe of Michael

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Penitent

Embrace: A.D. 750

Apparent Age: late 20s

It was love at first sight for Michael. Paul, though not a great sculptor in comparison to masters, was still sufficiently proficient to warrant attention. It was not his skill, however, that brought about his Embrace, but a longing in Michael that harkened back to his past. He believed that Paul was an incarnation of Ma-ri — his beloved ghoul from Ebla — based on some startling but coincidental similarities in his general build, effeminate manner and soft beauty.

Paul is not the reincarnation of Michael's ancient lover, but is convinced that he is. Paul also believes that the patriarch is an angel, and fears that their relationship may ruin Michael's ascendance. To prevent the patriarch from becoming a "fallen angel," Paul has allowed Symeon to transform him into a hideous monstrosity. Paul now sequesters himself in his chambers, concentrates on his craft and occasionally visits Michael when the Methuselah falls into torpor.

GALLASYN, THE FIRST FALLEN

8th generation, childe of Enasius

Nature: Celebrant

Demeanor: Rogue

Embrace: A.D. 324

Apparent Age: late 20s

An aspiring sculptor of great potential, Gallasyn was one of the original Roman Toreador brought to Constantinople to fulfill Michael's Dream. He was also the first to leave the city when, in the sixth century, the patriarch's influence started to dominate and stifle the creativity of the other Toreador. After wandering Europe, Gallasyn realized his error in leaving Constantinople and returned hoping to be readmitted into the Michaelites. Feeling betrayed by Gallasyn, Michael refused his request, but Khay'tall interceded and "adopted" the sculptor as a member of the Children of Judas.

Miserable in exile from Michael, Gallasyn was the first of the Toreador to fall to the influence of the Setites. Their vices offered him mindless comfort and allowed him to retreat into his own carnal nature.

The Children of Judas eventually left Gallasyn by the wayside, having exhausted his potential for depravity. He then became an advisor to the Narsene Lasombra when they first arrived in the city. The Narsene now have little to do with Gallasyn, even though he is still loosely associated with them.



He partakes in Bishop Alfonzo's orgies and blood feasts, stalks with mortal rape gangs in the slums, and spends a great deal of time in the Silk Road's hashish den where he feeds on drug-laced vitae.

TREMERE

The shock of the Usurpers' rise still reverberates throughout Constantinople. The doomed Clan Salubri is recognized here for its learning, and the followers of Tremere are mistrusted newcomers.

THERESA KYMENA, PRIESTESS OF DREAMS

Background: A skilled practitioner of ephemeral and mind magic, Theresa Kymena was a respected member of House Tremere of the Order of Hermes when she was called to the central covenant of her House. Theresa hoped that her elders had some exciting new lore to share with her. She got much more than she bargained for. Transfixed by the powerful presence of Tremere himself, she could not resist the Embrace of the German magus Friedrich. Now that she had become a vampire, her refined magic was debased into the blood rituals of Thaumaturgy. Despite the power of her Blood Oath to the Council, she knew immortality was not worth such a terrible price.

Sent back to her home in Thessalonika to establish a Tremere chantry, Theresa experienced a revelatory dream of Saulot's diablerie and realized that all of the Salubri would be hunted. As Theresa fled eastward, guided by visions of the Salubri Achmet the Dreamer, each step weakened her Blood Oath and fueled her hope. Arriving in Constantinople, she was astonished to be welcomed by the Tzimisce Gesu and brought before the Salubri holy man in his fasting cage.

CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

In the years after her clandestine arrival, Theresa has become the leading member of Achmet's Dream Circle. She has learned to release the sacred power of dreams into her dead flesh and is building a new Thaumaturgic Path based around Achmet's enlightenment. Since the arrival of the Tremere envoy Abetorius, Theresa has gone into hiding in the Gesudian monastery. Achmet's allies keep her informed of events in the city.

Image: Theresa is tall and thin and wears sheer, dark robes that blend with her waist-length black hair. Her pale skin is adorned with a variety of occult symbols taken from her visions and dreams — a practice learned from a fellow magus during her mortal days. Her most striking feature is the blood-red symbol of an eye on her forehead.

Roleplaying Hints: You spend much of your existence in torpor, lost amid dreams and visions, for only through these can you recapture the dynamic and vital magic of your breathing days. The Beast within you is strong, but the power of dreams can sublimate it — you hope.

Haven: Theresa sleeps in a small chamber below the tower in which Achmet slumbers in his cage.

Secrets: Theresa knows several of the secrets of the Obertus monastery, including the locations of secret passageways and hidden texts.

Influence: Theresa — as the principal member of Achmet's Dream Circle — has a strong influence over the growing cultist underground. She has also acted as an informal advisor to Anna Comnena in dealings with the newly arrived Tremere Abetorius. In exchange she receives sanction to remain in Constantinople.

Destiny: Theresa takes her explorations of dreams to new heights. She uncovers novel ways of using dreams to recapture the dynamism of life. All it costs is her soul; she must diablerize her beloved Achmet to complete her experiments.



Sire: Friedrich of Munich

Nature: Innovator

Demeanor: Fanatic

Generation: 8th

Embrace: A.D. 1139

Apparent Age: mid 30s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 2, Empathy 3, Leadership 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Crafts (calligraphy) 4, Etiquette 2, Herbalism 2, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Academics 4, Linguistics 4, Medicine 3, Occult 5, Politics 3, Science 2

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Dominate 3, Thaumaturgy 4

Thaumaturgic Paths: Rego Mortus 2, Rego Tempestas 2, Rego Elementum 3

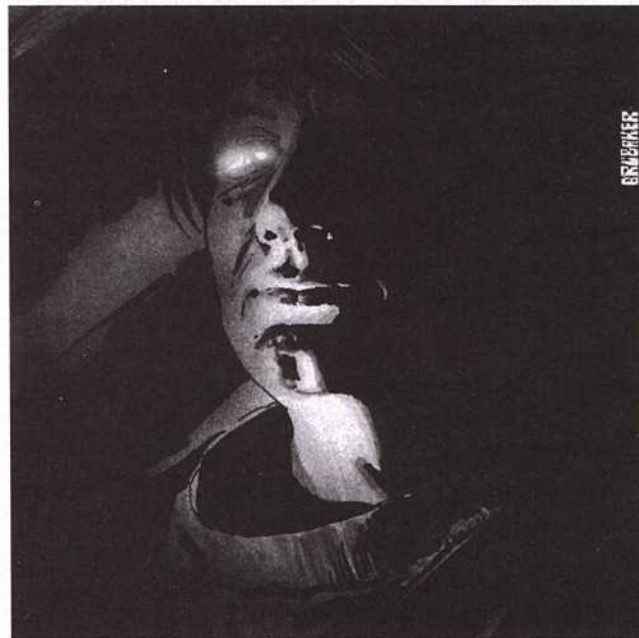
Backgrounds: Allies (Dreamers) 3, Contacts 4, Mentor (Achmet) 5

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

Road: Road of Humanity 6

Willpower: 7

OTHER TREMERE OF NOTE



ABETORIUS, ENVOY OF CLAN TREMERE

5th generation, childe of Meerlinda

Nature: Rogue

Demeanor: Gallant

Embrace: A.D. 1103

Apparent Age: mid 30s

Among the most recent arrivals to Constantinople, Abetorius bears the power and stigma of the Usurpers — marked clearly on the forms of his three gargoyles guardians. Sent by Tremere himself to establish a clan presence in the East, Abetorius has been tentatively welcomed by the

CHAPTER FIVE: THE DAMNED

Michaelite Toreador. Abetorius and the Lasombra Magnus have entered into prolonged negotiations over the future of the city and the creation of a chantry. Abetorius has also gained an ally in Pakourianis the Dove, who is fascinated by the flight of the Tremere's gargoyles. Beyond establishing a chantry, Abetorius has been ordered to hunt down and eliminate the rogue Theresa Kymena. In the process, Abetorius has learned that a Salubri may be hidden in the city and now focuses his attention on that prize instead.

TZIMISCE

The Tzimisce of Constantinople are a breed apart from their clanmates in the Carpathians. An unspoken war has been declared between the Obertus Tzimisce and the rest of the clan over the Embrace of Gesu, and that war has wracked Constantinople for several centuries. The recent emergence of the Tremere has eased the conflict, but when the time comes the clanmates will settle their scores.

GESU, SAINT OF THE DIVINITY WITHIN

Background: In hopes of ending the long feud between his lovers, Michael presented Gesu and his brother Symeon as gifts to the heads of the Ventrue and Tzimisce families, to be Embraced upon the boys' 21st birthdays. Both Antonius and the Dracon, upon gazing at the mortal siblings, were spellbound. Though separated by two full years, they appeared to be nearly identical. Gesu was only seven, yet his eyes and countenance showed a blossoming intellect, while his brother's childlike innocence could not hide the ambition and pride that exuded from him. From that night forth, until the tragic events that followed Gesu's Embrace, the Ventrue and Tzimisce families knew peace. The Dracon and Antonius relished the company of their promised children, molding them to be perfect emblems of their siring clans.

A few nights before the Dracon planned to Embrace Gesu, a small delegation of Old Country Tzimisce, including an envoy from the Tzimisce Antediluvian itself, arrived and demanded to speak with the Dracon. The envoy urged that Gesu not be sired, for the clan's seers had predicted his Embrace to be a terrible omen. The Dracon laughed at their petty superstitions and accused them of spending too much time isolated in the mountains. The delegation pleaded with him once more as it left, and warned that should he proceed, a terrible curse would befall both him and Gesu. The Dracon Embraced Gesu the following night, in a ceremony attended by Antonius, Symeon and Michael himself.

As the Dracon conducted the Embrace, dark clouds gathered over Constantinople and the Tzimisce monastery. As Gesu's life was drained away and the blood of the ancient Tzimisce flowed through his veins, a terrible change gripped

the vampire-to-be. His skin became yellow and taut and his bones contorted into impossible shapes. The envoy's words echoed in the mind of the Dracon as Gesu slipped into torpor.

Gesu was quickly taken away and placed under constant vigil; monks prayed and chanted for his recovery and icons were placed all about him. Rage mounted within the Dracon; that night he destroyed the chapel and, had it not been for Michael's soothing words, would have set fire to the Library of the Forgotten.

Determined to make his clan pay, he traveled to the Old Country and demanded to know why his brethren had cursed his child. None would answer, but their silence was answer enough. The Dracon searched for answers for the next few months, and condemned a number of his clanmates to Final Death. In the meantime, Gesu's frail body slowly withered.

While in torpor, Gesu was plagued by dreams of the Nailed God. The visions grew in vividness and detail until he found himself standing outside a dark chapel surrounded by a wasteland. As Gesu opened the chapel's heavy doors, a narrow beam of light shone into the small temple and illuminated a crucifix on a pulpit. Walking toward the altar, Gesu passed 14 alcoves. Each contained a statue that was cloaked in darkness and crumbled into dust as he proceeded — that is, all except the last, which turned its back and vanished into the wasteland. Arriving at the cross, Gesu kneeled and prayed to God for his salvation and that of his kind. As he did so, the crucifix began to bleed a dark vitae that flowed into a chalice. Picking up the cup, Gesu felt a presence behind him and caught the reflection of Archangel Michael in the dark blood as he brought it to his lips.

Gesu opened his eyes to the real world for the first time in months, the taste of blood still fresh in his mouth. He found himself in a chapel in the imperial palace. Weak and feverish, Gesu called out. To his surprise, Symeon answered. The Dracon, sensing his promised son's impending rise from torpor, ordered the still-mortal Symeon to the chapel where the two brothers could be one again, as they were meant to be. The siblings hugged, and in the rapture of the moment Symeon offered his arm to his brother so that Gesu might drink. Indebted, Gesu drained and Embraced his brother so that they would never be parted again.

When Antonius discovered that his promised had been taken, his anger knew no bounds. He plotted the destruction of the Tzimisce family, and the seeds of Iconoclasm were planted. Symeon was cast out of the Ventrue family, but he did not care; he was side by side with Gesu.

In the years before the Iconoclast wars, the Tzimisce family grew and prospered under the rule of Gesu and Symeon. Gesu turned the monastic order into its contemporary form, centered on the worship of himself as a saint of Jesus Christ, Unlocker of the Divinity Within and Savior of Caine. When the Dracon returned, the brothers were caught up in the Iconoclast war.



The long conflict with his own clan had taken its toll on the Dracon. He spent the following century in the Library of the Forgotten, rarely venturing out and brooding over the loss of the Dream. Gesu guided the Obertus family to prosperity until the events of the Immaculate Union.

Image: In many ways Gesu still bears the mark of his childhood fevers. His form, though tall (measuring over seven feet), is emaciated. His features are exceedingly beautiful, giving Gesu an ephemeral and haunting appearance. He wears long red habits that conceal the face of Lillian on his chest.

Roleplaying Hints: Divine peace exists in all creatures. Jesus Christ sacrificed himself for humanity, but mortals, being weak and imperfect, did not listen. You shall make them hear.

Haven: The inner chapel of the Monastery St. John Studius.

Secrets: Gesu and a small number of Gesudians keep vigil over the Salubri Achmet. The monastery of St. John is closed to outsiders for fear of Tremere actions should they discover Achmet.

Influence: Gesu's influence over the monastic orders gives him considerable power over the city.

Destiny: In the coming years, the rift between Gesu and his brother deepens and threatens to consume them both. Whatever happens, the Obertus Tzimisce are eventually forgotten by time and history, to be preserved only in the legends of the ghoulish family that bears their name.

Clan: Tzimisce

Sire: The Dracon

Nature: Caretaker

Demeanor: Autocrat

Generation: 5th

Embrace: A.D. 701

Apparent Age: indeterminate

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 6, Manipulation 6, Appearance 8

Mental: Perception 6, Intelligence 6, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 7, Intimidation 6, Leadership 3, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Animal Ken 3, Body Crafts (icons) 5, Crafts 3, Etiquette 3, Painting (icons) 6, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Academics 5, Hearth Wisdom 3, Linguistics 4, Occult 3, Theology 5

Disciplines: Animalism 5, Auspex 6, Dominate 3, Obfuscate 2, Obtenebration 2, Presence 5, Vicissitude 6

Backgrounds: Allies (Gesudian family members in other monasteries) 5, Herd 5, Resources 4, Status 6

Virtues: Conviction 5, Self-Control 5, Courage 5

Road: Road of Heaven 9

Willpower: 9

Notes: Gesu and his followers travel along a different path of the Road of Heaven, one that suits and exemplifies their vampiric and monastic needs. Most Gesudians possess the Virtue of Conviction instead of Conscience, giving them the inner strength necessary to unlock the Within.

SYMEON, HIS BROTHER'S KEEPER

Background: Symeon was born to be the perfect ruler, and Antonius knew it. Symeon had all the necessary characteristics: a strong will, ambition and determination. His one weakness was his love for his brother. Although Symeon was two years younger than Gesu, he acted as Gesu's protector and unselfishly devoted his time to his brother. Michael saw this as symbolic of the future: Tzimisce and Ventrue working together to maintain the Dream.

Antonius had a far different reaction to Symeon and Gesu's relationship. The Methuselah scolded Symeon for his attachment to his brother — after all, he admonished, rulers should remain distant from their subjects. After Gesu's Embrace and subsequent sickness, Antonius was adamant that his promised not spend time tending to his brother, and forced Symeon to stay in the palace. Symeon grew resentful and secretly stayed by Gesu's side. This eventually sealed his fate.

It was only after Symeon was Embraced that he truly understood the magnificence of the Ventrue, but it was too late, and his love for his brother had cost him his future glory. Antonius' reaction devastated him; Symeon never expected to be spurned and cast out, and his exile only heightened his desire to be Ventrue. That all changed, however, when Caius killed Antonius. Symeon saw that the Ventrue were blinded by their ambitions. Symeon then decided to see the Tzimisce prosper and devoted his energies to helping his brother.

Responsible for making the Byzantine Tzimisce powerful, Symeon has even traveled to the Carpathians, alternately feuding with and aiding his Balkan brethren. On one trip he returned with his disciple Myca. With the coming of the Comneni to power, a new bond has been forged between the Ventrue and Tzimisce, but Symeon has changed his ways. He has begun to emulate his Carpathian brethren. The gift of the

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Christ Pantokrator Monastery, its insane asylum and hospital to the Tzimisce has inspired him to conduct experiments on the insane and sick, often at Myca's subtle urging.

In recent years, Symeon and Gesu's relationship has also become strained, primarily by the tragic events that led up to Gesu's Immaculate Union with the mortal Lillian. The Genoese Lasombra Gabriella gave the child to Symeon as a gift for sheltering the women during the Latin Riots. Symeon raised the child as his own and fell in love with her as she entered adulthood. Symeon presented her to Gesu with the intent of Embracing her, but Gesu saw other potential in her. Lillian allowed herself to be Embraced by Gesu after he told her of a vision of the Archangel Gabriel announcing their union. During the Immaculate Union, Lillian was Embraced and bound into Gesu's torso, her soul joining his and forming, as Gesu believed, the perfect union between man and woman.

Symeon was outraged. Gesu had taken everything from him: his clan, his future glory and now his love.

With each passing night, as Symeon sees the face of Lillian upon Gesu's chest, his love for his brother fades. In the end that love may not be enough to stop Symeon from destroying his sibling.

Image: Gesu and Symeon differ the most in appearance. Gesu is fragile while his brother is strong and well built. Symeon's Augustian features mark him as a natural leader and his use of Vicissitude (not being bound by Gesudian precepts) only intensifies this air.

Roleplaying Hints: You see yourself as weak and forever indebted to your brother, though you have never told anyone of those feelings. Yet you also feel that your Embrace by Gesu has denied you of something. You try to dismiss these thoughts, but the loss of Lillian tears at your heart. It seems, though you hate to think about it, that Gesu takes everything that is yours.

Haven: Christ Pantokrator Monastery



CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

Secrets: During the Latin Riots, Symeon had a number of Latin Cainites captured and brought to his monastery where he has been experimenting on them.

Destiny: Symeon survives the coming crusade and journeys to the Carpathians with his childe Myca. There, free from the Blood Oaths that hamper others of his clan, Myca strives to build his own Dream. Symeon falls alongside the other Tzimisce elders in the great uprising of progeny; Myca consumes his blood, and the Sabbat is born. All the while, the Dracon smiles from the shadows.

Clan: Tzimisce

Sire: Gesu

Nature: Penitent

Demeanor: Autocrat

Generation: 6th

Embrace: A.D. 703

Apparent Age: early 20s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 6, Appearance 5

Mental: Perception 6, Intelligence 6, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 4, Dodge 4, Empathy 3, Intimidation 5, Leadership 5, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Body Crafts 4, Etiquette 3, Melee 5, Stealth 4, Survival 3

Knowledges: Academics 4, Investigation 4, Law 5, Linguistics 4, Medicine 4, Occult 4, Politics 4, Science 3, Seneschal 4

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Auspex 4, Dominate 6, Fortitude 3, Obfuscate 2, Presence 5, Vicissitude 5

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 2, Resources 4, Retainers 3, Status 6

Virtues: Conviction 4, Self-Control 3, Courage 4

Road: Road of Heaven 5

Willpower: 8

OTHER TZIMISCE OF NOTE

KEEPER OF THE FAITH

5th generation, sire unknown but suspected to be the Dracon

Nature: Unknown

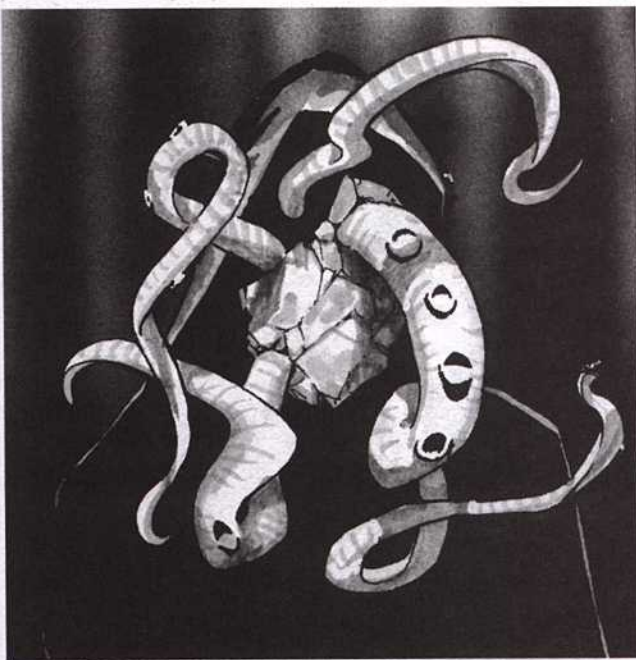
Demeanor: Caretaker

Embrace: Unknown

Apparent Age: Unknown

The figure, dressed in thick black robes, that is seen roaming the Library of the Forgotten is the Tzimisce monk responsible for its upkeep. Nothing is known of her history except that she seems to have always been associated with the library. Her responsibilities include filing and overseeing the transcription of works, and her knowledge of books is boundless. Without her, locating any tome would be a monumental task.

Assisting her in her duties are two childer, known only as the Watchers. Taken from Gesudian families, these Cainites were infirm children who could only be saved by the Embrace. Hidden behind leather cloaks, the two roam the library performing duties that only the Keeper knows about.



Unbeknownst to all, the Keeper knows of the Dracon's location and keeps him informed of events in Constantinople. She also has his permission to aid the Baron in moving the contents of the library to secret locations in eastern Europe. The Keeper is uncertain whether the Dracon will let Constantinople fall or, out of loyalty and love for Michael, return when all seems lost.

MYCA VYKOS

7th generation, childe of Symeon

Nature: Monster

Demeanor: Architect

Embrace: A.D. 1002

Apparent Age: mid 20s



Myca was a prodigy who was Embraced by Symeon during a raid on the Carpathian branch of the clan. Myca therefore displays a temperament more suited to his Balkan cousins. He practices Vicissitude beyond the bounds of Gesudian precepts, conducts dealings with Setites, and has secretly turned several Obertus ghouls to his service.

Vykos often works with the Keeper of the Faith and is genuinely interested in scholarship — insofar as it benefits him. He is a member of the Dream Circle, but only uses the cult to acquire magical knowledge.

An avid historian and researcher, Vykos has become fascinated with gaining power through the manipulation of blood. To this end, he courts the favor of Theresa, seeking to learn the secrets of Thaumaturgy. He is also involved in a clandestine correspondence with two Carpathian Fiends, Velya and Lugoj, who share his scholarly interests.

VENTRUE

The Ventrue of Constantinople have pulled the strings of imperial puppets for centuries and are the strength and weakness of the empire. In contemporary times, when the city teeters on the brink of destruction, intrigue shatters the Dream that the clan supposedly defends.

CAIUS, EMPEROR OF THE NIGHT

Background: Caius, who was a lieutenant to Constantine the Great, backed his leader's bid to become emperor of Rome. A man of faith and profoundly dark moods, Constantine turned to Caius in times of hatred and predatory rage. Assuming the responsibility for his mentor's murderous moods, Caius carried out the dark and bloody orders that paved the way for the would-be emperor's rise. He even carried out the execution of Constantine's own firstborn when the boy became a threat.

The Triumvirate was fascinated by the glorious spirituality and bloody acts of Constantine, but its members could not bring themselves to affect him directly. The predatory efficiency and loyalty of Caius, however, was familiar territory for Antonius, and the Ventrue helped the Roman carry out his gruesome orders. Once Constantine's position was secure and his enemies destroyed, Antonius took Caius as his own. Little did the Methuselah know that he Embraced the instrument of his own destruction.

Caius was content to learn at Antonius' side for a time, but soon after the death of Constantine felt a longing for his old position as imperial confidant. Caius was fascinated by Michael and who saw the patriarch as the immortal epitome of Constantine's holy wisdom. Caius continued to serve Antonius for centuries, all the while hoping to replace him at Michael's side. He confided his love for Michael only to the Cappadocian Alexia Theusa, who understood such longing.

The disorder created by the Iconoclast crisis provided Caius with the opportunity to act. Antonius was determined to destroy the Dracon's power even if it meant the end of the Dream, and Caius was able to gather support for eliminating his sire. Septima Dominica, Antonius' estranged child, was the first to join Caius, and they soon gathered other conspirators. During the fateful Fourth Council of A.D. 796, the "traitors" presented their plan to the Dracon and Michael. After three nights of deliberation, the patriarch agreed to the murder of his former lover. Two nights later, Caius staked his sire during a council meeting and left him for the dawn. Caius assumed the throne of Ventrue basileus and hoped to take Antonius' place in Michael's bed. He was disappointed. Consumed by guilt over his decision, Michael withdrew from Cainite society and began his fall into madness. Any affection felt for Caius was overcome by the horror of their mutual crime.

Caius never recovered from this blow. For the first century of his rule, he benefited from the advice of Septima, who provided the guidance he needed to remain an effective leader. Even that support was taken from him, though, when she was killed by witch-hunters in 1001. Caius has since carried out his duties and maintained his power by playing rivals against each other, all the while yearning for the favor of the patriarch.

The Latin Riots of 1185 took Caius off-guard. His distraction resulted in the humiliation of issuing a formal apology to the Latins and granting them extensive rights at the Eighth Council.

Image: Caius' long and sharply defined face almost hides the weight of years that bears down on his soul. However, his dark eyes speak volumes of the blood he has spilled and the love he has lost. His purple robes give the basileus a regal appearance, which is emphasized by his tall frame.

Roleplaying Hints: You go through the motions of leadership. Stripped of your advisor Septima and rejected by the one you love, you cannot even find solace in past glory.

Haven: Caius sleeps in the Sacred Palace of the Great Palace complex, and holds court on a golden throne. His public receiving rooms are ornate and regal, but his private rooms are bare save for a few icons of Michael.

Secrets: Caius' sorrow gives him clear insight into Michael's madness. He has come to understand the nature of the patriarch's delusions. Unfortunately, this serves only to drive Caius deeper into depression.

Influence: Officially, Caius rules the Antonian Ventrue with absolute power, but his influence is rapidly shrinking. He plays the powerful Anna Comnena and Nicephorus against each other to preserve his place, but cannot hold it for much longer.

Destiny: Caius does not survive the coming storm. As the city burns he seeks out Michael for a final and terrible union. Whether he succeeds is a mystery.



Clan: Ventrue
Sire: Antonius the Gaul
Nature: Penitent
Demeanor: Autocrat
Generation: 5th
Embrace: A.D. 325
Apparent Age: mid 60s
Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3
Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 3
Talents: Alertness 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Empathy 1, Intimidation 4, Leadership 4, Subterfuge 6
Skills: Archery 2, Etiquette 4, Melee 5, Ride 3, Stealth 4, Survival 2
Knowledges: Hearth Wisdom 3, Law 4, Linguistics 3, Politics 5, Seneschal 4
Disciplines: Auspex 4, Celerity 2, Dominate 6, Fortitude 4, Obfuscate 1, Potence 5, Presence 4
Backgrounds: Allies (Alexia Theusa) 3, Contacts 5, Herd 5, Influence 5, Retainers 5, Status 6
Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 3, Courage 5
Road: Road of Humanity 4
Willpower: 7

ANNA COMNENA, QUAESITOR AND CHAMBERLAIN

Background: Anna Comnena was born to rule—or so she thought. The eldest child of Emperor Alexius I Comnenus, she was betrothed to an imperial candidate at an early age and prepared for life as empress of New Rome. An avid student and brilliant thinker, she absorbed political, theological, scientific

and philosophical teachings with a passion that stunned her tutors and made her parents proud. When her young brother John became heir apparent, however, her lifelong dreams were shattered. She fell into a bitter hatred for her fraternal rival and tried to have him killed. Her plots, however, were repeatedly thwarted, and John was eventually forced to exile her to a convent for the rest of her days. There she wrote her famous *Alexiad*, an account of her father's reign.

Anna's will and intelligence brought her to the attention of Ducas, the Ventrue guardian of the imperial family. He recognized in her the drive that could save the crumbling empire, but also the hatred and jealousy that could destroy it. When Anna was exiled, Ducas arranged to watch over her while she toiled at her chronicle, and he subtly guided her to understand her brother. When she laid down her pen after completing the *Alexiad*—her hatreds vented and purged—she prepared to die, hoping to make peace with her deceased brother in the hereafter. That was when Ducas took her.

As a vampire, Anna has found her drive reborn in a pure form. Bringing her knowledge and skill to the efforts of the Comneni's mentor Belisarius, she has risen to become both Quaesitor and chamberlain, overseeing her clanmates and opposing the old Caesar Magister Nicephorus. In the process she has gained a respect for the Quaesitors Symeon and Petronius. As Belisarius' plans falter, however, and Nicephorus regains favor, Anna finds it increasingly difficult to ignore the call of blood and glory.

Image: At Anna's request, Symeon has reformed her into a woman of inhuman and predatory beauty. She wears elaborate clothing that marks her station.

Roleplaying Hints: This is the world you belong to. You finally wield great power, and you know what is best for the empire. Those around you drown themselves in intrigue; you are more than willing to push them deeper.



Haven: Anna maintains lavish quarters in the Great Palace haven of the Antonian Ventrue. Her apartments are adorned with mementos of her father's reign.

Secrets: Anna makes it a point to gather as many secrets as she can. She has learned that it was her sire Ducas who had the Ventrue Septima Dominica destroyed, and that Basil of Thessalonika occasionally meets with strangers in the mansions of Arcadius.

Influence: Anna's twin positions as Quaesitor and chamberlain of the Antonian Ventrue give her great official influence in Constantinople. She is perceived as Nicephorus' only competitor for true leadership of the family.

Destiny: Anna never leaves her city. Some say she died on the battlements fighting a losing battle against the Ottomans, others that she became a Turk and still lives in her chosen home.

Clan: Ventrue

Sire: Ducas

Nature: Autocrat

Demeanor: Loner

Generation: 7th

Embrace: A.D. 1153

Apparent Age: mid 20s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Appearance 6

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 6, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Intimidation 4, Leadership 5, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Etiquette 5, Music 2, Ride 2, Stealth 1

Knowledges: Academics 5, Hearth Wisdom 2, Law 4, Linguistics 3, Politics 5, Science 3, Seneschal 3

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Dominate 5, Fortitude 2, Presence 5

Backgrounds: Contacts 5, Herd 5, Resources 4, Retainers 5, Status 5

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

Road: Road of Humanity 7

Willpower: 7

BELISARIUS, MILITARY PREFECT

Background: The greatest general the empire had ever seen, Belisarius was directly responsible for the military victories of Justinian's rule—retaking North Africa and much of Italy, repelling Persian attack and suppressing the popular Nika revolt. Despite all this, Justinian never trusted Belisarius and played Chamberlain Narses as a foil to the general. Antonius recognized Belisarius' loyalty, though, and Embraced him.

Belisarius was close to his sire, but because he had little taste for the petty struggles with the Dracon, he soon requested to gain the prefecture of North Africa and left for Carthage. When Arabs captured the region in the seventh century, Belisarius did not return to Constantinople and was thought

destroyed. Freed of his obligations, he wandered the Mediterranean and became the companion of the North African Assamite Shabah.

When the Battle of Manzikert meant the empire's loss of Anatolia, Belisarius could no longer stay away from Constantinople. During the Sixth Council he petitioned for the destruction of Lyseros and Isaac the Hermit, the military and eastern prefects whose corruption and weakness were responsible for the defeat. Buoyed by his victory in council, Belisarius used his influence to assist in the rise of ambitious general Alexius Comnenus to the throne. He was very close to both Alexius and his successor John II, but with John's assassination by Assamites and the concessions made to the Latins under John's son Manuel, Belisarius' influence in Constantinople decreased in favor of Nicephorus'.

In contemporary times, Belisarius is pleased by the assignment of his old love Shabah as Assamite representative to Constantinople. They have rekindled their old relationship, although Belisarius greatly resents the murder of John by Shabah's clan. Little does he know that Shabah herself was the assassin.

Image: Belisarius was Embraced late in life. He has a weathered face and deep brown eyes. His head is topped with a few gray hairs. His frame is impressive and he stands with regal dignity.

Roleplaying Hints: You have returned to the position that defined your mortal life. The burden is heavy and you long for your carefree traveling days, but who else could take your place? Your only real pleasure comes from the time you find with Shabah.

Haven: Belisarius maintains quarters in the Old Palace complex. They are Spartan, but his sleeping quarters are decorated with many mementos from his travels. He is attended by a cadre of ghoul soldiers known as the Varangian Guard.



CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

Secrets: Belisarius is aware of the principal rivalries of the Antonian Ventrue, but relies on his childe Helena for details about them. He also knows of the growing alliance between the Brujah, Gangrel and Nosferatu of the city and gives it what support he can, hoping it can counter the splintering of the Trinity.

Influence: Belisarius' successes under the Comneni gave him powerful influence until the death of John II. The debacles since that time have stripped him of most of his political clout.

Destiny: Belisarius cannot abandon Byzantium to its fate, but may be able to leave once it is razed. He may become one of the Inconnu, if they can conceal their role in Constantinople's destruction.

Clan: Ventrue

Sire: Antonius

Nature: Defender

Demeanor: Autocrat

Generation: 5th

Embrace: A.D. 566

Apparent Age: mid 60s

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 6

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 4, Brawl 5, Dodge 4, Intimidation 4, Leadership 5, Subterfuge 1

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Archery 4, Crafts (weapons) 4, Melee 6, Ride 5, Stealth 3, Survival 4

Knowledges: Academics 1, Hearth Wisdom 3, Investigation 2, Linguistics 4, Politics 3, Seneschal 4

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Celerity 4, Dominate 4, Fortitude 7, Potence 7, Presence 3

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 4, Retainers 3, Status 3

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

Road: Road of Chivalry 7

Willpower: 8

OTHER VENTRUE OF NOTE

NICEPHERUS, CAESAR MAGISTER

6th generation, childe of Septima Dominica

Nature: Tyrant

Demeanor: Autocrat

Embrace: A.D. 604

Apparent Age: mid 30s

Nicephorus, eldest childe of Septima Dominica, who was in turn eldest childe of Antonius, believes that a position of leadership is his right. Septima Dominica supported Caius' usurpation of Antonius, but was destroyed in 1001 by a cadre of witch-hunters. Nicephorus spent much of the Macedonian era trying without success to uncover the identities of his sire's mortal murderers, sometimes with the assistance of the Malkavian Gregorius. Little did he know that the Malkavian was conditioning him to become a tool of the Inconnu. In the 11th century,

under the influence of Gregorius' Dementation, Nicephorus came to the "realization" that Caius must have ordered Septima's destruction out of jealousy.

Boiling with hatred, Nicephorus — by this time caesar magister — decided to turn the tables on Caius and joined the Inconnu. He was initiated into the old Roman ways and asked to perform several tasks. One was to issue the order to Domestic Prefect Epirus to encourage the Latin Riots. Nicephorus witnessed the destruction that his act caused, and took great pleasure in watching Caius plead with the Venetian Narses to prevent a war.

IRENE STELLAS, DOMESTIC PREFECT

8th generation, childe of Anna Comnena

Nature: Penitent

Demeanor: Judge

Embrace: A.D. 1169

Apparent Age: mid 20s

A recent addition to the Antonian hierarchy, Irene Stellas has the undesirable job of replacing Epirus, the domestic prefect who helped elicit the slaughter of Constantinople's Latin population in 1185. Epirus and his Brujah ally Tribonus paid with Final Death for the infraction, and Anna Comnena placed her childe Irene in Epirus' place. Irene has gained the trust of the Brujah Natalya. Together they search for the Cainite who made their predecessors scapegoats for the Latin slaughter.

Irene, a member of the Dream Circle, received a revelatory vision after drinking the blood of Caius. She saw the basileus running through burning streets. He entered a gilded enclosure where Michael the Patriarch rested. Caius seemed desperate to find the Methuselah, but instead found the patriarch's form turning to ash before a black-skinned girl who brandished a gleaming sword. Irene is unsure of the vision's meaning, but is determined to learn the secrets of Caius and Michael's relationship.

DUCAS, PALACE PREFECT

6th generation, childe of Septima Dominica

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Judge

Embrace: A.D. 836

Apparent Age: early 50s

Ducas was Embraced at the height of the second bout of Iconoclasm and witnessed Caius' struggles with the Tzimisce and their mortal worshipers. Discovering the anti-Iconoclast writings of his destroyed grandsire Antonius, Ducas came to believe that Cainites should exist secretly, apart from mortals. In his eyes the worst offender of this ideal was not a Tzimisce, but his own sire Septima Dominica, who held an open blood court where she fed on virile young men.

Ducas realized what had to be done. Using his skill at manipulating the kine, he recruited a small circle of witch-hunters. In 1001 he let them into Septima's haven, where they

ambushed the Ventrue. Staking her, they proceeded to burn her palace and body. Ducas eliminated the witch-hunters soon thereafter to erase all traces of his involvement.

In the centuries since, Ducas has risen in the ranks of the Antonian Ventrue. He has always sought to expand his Iconoclastic views, undermine the Obertus position and strengthen the empire. He Embraced Anna Comnena, hoping to make her an Iconoclast as well, and thought she was dedicated enough to learn the truth of Septima's death. Since then, however, Ducas has grown concerned by the bond that has formed between Anna and Symeon.

HELENA THE ARMENIAN, EASTERN PRAETORIAN PREFECT

6th generation, childe of Belisarius

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Defender

Embrace: A.D. 1081

Apparent Age: late 30s

Embraced shortly after Belisarius' return to Constantinople, Helena rose to her position as foreign prefect when Alexius and John Comnenus reconquered the territories lost after Manzikert. She understands the ways and strengths of the Turkish Gangrel and has done her best to establish peaceful relations with them, gaining friends among the Baron's Gangrel. She feels confident that threats from the East can be dealt with as long as the West remains secure. As far as she is concerned, the presence of Latin power in Constantinople is the greatest threat facing the empire.

The arrival of Shabah has given Helena a weapon against the Latins in Constantinople. Helena witnessed the assassination of John II and knows the Assamite is responsible. She has chosen not to tell Belisarius, but has blackmailed the Saracen,



CHAPTER FIVE: THE DAMNED

demanding service in exchange for silence. Helena has ordered Shabah to eliminate the Latin Lasombra leaders, starting with Gabriella of Genoa.

BASIL OF THESSALONIKA, WESTERN PRAETORIAN PREFECT

8th generation, childe of Theodora

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Celebrant

Embrace: A.D. 1021

Apparent Age: late 40s

Widely known for his Cainite decadence, Basil held a lavish blood court in Thessalonika. Indeed, he did his best to lose himself in pleasure, at least until his city was sacked in 1184. During the assault, Basil remained secure in the concealed passages of his palace, watching while his court and subjects were decimated. He only emerged when the attackers moved on, foolishly believing himself out of danger.

It was then that the Chosen of Calomena came to the carcass of the city. Basil was found wandering through the ruins, overwhelmed by the loss of the pleasures that gave his life meaning. The Chosen's compelling leader Stanislav came to him and began to mend his psyche. Under the Caitiff's tutelage, Basil learned of the putrid truth of Cainite nature and of the retribution that would be Calomena's.

Prompted by his new master, Basil claimed his right to oversee the western part of the empire and took up residence at the Ventrue court in 1187. Since then he has acted as Stanislav's eyes and ears in the halls of power, reporting on those who might be turned to the cause or destroyed. Basil brought the Brujah Theophilus and Dorotheus to Stanislav's attention.

Basil's demented faith has turned his corrupt heart from hedonism to masochism. He finds the blessing of Calomena in the scorching agony of torture. He spends many a night howling in ecstasy as mortals drive red-hot spikes into his flesh and flay him with barbed reeds. Basil wears flowing robes of station that conceal the painful hooks and nails that he wears in his flesh.

OTHERS

ACHMET THE DREAMER, SALUBRI PROPHET

7th generation, childe of Orpheus

Nature: Caretaker

Demeanor: Caretaker

Embrace: A.D. 813

Apparent Age: early 40s

Achmet is one of the remaining few of the enlightened Salubri clan, the founder of which was diablerized by Tremere. Achmet has spent his existence searching for fabled Golconda, and has come to espouse a philosophy which states that Cainites may recapture the vitality of true life through dreams. He believes that visions had during slumber and torpor are clues to the attainment of a higher existence, and has dedicated his unlife to exploring these revelations.

Achmet's views have attracted a small group of followers, including Theresa Kymena, the Ventrue Irene Stellas and the Ravnos Gregory. Achmet learned of the power of the bloodfast from the Tzimisce Gesu, and continues his search for Golconda from one of the Tzimisce fasting cages. Achmet has



CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

dreamt that he and Theresa shall repeat the tragedy of Tremere and Saulot, but that from his destruction will come the seeds of rebellion and rebirth.

ZOE THE PRODIGY

Awakened student of Gregory the Wonder Maker

Nature: Innovator

Demeanor: Child

Age: 14

Gregory discovered his most promising student as Constantinople crumbled around him. Zoe was a simple street urchin when the Ravnos found her in his workshop in 1193. She was coaxing the birds he had forged to perform complex aerial maneuvers. Gregory instantly became the girl's guardian. In the years since, Zoe's skill with constructs has improved by leaps and bounds. She has developed a preference for feline creations, and several mechanical lions and panthers stalk Magnaura thanks to her efforts.

Zoe's amazing progress has given Gregory renewed hope for his own future and has led him to pursue the path of Achmet the Dreamer with increased fervor. He is unaware that when he visits the Salubri mystic, his mortal student seeks out a new mentor. Traveling in the company of her most beautiful creations, Zoe travels to the House of Lamps to learn secrets from Layla Madeer.







Chapter Six: Stories in Constantinople

Constantinople by Night offers many opportunities for storytelling. The madness that reigns before the city's fall is rich with potential; when the Cainites of New Rome realize that the end is nigh, they welcome anyone capable of making a difference. While the preceding pages have hopefully sparked many story ideas, more are provided here to help Storytellers get started, allowing you to immerse the characters into the intricate tapestry that is Constantinople.

The following story concepts are divided according to three themes, each of which serves a different function. The Son introduces subtle plots to new characters and to those who originate outside Constantinople. The Father deals with the intrigue that develops as the Fourth Crusade approaches. The Holy Ghost deals with stories of mystery and the bizarre.



THE SON THE PRICE OF KNOWLEDGE

The characters (preferably including a Tzimisce, Toreador, Nosferatu, Cappadocian or Brujah with a scholarly nature) come across a small wooden crate that contains a number of rare and ancient books — including occult texts. The find rapidly elevates both their knowledge and prestige as they become privy to secrets thought forgotten. The characters can trace the box and its books back to a small monastery in the East, and then to Constantinople.

The coterie leaves the familiar West for the strange East. In Constantinople, the characters' search for knowledge deepens as they are dragged into the city's plots. The crate was sent by the Baron to one of his childer in Europe — part of his mission to safeguard the Tzimisce library. Along the way, bandits attacked the trade caravan that was transporting the texts. The bandits left the crate behind, afraid of the books within. That's when the characters stepped in.

The characters attract the attention of the Obertus Tzimisce, who want to know how their books were found outside the city, and demand their return. The Baron does his best to keep his involvement a secret, even to the point of

silencing the characters if an agreement cannot be reached with them. As far as all interested parties are concerned, the value of the Library of the Forgotten far outweighs the lives of the characters.

MIDNIGHT TEARS

In the pale light of a crescent moon, a character on her nightly hunt is attracted by the tranquillity of a cemetery. She steals herself a quiet moment amid the graves. After a few minutes, the character hears a soft murmur that originates from one of the many tombs. The character enters an old section of the cemetery and spots a cloaked woman standing by a tomb's entrance. Dark tears stain her face.

The woman is none other than Alexia Theusa, and a pall of sorrow hangs over her. She knows of the character's presence and invites him to discuss matters of death and love. During the conversation, Alexia remains hidden, moving from one shadow to the next, undoubtedly unnerving the character. When the conversation concludes, Alexia abruptly vanishes.

If the character is male, Alexia may court him as her latest lover. The character finds himself dealing with a devastated and exceedingly powerful Cainite. If the character is female and shares Lady Alexia's interest in death, the Cappadocian asks to meet again and the two may become allies.

CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

VANISHED SILENCE

A character's sire vanishes, leaving no clues as to where she has gone or why. As the characters investigate, a number of strange Cainites become interested in the search and lend a helping hand. These Cainites keep their distance, but if the characters lose interest in the quest, the strangers drop subtle clues and reveal tidbits of information. The trail eventually leads to Constantinople.

Unknown to the primary character, his sire was a member of the Inconnu, one who disapproved of the sect's vendetta against Constantinople. The mysterious Cainites — Roman Inconnu — hope that the characters will find the rogue member so that she can be dealt with. The rebel Inconnu is being protected by the St. Ladre Nosferatu. The characters are faced with the daunting task of learning this before the Carrion or other factions within Constantinople get involved. The Inconnu instruct Nicepherus and Bishop Alfonzo to aid the characters in their quest. This help labels the vampires as Latin sympathizers and makes their quest more difficult; the Ventrue Helena attempts to deal with Alfonzo's new tools.

THE FATHER OF DARKNESS WITHIN

Tensions in the Tzimisce family cast a dark shadow over Constantinople. Though Symeon's anger for his brother fes-

ters, their inherent bond keeps him from taking action against the Tzimisce saint. Myca Vykos sees his sire's greatness once more usurped by Gesu, and knows that only by undoing the bond between the brothers can Symeon prosper. Myca therefore plans to destroy Gesu, but needs pawns to carry out the dirty deed. He uses his influence over his family and the city to manipulate the characters into doing his bidding. The repercussions of destroying Gesu are staggering. The Gesudians revolt and target all whom they feel are responsible.

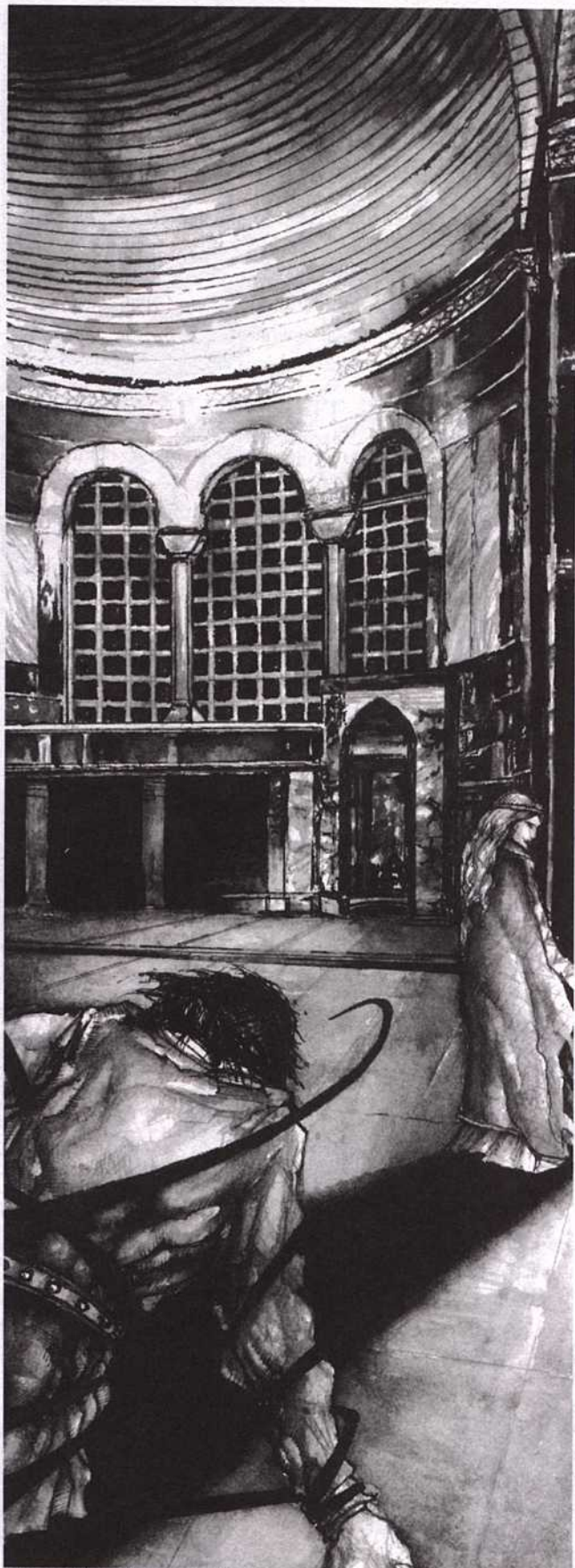
Yet, Myca's plans might be averted before they reach fruition. Michael, through visions and delusional riddles, warns the characters of the magnitude of what they plan. The question is, can they decipher his enigmatic signs before it is too late?

EMBERS OF THE DIVINE

Michael's delusions manifest through his use of Chimerstry and the characters are the first to see them. Angels are seen to dart behind churches, leaving white feathers in their wake. Bushes burn with holy fire and preach to those who listen. Unknown to all, the patriarch has entered deep torpor and the Toreador family is in chaos. Pakourianis, fearful that Michael is ready to leave forever, roams Hagia Sophia and chases shadows that he believes to be angels. Meanwhile, Petronius struggles to cover up the family's troubles. If the characters warn Petronius that Michael's delusions are physically affecting the city, he tries to quiet the troubled patriarch, but without success. The characters then discover that Gregorius is missing.



CHAPTER SIX: STORIES IN CONSTANTINOPLE



CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT

Although Gregorius is partly responsible for Michael's madness, his presence in the city actually kept the patriarch's delusions under control. Now, without the Malkavian to direct Michael's mind, the Methuselah's insanity manifests overtly. To save the patriarch the characters must find Gregorius, who is being held by Stanislav. The sect leader plans to sacrifice Gregorius to Calomena.

GHOSTLY ALLIES

The characters begin to vanish one by one. As the coterie shrinks, the remaining characters become increasingly nervous. An investigation reveals only vague reports of a shrouded figure seen where each character disappeared. As the survivors continue their search, they vanish until one remains. When his guard is raised and he is most alert, the remaining character is still taken completely by surprise by the Assamite Shabah, who poisons him with her vitae.

All the characters awaken in Shabah's haven. The Assamite explains that she has kidnapped them to protect them from an enemy among the Antonian Ventrué. This is a lie, of course. She actually plans to use the characters as tools against Helena the Armenian. Shabah hopes that the characters can give her leverage over Helena so that she and Belisarius can be together again.

While in the Assamite's haven, one of the characters catches a glimpse of another Cainite in an adjoining room. Once released, the characters could make discreet inquiries about the other vampire, and discover that she is Gabriella, a Lasombra bishop who has been missing for some time now. Armed with this information, the coterie (possibly prompted by Helena) could turn the tables on Shabah — an option which could lead to a full-blown war when Belisarius steps in to protect his love.

THE HOLY GHOST CELESTIAL DREAMS

A character who follows or is interested in the ways of Achmet the Dreamer is invited to partake in a dream-journey with Theresa Kymena and the Dreamer himself. After fasting at the Obertus monastery, the character embarks on her journey and is exposed to the hidden souls of many of the local Cainites. The journey continues until the character realizes that the whole dreamscape is supported by the dream of one entity: Michael the Patriarch. With this realization comes an irresistible pull into his delusion.

The character experiences the Methuselah's madness for what seems an eternity. She walks through the halls of Heaven and sits by the side of Archangel Michael as he serves his Father and builds a testament to Him on earth. When this dream seems to border on reality, Achmet "saves" the character from being lost forever and wakes her up.

The character now has powerful insight into the spirit of Michael and the shaping of Constantinople. Can she use it to help reverse the collapse of the city? More importantly, can she maintain her own sanity? She now has to actively remind herself that Michael is not an archangel, that Constantinople is not Heaven and that she is not a servant of the Host.

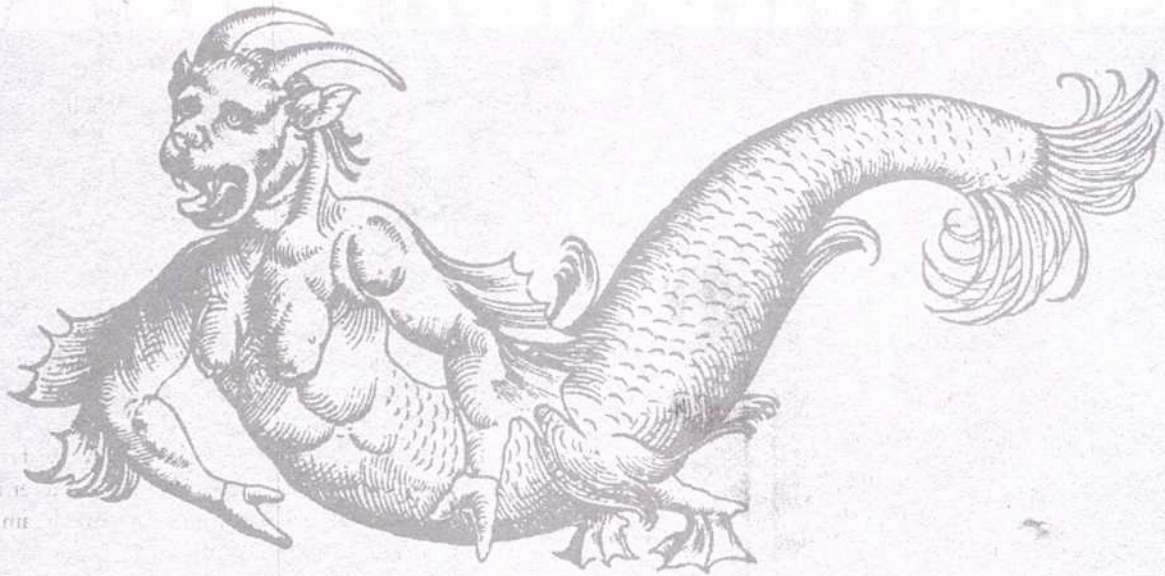
MOKIUS

On a trek through Exokionion, the coterie comes across a terrified man who is running blindly. After he is stopped and questioned, he tells the characters that he and a friend were walking near the Cistern of Mokius when a black shadow grabbed his friend and dragged him in. Upon arriving at Mokius, the characters discover blood, sewer water and torn chunks of flesh on the cistern floor. The trail leads to a small hole in a wall; beyond rests Constantinople's aqueduct network. As they venture into the darkness, the characters realize that they're the uninvited guests of the Nosferatu who make the cisterns their home. If the characters have previously proven themselves to be allies of the city, the Nosferatu might bring them into the fold. Otherwise, the characters are in for a terrorizing night as the Lepers have fun with them in the aqueducts' winding corridors.

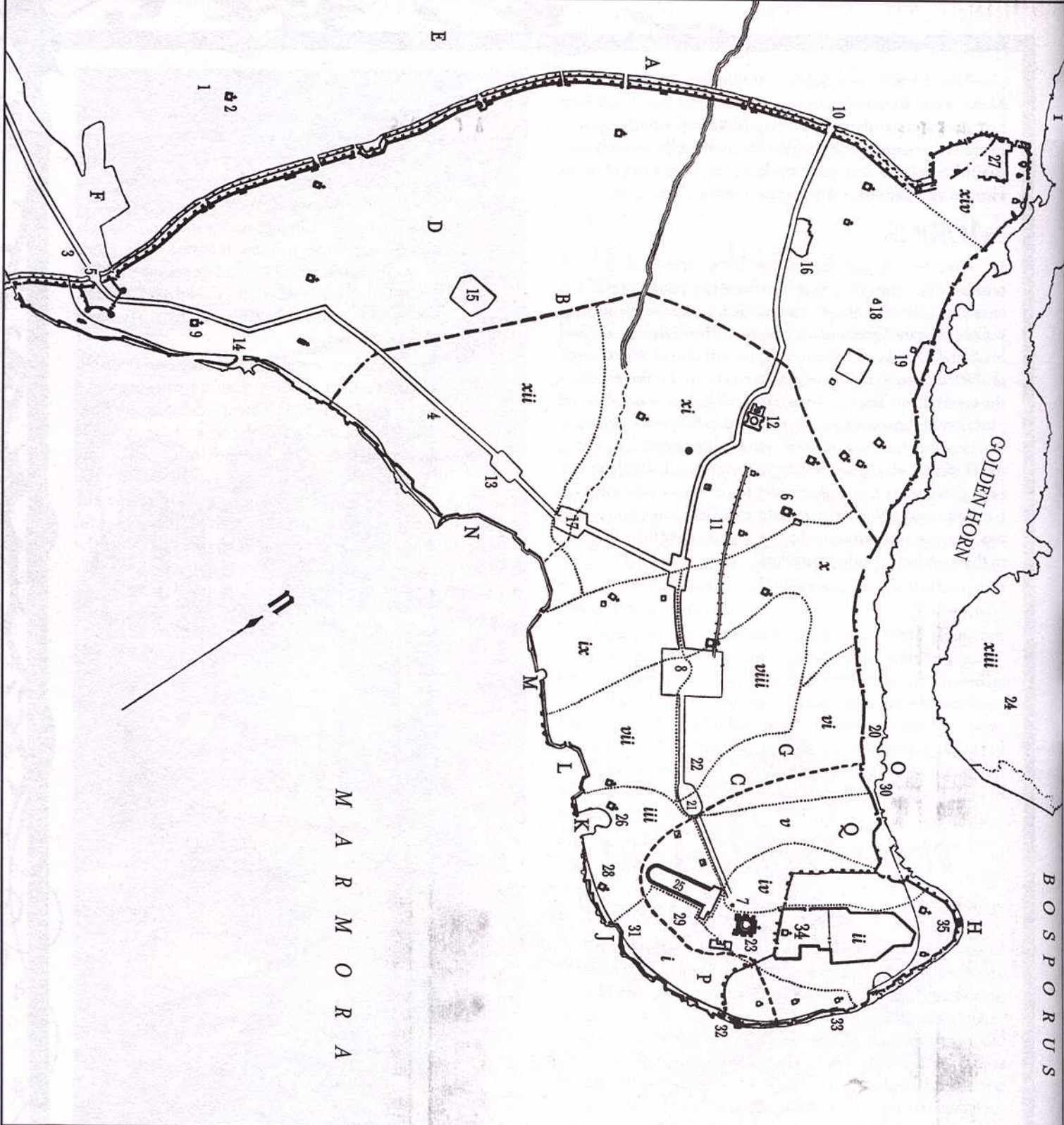
SHIP OF THE DAMNED

One evening, the characters walk by one of the city's ports along the Golden Horn when they see a small Nosferatu boy, one of The Three, gazing at the sea. As they approach, he points to the dark waters and proclaims, "Look there... it comes tonight." The characters see a dilapidated vessel approach the port. Its sails are tattered and the silhouettes of strange figures move on its deck. When the characters turn to the boy again, he is gone. Making their way to the port, the characters arrive in time to see a number of men, under the control of the Tremere Abetorius, close the dock and set fire to the vessel. As this happens, the characters sense a presence onboard that begs them for help.

If the characters dare venture aboard the burning vessel, they discover the body of a staked Cainite who bears the distinguishing mark of Saulot. The vampires have very little time to act; the smell of smoke fills the air and the agents of Abetorius shout at them from land. Removing the stake only plunges the Cainite into torpor, making it difficult for the characters to rescue him. If the characters do rescue the mysterious vampire, they invoke the wrath of Abetorius, who is using the ship to lure the renegade Theresa and Achmet the Dreamer into his clutches. The staked Cainite is none other than Achmet's sire, Orpheus.



Constantinople Night map



M A R M O R A

- A Walls of Theodosius II
- B Walls of Constantine
- C Walls of Byzantium
- D Exokionion
- E Military Training Fields
- F Industrial Quarter
- G Great Bazaar
- H Seraglio Point, Military District
- I Harbor of Herodion
- I Harbor of Bucoleon
- K Harbor of Sophia
- L Harbor of Kontoscalion
- M Harbor of Heptascalion
- N Harbor of Theodosius
- O Harbor of Neokion
- P Arcadius District
- Q Stratagion
- 1 S. John the Evangelist
- 2 Iudendiae Palace
- 3 Egnatian Way
- 4 The Mese
- 5 Golden Gate
- 6 Ch. of Christ Pantokrator
- 7 Forum of Augustaiou, Senate Basilica, Milion
- 8 Forum of Theodosius
- 9 Ch. of S. John Strudus
- 10 Gate of Potvandrion
- 11 Aqueduct of Valens
- 12 Ch. of the Holy Apostles
- 13 Forum of Arcadius
- 14 Gate of Pammathia
- 15 Cistern of Mokius
- 16 Cistern of Aspar
- 17 Forum of Bouis
- 18 Ch. of S. John in Teulio
- 19 Citadel of Petron
- 20 Perama Porta Herbaica
- 21 Forum of Constantine
- 22 House of Lampr
- 23 Ch. of Hagia Sophia
- 24 Galata Tower
- 25 Hippodrome
- 26 Ch. of Archangel Michael
- 27 Blachernae Palace
- 28 Ch. of S. S. Sergius and Bacchus
- 29 Great Palace
- 30 Pora Veterans Rectoria
- 31 Palace of Bucoleon
- 32 Seraglio Lighthouse
- 33 Ch. of S. Savior
- 34 Ch. of Irene
- 35 Acropolis

Constantinople

b n i g h t

The greatest city of the medieval world, domed Constantinople is a lodestone for the vampires of the Dark Ages. Immerse yourself in intrigues ancient and contemporary as you traverse the labyrinthine streets and torchlit bazaars of Byzantium's wondrous capital. But beware: yours is not the only hunger in the East that demands to be sated.

CONSTANTINOPLE BY NIGHT includes:

- Guidelines for immersing characters in Constantinople's intrigues, and;
- Connections between Dark Ages characters and their modern counterparts.
- This is the first setting book for Vampire: The Dark Ages.



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