

# Dark Ages

STORYTELLERS  
COMPANION



A SOURCEBOOK FOR DARK AGES: VAMPIRE™



# Dark Ages

## STORYTELLERS

### COMPANION



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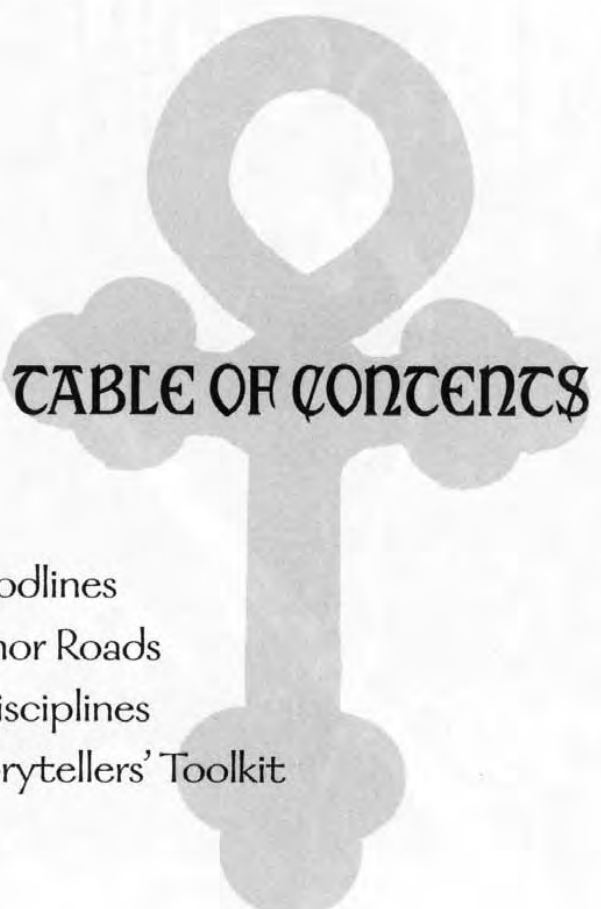
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# INTRODUCTION

The Dark Medieval world is a vast and often daunting place, even when one considers only mortal happenings. Adding the mythology and history of the Cainites makes the setting seem even more bustling, and you might need more information on certain topics — the Salubri, the demon-worshipping Baali, the five “minor roads” and so forth — than **Dark Ages: Vampire** is equipped to provide. Likewise, some of the ideas in that tome, notably maturation and downtime, deserve expansion. Hence, the **Storytellers Companion**.

This book gives more detail to some of the components of **Dark Ages: Vampire** that need it. Players may find this information useful; a player might wish to take on the role of a visiting Laibon in a chronicle, or rise to the challenge of playing an Assamite on the Road of Blood. In general, however, the information contained herein will be most useful for the Storyteller.

- **Chapter One: Bloodlines** describes six new bloodlines of Caine — from the unrepentant Baali to the tragic, fallen Salubri — for use as characters, antagonists, or allies.

- **Chapter Two: Minor Roads** explains the tenets and practices of the six roads mentioned on page 99 of **Dark Ages: Vampire**.

- **Chapter Three: Disciplines** reveals the arcane powers of the bloodlines.

- **Chapter Four: Storytellers' Toolkit** is exactly what the name suggests. It includes expanded rules for mass combat, supporting characters, downtime and maturation points, and even rules for creating elder vampires.





MANIBRAKE

# CHAPTER ONE:

# BLOODLINES

A certain recluse, I know not who, once said that no bonds attached him to this life, and the only thing that he would regret leaving was the sky.

— Yoshida Kenko, *Tsurezure-Gusa* (*Essays in Idleness*)

The six bloodlines presented in this book are not intended simply as an extension to the existing list of clans that people can play. Bloodlines are by definition much less numerous than clans. They have less of an impact on the political and social world of the Cainites. They are, in some way or another, not considered “up to snuff” by the rest of the vampiric community.

Some lineages are seen this way because their members are exceedingly rare, or they make their homes in lands far from Europe. Others are considered mad, degenerate, failed experiments that haven’t had the good graces to lie down and die yet. Still others are the subjects of hunts and pogroms, either for their hideous practices or for their political inconvenience.

These minor clans aren’t easy to play for several reasons. Any member of these lines will be looked upon with suspicion at best by other vampires. Many will be killed on sight, hunted, enslaved, or exiled from most princes’ domains. Any character put in this situation will likely lead a short and terrifying unlife, and certainly won’t be able to get involved in as wide a range of plots as most other characters. Because of this, most of the information presented here provides plot hooks for Storytellers and suggestions for using members of the bloodlines as Storyteller characters and plot sources.

Every troupe is a little bit different, however. Many players and Storytellers can create a fun and interesting game by breaking the rules. If you wish to allow your players to experiment with the bloodlines, by all means do so. It is recommended that you restrict use of these bloodlines to players who have at least some experience with the setting and rules. This way, they’ll have some idea of what they’re in for. Feel free to disallow characters from these bloodlines if you believe they would make your game too difficult to run.

Each bloodline write-up contains suggestions to help players portray members of the lineage. You’ll find thoughts on which bloodlines make better characters for players and why, along with suggestions for how to make such characters work for you and your game. In some cases it may be necessary to adapt a bloodline’s traits or weaknesses in order to make a workable character for a player. If you do this, it is recommended that you also either weaken a corresponding strength that the family confers or exaggerate a different weakness so as to maintain balance.





It is also recommended that you use these minor clans sparingly, even as Storyteller characters. As rare walk-on parts they highlight the tragedy of the failed, dying bloodlines. They can inject a measure of sobriety into your game by showing the last moments of a dying species, or give it an exotic feel. You can use them to hint at some of the larger and more dangerous schemes of the Cainites, or to underscore just how inhuman and messed up vampires really are. If they show up in droves every other week, however, many of these elements are lost.

By their very natures, many of these bloodlines have an epic feel to them. They speak clearly of birth and death, genocide and the creation of new species, wars and conquest. This allows you to use them as fodder for climactic plot threads. They can also bring home the very personal ways in which such large schemes impact the individual. You can achieve this effect simply by restricting yourself to introducing members of the bloodlines as individuals, and showing the impact of their bloodlines' travails upon their personal concerns.

## BAALI

The origins of the Baali are unclear, but they are as ancient as any clan of Caine. The Baali are as old as the first dark rites held around a primitive campfire, designed to take control of the forces at work in the world, rather than be forever at their mercy. An ancient tribe of humans desired power and so made a pact with darkness and the night. Over time, these dark forces acquired have had many names and forms — the Children, the Lords, and other, much stranger names. The Lords were called *Ba'al* in the language of the time, and so their servitors came to be known as Baali, and later, the Shaitan.

The transmutation of these mortals into Cainites is an event shrouded in mystery. The two constants in the stories of the Baali bloodline's creation are hubris and foolishness. As the stories have it, a Cainite toyed with the Baali — for fun, to teach them the foolishness of their ways, or to teach them how pathetic their

attempts at "evil" were, depending on the tale. Whether deliberately or accidentally, he touched them with his blood. Those who "survived" his attentions became the founders of this tainted line.

The Baali see existence as a struggle between two great powers. For lack of better identification, they call these sides good and evil, or light and dark. Much greater than the petty wars and sins of Cainites, these powers encompass all existence. Everything and everyone is a part of this conflict; to the Baali, the only measure of worth is in whether you can participate in the game.

The great powers of good and evil have no need for Cainites — vampires have no souls, or are already damned. What these powers value are human souls, and anything of value to the greater powers is of value to the Baali. The Baali have split into different sects over the years, each worshipping its own version of the dark forces: the Children, the Lords, insect-demons, ancient gods and more. All of these sects strive to take part in the overarching struggle.

The Baali were doing well for themselves and might have come into their own as a clan of power, but the Salubri



### BAALI IN PLAY

**As Storyteller Characters:** Baali play for the souls of mortals, not Cainites. They can bring the focus of the game back to the mortals for a little while. They can invoke a feeling that vampires aren't the most powerful players in the game — in fact, next to the great powers in the universe, they're barely on the playing field. They can remind the characters that there are larger things to fight for than their own unives, more important things to worry about than who the prince is or where one's next supply of blood will come from. They can expand the scope of the game.

**As Characters for Players:** The Baali tend to make particularly difficult characters for players. Baali are vicious, terrible vampires who do hideous things in order to tempt, corrupt and damn others. This is rarely a good direction for roleplaying — it tends to make other players uncomfortable at best, and can easily tear apart a game. If you want to allow a player to play a Baali, it is recommended that you both use subtlety. The Baali need skilled spies and messengers who can blend in with the other clans, and who know better than to risk their covers by torturing innocents in their spare time.

### STEREOTYPES

**The High Clans:** They believe themselves lords and ladies all, but we shall bring them low before our masters. For now, however, we endeavor to avoid their notice.

**The Low Clans:** They will never be allies, but they make wonderful pawns. Anyone who is dissatisfied with his lot in life can be used. Anyone who feels oppressed, trampled or held back can be manipulated.

**Salubri:** If it takes us a thousand years, the tattered remains of this pathetic excuse for a bloodline *will* fall.

**Tremere:** We are uncertain whether to flee these wizards or embrace them from a distance as brothers. Watch them carefully and see which side of the line they fall upon. Either way, beware their lust for power.

**Assamites:** Don't let them know your lineage or your unlife is likely forfeit. These zealots will sooner tear you apart than look at you. We punished them for their actions against us once; it's clearly time to find a way to do so again.

long ago took up arms against them, crusading to wipe out the infernalists. Although the Baali brought low most of the best Salubri warriors, the conflict greatly reduced their numbers and power as well. An Assamite holy war closely followed the Salubri assault, which further weakened the bloodline. The Baali struck back with a ritual whose power even now works its way through the line of Haqim, striking the Assamites with an irrational thirst for Cainite blood. The Assamites still possess much more power than the Baali, however, and they make a formidable enemy.

Diminished in numbers and strength, the Baali now suffer correspondingly greater persecution by other Cainites, as well as mortal witch-hunts. As a low-blooded clan, the Baali are actively distrusted and officially banned by most princes. While some few court them in hopes of gaining the backing of the Baali's infernal masters, most use them as convenient scapegoats for anything that goes wrong. For their part, the Baali try to remain inconspicuous, staying out of sight and avoiding obvious positions of power. They operate outside the normal parameters of the Cainite feudal system, or pass themselves off as members of other clans.

This low profile gives the Baali considerable opportunities to do valuable research. They collect information, worm their way into unassuming positions of influence over those in power, seduce those they can, and in other ways set themselves up for later advances. The major obstacle to these plans is the bloodline's current disunity. The disparate Baali sects quarrel and fight, sometimes using their accumulated influence to strike at each other rather than at their clan's enemies.

Childer are usually indoctrinated into their sire's cult upon their Embrace, and are expected to follow his dictates. After five to 10 years they're usually allowed to strike out on their own, although they often return to report to their sires, just as each sire must report back to his sire, and so on back to the Baali's infernal masters. Baali value loyalty greatly in their childer, but they do not value blind loyalty, which they see as the sign of a weak mind.

The ancient Baali Mary the Black, who recently diablerized the Toreador Methuselah Michael, is on the run across Europe. The Baali do their best whenever she is sighted to help cover her tracks, as long as they can do so without endangering themselves. Unfortunately, her actions have prompted renewed efforts to stamp out the Baali threat, and some Baali argue against sheltering her.

**Sobriquet:** Shaitan, Devils, Demons

**Appearance:** The Baali do their best to blend in wherever they are, and so they dress in a fashion typical of the region where they are found. Since the Baali enjoy influence over others, their clothing is usually of good quality. They can be of any race. Many Baali, particularly elders, bear ritual scars.

**Haven and Prey:** The Baali prefer to draw cults of weak-willed mortals around them to feed upon. The trappings of religion fascinate them, and they often take up residence in abandoned temples and other places of worship that no longer feel the touch of faith.

**The Embrace:** The Baali feed upon and enslave the weak-willed, but they Embrace the strong. They try to avoid self-serving, prideful manipulators, instead preferring mortals who have glimpsed the larger conflict of the universe and been drawn toward the darkness. This includes people who have dabbled in the occult or who keep faith with the older gods in the face of Christianity. It also includes scholars who seek meaning in the universe. The Embrace is preceded by a long process of indoctrination, and culminates in the induction into the sire's cult as one of his favored acolytes.

The Baali prefer to Embrace by pouring their vitae into an eviscerated heart and forcing their chosen to claw through a pit of dead and decaying bodies to reach it. They believe this guarantees that only the strongest candidates make it into the clan. Legend has it that the Baali also know





how to Embrace members of other clans into their own.

**Character Creation:** Mental or Social Attributes are usually primary, with the other being secondary. Knowledges of all kinds are common, particularly Occult, Academics and Linguistics. Talents such as Intimidation, Subterfuge and Leadership also show up quite often. Most Baali are on the Road of Sin (specifically the Path of the Devil), but a few follow the Road of Kings instead.

**Bloodline Disciplines:** Obfuscate, Presence, Daimoinon

**Weaknesses:** The Baali are particularly vulnerable to religious symbols; unless those symbols have lain abandoned for at least half a century, the Baali must flee before

them. Crosses, Stars of David, chants of verses from the Qur'an — all drive the Baali before them. The Baali also suffer double damage from any Faith-based power.

**Organization:** Elders' havens are known as nests, and their childer spend several years with them in that nest before striking out on their own. Although childer usually remain loyal to their sires, it is common to see competition and sometimes even war between different nests. Different Baali worship different aspects of the demonic powers; because of this, their agendas and practices differ as well. Such differences often cause them to fight among themselves.

*Quote: Just a little farther now, a little farther, and you will know the truth....*

## GARGOYLES

The Gargoyles are a servitor race, an experiment in slavery, a horrifying hybrid of Nosferatu, Gangrel and Tzimisce bloods. The Tremere created them from captive Cainites in an effort to keep themselves from being overwhelmed by their enemies, and imbued them with a hatred for their "ancestors." The Gargoyles single-handedly turned the tide of battle, giving the Tremere a chance to survive and even thrive despite the enmity of other Cainites. Since midway through the 12th century, Gargoyles have guarded almost every Tremere chantry.

The Gargoyles' Nosferatu blood gives them a hideous, demonic appearance; their Gangrel blood makes them little better than beasts. Their



Tzimisce blood is perhaps responsible for the strangest of their mutations, such as the huge, bat-like wings that sprout from their backs, and the tendency of their skin to harden into a stone-like substance as they age.

Gargoyles are generally of low intelligence and simple needs, and they have few desires. They mix best with their own kind and are fiercely loyal to their own breed. They sleep heaped in piles, taking comfort in one another's presence. They refuse to harm the weak or crippled of their own race, choosing instead to bring them animals from which to feed. They are also fiercely territorial — anyone but their creators who enters their lairs must immediately leave or be beset by a horde of angry beasts.

The majority of Gargoyles are created from captured Cainites rather than Embraced by other Gargoyles, and the creation process is not always entirely successful. Some Gargoyles are mad, degenerate creatures. These monsters' need to obey their Tremere masters rarely holds for more than a few months, and then they must be slain. The creation process is overseen by the Tremere Virstania, who takes a motherly role toward the Gargoyles. She has allowed them to create a few nearly mindless ghouls to guard their lairs during the daytime.

Simulacra are Gargoyles who look like normal Cainites, and are usually created for one-time suicide missions. They combine a typical Gargoyle's loyalty and lack of intelligence with the appearance of a particular Nosferatu, Gangrel or Tzimisce. They are accepted by no one, and their brief unives

### GARGOYLES IN PLAY

**As Storyteller Characters:** Gargoyles can drive home the inhumanity of the actions of Clan Tremere. They stand as evidence of the bestial nature of the Cainites from which they were created and those who created them. They make terrifying opponents in battle, and will be an inherent part of any story that involves taking direct action against the Tremere. They can also demonstrate some of what is noble in vampires and in beasts, by their occasional longing for freedom and rejection of enslavement. They can kidnap coterie members or their allies, or attack their concerns.

**As Characters for Players:** In general a Gargoyle character is either boring (guard dog for the Tremere), or short-lived (or both). Most of the other clans kill Gargoyles on sight, because their only experience with them is on the battlefield. As far as they know, all Gargoyles serve the Tremere and the Tremere aren't to be trusted. That said, however, a free Gargoyle who attempts to garner support or aid for his people could be an interesting character for a skilled player. That player should understand how dangerous the world will be for his character, and shouldn't mind high odds of death.

### STEREOTYPES

**Tremere:** The masters. Obey them, but worship Virstania only.

**Nosferatu:** Bad-tasting prey. Give to mother. Don't eat.

**Tzimisce:** Dangerous prey. They catch one of my brothers and the great lords say they take him to pieces. They pay for that.

**Gangrel:** Difficult prey. Eat when no one looking.  
**Everyone Else:** Only eat if masters say so, or trouble follows.

are almost always miserable. Cainites find them uninteresting conversationalists at best, while true Gargoyles hate them as much as they hate any normal member of their ancestor breeds.

Rumor has it that one of the early Gargoyles escaped Tremere control and formed a free colony of Gargoyles hidden somewhere not far from Ceoris. This legendary figure is called the Rock Lord, and stories of his escape have done more than anything else to turn the thoughts of the Gargoyles toward freedom. Most of them love their creators dearly, and they were designed for loyalty, but sooner or later some Gargoyle minds do start to wander toward a desire for liberty.

For now, the escaped Gargoyles must swell their ranks with their freed fellows, as they find it difficult to create more of their own kind. Sooner or later a race that cannot reproduce will die out; even the Gargoyles realize this. They continue to experiment with Embracing captives, and if they ever produce sustainable progeny, the free Gargoyles could become more than just occasional pests.

No one but the Tremere tolerates the presence of the Gargoyles. The other clans see them as enemy soldiers and abominations. Any Gargoyle that shows its face without a Tremere handler is likely to be destroyed—or taken apart piece by piece to see how it works.

**Sobriquet:** Watchdogs, Abominations

**Appearance:** Most Gargoyles possess unusually long claws, and fangs that could more rightly be called tusks. Their faces are hideous and twisted. As they grow older their skin hardens, taking on a stone-like appearance after approximately 30 to 50 years. They also develop odd subdermal lumps and protrusions, causing them to look less and less like their ancestors as they age.

**Haven and Prey:** Gargoyles prefer to live in caves and catacombs, surrounded by the stone they come to resemble. They prey upon wild animals, livestock and the enemies of the Tremere. At first they drove many of the common folk from the area around Ceoris by over-feeding on the local animals, but they eventually learned to widen their feeding area. Some can fly as far as two hundred miles in one night to fetch food for their fellows.

**The Embrace:** Only the top third most successful of the Gargoyle experiments are capable of passing on Caine's curse through the Embrace. These further progeny, however, are often incapable of Embracing others. Many of them cease to function and "die" within a week of their Embrace. Even

when they come out well, these Gargoyles often smell wrong to their fellows, and the Gargoyle community is slow to accept them. The creation process developed by the Tremere takes several months, and all Gargoyles are created from Nosferatu, Gangrel and Tzimisce Cainites.

**Character Creation:** The first Gargoyle was made in 1121; the majority of the Gargoyles are much younger. Gargoyles lose all or nearly all of their memories from their former lives, as well as their Disciplines. They can come from any background, but Physical Attributes and Talents become primary with the change. The vast majority of Gargoyles follow the Road of the Beast, but a few of the more intelligent follow the Road of Heaven in an attempt to find meaning in their twisted unives. With rare exceptions, Gargoyles are not terribly intelligent. An Intelligence rating of 2 is considered exceptional; Knowledges are almost always tertiary.

**Bloodline Disciplines:** Special (see page 49).

**Weaknesses:** Created as servants and slaves, Gargoyles are weak of will. Their Willpower pool is reduced by two dice when resisting Dominate or other mind-control magics.

**Organization:** Although Gargoyles might fight among each other as a show of strength or to determine status, they never seek to kill one another (except for the Simulacra, whom they do not recognize as Gargoyles). They cannot be made to violate their intense loyalty to each other, except through the use of Dominate and other mind-control magics. Beyond their group loyalty, they have little obvious organization aside from a simple pecking order based primarily on strength and combat ability.

**Quote:** *Here, mother—this one make fine brother for me once you make him in pieces.*





# LAIBON

European vampires believe that the Laibon were created by Cainites who migrated to Africa before the Sahara cut off the southern part of the Dark Continent from the rest of the world. The Laibon believe that they descended from the spirits of the land, and see stories of Caine as perversions of their own beliefs.

Africa is still a wild place, where the dance of predator and prey is played out for all to see. Wild beasts dominate the plains and acacia woodlands. The Laibon take their lessons from the spirits of these graceful predators.

Study of and kinship with the animals have given the Laibon a much deeper understanding of and control over their Beasts. They see the Beast not as a separate entity that controls their actions, but as a part of them that is closest to the animal spirits from which they came. This sense of kinship makes the Laibon formidable hunters. They strive for the grace of the leopard, the speed of the cheetah, and the strength of the lion. Like many of those great predators, they also tend to have large territories, and defend them viciously against intruding vampires.

Laibon have little truck with each other. Like most predators, a childe once turned out of the home is no more a relation to his or her sire than any other member of the species. Laibon send messages to one another through ghouls and allies, but they do not enter another's territory without clear invitation, and such invitation is rarely



given. Most Laibon will not even communicate with each other except on matters of importance to the clan as a whole.

Because of the Laibon's large territories and their lack of proximity to other Cainites and the War of Princes, they have more leisure time than other vampires. Some of the Laibon use this time to engage in scholarly pursuits, learning the languages of distant places and honing the fine art of storytelling. Most Laibon know the creation myths of their people by heart and pass them on to any Cainite who asks.

As a rite of passage, Laibon neonates travel far and wide before taking on their own domains.

Occasionally an older Laibon who has grown weary of his home will travel for a time as well. The Laibon believe that one cannot rule one's own domain without some understanding of what lies beyond it. Some few of these Laibon have traveled into Europe, paying for their hosts' hospitality with fanciful tales from distant lands or beautiful displays of grace and ferocity.

Now that trade routes have been established into the depths of Africa, Islamic vampires have moved into the Laibon's territories. The African vampires appreciate neither the intrusion of their Arabic brethren, nor the spread of the foreign faith in their lands, and they strike swiftly at any foreign Cainites they find in their territories. Now traveling young Laibon carry more than just stories — they also carry messages and warnings, accompanied by violence if that seems the only way to get the point across. Although the Laibon possess fine control

## LAIBON IN PLAY

**As Storyteller Characters:** Exotic and erudite, a visiting Laibon can make a fascinating appearance in your game. They tell captivating stories, fight like lions, and see vampirism in a new and different way. If your players are starting to take the ways in which vampires work for granted, try using a Laibon to shake up their assumptions a little bit. The Laibon can also introduce a threat from outside Europe and the War of Princes. They can turn up the heat if things seem a little too predictable or familiar.

**As Characters for Players:** The Laibon are one of the easiest bloodlines for players to work with. Unlike many other bloodlines, they aren't killed on sight. They see things differently from their European brethren, but that doesn't make them inherently more monstrous than any other Cainite. They are also flexible and easy to work into your plots. Perhaps a Laibon comes to deliver a warning and decides to stay for a while. Maybe a traveling neonate ends up in debt to someone in Europe and stays to work off that debt. There is no set length to a neonate's travels, and in vampiric time a journey of several decades is nothing unusual.

## STEREOTYPES

**The High Clans:** These are the rulers of our European cousins? Truly, we have little to fear from such fractious and quarreling creatures. As long as they stay out of our homeland there will be little reason to fight, but should they attempt to conquer us...

**The Low Clans:** An unbalanced rabble. I can't imagine what mad spirit must have created them.

**Baali:** Keep these devil-worshippers from our gates, and destroy them when you find them. They must not be allowed a foothold in our domains.

**Tremere:** Be vigilant against these betrayers — they have the eyes of conquerors.

**Gangrel:** I feel an odd kinship with some of these beasts. Truly, they still possess a shard of spirit within them.

**Ventrue:** Elegant hosts and polite audiences, but they will try to use you. Pick out your own haven as quickly as possible and do not become too beholden to these creatures.

over their Beasts and tempers, they have no compunction against striking out against their enemies when necessary.

**Sobriquet:** Sphinxes

**Appearance:** Most Laibon are dark-skinned and either wiry or muscular. A few have been Embraced from civilizations in the Middle East. Many bear ritual scars from the traditions of their tribes, which occasionally leads to their being confused with the Followers of Set or the Baali. Travelers adopt the dress of the areas to which they travel, making at least a minimal attempt to blend in.

**Haven and Prey:** Traveling Laibon stay either in quarters provided by their hosts, or in abandoned or disused buildings. They check with their hosts to be sure which mortals are safest to feed from. Once they have settled into a city, they prefer to dwell in some comfort, often using their neighbors as ghouls and prey. The Laibon do their best to drive off any other vampires who try to settle or feed in their area. If a Laibon has settled for a time in someone else's city, that area is probably limited to the building or neighborhood where he is staying. If he has taken up his own territory back home, it may encompass several villages and the plains or woodlands between and around them.

**The Embrace:** The Laibon Embrace for grace, speed, strength and combat ability, as well as curiosity and ambition. They prefer childer who exhibit a good balance of these characteristics. Recently the Laibon have started to Embrace outside their homelands, but their standards for doing so are very high. In addition to being a superb hunter, a European childer must be intelligent (though not necessarily literate) and willing to shed the blind faith in the vengeful God of the Europeans to learn the more animistic faith of the Laibon.

**Character Creation:** The Laibon prize a wide variety of capabilities and strengths. Any of the Attribute classes can be primary, although Mental or Physical is more common than

Social. Self-Control or Instinct is usually high, reflecting the Laibon's skill at controlling the Beast. Survivor, Defender and Loner are common Natures, and Demeanor is usually tailored to suit whoever the Laibon is currently dealing with. Common Abilities include Survival, Expression, Stealth and Melee. Typically, Laibon follow variations of the Roads of the Beast and Heaven.

**Bloodline Disciplines:**

Abombwe, Animalism, Fortitude

**Weaknesses:** The Laibon's control over their Beast (as in the use of Abombwe; see p. 36) comes at a cost — a tithe of the blood a Laibon consumes and uses. Each time a member of the bloodline uses or consumes blood, the Beast "consumes" a point, or two if the net change in blood pool is five or greater in one scene. For example, if a Laibon vampire spends two points to boost her Attributes, she actually loses three. If she drains a mortal of 10 blood points, she only gains eight.

**Organization:** In Europe the Laibon are solitary wanderers, usually viewed as little more than a curiosity. They rarely meet up with each other while traveling, and spend little time talking when they do; although they are respectful and polite to each other, they prefer the company of strangers. In their native lands they claim vast domains as their own and avoid each other as much as possible. Some vampires have told stories of coming across small gatherings of Laibon, of witnessing odd rituals and the telling of tales in an ancient and musical language, but these stories are generally dismissed as fanciful. Certainly none of the Laibon will admit to the truth of them.

**Quote:** *You should not have entered my domain, soft Cainite. You will never leave it again.*





# LAMIA

The very first Lamia was the daughter of Lilith. Some of the bloodline's legends say that Lilith became pregnant by Adam in a fit of passion after she refused to service him. Most of the Lamia sneer at this, insisting that Lilith would never have opened herself to Adam.

"Lamia" became the title of the Dark Mother Lilith's high priestess. It was an inherited position, passed down from mother to daughter for centuries. Each Lamia upheld the memory of the Dark Mother, venerating her with violent rites and acts of carnage. Each Lamia gathered worthy women to her, instructing them in the Dark Mother's secrets and teaching them the twin arts of ritual and war. The Cult of Lamia remained a well-guarded secret.

One night Lazarus of Clan Cappadocian found a hidden temple at which Lamia performed her vicious rites. He was touched by her erudition and fervor, and determined that he would make her his childe. He bore down upon her and Embraced her by force.

Lamia was overcome by dark visions as she sank briefly into death. The Dark Mother spoke to her then in a voice as ancient as the wind, instructing her to prepare for her distant



coming. "I am Death," she said in her reedy voice, "and your new patrons shall be the key to my return to the world. Protect them and see to it that their studies come to fruition."

When Lamia had completed her transition to undeath, Lazarus told her that she would now join the Cappadocians in the study and contemplation of death. She smiled secretively and whispered in his ear. He trembled and left the glade then, fleeing from his own childe. No one knows for sure what Lamia told Lazarus that day, but her descendants have many theories. Some say she gave him just a fraction of the revelation that Lilith had given her that night. Some say she laid out his position as Lilith's pawn in incontrovertible terms, showing him just how small he was in the grand scheme of things.

Lamia made her way to the Cappadocians, where Japheth, childe of Cappadocius, initiated her into the Clan of Death. From then on the bloodline remained close to the Cappadocians. The Lamia shared the Cappadocians' thirst for knowledge, although they preferred to find it in the realms of sensation and experience rather than in dry and dusty tomes. They shared the Cappadocians' reverence for and fascination with death, although they preferred to exult in it rather than coldly study it. They reveled in vampirism as a gift from their Dark Mother, the natural evolution of humanity. They fell naturally into their new role as predators, perhaps not so different from their previous activities.

The Lamia cult had always emphasized the arts of violence and war, so the transition from simple cult to defenders of Clan Cappadocian was a small step for them. They believe that the High Clan unknowingly serves the

## LAMIA IN PLAY

**As Storyteller Characters:** Any plot involving the Cappadocians, Lilith, religion as related to vampirism, or the origins of vampires could involve the Lamia. They possess a rather different view of their condition than most vampires do, and their idea of what they and the Cappadocians are up to is very different than the Graverobbers' view of things. If you want to tell a more epic story that involves the origins and purposes of the Cainites, then the Lamia might provide a useful avenue. The Lamia also make interesting combat antagonists.

**As Characters for Players:** Lamia are rare and very devoted to their cause, so a Lamia character would need a compelling reason to go off with non-Cappadocian vampires for any length of time. There are few circumstances under which a Lamia would fit into a party that included no Cappadocians. A few possibilities exist, however. For example, the Lilith cult might believe that a coterie member needs the protection of the Lamia, even though he is not of the Clan of Death. Or the Lamia might owe her unlife to one of the characters. Or perhaps a vision from the Dark Mother told the cult that one of their number must join with this coterie for some reason. All of these scenarios could lead to interesting plots.

## STEREOTYPES

**The High Clans:** Only the Cappadocians are fit to rule the Cainites, but we understand that they prefer not to make themselves such an obvious target.

**The Low Clans:** The world would be a much better place if the Low Clans realized their proper role as servants of the Dark Mother.

**Giovanni:** These bastard childer don't deserve to lick the feet of the Cappadocians. Keep your eyes open when dealing with them — they are not to be trusted for a moment.

**Cappadocians:** The Cappadocians have been blessed by the Dark Mother's touch, even if they do not realize it. Protect them at all costs, for they are the key to Lilith's eventual rebirth.

**Ventruue:** Arrogant bastards, these princes ban us from their domains and try to keep us from our tasks. We shall not allow them to stay us from our obligations.

Dark Mother, and they're happy to maintain that arrangement. Their exaltation of the female principle bothers many Cainites, prompting most Lamia to keep private their loyalty to Lilith, although they don't make a secret of it. Some Lamia exacerbate the problem by spreading their gospel under the guise of cults devoted to Mary.

Few in number, the Lamia are close-knit and loyal to their vision of the Dark Mother's plans for them and the Cappadocians. Their status as the servants and guardians of one of the High Clans leaves some Cainites uncertain how to treat them, particularly given their bloody and zealous reputation. The Lamia often receive a respect denied to most other bloodlines and Low Clans, if only out of wariness and respect for the Cappadocians, giving them a sort of middle class status.

According to Cainite legend, Caine stole his powers from Lilith by forcefully drinking her blood after she refused to teach him her magics. Most of the Lamia refuse to believe this, saying instead that Lilith taught Caine a bare fraction of her powers. The legend of his theft, they say, arose because the Cainites could not stand to believe their power was given to them by a woman, or that Caine was Lilith's subordinate.

**Sobriquet:** Gorgons, Witches

**Appearance:** Most of the original Lamia are of Semitic or Mediterranean descent; a few Europeans have been recently Embraced. The Lamia prefer to dress in dark robes that resemble those of religious orders; the irony appeals to them. They are not quite as pallid as their Cappadocian cousins, and they tend toward the tall and muscular, often possessed of a feral beauty.

**Haven and Prey:** The Lamia prefer solitude in their havens, the better to contemplate the mysteries of the Dark Mother. Tombs and sarcophagi are favored havens, as are convents. The Lamia often feed from the newly dead, so as to avoid

spreading their contagion and feel a little closer to death at the same time; they prefer to feed from females when possible.

**The Embrace:** The bloodline is young and does not reproduce quickly; the Lamia still labor to find worthy members with which to fill up their cults. Most inductees are female, but a few males have been chosen in recent years. The Lamia often Embrace people on the verge of suicide or who have recently committed murder.

**Character Creation:** Even those Lamia primarily concerned with things ritualistic and religious tend to make Physical Attributes primary—the rites of the Lamia are violent and strenuous. Each Lamia possesses at least one combat-related Ability. Most Gorgons follow the Road of Humanity, but most of the major roads are represented somewhere within the Lamia.

**Bloodline Disciplines:** Mortis, Potence, Fortitude

**Weaknesses:** The Lamia carry a virulent plague they call the "Seed of Lilith." Most of the bloodline believes it to be a reminder from Lilith that she holds complete power over the line, and that the Lamia exist only at her will. Anyone the Lamia feed upon must make a Stamina roll (difficulty 6 for women, 8 for men). If the roll fails, the victim contracts a Black Plague-like pox that is fatal within several days. Any vampire that consumes Lamia blood becomes a carrier of the disease until all of the Lamia vitae has been purged from his body. Most princes who know of the Seed of Lilith attempt to ban the Lamia from their domains, or restrict their presence to leper villages.

**Organization:** The Lamia have a cult-like hierarchy. Most Lamia are female, and as women are believed to be closer to Lilith, they occupy the higher positions of the priesthood. Most Lamia remain with their sires for at least a decade before moving on. The Lamia zealously serve the Cappadocians at Lilith's behest.

**Quote:** *The Dark Mother has a special place prepared for you, little one. Take my hand....*





# LHIANNAN

Most Cainites who know of the Lhiannan believe them to be a subspecies of the Gangrel clan. After all, they're wild and fey, they live almost exclusively in rural areas, and they still follow pre-Christendom traditions. No one knows exactly where the Lhiannan line started. Even the bloodline itself only knows that at some time in the distant past, a woodland spirit was somehow bound into the body of a vampire by a shadowy female figure called the Crone, and with that act began the Lhiannan.

Fragments of Europe's older cultures still survive in isolated villages, and where they survive, the Lhiannan continue. As the forces of Christendom drive back the last of the pagan religions and stamp out (or assimilate) the superstitions of the common peasant, the Lhiannan are pushed further and further from the lights of civilization. The breed is dying, for several reasons. Their mystical nature marks them indelibly, giving them an aura that even ordinary humans can sense. This makes them easy targets for witch hunts and ambitious Cainites. In addition, the spirit that gave them their identity and much of their power is fading.

The spirit that joined with the first Lhiannan was a highly territorial, bloodthirsty being that demanded sac-



rifice from those around it. When the first Lhiannan Embraced the second, that spirit broke off a piece of itself into a new spirit and passed it into the newly-made vampire. That spirit has been broken again and again over the centuries, and the newer Lhiannan are much weaker than the original. Each Lhiannan who makes a childe becomes weaker, and each childe is weaker than her sire. With each Lhiannan destroyed, a piece of the spirit disappears forever.

Because of this, the Lhiannan sire only rarely, jealously guarding the shards of spirit they still hold within them. Only when loneliness overcomes them do they diminish their power by producing a childe. The entirety of Europe now holds less than 20 Lhiannan.

The Lhiannan have inherited a great deal from the spirit that inhabits them all. Fiercely territorial creatures, they choose an area and then stay with it, keeping most others out. They leave their territories only in an emergency. They are strongly tied to woodland areas; cities make them constantly uncomfortable, even physically ill. The Lhiannan also have a certain amount of power over spirits through their Discipline of Ogham. They have tried to find a way to bind a new and powerful spirit into their bloodline to renew their strength, but so far they've failed.

Other European Cainites see the Lhiannan as little more than savages. The Gangrel, however, view them with intense hatred and slay them whenever possible. The Animals are characteristically tight-lipped about the reasons for their vitriol, but do sometimes speak of a "great betrayal" when referring to the Lhiannan. Magda, possibly the eldest

## LHIANNAN IN PLAY

**As Storyteller Characters:** Lhiannan are alien to the average Cainite, and their plight is particularly tragic — they are clearly a dying breed, regardless of whether they create more of their kind or not. They cannot halt the spread of urban areas and Christianity, nor can they renew the spirit that touches them all. The Lhiannan are desperate, and desperate vampires are dangerous. A Lhiannan might try to use the characters as experimental subjects, seeking to bind new spirits into them. Or a Lhiannan might plead, cajole, threaten, or blackmail the characters in order to gain their aid.

**As Characters for Players:** In general, the Lhiannan don't make good characters for players. They don't like the urban areas most vampires frequent, they're highly territorial (and don't like to leave their turf), and they have little in common with other Cainites. On the other hand, a Lhiannan on a quest to save her people might make an interesting character — perhaps the spirit within her is so weak that she isn't quite as territorial as her sisters.

## STEREOTYPES

**The High Clans:** They cut down our trees and hunt our sisters. I would destroy every last one of them if I could.

**The Low Clans:** They try to call us brothers and sisters and tell us they'll help us against their betters, but the other hand always conceals the knife.

**Gangrel:** A Gangrel once came for my blood. I ripped out his heart and fed it to the spirits of the trees in my grove.

**Tremere:** The Tremere think they know magic, but they are wrong. The magic of dusty tomes and Latin screeds is nothing to the raw power of the spirits themselves.

of the bloodline, resides in Ireland and has thus far repelled attempts on her unlife.

**Sobriquet:** Druids, Barbarians, Savages

**Appearance:** In general, the Lhiannan appear much like any other rustic inhabitants of rural Europe. When using their Ogham Discipline, however, they often anoint themselves with bloody glyphs and runes. When in their havens, the Lhiannan sometimes dress in old garb and adorn themselves with talismans.

**Haven and Prey:** Lhiannan favor forest glens and isolated rural villages where the old ways are still practiced. Failing this, they occasionally try to blend in on the fringes of urban areas. The Lhiannan prefer to feed by setting themselves up as cult priests or by terrorizing local villagers into offering blood sacrifices to appease them. Some Lhiannan become jealously protective of their villages and the trees within their forests — not out of any fondness for them, but out of simple possessiveness.

**The Embrace:** The Lhiannan prefer to Embrace rural men and women with strong ties to the land they live on, a belief in the old ways, and a strong will. They refuse to Embrace anyone who follows a monotheistic faith. A childe stays with her sire for a couple of years at most, by which time the sire's territorial tendencies usually drive her to evict her childe from the nest. As the spirit within the Lhiannan grows weaker, however, some newer childer are less territorial than their elders, and occasionally two or three Lhiannan will join together for a time.

**Character Creation:** Any Attribute set can be primary. Lhiannan often have high scores in animal- and survival-related Abilities due to their rural upbringing. Many Lhiannan also have Retainers (typically animals) and Herd, but very few have Allies or Mentor. Most Lhiannan follow the Road of the Beast; a few follow the Road of Kings or the Road of Sin.

**Bloodline Disciplines:** Animalism, Ogham, Presence

**Weaknesses:** The Lhiannan are part nature spirit, and the mark of their inhumanity runs strong within them. All difficulties to detect their nature via *Auspex* are reduced by two, and even normal humans feel vaguely uncomfortable in their presence. Additionally, any Lhiannan who leaves her territory is too upset, uncomfortable, and even physically ill to act quickly and well — all dice pools are reduced by one die per week (to a minimum of the character's Stamina) that she is gone. Once she re-enters her territory, her dice pools return to normal within a few hours.

**Organization:** The Lhiannan are extremely individualistic and territorial. They do experience loneliness, but they usually slake it by allowing it to build to the breaking point over decades and then Embracing someone. It only takes a couple of years for them to grow tired of their new childe's company and send her away. Most Lhiannan keep a wary truce with each other, and allow each other to quickly travel through their territories if the need arises.

**Quote:** *Stay out of my forest if you wish to live — the trees themselves will rise up to stay your grasping fingers.*





# SALUBRI

The Salubri are a haggard race, constantly on the run from the clan that murdered their progenitor Saulot. The Tremere hunt the Salubri down like dogs, seeking to purge them from the face of the earth. The Healer Caste does its best to hide from the Tremere and their other enemies. As Cainites, the healers are capable of defending themselves, but most are scholarly folk not suited to a hunted life. The Warrior Caste fights back as best they can, which would mean much more if most of this caste had not been destroyed making war against the infernalist Baali.

Few Salubri still exist tonight, and in an act of irony the Tremere have tried to turn them into the very image of the things the Salubri despise. Where the Salubri have spent centuries fighting the Baali and other devil-worshippers, the Tremere now spread lies and rumors asserting that the Salubri are creatures of darkness and servants of Hell. They claim the Salubri only waged war against the Baali to bolster their public image and place themselves above reproach.



The Tremere make deals with princes and lords, offering thaumaturgic favors in return for aid in capturing and killing the Salubri. Where bribes do not work they try threats instead, finding ways to put Cainites' most treasured possessions and companions in jeopardy, preferably making it look like the fault of the Salubri. Rumor among the Salubri has it that a fledgling alliance has sprung up between a particularly unsavory Tremere lord and a sect of Baali. The two trade information on known names and locations of Salubri, and aid each other in eradicating their mutual enemy.

It doesn't help that the Salubri, with their high moral standards and their willingness to make war against anything they deem evil, have made enemies over the centuries. All of these foes are coming out of the shadows now, taking advantage of the Salubri's plight to get revenge while they can. The Baali in particular are trying to exploit Salubri weakness in hopes of obliterating them.

Another difficulty the former High Clan faces is the loss of the Code of Samiel. The code was created by Samiel, first of the Salubri warriors, and his close disciples. It laid out the proper nightly conduct of a warrior in war and peacetime, and outlined the proper procedure for the blooding of a new Salubri warrior. This ritual was believed to purify the warrior, to charge him with his sacred duties and prepare him for his purpose.

Over the years, most copies of the Code have been lost or destroyed, and the Salubri's enemies have slain most of the warriors who knew the procedure. The Warrior Caste has done its best to recreate the rite of blooding, but have only come up

## SALUBRI IN PLAY

**As Storyteller Characters:** The Salubri fight a terrifying battle against extinction. Many of their old allies refuse to aid them out of fear of or obligation to their enemies. The third eye that marks most Salubri makes it impossible for them to hide for long. They avoid each other as much as possible in order to make certain they cannot betray each other to the Tremere. They endure a lonely, desperate existence, most likely doomed to eventual destruction. Their terrible plight makes the Salubri wonderful catalysts and pawns, valued for their own abilities and for their value to the Tremere. A Salubri Storyteller character could make an interesting prize or pawn in a plot. The arrival or unmasking of a Salubri can spur all sorts of conflicts, visits from distant powerful figures (or their emissaries), and so on.

**As Characters for Players:** The Salubri are difficult characters to play — they are constantly hunted, and hiding their lineage is almost impossible. A player's Salubri would constantly be on the run, always looking over his shoulder for fear of being killed or turned over to the Tremere. Salubri warriors stand a greater chance of defending themselves, and thus might last longer as characters. Salubri healers possess valuable abilities for which a prince might be willing to offer protection, thus allowing the character to stay in one place and enjoy a small measure of safety. A Salubri character should almost certainly have some sort of a patron to protect her, or should have a good front established as a member of another clan.

## STEREOTYPES

**The High Clans:** Once we were counted among these, but our status has fallen at the behest of the Usurpers. How can the others still call themselves high, when they allowed the Usurpers to slaughter our father and round up our brethren like cattle for the charnel house? Most of the High Clans are puppets, held firm in the grasp of the Tremere.

**The Low Clans:** Low Clans include the best and worst of the Cainites, from noble Gangrel to treacherous Usurpers.

**Tremere:** Someday this pretender clan shall fall — God willing, at our hands.

**Brujah:** At their best the Brujah are worthy to be called brothers — wise and passionate warriors who fight for their ideals. At their worst they are brash and insulting, impetuous and vengeful.

**Assamites:** These noble warriors and scholars protect us when they can, and carry on our memory when they cannot. Aid them in whatever way possible..

with a reduced and largely bastardized version of the original. Some believe that new warriors no longer learn what Samiel would have wished them to, and that they are lessened as a result.

The bloodline generally believes the Code of Samiel is lost to them, but this does not stop them from searching for it, just as some Cainites search for the Book of Nod. The Code is their heritage and the inheritance of their childer, and without it they believe that they will ultimately fail in their work. A whispered tale has it that a couple of powerful Salubri remain in hiding, and that one of them might have a copy of the true Code of Samiel. This could be wishful thinking on the part of those spreading the rumor, but no one can be sure.

**Sobriquet:** Cyclops (derogatory), Unicorns (no longer in common parlance), Luminaries

**Appearance:** Every Salubri who progresses above the second level of Valeren develops a “normal,” human-looking third eye in the middle of her forehead; it is usually the same color as the Salubri’s other eyes. Many uses of the Discipline cause the eye to open, and it is not easily hidden. The Salubri come from all walks of life and all races, and because they are so constantly on the run they often travel far from their birthplaces. Most members of the Healer Caste (and sometimes warriors as well) radiate auras of calm and serenity. The Salubri prefer to dress in whatever manner allows them to blend in best, choosing simple styles and muted colors. Those who belonged to religious orders in their mortal lives often continue to wear their vestments. Many Salubri attempt to keep their third eyes covered with hoods, wimples or Gypsy-style headscarves.

**Haven and Prey:** Most Salubri enjoy human company and find it easier to disappear among their thronging numbers, and so they tend to make their havens near or among humans. Some take up residence amid religious orders: monasteries, convents, heretical cults and so on. A rare few live in solitude at the fringes of human settlement, choosing to take their meals from animals. The brutal attacks of the bloodline’s enemies have driven many Salubri from their homes, however, and forced them to take shelter in movement. The Salubri prefer to feed from willing subjects when possible; when not, they prefer animal blood to human.

**The Embrace:** The Salubri prefer to Embrace mortals who pos-

sess a strong moral compass, an understanding of right and wrong, and a sense of compassion. They have no preference as to race or religion, although the Salubri often Embrace devout members of religious orders.

**Character Creation:** Mental Attributes are usually primary, particularly Perception. Healers value such Abilities as Hearth Wisdom and Medicine; warriors value combat abilities and Leadership. Both castes appreciate the value of Empathy, Willpower and Self-Control. No Salubri starts higher than 10th generation, due to a desire to keep the blood strong and “pure;” two points must be placed into the Generation Background. Most Salubri also start with a dot in Linguistics to reflect their knowledge of the language of the Second City, which all Salubri learn in order to keep correspondence and conversations private. The Salubri follow the Roads of Kings, Heaven and Humanity exclusively.

**Bloodline Disciplines:** Auspex, Fortitude, Valeren

**Weaknesses:** A warrior Salubri cannot refuse to aid someone in need without paying a stiff price. If she does refuse, reduce all dice pools by two to reflect how badly the character has been shaken by the experience. This penalty ends when she has made some sort of restitution. A healer’s role is to mend body and spirit, and he may not do harm to another. If he injures someone, even in self-defense, the player loses two dice from all die pools for the rest of the scene. Any use of Valeren above level 2 causes the third eye to open; to keep the open eye covered is very uncomfortable and causes a one die penalty to all rolls. Many of Valeren’s powers also cause light to emanate from the eye, making it extremely difficult to conceal.

**Organization:** The Salubri do their best to avoid one another, fearing that any knowledge of each other’s whereabouts and plans could be tortured out of them. They do, however, leave messages for each other at certain drop-off locations (often within hostels or monasteries), coded in the language of the Second City, passing on knowledge of who still exists and who has been destroyed by the bloodline’s enemies. Childer once spent five years learning from their sires, but now are often thrust into the world and forced to fend for themselves as their sires flee onward or fall victim to the blades of the Usurpers.

**Quote:** *The Usurpers have stolen away our father and brethren, but they shall not take our integrity, our strength of will or our souls.*







# CHAPTER TWO: MINOR ROADS

One must not always think so much about what one should do, but rather what one should be. Our works do not ennoble us; but we must ennoble our works.

— Meister Eckhart, *Work and Being*

In a mechanical sense, the minor roads work similarly to the major roads. Like their more widely practiced cousins, these roads stress different Virtues, involve most if not all of the usual stages (initiation, adherence, teaching), have paragons and priests, and include rites and ritual, prayer and study. The road rating behaves in the same way; moments of truth come about in the same basic manner; and degeneration is determined with the same die rolls.

What, then, makes these roads different? What sets them apart from the Road of the Beast, or the Road of Kings? Why do they belong in a book meant for Storytellers, instead of one meant for players?

The minor roads were each derived from the beliefs of a specific clan. Rather than serving the broader interests of the Cainite community in general, they have been nurtured in an environment that encourages them to remain “pure.” There has been no need for these roads to broaden their practices in order to appeal to a wider variety of followers. This means that many of these roads are the purview of fanatics and zealots. Many outsiders have difficulty relating to such intense, culture-specific beliefs.

The minor roads are not limited to the clans that spawned them — religions always spread, even if only one follower at a time. Neither do they represent the only roads that their mother clans follow — there will always be those who buck the status quo, or who simply choose a path their sire didn’t intend. By and large, however, the followers of a given minor road come from the clan that developed it. Some of these clans jealously guard their religions; new followers from outside the clan might find it dangerous to join in. Tests are often much harsher for outsiders; moments of truth may be designed to drive away any initiate who isn’t absolutely devoted. No one ever said that the true path was easy.

The minor roads have few divergent paths — most don’t attract enough followers to divide into sub-sects. Their tenets and ethics are usually more stringent than those of the major roads, making adherence to them very demanding. Most players will find it difficult to play characters who follow these roads. The minor roads tend to focus on spiritual purity; they embrace their viewpoints as the only “right” ones and follow extreme codes of conduct. As far as most followers of the minor roads are concerned, all other Cainites are heretics.





## CHANGING TO MINOR ROADS

Outsiders can have a tough time adopting a minor road. Outlined below are the requirements for changing to a minor road from any other road. These requirements are more stringent than those for changing to a major road.

- Study with a teacher of the new road for at least two years (sometimes more), learning the road's precepts and ethics. During this time the Cainite may be required to cut old social ties, or sacrifice something else of worth to him, as the first sign that he values his new faith above all else.
- Reduce the rating of the character's old road to at least 3 (but not lower than 1). This is accomplished normally through degeneration, by deliberately committing sins against the old road.
- While the initiate discards his old faith, he must uphold the ethics of his new beliefs. Teachers of minor roads tend to expect strict adherence to the road's ethics during this period of initiation. This is where most "unworthy" converts fail.
- Reduce any Virtues inappropriate to the new road to 1. This is also accomplished through degeneration. Once the character's road rating reaches 3 or less, he can choose to reduce a Virtue rather than the road rating:

when he degenerates (he can only do this when seeking to change roads).

Once he has met all of the requirements, the vampire undergoes an appropriate test for the new road. Tests given by teachers of minor roads to students from outside the "accepted" clan often require the initiate to make great sacrifices or enter into very dangerous circumstances. They also traditionally put the initiate into a situation that pits his former values against his devotion to his new road, requiring him to prove that he has changed.

This test can be carried out strictly through roleplaying if the Storyteller believes it appropriate. Alternatively, the Storyteller may use the following mechanic at the end of the test to see whether the Cainite achieves his goal. The player rolls Willpower against a difficulty of 4 + the character's current Road rating, +1 per Virtue to be changed (if any). If successful, the character passes the test and his road and Virtues change. This does not mean that his teacher or other adherents of the road will treat him as an equal, however — he will probably always suffer a certain amount of distrust.

## ROAD OF BLOOD

### VIA SANGUINIUS

The blood of Caine must be earned. The state of vampirism is not a right, nor a curse. It is a privilege that not everyone deserves. The followers of the Road of Blood understand this distinction and see themselves as its enforcers. They value purity of action and purpose.

This is not a trivial road to follow by any stretch of the imagination. It is all too easy to pervert the Road of Blood, using it to justify wanton diablerie. Because of this, the Road of Blood is characterized by a rigid code of ethics, a strict emphasis on self-control,



and the utmost devotion and discipline. Its followers watch each other at least as closely as they watch outsiders. They see the triumph of the Beast as a weakness, and the Beast must be denied control at all costs. The Road of Blood encourages fervency to the point of fanaticism — without this devotion, these Cainites would likely succumb to base temptation and abuse their purpose.

Though the Children of Haqim originated this road, not all Assamites follow it. While much of the clan believes in purity and

### HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST THE BLOOD

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Acting impulsively in any situation.	Discipline is strength.
9	Allowing actions to be dictated by emotion.	Passion is the first stirring of the Beast.
8	Succumbing to frenzy.	Our will must be unshakable.
7	Failing to diablerize an unworthy vampire.	Return the blood of the unworthy to Haqim.
6	Acting cowardly or dishonorably.	Our actions reflect upon our father, Haqim.
5	Allowing the unworthy to go unpunished.	We are the judges of the unliving.
4	Showing weakness before the unworthy.	We represent Haqim in all things.
3	Failing to honor an oath.	Our honor is what sets us apart.
2	Submitting to the will of an unworthy prince or elder.	Nothing in this world must sway us from our sacred purpose.
1	Becoming oathbound to a Cainite.	We serve Haqim and no other!

discipline, not everyone can manage the zeal of a true follower. Some members of other clans follow this road, but Assamites generally view them with a certain contempt and derision. Many clan members believe that any Cainite on the Road of Blood who does not share the blood of its founder, Haqim, must be using it to justify diablerie. These foreign Cainites are watched particularly closely for any sign of unworthiness — their behavior must be exemplary for a very long time in order for them to be treated with any degree of acceptance.

Haqim is seen as the paragon of the Road of Blood, the epitome of the road's values and goals. Stories of his deeds lace the road's teachings, and his behavior is held up as the ideal for those Cainites who would prove themselves worthy of his blood.

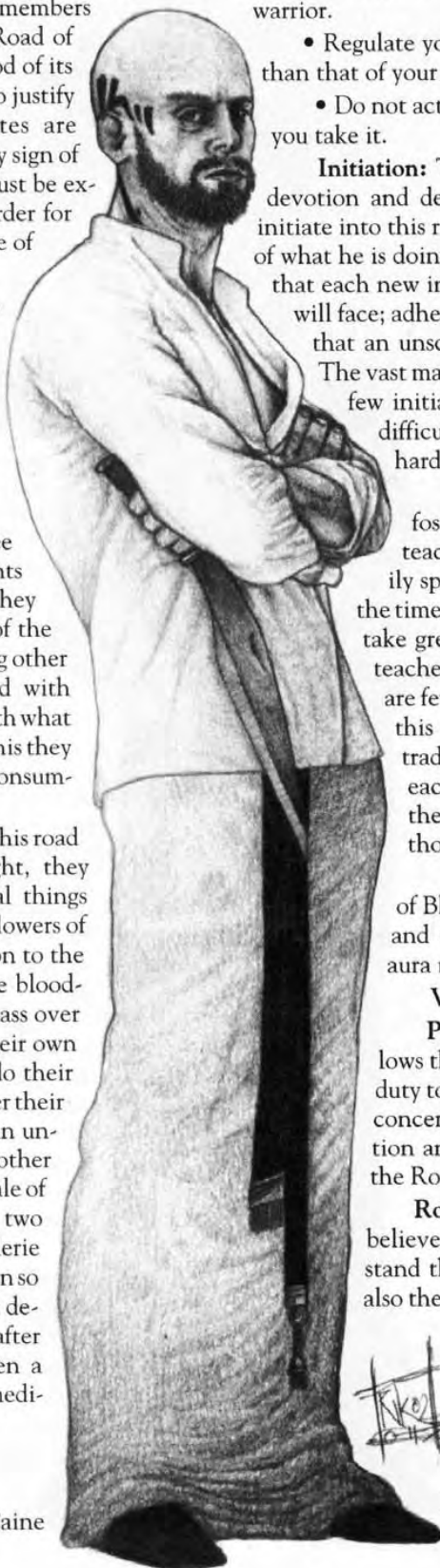
Most followers of this road see the majority of Caine's descendants as corrupt, unworthy of the gifts they have been given. The adherents of the Road of Blood do their best to bring other Cainites, particularly those gifted with Haqim's blood, into accordance with what they should be. When they fail at this they destroy the unworthy vampire, consuming his vitae.

Obviously, if the followers of this road diablerized Cainites left and right, they would soon be destroyed. Several things keep this from happening. The followers of this road pay their closest attention to the worthiness or unworthiness of the blood-descendants of Haqim; they will pass over other Cainites in order to keep their own kind in line. The Sentinels also do their best not to act rashly. They consider their actions carefully, and try to remain unnoticed in their duties. Like any other Cainites, they exist on the time scale of a vampire — if they must take two centuries to orchestrate the diablerie of a particularly corrupt prince, then so be it. They also take into account degrees of corruption — why go after someone who sins but little when a greater sinner nearby requires immediate attention?

**Sobriquet:** Sentinels

**Ethics of Blood:**

- The blood of Haqim and Caine is a gift that must be earned.



- The Beast is a sign of weakness, and it must be kept tightly controlled.

- Purity, honor and discipline are the virtues of the warrior.

- Regulate your own behavior even more carefully than that of your neighbor.

- Do not act rashly — consider each action before you take it.

**Initiation:** The Road of Blood requires immense devotion and dedication — no Cainite becomes an initiate into this road by accident, or without awareness of what he is doing. Teachers on this road make certain that each new initiate understands the difficulties she will face; adherents of the Road of Blood understand that an unschooled initiate is a dangerous thing.

The vast majority of initiates are Assamites. Those few initiates from outside the clan have great difficulty finding teachers, and face much harder tests.

**Organization:** The Road of Blood fosters a one-on-one relationship between teacher and student. They do not necessarily spend long periods of time together, but the time they do share is intense. The Sentinels take great pride in their heritage, the line of teachers from whom they've learned. There are few organized events or groups related to this road, but its adherents always try to trade a few words when they meet up with each other — as much to keep an eye on their fellows as to trade information about those they hunt.

**Aura:** Resolve. Followers of the Road of Blood know the seriousness of their task and are incredibly dedicated to it. Their aura modifier affects Willpower rolls.

**Virtues:** Conviction, Self-Control

**Paths:** A small, secretive group that follows the Path of Righteousness see it as their duty to watch the watchers exclusively. They concern themselves with rooting out corruption and lack of resolve among adherents of the Road of Blood.

**Roleplaying Tips:** You and your fellow believers are the only ones who truly understand the blessing that is the Blood. You are also the only ones who understand the responsibility that comes with it. Each action you take must venerate the Blood that moves within you; consider your actions carefully so as not to shame your heritage. Stand proud, but do not allow arrogance to control you. Honor your word, but do not give it to those who do not deserve it.



# ROAD OF BONES

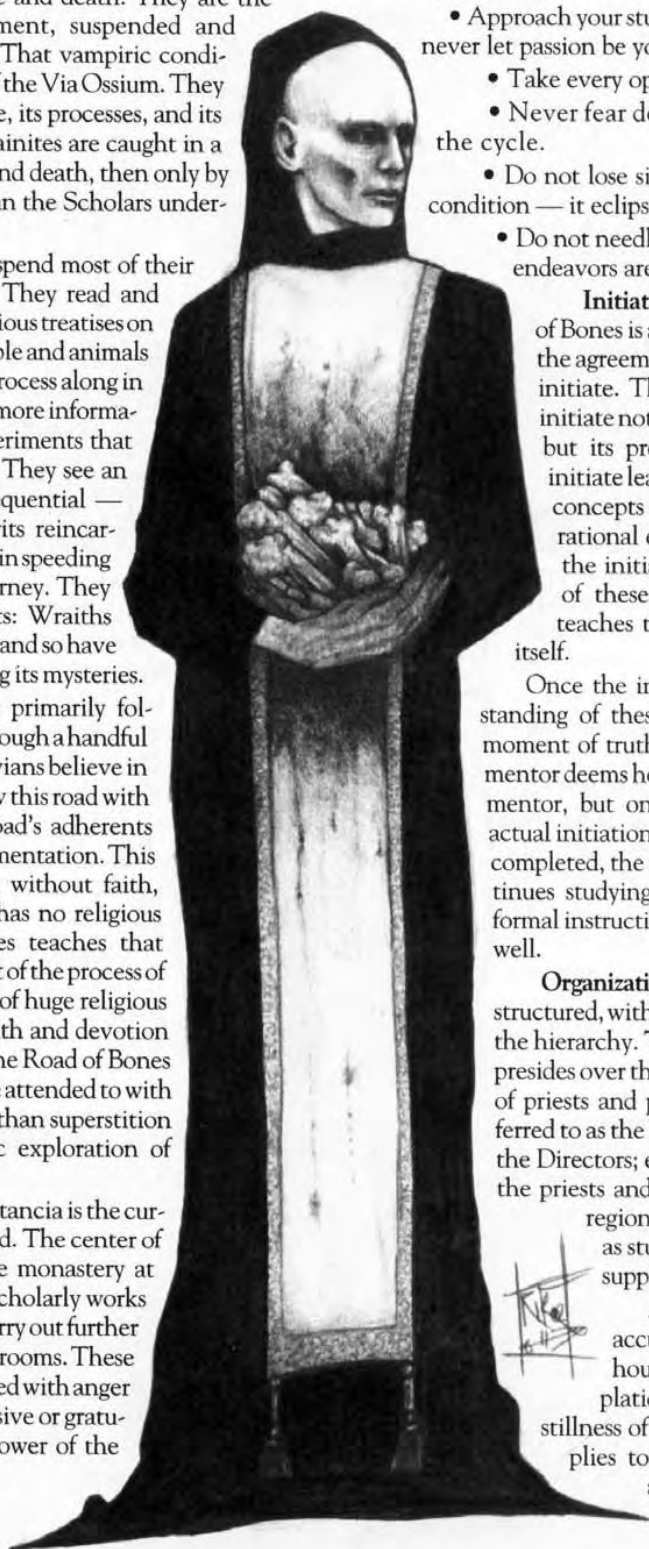
## VIA OSSIUM

According to the precepts of the Road of Bones, Cainites are caught in a single moment in the cycle of life and death — the moment *between* life and death. They are the embodiment of that moment, suspended and stretched out into infinity. That vampiric condition obsesses the followers of the Via Ossium. They seek to understand its nature, its processes, and its place within the cycle. If Cainites are caught in a long moment between life and death, then only by studying death and dying can the Scholars understand Cainites.

Followers of this road spend most of their time contemplating death. They read and write long scientific and religious treatises on the subject. They watch people and animals die, sometimes helping the process along in various ways in order to gain more information; they perform cold experiments that would horrify most mortals. They see an individual death as inconsequential — they believe that most spirits reincarnate, and so they see no harm in speeding a single soul along on its journey. They have little interest in ghosts: Wraiths have stepped out of the cycle and so have little insight to offer regarding its mysteries.

The Road of Bones is primarily followed by Cappadocians, although a handful of Tzimisce and a few Malkavians believe in it as well. Few Cainites follow this road with any sense of passion; the road's adherents value reason and cold experimentation. This is not to say that they are without faith, however, or that this road has no religious aspect. The Road of Bones teaches that Cainites are the embodiment of the process of death, and death is a matter of huge religious significance, speculation, faith and devotion in every part of the world. The Road of Bones is simply a scholar's faith, one attended to with rationality and detail rather than superstition and myth. It is a scientific exploration of religious matters.

The Cappadocian Constancia is the current high priestess of this road. The center of the Road of Bones is in the monastery at Erciyes, where monks copy scholarly works on the nature of death and carry out further experiments in underground rooms. These experiments are not conducted with anger or sadism, nor are they excessive or gratuitous — except when a follower of the road begins to degenerate.



**Sobriquet:** Scholars, Executioners (derogatory)

### Ethics of Bones:

- Approach your studies with wisdom and calm — never let passion be your guide.
- Take every opportunity for understanding.
- Never fear death — it is a natural part of the cycle.
- Do not lose sight of the mystery that is our condition — it eclipses all earthly matters.
- Do not needlessly sacrifice yourself — your endeavors are too important.

**Initiation:** Initiation onto the Road of Bones is a formal process. It begins with the agreement of a follower to mentor the initiate. This adherent first teaches the initiate not the road's precepts and ethics, but its preferred modes of study. The initiate learns scientific method, broader concepts of experimentation, and the rational exploration of the religious. If the initiate displays an understanding of these concepts, then the mentor teaches the basic precepts of the road itself.

Once the initiate has reached an understanding of these precepts and had her first moment of truth, she may be initiated, if her mentor deems her ready. Any Scholar may be a mentor, but only a priest may perform the actual initiation. Once the initiation has been completed, the new adherent of the road continues studying with her mentor, but takes formal instruction from priests and teachers as well.

**Organization:** The Road of Bones is highly structured, with a clear line of descent through the hierarchy. The high priestess Constancia presides over the road, supported by a handful of priests and priestesses just below her, referred to as the White Bones. Below these are the Directors; each Director holds sway over the priests and priestesses of a geographical region. All adherents are referred to as students, and initiates are called supplicants.

**Aura:** Silence. The Scholars, accustomed as they are to long hours of quiet study and contemplation of the grave, radiate the stillness of death. The aura modifier applies to rolls involving Stealth and attempts to go unnoticed.

## HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST THE BONES

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Needlessly preventing a death or refusing to kill.	All things must die eventually.
9	Refusing to feed when hungry.	You must attend to the necessities before you can concentrate on your research.
8	Failing to study death when provided an opportunity to do so.	The pursuit of knowledge is your sole purpose.
7	Refusing to pursue experiments.	Knowledge is more important than any single life.
6	Succumbing to frenzy.	You must rule the Beast, not be ruled by it.
5	Allowing emotion to sway your decisions.	Wisdom and rationality are the basis of all scientific pursuit.
4	Refusing to share insight with others on the road.	Only together can we hope to unravel the greatest of mysteries.
3	Showing fear of or aversion to death.	Death is a natural part of the cycle to which all things belong.
2	Risking your existence unnecessarily.	You have important work to do.
1	Giving your loyalty to anyone else above your road and clan.	Your first duties are to faith and lineage.

**Virtues:** Conviction, Self-Control

**Paths:** Members of the small and secretive Path of the Wheel believe that vampires are “stuck” in the cycle and must move on. They search for some scientific means to push all Cainites back onto the cycle of life and death. Most adherents of the Road of Bones know nothing about this offshoot. Those who do consider its followers the worst kinds of heretics and destroy them wherever possible. Several times this path has seemed to fade away, only to resurface a decade or two later.



**Roleplaying Tips:** You approach the mysteries of the universe with calm expectation, knowing that eventually they will be solved. This knowledge does not detract from the wonder that such enigmas provoke, however. You enjoy spending your nights in experimentation, discussion with your peers, and contemplation. You know that your road will solve the mysteries no one else can, and this gives you a quiet confidence to which few other clans can lay claim.

## ROAD OF METAMORPHOSIS

### VIA MUTATIONIS

Where the Road of Bones concerns itself with the current condition of vampirism, the Road of Metamorphosis looks toward the transition to a further, exalted state of being. Where the Road of Bones studies the state of all Cainites, the Road of Metamorphosis indulges the desire for individual transformation. The Road of Bones is a community of scholars engaged in a discussion that furthers a wider base of knowledge; the Road of Metamorphosis teaches the value of individual study and enlightenment.

Adherents of this road reject any stories of Lilith showing Caine how to use his blood for power — they believe that Caine taught himself. They hold his accomplishment up as the proof that any vampire can transform himself through strength of will and research. The creation of Vicissitude is seen as further evidence of this fact, and followers of this road view the use of Vicissitude as one of the foremost physical expressions of their philosophy.

A small, dedicated minority of the Tzimisce clan follow this road, and for the most part they guard its

secrets jealously from the other clans. Most *voivodes* follow the Road of Kings, and many of them take advisors from the Via Mutationis. Its adherents have a reputation for sadism, cruelty and even “evil,” but it is not always deserved. Followers of this road spend at least a portion of their studies experimenting on living and unliving subjects, but not all continue with such studies indefinitely or necessarily enjoy them (for all the difference that makes to the guinea pigs).

The Road of Metamorphosis requires considerable dedication from its followers. They tend to lead ascetic and lonely unives, exploring inwardly while their contemporaries explore the outer world. They spend long hours in meditation and personal experimentation. Because adherents of this road believe that personal experience is the best teacher, most followers must learn the same things their predecessors learned all over again, in the same manner, without much guidance. What little they get usually consists of vague suggestions and loose guidelines rather than specific pieces of knowledge.



Teachers on this road pride themselves on their ability to nudge their students in the right directions, prodding them to make their own discoveries rather than leading them along by the hand. There is little structure to the Road of Metamorphosis; the hierarchy of teachers, adherents, and initiates is loose at best. However, almost all of these so-called Seekers look to the Tzimisce Methuselah Yorak as the most accomplished Seeker, and the closest thing the road has to a high priest.

Yorak is one of Transylvania's eldest Tzimisce, and he has long since developed into a being of inconceivable power and alien intent. Many adherents of the Road of Metamorphosis see him as the living embodiment of their aims — the personal transformation of the vampire's own being into something different, something more. No one knows for certain just how powerful Yorak is or what he is capable of doing. Occasionally, for his own reasons, he takes an initiate under his wing for a time. Most of these poor souls go mad, but a few emerge from his tutelage with an impressive understanding of this road's tenets.

**Sobriquet:** Seekers

**Ethics of Metamorphosis:**

- Enlightenment and transformation are the same state of being. This understanding is the key to all change.
- Concern yourself with the state of your own being, not that of others.
- Reject outward distraction for inward transformation.
- Any vampire can transform himself through the application of research and will; only a select few can fully understand this precept.
- The flesh is clay, to be molded and shaped as desired; we desire the perfection of the spirit.

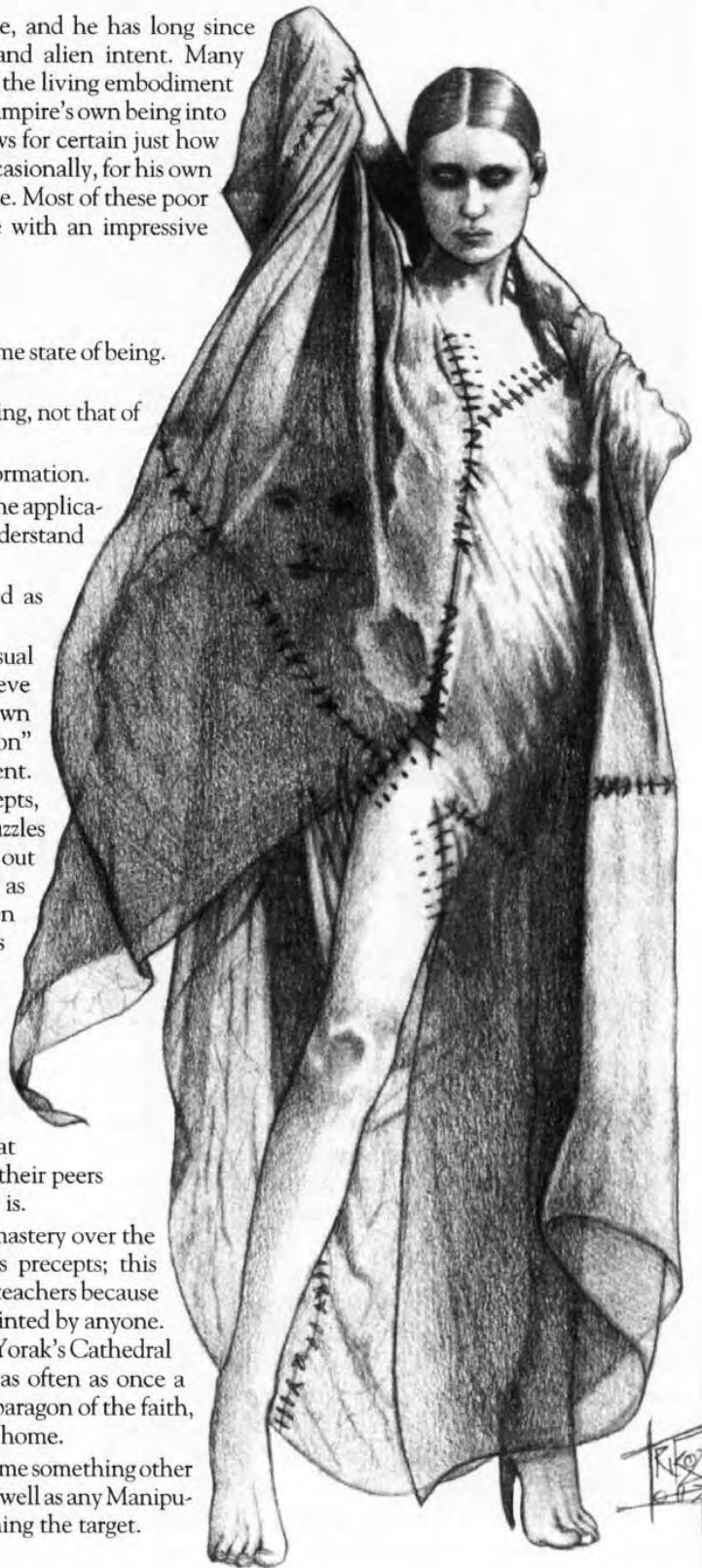
**Initiation:** The Road of Metamorphosis is unusual in that its adherents do not recruit. They firmly believe that students of this road must come to it of their own volition. Of course, "not recruiting" and "own volition" are interpreted differently from adherent to adherent. Initiates are taught some of the road's basic precepts, generally at first through hints, implications and puzzles posed by their mentors. Those who manage to figure out the precepts through such obfuscation are initiated as soon as they've had their first moment of truth — often the moment of revelation in which the initiate comes to understand the truths that his mentor has been hinting at for months.

**Organization:** This road has little obvious organization. Sometimes adherents gather in loose circles, sharing tidbits of their own revelations, but always holding back the "best" information. A certain competition can emerge, in which adherents imply that they've found a deeper level of understanding than their peers without actually revealing what that understanding is.

Respect is accorded to those with the greatest mastery over the flesh and the highest understanding of the road's precepts; this translates into a fluid hierarchical web. Teachers are teachers because they choose to be, not because they have been appointed by anyone. Most believers try to make at least one pilgrimage to Yorak's Cathedral of Flesh during the time of their study; some visit as often as once a decade. The cathedral is viewed as an architectural paragon of the faith, and it is the closest thing the road has to a physical home.

**Aura:** Inhumanity. Seekers work steadily to become something other than human. Aura modifiers apply to Intimidation, as well as any Manipulation rolls that can be positively affected by frightening the target.

**Virtues:** Conviction, Instinct



## HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST METAMORPHOSIS

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Failing to ride out a frenzy.	The Beast must be known in order to be transcended.
9	Sharing undeserved knowledge freely.	Helping another to come to his own understanding is acceptable, but enlightenment cannot be handed out <i>gratis</i> .
8	Indulging in displays of emotion.	Emotion is a human response.
7	Asking for knowledge that one has not earned.	Enlightenment comes from within; enlightenment comes through hard work.
6	Denying basic needs.	Hunger, exhaustion — these things cause distraction.
5	Avoiding necessary experimentation due to personal risk.	Without experimentation there can be no understanding.
4	Indulging unnecessary desires.	Pleasure is a distraction.
3	Aiding an unworthy Cainite in understanding the Road of Metamorphosis.	Only the truly exceptional are worthy of enlightenment.
2	Avoiding necessary experimentation due to compassion or discomfort.	Before death and pain can be transcended, they must be understood.
1	Avoiding the alteration of one's own body.	Through the transformation of the flesh, transformation of the spirit may be achieved.

**Paths:** The Road of Metamorphosis has two minor paths, both of which take the basic precepts of the road as true, but focus on one side of it almost to the exclusion of the other. Adherents of the Path of Flesh believe that the ultimate goal of the Road of Metamorphosis is entirely physical — bodily transformation leading to the acquisition of vast power in the material world. The spiritual is only considered important when it aids in this physical transformation.

Followers of the Path of Spirit believe that the true goal of the road is an entirely spiritual transformation. They see the physical world as an illusion and a distraction, at best a simple tool for spiritual growth. They believe the ultimate transformation is one in which the Cainite transcends the flesh,



breaking through the illusion of the material realm into the world of spirit beyond.

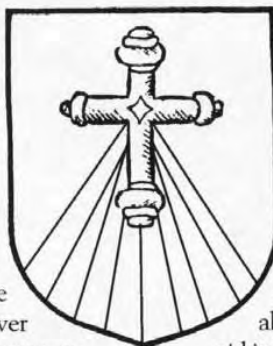
**Roleplaying Tips:** You spend little time with others and have long since lost touch with your humanity. It is difficult for you to comprehend the needs and desires of mortals and other vampiric clans, and you often have no desire to try. You feel little need to hold others' hands and tell them how to do things, but you might nudge them in the right direction if you're in the mood to help. The pleasures of the flesh hold little attraction for you and only distract you from your work. Your own personal transformation and enlightenment are more important than almost anything else you can imagine.

## ROAD OF NIGHT

### VIA NOCTIS

Legend among the Lasombra has it that the Road of Night was once a path of the Road of Heaven, but it has taken many twists and turns since then. The Road of Night cares nothing for the salvation of the vampiric soul, nor for the behavior of vampires in general. It cares only for humanity.

Where the Baali see themselves as the corrupters of human souls on behalf of dark powers, those who follow the Path of Night see themselves as man's redeemers. Redemption is never easy, however. True sinners cannot be told to repent, or gently convinced, or talked into repenting, or nudged or tricked into it. Only pain and suffering can bring about true repentance, and thus, true salvation.



Vampires are damned and there is nothing they can do about it. Adherents of the Road of Night see purpose in that damnation. They believe that Cainites exist to serve as the scourges of mortal sinners; they give mortals a chance to redeem themselves by punishing them before their deaths. Followers of this road do terrible, twisted things, but always in the service of this goal. On those occasions when a follower of this road judges a sinner irredeemable, he may decide to Embrace her so that she can aid in his work. Some refer to the mortals they punish as their students, flock, or parish.

Many adherents of this road take their work a little further. They extract confessions from their victims, by force



if necessary, and prescribe penance. Some seek to further advise those who have repented, believing that repentance is not enough — without a further push onto the right path, the mortal will simply fall into old ways of sinning. A very few kill mortals who have repented, believing it best to send their subjects' souls to Heaven before they have the chance to fall from grace again.

The behavior of Cainites only matters to these vampires when those Cainites debase mortals. Adherents of this road kill the Followers of Set whenever they can; they have no tolerance for those who tempt mortals in pursuit of worldly gain. The Baali are a slightly different problem. The Baali corrupt mortals not to their own ends, but in the service of their dark masters. Followers of the Road of Night prefer to work directly against those dark powers rather than their pathetic servants.

The Black Angels, the *angellis ater*, adopted the new road wholeheartedly and have become its most vocal supporters. Some of the more religious followers of this road worry that the Black Angels revel too much in their state of damnation, and that they might eventually pervert the road's purpose. The Angels organize themselves in covens of five to 13 members, and have begun to create their own rituals for the road that involve blood sacrifices, baths of blood, and other foul practices. Many followers of the Road of Heaven decry the Angels as heretics and blasphemers. The Angels believe that the shadows brought forth by Obtenebration are black shades from Hell.

**Sobriquet:** Redeemers, Confessors

**Ethics of Night:**

- All Cainites are damned.
- Our damnation is the price we pay for others' salvation.
- Only pain and suffering bring about true repentance.
- Without repentance there can be no redemption.
- Do not suffer the corruption of mortals — stamp the corruption out at its source.

**Initiation:** Many followers of this road are chosen by their sires even before they are Embraced, from among those sinners believed to be irredeemable. Initiates are expected to “help” mortals only under the guidance of their mentors until they have become true adherents of the road. They are also expected to prove their self-

sufficiency, judgment, and ability in a series of tests devised by their mentors as they are instructed in the road's tenets. When these tasks are deemed satisfactorily completed and the *childe* has undergone her first moment of truth, she may be initiated in a ceremony much like a perverted version of a baptism.

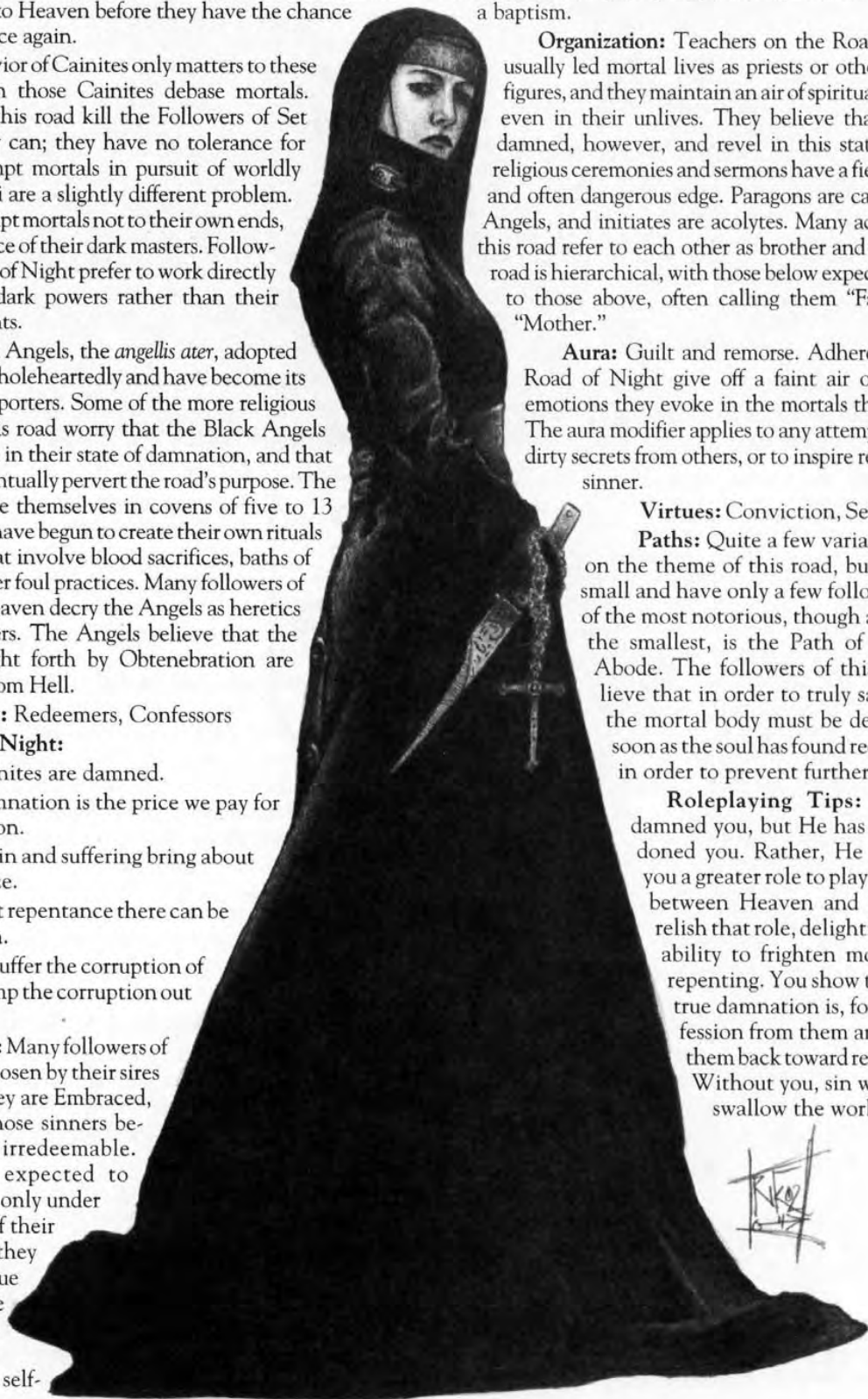
**Organization:** Teachers on the Road of Night usually led mortal lives as priests or other religious figures, and they maintain an air of spiritual authority even in their unlives. They believe that they are damned, however, and revel in this state, so their religious ceremonies and sermons have a fierce, hectic and often dangerous edge. Paragons are called Fallen Angels, and initiates are acolytes. Many adherents of this road refer to each other as brother and sister. The road is hierarchical, with those below expected to bow to those above, often calling them “Father” and “Mother.”

**Aura:** Guilt and remorse. Adherents of the Road of Night give off a faint air of the very emotions they evoke in the mortals they punish. The aura modifier applies to any attempts to elicit dirty secrets from others, or to inspire remorse in a sinner.

**Virtues:** Conviction, Self-Control

**Paths:** Quite a few variations exist on the theme of this road, but most are small and have only a few followers. One of the most notorious, though also one of the smallest, is the Path of Heavenly Abode. The followers of this path believe that in order to truly save a soul, the mortal body must be destroyed as soon as the soul has found redemption, in order to prevent further sinning.

**Roleplaying Tips:** God has damned you, but He has not abandoned you. Rather, He has given you a greater role to play in the war between Heaven and Hell. You relish that role, delighting in your ability to frighten mortals into repenting. You show them what true damnation is, forcing confession from them and turning them back toward redemption. Without you, sin would soon swallow the world.



## HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST NIGHT

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Spending much time on the affairs of Cainites.	Do not allow yourself to be distracted from your work.
9	Feeling remorse for your actions.	You are damned. Only mortals benefit from repentance.
8	Killing any mortal without taking confession first.	No mortal should be sent to his death without the chance to unburden his soul.
7	Attempting to "save" a Cainite.	Vampires are entirely damned — do not waste your time on them.
6	Accepting the superiority of a Cainite other than those on the Road of Night or other members of your clan.	All vampires are equal under God.
5	Killing a sinner for any reason other than self-defense.	Dead sinners cannot repent.
4	Trying to save a sinner by means that do not involve pain and suffering.	Only pain and suffering can expiate sins and bring about true remorse.
3	Allowing the corruption of mortals.	Hell must have no dominion over the mortal soul.
2	Embracing a sinner who is still capable of remorse and redemption.	Only the irredeemable may be Embraced — all others should have a chance at salvation.
1	Causing or bringing about the corruption of a mortal.	You are here to save souls, not damn them.

## ROAD OF PARADOX

### VIA PARADOXI

Contradictory tales abound about the purpose of the Road of Paradox. Some of these stem from one of the road's own precepts: to keep one's true intentions hidden from others, the better to act with freedom. Followers of this road believe that if others knew what they were up to, they wouldn't be able to do their job.

Those who follow the Road of Paradox believe that all mortals have a certain purpose for being (some call this their *svadharma*). When a human is Embraced, he is removed from the cycle of life and death and thus also removed from his destiny. If he does not find his new purpose, he will simply become a useless drain on the *maya*, the illusory fabric of the universe.

Adherents of the Road of Paradox see it as their duty to return Cainites and wandering mortals to their purposes. They do not show the way, but rather test, prod, nudge, and otherwise propel the subject toward his own realizations. They believe that anyone who is aware of the road's purpose cannot be gently led to his own understanding of his destiny, and so they employ trickery, illusion and deceit to hide their goal from others. Many of them also employ such means in their "lessons."

These Cainites have a reputation for killing other vampires that is only partially deserved. Occasionally, if a Cainite is particularly obstinate about refusing to acknowledge his purpose, or repeatedly prevents others from attempting to fulfill their own destinies, he may be deemed too much of a burden on the *maya*. When this happens, an adherent of the Road of Paradox will execute



the offending Cainite, if she can do so without undermining her own destiny.

Followers of the Road of Paradox make up a small and fanatical sect even among the Ravnos who originated it. Because they believe that Embracing a person removes him from the cycle and from his destiny, they only Embrace after much careful consideration and when they believe it necessary. They also Embrace strictly within their own family line.

The road has strict rules against killing humans; followers consider it a grave sin to murder someone who might not yet have fulfilled the purpose of his existence. While adherents of this road believe it wrong to kill a vampire who has not yet found or fulfilled his purpose, slaying a vampire is not as great a sin as killing a mortal, since the vampire technically is no longer part of the cycle of the universe. Some few adherents of this road use its precepts as an excuse to kill or harass vampires and humans, and they get away with it more often than not. Unlike adherents of the Road of Blood, members of the Road of Paradox prefer not to interfere with each other.

Most followers of the Road of Paradox believe their destiny lies in showing others their own ultimate purposes, and they will do whatever they can to further that aim. Some lie, cheat and steal to finance their important endeavors. Others do the best they can to work within honest means. The Deceivers are highly individualistic, a characteristic reflected in the wide array of means they employ to reach the same end.



**Sobriquet:** Deceivers

**Ethics of Paradox:**

- Guide others to their purpose for being.
- Cainites and mortals must come to their own realization of their destiny.
- Execute only those who absolutely refuse to accept their purpose, or repeatedly prevent others from following their destinies.
- You may not kill those who have not yet fulfilled their purpose, unless they refuse to do so.
- Keep your secret face hidden from those around you; only by doing so may you act with freedom.

**Initiation:** Cainites on this road are exhorted to Embrace only with consideration and from their own family line. They may only Embrace mortals who have fulfilled their destinies. They also only Embrace when they need more help — when they feel their own existences coming to an end, or when the amount of work to do is urgent and overwhelming.

Initiates are usually taught by example, brought along without explanation on their mentors' exploits as helpers and observers. Such exploits are carefully designed to incorporate lessons for the childe as well as the primary subject. This lesson-by-example usually leads the initiate to her own moment of truth, in which she realizes that *her* personal destiny is also to lead people to their purposes.

**Organization:** The Road of Paradox is extremely disorganized. Knowledge and understanding is usually passed from sire to childe. Some adherents become known as teachers for their particular understanding of their work or their supreme ability to carry out their tasks, but such status rests on rumor and reputation rather than appointed position. Paragons of the Road of Paradox not only push their subjects toward their personal destinies, but they do it with flair and style, in a way that makes for good stories. When members of this road get together, celebration and tales are sure to follow — most Deceivers value those rare occasions when they are allowed to be themselves.

**Aura:** Confidence. The Deceivers believe that they are in the exact place and time they are meant to be, doing what they are meant to do, and it shows. The aura modifier applies to attempts to manipulate or lead others.

**Virtues:** Conviction, Self-Control

**Paths:** The Eastern Road of Paradox is far more religious than the Western road. Like its Western counterpart, it espouses a tradition of enlightenment through deception. But where the Western road sees Cainites as redeemable, the Eastern road believes that once they understand the truth of what they are, they must be destroyed.

**Roleplaying Tips:** You do the work of the universe, bringing people to self-awareness. You return people to their purposes, orchestrating circumstances to teach them what they need to know. You go where you want and do what you want, plotting and scheming and crafting each lesson with more skill than the last. You are an artisan, and you practice your art on the world around you.



## HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST PARADOX

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Allowing restrictive social conventions to go unchallenged.	Such structures prevent people from seeking out their destinies.
9	Failing to execute a Cainite who stubbornly refuses to acknowledge his destiny.	Vampires who cannot adapt to their new purposes must not be allowed to batten on the cycle.
8	Embracing outside the family line.	Only your own flesh and blood can entirely comprehend your place in the universe.
7	Allowing your subjects to understand what you're doing to them.	They cannot come to their own realization in their own time if they understand what is happening to them.
6	Failing to execute a Cainite who repeatedly stops humans from working toward their personal destinies.	Vampires must not deliberately pollute the cycle.
5	Allowing those who are not on the road to see your true self.	Only from the shadows may you exercise your purpose.
4	Destroying a fellow adherent of the Road of Paradox.	You are not your brother's keeper, and cannot tell him how to carry out his destiny.
3	Killing a human who has not fulfilled his purpose for any reason other than survival.	You may not interfere in the destiny of mortals.
2	Embracing needlessly, out of personal desire, or without due consideration.	Removing someone from the cycle is a grave action, not to be undertaken lightly or for the wrong reasons.
1	Acknowledging any other as your superior.	The will of a master interferes with the carrying out of your destiny.

## ROAD OF THE SERPENT

### VIA SERPENTIS

The Road of the Serpent is a religion in the purest sense of the word, not simply a philosophy or a way of unlife. Adherents of this road worship the great god Set, praying to him, venerating him. They uphold his values, seek converts in his name, and fight against his enemies.

Often called Tempters, followers of the Serpent Road believe that the Egyptian god Osiris has vastly abused his power, and that the majority of social structures only further Osiris' ends. They seek to free all people from Osiris' chains, allowing them to rule themselves as should rightfully be. They believe in no interest save self-interest. The only "true" emotions in the lexicon of the Tempters are self-serving ones. In their ideal world, each person would look out for himself rather than policing his brother's actions.

The Tempters believe that most religions merely serve to subjugate their followers, particularly those that strictly regulate morality. The feudal system itself keeps people from realizing their potential, from thriving on their own freedom. Followers of the Road of the Serpent believe that mortals should rely on themselves, living and dying on their own abilities. They should owe no alle-



giance to king, pope, or Cainite prince, nor should they be rescued when they fail to care for themselves.

The exceptions to this rule are those institutions that aid in the spread of unrest and corruption. For instance, many of the Tempters supported the Roman Empire for a time. Some deliberately attempt to corrupt institutions rather than undermining them, reasoning that a corrupt institution can spread dissent faster than any individual. Others believe that such actions amount to using the tools of Osiris, and that any attempt to wield the enemy's creations against him will merely pollute the Tempters' own goals.

Adherents of the Road of the Serpent believe that individuals can be freed only through exploring and acknowledging their own desires. Indulgence and lust are natural; it is not merely acceptable, but desirable to act in one's own interest rather than society's. Pleasure is meant to be taken, not avoided. The flesh is meant to be appeased, not denied. Corruption is simply another word for freedom, and "evil" is a tool, not an end. Virtue and traditional views of morality are nothing but chains, willing subjugation to an abusive master.





**Sobriquet:**

Tempters

**Ethics of the  
Serpent:**

- Worship Set and uphold his memory with reverence, for too many people have forgotten him and his great cause.
- Undermine the rule of law, by which Osiris has abused his power.
- Help others to realize their desires, for only desire can set them free.
- Amass personal wealth and influence, for these are the tools of strength and seduction.
- Embrace only those who are worthy to serve Set, for otherwise you debase his memory.

**Initiation:** The initiation of a new follower onto the Road of the Serpent is an act of devotion that can take years, even decades, to complete. Most initiates start out as subjects of a Tempter's seduction; in many cases, the Tempter already has some idea that this subject might be different from the rest. If the subject falls to her own depravity but goes no further, then she is simply a beautiful offering to Set, and no more. If she goes beyond that, if she begins to understand that there is purpose and meaning to her indulgences, if she seeks to bring others to this understanding, then the adherent knows he has chosen well. If she can be further turned to worship Set, then the Cainite Embraces her. Because of this long and protracted process of choice and elimination, anyone who is Embraced by an adherent of the Road of the Serpent has also been initiated onto the road — the two processes are considered one.

**Organization:** The Road of the Serpent receives its guidance from a handful of elders called Hierophants, who claim to pass on Set's edicts to his followers and expect to be obeyed by all Tempters. Signs of political squabbling and disagreements between the Hierophants, however, have led some younger followers to view these elders' pronouncements with doubt. Cainites on the Road of the Serpent are expected to serve the needs of their sires without fail, and to keep the memory of their sires alive should they be destroyed. Aside from these minimal obligations, Tempters are expected to serve their own needs and the agenda of the god Set.

**Aura:** Devotion. The Tempters do everything with an eye to how they might best serve their god. The aura modifier aids in attempts to win converts to their religion and in rolls to resist powers based on other faiths.

**Virtues:** Conviction, Instinct

**Paths:** The debased Path of Typhon began to preach evil and corruption as their own ends rather than as tools for freedom. Luckily the fall of Constantinople, one of the centers of this heresy, has greatly reduced the numbers of those who believe such things. The slowly growing Path of Subversion holds that only through the corruption of large-scale institutions can enough people be freed. This

is largely believed to be a delusion bordering on heresy, however.

**Roleplaying Tips:** Every action you take is an offering to Set; every word you speak is a prayer. You will not rest until you have freed each and every person you can from Osiris' chains. If you enjoy yourself in the process, what's wrong with that? Power and money help you achieve your aims. If you do not experience pleasure, you cannot understand it enough to seduce others. You're careful not to allow the medium to overwhelm the message, however; balance and self-awareness have always been your watchwords.

## HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST THE SERPENT

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Failing to indulge your urges when they do not interfere with your work.	You must understand desire in order to teach it.
9	Indulging your desires when they interfere with your devotion to Set.	Desires are a means to an end, not an end in themselves.
8	Failing to collect wealth and influence.	Every artisan must acquire the tools of his vocation.
7	Failing to spread Set's truth among mortals.	If his name is forgotten, he will cease to exist.
6	Failing to encourage mortals to seek their freedom from Osiris.	Your work is more important than anything except your worship of Set.
5	Abusing a ghoul.	Your priests are disciples of and gifts from Set.
4	Supporting the rule of law in any way.	Osiris is the enemy of Set, and you must take no action that aids him.
3	Putting any other vampire under the blood oath.	Using the essence of Set to bind another vampire goes against the very freedom he champions.
2	Embracing one who does not worship Set.	Only the deserving may drink of the river between life and death.
1	Failing to uphold Set's memory and worship him.	What you do means nothing without your devotion to Set.



MANIAC





# CHAPTER THREE: DISCIPLINES



“O! It is excellent to have a giant’s strength, but it is tyrannous to use it like a giant.”

— William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*

The following Disciplines are proprietary to the bloodlines included in the **Storytellers Companion**. These Disciplines are closely guarded, even more than the signature gifts of the Lasombra and Ravnos. This is primarily a function of the bloodlines’ small numbers: only a few Lhiannan exist in the whole of Europe, for instance, and they are the only ones who can learn or teach Ogham. Therefore, very few Cainites know Ogham. Very few Cainites even know these Disciplines exist, which complicates things further. Starting characters who are not members of the bloodlines in this book should not begin the game with levels in any of the Disciplines listed here, including the normally flexible Caitiff.

Unlike the Disciplines practiced by the 13 clans, few of the bloodlines’ Disciplines reflect the Curse of Caine on the Antediluvians, or that of God on Caine. With two exceptions (Valeren and Daimoinon), these Disciplines were developed by Methuselabs centuries or millennia after the Great Flood, and consequently are specialized. Overuse of any Discipline power can prove dehumanizing to a Cainite, but this drawback is a general malaise rather than having specific effects as described in the various Discipline write-ups in **Dark Ages: Vampire**.





## DISCIPLINE SECRETS

As closed-mouthed as most clans are about their unique Discipline powers, the bloodlines listed here are even better able to keep secrets. It is easier for members of these clans to keep tabs on one another, and make sure that their childer and peers do not share clan secrets with other Cainites. In these dark nights, proprietary Disciplines like Abombwe are an advantage that minor bloodlines cannot afford to lose.

With that in mind, the optional rule on page 171 of *Dark Ages: Vampire* is strongly recommended for use with minor bloodlines. For those without that book at hand, the core idea is that a Discipline cannot get more than one step away from a member of a bloodline to whom it is native. For example, Robert the Baali may teach Daimoinon to Jervais the Tremere, but Jervais cannot teach it to anyone. Even Storytellers who do not wish to use this rule for Disciplines belonging to the 13 clans are strongly encouraged to apply it to bloodlines.

## Abombwe

*Qarakh watched the dusky creature warily as they circled one another. Scent told him that this being was dead, a walking corpse like himself, but it showed none of the usual signs, no hint of blood-frenzy as they sized each other up. Qarakh bared his teeth and growled, trying to provoke the man's Beast into a predictable reaction, but it was no use. Qarakh would have to fight the man if he wanted to learn who dominated whom.*

Abombwe is the proprietary Discipline of the Laibon vampires of the lands south of Egypt. The Laibon, like many of the inhabitants of the dark lands beyond Constantinople, do not obey the teachings of Christ, nor do they respect the dictates of Mother Church. They have no concept of sin or redemption and are therefore savages — or so goes European Cainites' understanding of them.

European Cainites oversimplify Laibon beliefs, of course, but one thing is certain: the Laibon spend their nights far closer to their Beasts than other vampires ever do. They do not see their identities as fundamentally separate from the Beast; they embrace their own violent natures when the time is right for fearsome bloodshed, and submerge it when they need rationality. The Laibon accept the Beast as part of themselves, rather than as a foul influence to be fought.

As a result, the Laibon are far better acquainted with the vagaries of the Beast than are European vampires. They use this intimate knowledge to affect their own dual natures as well as the Beasts of other Cainites. Rumors abound that the ancient progenitors of the modern Laibon taught this ability to the vampires of Cathay (see *World of Darkness: Blood and Silk*), but such stories remain apocryphal. The Laibon have a difficult time teaching Abombwe to European vampires, as few Europeans accept their Beasts to the degree necessary to fully comprehend this Discipline. Followers of the Road of the Beast seem to have an easier time learning Abombwe than other Cainites.

### • Predator's Communion

The Laibon's Beast is a part of his nightly existence; in many ways it is the most vital force in his unlife. It does not merely lurk

in his consciousness: it is the basic, animalistic and feral part of his awareness. Consequently, the Laibon is keenly aware of creatures who work at suppressing or mastering a divided nature — those whose Beasts are separate entities. Such beings create a sort of background noise in the night air. This noise disturbs the balanced Laibon, who can turn his feral nature toward finding them. Laibon traveling through unfamiliar territory use this ability frequently; it helps them avoid unpleasant confrontations and find the local blood-drinkers.

**System:** The player spends two blood points (one for non-Laibon) and rolls Perception + Survival (difficulty 6). Upon success, for the remainder of the scene, the character can detect other Beasts within sensing distance (generally, those within eyesight, but those with strong scents or who howl in frenzy should also be obvious to the Laibon). Beasts are not restricted to Cainites; Lupines, ghosts, sufficiently feral fairies, and even some particularly bestial mortals might come to the Laibon's attention.

If the player rolls three or more successes, the character can detect relative strengths of nearby Beasts. If nothing else, the Storyteller should tell the player whether a given Beast is stronger than her character's (lower Road rating), roughly as strong, or weaker (higher Road rating).

### •• Taming the Beast

As the Laibon's spirit is a mix of rationality and Beast, he can easily tap into his physical urges, and turn the power of his own frenzy into a tool. The feral parts of his personality can give him a burst of adrenaline, improving his physical prowess in a number of ways. However, by submerging his rational nature, the Laibon runs the risk of entering into a full-blown frenzy.

**System:** The character must spend a full turn concentrating. Then the player rolls either Self-Control or Instinct (as appropriate) against a difficulty of 5. For every success, the player receives a bonus die that can be spent on any physical action for the remainder of the scene. These bonus dice are gone once spent. For example, if the player achieves three successes, she can add one die to each of three separate actions, or two dice to one and one to another, or three dice to a single action. These dice are applied individually to dice rolls, in the case of characters who choose to take multiple actions in a turn. First subtract the usual penalty for multiple actions, and then add bonus dice to individual actions.

A character awakening his feral nature risks frenzy. The player must immediately roll to resist frenzy (difficulty 6). The bonus dice remain available, even if the character flies into frenzy.

### ••• Whistling Up the Beast

The Laibon can sense the dissonance in creatures with Beasts (Cainites and others, as described above under Predator's Communion). His sympathy for that aspect of a Cainite's spirit allows him to pull others' Beasts (or his own feral aspect) to the forefront.

**System:** The character must whistle, sing, or murmur for a full turn. The player must then roll Manipulation + Expression (difficulty 7). The target resists this roll with a Courage roll (difficulty 7). If the target wins or ties, she merely becomes uneasy for the scene, and suffers a one-die penalty to all actions against the Laibon; her difficulties to avoid frenzy and Röttschreck

also decrease by one for the scene. If the target fails, she must immediately retreat from the character—this is not Röttschreck, but rather a wary retreat. If for some reason the target cannot leave the character's presence, she enters Röttschreck.

If the character uses this power on himself, no roll is needed; he immediately enters frenzy, gaining all the benefits thereof (see *Dark Ages: Vampire*, page 264).

### •••• Beast-Channel

Just as Taming the Beast (see above) allows a Laibon to direct a small amount of the Beast's power to fuel his actions generally, this power lets him channel that feral energy into different parts of his body, greatly increasing his ability to perform certain specific tasks. The Laibon can decide into which part of the body he wishes to focus his bestial nature when he activates it.

**System:** The player spends three blood points (two for non-Laibon) and decides on which part of the character's body to focus the Beast. That area becomes encrusted with black, hardened vitae, and gains the appropriate benefits, listed below. All of the following effects last for a scene unless otherwise noted. Rumors persist that elders of the Laibon bloodline know even more wicked and devastating uses for this power.

**Hands:** Punching damage becomes aggravated.

**Body:** The character's Physical Attributes each increase by 2 for one scene.

**Throat:** The character may roar. All those nearby must succeed at Courage rolls (difficulty 9 for mortals, 8 for supernatural beings). Mortals who fail must flee; supernatural beings become weakened, and their dice rolls are halved.

**Feet:** Kicking damage becomes aggravated. Additionally, the character may stomp with extreme force, causing a violent shockwave that causes everyone within 100 feet of him to make a successful Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 7) or fall to the ground. The tremors continue for as long as he continues to stomp.

### ••••• Taking the Skin

The Laibon with this ability can take the form of almost any other creature, so long as he taints his own nature with that creature's Beast. Unfortunately for the target creature, the only way for the Laibon to do such a thing is to kill the target and douse himself in its blood. Once that is accomplished, the character can sense the true nature of the target's physical shell and force his own flesh to twist, stretch, and compress to match it.

**System:** The character may take the form of whatever creature he kills, so long as a few conditions are met. First, he must kill the creature himself—he can have assistance, but must personally deal the killing blow. Second, the creature must be a predator—no Cainite can adopt the form of a grass-munching prey animal. Third, the creature must have at least one blood point's worth of vitae left in it upon its death—this means that neither very small predators such as bats nor blood-drained mortals or vampires can be targets of Taking the Skin. Finally, the Laibon must drench himself in the creature's remaining blood (which must be fresh).





This form change lasts for as long as the character wishes to remain transformed. He takes on the better of each of the target creature's or his own Physical Attributes for the duration. This shift applies to his Perception and Appearance Attributes (the latter if he stole the form of a human or human-looking creature), though not to any other Mental or Social Attributes. He also takes the creature's shape and size, its precise appearance, and its gross physical characteristics. This includes claws, enhanced but non-magical senses, and wings, but does not include supernatural abilities.

The character can use this ability on supernatural beings such as vampires, Lupines, and the fae; he cannot use it on insubstantial creatures like spirits or ghosts. Abilities like shapechanging, Disciplines, and other magical gifts are not conveyed by this power.

### ••••• • Predator's Mastery

At this level of power, the Laibon's mystical synthesis with his own Beast elevates him to a position of mastery over other Beasts. If he encounters a being with a Beast of sorts (see Predator's Communion, above), he can attempt to dominate that Beast after the fashion of wild animals. Should he dominate another being's Beast, that individual submits to him in nearly all matters.

**System:** The player rolls Manipulation + Courage; the difficulty depends on the character's strength relative to the target. If the target is obviously weaker (this includes mortals and animals), the difficulty is 5. If the target is roughly the same strength (around the same generation and age as a Cainite, or a Lupine or other supernatural being with physical abilities comparable to the Laibon's), the difficulty is 6; if the target is stronger, the difficulty is 7. The target gets a Self-Control or Instinct roll to rein in her Beast and resist this power; her difficulty is the inverse of the player's (for example, if the character is stronger, the player's difficulty is 5 and the target's is 7).

If the player achieves more successes than the target, the target obeys the character for as long as he remains vigilant. The target must remain in the Laibon's vision throughout the power's duration. This power only grants sullen and grudging servitude, not loyalty or any positive feeling toward the Laibon, and the effect ends as soon as the target sees a chance to escape or attack without immediate retribution.

## Daimoinon

*Rosamund slipped through the countryside like a ghost — if a ghost were to be gowned in brocade and lace. It would not do to be more than fashionably late to the Prince's soiree, so when the carriage wheel broke, Rosamund gathered her skirts and set off the remaining distance on foot. She fancied she could see the lights of her destination ahead, when she heard the dying scream of some young animal from a copse of trees. Curiosity got the better of caution. Slinking through the slender tree trunks in her inappropriate attire, Rosamund stumbled onto a scene out of nightmare. Black-robed cultists crouched around the cooling body of a young girl. The knife-wielder looked up; she spoke words in a fluid tongue that Rosamund did not understand. For a moment, Rosamund was transfixed by the beauty of the voice, as it lilted through the stillness of the night. Then the terror came in a wave,*

*and the smell of the blood, and sight of familiar faces under the hoods... she fled, unable to bear what she had seen.*

*She came to her senses, how much later she could not be sure, her lovely dress torn, her shoes lost. Searching the sky for traces of dawn, she could only think, "Mon Dieu, must the Devil have such a beautiful voice?"*

Daimoinon is a dark and fearsome Discipline, practiced only by the most reprehensible Cainites. The Baali know it best, having learned it from the nameless founder of the bloodline. They use Daimoinon to aid them on their twisted missions, perverting and corrupting Cainites and mortals to the service of dark powers.

While Daimoinon can be used on Cainites and mortals with equal facility, the Baali concentrate their efforts on perverting the souls of mortals. In their eyes, either the souls of Cainites are unavailable to their dark masters, or vampires simply lack souls. No doubt the Baali disagree among themselves on this point. The Baali will use Daimoinon on a Cainite if the need arises, of course, but since Cainites already possess dark urges and a wicked hunger, the average Baali needs to waste less of his time digging around the vampiric soul for leverage.

A Baali using Daimoinon experiences an unholy reverie; whether he worships Satan, mysterious cthonic entities, or some Manichaeen outer darkness, whenever he spends blood or Willpower to use this Discipline, he briefly taps into the power of his dark master. This may be a cold and hollow feeling, or a painful and piercing inner light. The experience is rarely entirely pleasant, though the Baali may feel bliss in the caress of his lord.

### • Sense the Sin

Righteous Christians must admit that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Who better to know the hidden paths that evil carves in the soul than the most grievous of sinners? The Baali use this power to discover the innate weaknesses or past missteps of their victims. Rarely, the Baali invoking this power uncovers a weakness in his victim that has nothing to do with her soul — perhaps a favored hunting ground, or the location of a haven. The Baali look upon these moments of dark inspiration as gifts from their profane gods. Fledgling Baali must exploit this stolen knowledge with nothing but their own cunning. More experienced members of the bloodline can use what they have learned to further violate their victims' souls using more powerful permutations of this Discipline.

Using Sense the Sin does not require eye contact, but the Baali must intensely scrutinize his subject (giving her the "evil eye"); the subject or others around may take notice of, and possibly umbrage at, this intent study.

**System:** The player rolls Perception + Empathy against a difficulty of the target's Self-Control/Instinct + 4. Success indicates that the Baali has discovered a weakness in the target. The Storyteller must use her judgment to determine the depth and significance of the information revealed. As a guideline, one success may reveal a low Virtue, weak Willpower, or recent actions that violated the tenets of the target's road. Two successes may reveal a closely guarded secret or a path habitually traveled; three or more successes may uncover the exact nature of a Derangement, a formative and traumatic event from the target's past, or a secret entrance to a haven.

The Baali may learn more than one weakness using this power, with the Storyteller dividing the successes as she sees fit. Only one weakness is learned each turn, however, with each additional secret requiring another round of concentration but no further rolls. Sense the Sin may only be used once per night on a given victim, whether it succeeds or fails. Repeated use on a victim may raise the difficulty, at the Storyteller's discretion.

## •• Fear of the Void

Every creature fears the unknown. Thinking beings have an even greater fear of the unknowable. When using Fear of the Void, the vampire inflames that instinctive terror with the power of her voice, channeling the madness of what lies Beyond to her enemies — an experience that can make even unbeating hearts sick with dread. Pagans and heretics — even other Baali — are not immune to this nightmarish terror; it is a primal response that even an ardent sinner cannot eradicate from his psyche.

The vampire using Fear of the Void must speak, but she need not use a language her listeners understand. Words and syntax have no meaning to convey the essence of the Void; the sound of her voice alone is enough.

**System:** The Baali must first successfully use Sense the Sin (above) on the target during the same scene, to learn how best to manipulate the target's fears. The player then rolls Wits + Intimidation against a difficulty of the victim's Courage + 4. Mortals may not resist this roll. Most other supernatural creatures may do so, though creatures easily dominated by strong emotions, such as the fae and some ghosts, may get no resistance at the Storyteller's discretion. If the victim can resist, she makes a Courage roll against a difficulty of the Baali's Willpower. One net success for the Baali sends the victim into fits of panic, leaving him with two fewer dice in all dice pools. Two net successes drives a vampire into Röttschreck; other victims flee in blind panic. Three or more net successes plunges the victim into a catatonic state. All effects last for the remainder of the scene.

This wave of terror may be unleashed upon any number of victims in one action, so long as the Baali has studied each in turn with Sense the Sin.

## ••• Essence of the Netherworld

That which lies outside our world is by nature inimical to everything that exists here. By sheer force of will, a Baali can reach out to the boundary of worlds and snatch up some of the darkness that lies beyond the light of God's Creation to hurl at his foes. The results are incredibly destructive: wood falls to ash, metal twists past recognition, and flesh — alive or undead — melts.

The most common manifestation of this power is a ball of black flame that to the pious reeks of brimstone, but other forms of destruction have been witnessed. Survivors recount tales of swarms of alien insects, bolts of lightning in sickening hues, or barely perceptible ripples of force. Surely even more bizarre manifestations have left no one to tell the tale. Those unfortunate enough to have multiple encounters with the Baali report that individuals consistently channel the same kinds of energies.

**System:** The player spends a blood point to create a missile that does one die of aggravated damage. The vampire can burn blood for several turns to build up the power of this

attack before releasing it (for example, a 10th-generation Baali may spend four turns and build a missile that inflicts four dice of damage). To hit the target, the player rolls Dexterity + Occult against a difficulty determined by range (short range for the missile is 15 yards). The target may dodge normally. Once thrown, the energies of the missile dissipate after one turn. This damage is aggravated and may only be soaked with Fortitude.

Cainites confronted with fiery missiles must make a Röttschreck roll as though confronted with a similarly-sized normal fire. Strange manifestations of Essence of the Netherworld, like insects, only provoke Röttschreck rolls once the Cainite has taken damage from the power (difficulty 8).

Buildings, conveyances and other items either directly targeted or in the line of fire suffer massive amounts of damage. The results of this are left to the Storyteller's discretion.

## •••• Psychomachia

Pious scholars study the *Psychomachia* of Prudentius, spending countless hours annotating the religious poem recounting a war between virtues and vices. The impious scholars of the Baali bloodline study it as well, but they recognize it as more than an allegorical device. When a Baali ferrets out her victim's greatest failings, she may breathe a demonic life into them, casting her victim as an unwitting "hero" in the morality play of his nightmares.

**System:** The Baali must first successfully use Sense the Sin (above) on the target during the same scene, and then spend a full turn in concentration. The target must roll his lowest Virtue (difficulty of the Baali's Willpower). Even one success is enough to defuse the psychic attack, but the Baali may attempt to continue the assault in subsequent turns. Failing the roll pits the target against his own worst vice (pride, envy, anger, sloth, avarice, gluttony and lust are the classical seven, but many other vices make appearances in the *Psychomachia* and other popular allegorical literature). The vice usually appears as an important figure from the victim's past — an abusive parent, a scorned lover, a trampled nemesis or (for vampiric victims) a manifestation of the Beast within. The spiritual assailant is visible only to the victim, but to him it is solid and painfully real. Also, any Derangements from which the character suffers immediately come to the fore. A botch on the Virtue roll indicates that the victim has been completely overwhelmed; he frenzies (if possible), or becomes possessed by the manifestation of the vice and develops an appropriate Derangement.

The imaginary assailant is a Storyteller character that can be wholly narrated, or assigned Traits equivalent or slightly inferior to the victim's — though a character whose sins significantly outweigh his virtues should encounter stiffer opposition. (Storytellers note: if you plan to use a Baali with this power, you may wish to prepare an appropriate opponent for each of your players ahead of time. If a player in your troupe has a Baali character, for whatever reason, do the same for characters significant to your story.)

The victim of Psychomachia must defeat his dark counterpart, though not necessarily through combat. He may outwit or cow his alter ego, but accomplishing this isn't likely to be easy — the dark figment knows all of the victim's usual tactics and threats. If the victim attempts to act against the Baali in any way, the imaginary doppelganger attacks. All injuries sustained by the



victim in a physical engagement with the figment are illusory (substitute catatonia or torpor for death as appropriate), and vanish when the opponent is defeated, or when the Baali ceases to concentrate on the attack.

### ••••• Curse

The dark masters of the Children of Ba'al relish every chance to put forth their influence in the world. When their favored servants call down curses on the heads of enemies, the Lords of Beyond always hear — and almost always lend their power to the pronouncement of doom. No ritual or sacrifice is necessary; by the time the Baali has grown to this level of faith and service, she has shed enough innocent blood on blackened altars to earn a measure of latitude from her masters.

The nature of the curse depends solely on the twisted imagination of the inflicting vampire, and can range from such immediate afflictions as blindness or withered limbs, to more subtle machinations that turn the victim's allies against him. The power of the curse varies, dependent on the fervor with which the Baali disciple invokes her infernal masters. Fortunately for Cainite and mortal alike, the most powerful curses rarely last long.

**System:** The player rolls Intelligence + Occult, (difficulty of the victim's Willpower). Successes must be split between the severity and duration of the curse, as follows:

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 1 success   | One week; "Let boils erupt and fester on your perfect face."                            |
| 2 successes | One month; "If you cannot see truth, you will see nothing at all."                      |
| 3 successes | One year; "You will live forever in fear, as those who serve seek to betray you."       |
| 4 successes | Ten years; "I will wring the godling from your veins — you shall sire childer no more!" |
| 5 successes | Permanent; "Dare not hope or love: all you care for shall be destroyed."                |

The Baali may choose to end the curse at any time, though few have ever done so. Repairing a physical or mental curse may be possible with Vicissitude or Dominate, but the erstwhile "healer" must have as many or more dots in the appropriate Discipline as the Baali who laid the curse has in Daimoinon, and must achieve as many successes. Baali who abuse or simply overuse this power may find themselves in disfavor with the powers they serve — curses may fail or be altered (with unexpected repercussions), or the vampire may be forced to atone in some fashion to regain favor.

### ••••• • Hell-Born Investiture

The blessedly few Baali who delve this deeply into the mysteries of Daimoinon are no longer simply Caine's childer. They have been adopted by creatures of the Void, gathered up in cocoons of inky blackness and remade in the image of their new sires. The Lords Beyond care not for the human form or for human custom; the changes they wreak on the Baali are seldom subtle or easily hidden. Horns, talons, pincers, lurid coloration, tentacles, wings — these alterations and more are recorded in the few histories of the Salubri-Baali conflict. Mortals (and many Cainites) mistake these changed Baali for mere "demons," while those with more knowledge know that they represent something far worse than Hell.

**System:** The most common investiture the Baali receive is a complete immunity to fire — both to the damage and the terror it causes. Other equivalent powers (such as an insect-like carapace that converts lethal damage to bashing damage) or combinations of powers (usable bat wings and poisonous claws) may be available at the Storyteller's discretion. The "gifts" should always have a visible or tangible effect, and should never counter the most basic banes of Cainite existence — sunlight, faith or the need for blood. This Discipline may be purchased more than once to accumulate demonic traits, at an additional cost in disfigurement.

## SAMPLE INVESTITURES

**Ignore the Searing Flames:** The vampire is immune to fire of any magnitude. He also has no fear of fire and need never check for Röttschreck because of it. This investiture is often accompanied by a strong metallic or reddish cast to the vampire's skin.

**Demonic Form:** The Baali sprouts bat-like wings from her back, while her finger- and toenails lengthen into dreadful claws that drip venom. The wings allow for flight at a speed of 30 mph (80 yards per turn). The claws inflict Strength +2 lethal damage.

**Blood Hive:** The vampire may vomit three swarms of bloodsucking insects (one swarm per turn). The insects travel at a rate of 20 yards per turn, and upon reaching a blood-bearing victim may suck one blood point from that victim per turn. Cainites simply lose a blood point; mortal victims also lose a health level. Each insect cloud can carry five points of blood back to the Baali, who re-ingests the insects to receive the stolen blood. The insects may be dispatched again in the next turn. The insects cannot be

fended off or crushed — only fire can damage the swarm, and they will flee from it. A Baali with this investiture is always surrounded by insects — they buzz around him, crawl in and out of his orifices, and visibly slide beneath the surface of his skin.

**Tentacled Grasp:** The Baali's arms metamorphose into two thick, muscled, sucker-bearing tentacles, or perhaps she sprouts many smaller tentacles from her torso. These tentacles are astoundingly strong; they grant an effective +2 to the Baali's Strength, and the Baali may climb sheer walls at her normal movement rate (provided that whatever she is climbing is strong enough to hold her weight). In combat, the Baali may make two Brawl attacks at no penalty, and an additional two attacks by splitting her dice pool once. Also, in close-quarters fighting, the vampire can use her tentacles on one target to inflict damage as in a clinch, but the target can only attempt to escape as if he were in a hold without the option of inflicting damage on the Baali.

## Mortis Path

As described in *Dark Ages: Vampire*, the Cappadocian clan has a greater understanding of the processes of death than any other group of vampires. The Lamia, as an offshoot bloodline of the Cappadocians, are heir to the same cache of knowledge and power, which they access through the Mortis Discipline (see *Dark Ages: Vampire*, page 190, for more on Mortis). Lamia must take the Path of the Dark Mother as their primary path.

### Path of the Four Humors

*Ankhenatsen stood in the doorway, his ghoul's lifeless body casting a shadow over his face as it swung gently on the makeshift noose. Ankhenatsen felt a pang of sorrow — he had treated Christof well, so what could have driven the young man to this? Stepping into the room, the Setite spied a wisp of black smoke roiling near the window.*

*A gentle hand on his shoulder startled him. "Andrew," said a woman's voice, quiet yet vibrant, almost lilting, "we have no need of your wares here. Yvonne of Clan Cappadocian claims domain over this town, and the Tempters are not welcome. Your carriage is waiting outside."*

*Ankhenatsen didn't argue, but left, eyes downcast. What kind of power, after all, could compel a fit young man to take his own life?*

The Lamia bloodline's communion with Lilith and its familiarity with death through association with the Cappadocian clan have provided them with secrets unknown even to most Cappadocians. According to the bloodline's legends, this path was originally developed by a mystical trio of Lamia: a neonate, her sire, and the bloodline's founder. Their resonance with the dark side of female nature allowed that trio to explore the powers of

death that are present in the living humors of all creatures, and which persist in cursed stasis within the body of a Cainite.

Philosophically, the four humors represent different qualities, split along two axes: hot and cold, and wet and dry. Blood is hot and wet; phlegm is cold and wet; yellow bile is hot and dry; and black bile is cold and dry. When a mortal is out of sorts or ill, it is said that his humors are out of balance, and a philosopher or physician might try to heal him by bringing his humors back into balance. The Lamia believe that in their undead forms, all four humors are held in a mystical stasis, and that they can tap into all four of them, rather than merely tapping into blood in the form of vitae, as other Cainites do.

No Cappadocian (save possibly the clan's Methuselahs) can learn this path without tutoring from a Lamia who knows it. Despite the bloodline's loyalty to the Cappadocians, they are loath to teach the path's secrets to their "parent clan"—pragmatic Lamia elders feel that the Path of the Four Humors might be the only weapon the Daughters of Lilith have, should the Cappadocians betray them.

### • Whispers to the Soul

The Lamia with this ability can let slip a little of her own undead bilious humor as she speaks to another being (whether mortal or Cainite). The wicked vapor slips into the target's ear canal, and whispers nightmares to the target throughout the day and night. The target has a harder time sleeping, and becomes irritable and distracted during his waking hours.

**System:** The character must whisper the target's name as she knows it. The victim rolls Willpower (difficulty 8). If the roll fails, the victim suffers from nightmares and hears the wicked mutterings of the mad while awake for a number of full days equal to the Lamia's Manipulation. The victim loses one die from all dice pools while thus afflicted, and at the Storyteller's





discretion, the difficulty to resist Röttschreck may be increased by one at the same time.

## •• Kiss of the Dark Mother

Kiss of the Dark Mother allows the Lamia who uses it to mix her unliving vitae with black bile, turning it into a noxious poison. The Lamia forces it into her mouth as saliva might once have come; the vitae tastes acrid and bitter, as though it had been scorched. Once the Lamia coats her teeth and lips with it, she can inflict terrible damage with her bite.

**System:** The player spends one blood point; activating this power is a reflexive action, but it must be done before making a bite attack. If the bite hits, the aggravated damage inflicted by a single bite is doubled before soak is calculated. This power does not affect the character's ability to drain blood from the target, nor does it increase the amount of damage done by blood loss. The Lamia's bite remains potent until this ability is discharged by a successful hit or she spends one turn cleansing the dark blood from her mouth.

## ••• Dark Humors

As mentioned above, the four humors that govern the health of all mortals (blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm) remain in an unliving stasis within the animated corpses of Cainites. Most vampires only concern themselves with blood, in the form of vitae, but the Lamia have learned through their dark studies to manipulate all four humors to dangerous ends. After a Lamia has used this power, she generally feels the opposite of the sensation the humor usually conveys. Using blood leaves her depressed and pessimistic; using yellow bile renders her calm and placid; using black bile leaves her optimistic; and using phlegm makes her aroused and angry.

**System:** The player spends two blood points. The Lamia chooses which humor she wishes to excrete. The humor can simply coat the skin — in which case touching the victim's skin lets the humor take effect — or it can act as a poison if placed in a beverage (or in vitae). The victim must make a Stamina roll (difficulty 8) to resist the effects of the humor. The effects on the user's mood, as described above, have no game effect or associated dice rolls.

**Phlegm:** Target becomes lethargic; all dice pools are reduced by two for the remainder of the scene.

**Blood (vitae):** Target becomes prone to excessive bleeding, and any lethal or aggravated wounds he suffers deal an additional health level of damage on the turn after they originally occur. Vitae altered by Dark Humors will *not* turn a human into a ghoul if ingested, nor will it initiate a blood oath.

**Black Bile:** Target suffers a number of health levels of damage equal to the Lamia's Stamina. This damage is considered lethal and can be soaked (if the victim is normally capable of soaking such damage), though armor does not protect against it.

**Yellow Bile:** Target becomes melancholic and is plagued with visions of death. He cannot spend Willpower for the remainder of the scene, and all Willpower rolls receive a +2 difficulty.

## •••• Clutching the Shroud

Blood, the sanguine humor, is regarded by philosophers as being both hot and wet. Blood from a cold corpse has been transubstantiated into a dead form, being a cold incarnation of a hot, wet element. This transformation of the living into death

holds great power; the Lamia know how to infuse their own being with the blood of a cold corpse and transform themselves into something not wholly vampiric. Instead, the Lamia edges closer to being an animated corpse in fact as well as name. She grows distant and chill, as though possessed by the spirit of Death itself; she has to work to push her attention into the physical world.

**System:** The character must drink, and then spend, five blood points from a cold corpse (one dead for 24 hours or more, but generally less than three days). It should take at least two turns to consume that blood, and the power is not activated until the character can spend all of it. For example, if the character is 12th generation, Clutching the Shroud takes seven turns total to activate (two to consume the blood and five to spend it).

After the power is active and for the rest of the scene, the Lamia gains several benefits. First, she receives two additional soak dice, which may be used to soak any sort of damage, even if the character does not possess Fortitude. Second, she gains a mystic sense of how far those in the area are from death — whether they are healthy or infirm, suffer from diseases, or are undead, ghouls, or mortals. Finally, a Perception + Occult roll lets her see into the lands of the dead (see Chapter Eight of **Dark Ages: Vampire** for more details) and speak with ghosts freely. The difficulty for this roll depends on how attuned to death a locale is; a cemetery would be difficulty 5, while a warm homestead might be difficulty 7. However, this ability makes the Lamia much more susceptible to the effects of powers used by ghosts, which means that she must act carefully.

## ••••• Black Breath

A Lamia who has mastered the Path of the Dark Mother can harness the undead black bile that festers at the core of her being; she pulls that melancholy to her lungs and lets it mingle with her outgoing breath. She then exhales the dark mist, letting it engulf those nearby. The Lamia feels curiously lightheaded and optimistic after using this power, as she has forced some of her most depressed nature out into the world; those caught in the black vapors grow despairing and hopeless.

**System:** The player spends one Willpower and one blood point, and rolls Stamina + Athletics (difficulty 7). Black Breath allows the character to exhale a dark cloud of vapor that is five yards in diameter per success rolled. Those caught in the mists may attempt a Dexterity + Dodge roll to escape it if they have an available action; otherwise, they may be overwhelmed by depression to the point of suicide. Those who cannot escape the mists must immediately roll Willpower (difficulty 8 for mortals, 7 for supernatural beings) and achieve more successes than the player did. Mortals (including ghouls, Lupines, and wizards) who fail in this active attempt to kill themselves on their next turn. They do not attempt such ludicrous suicides as praying for a lightning bolt or holding their breath; they use the most effective means at hand to end their own lives. If prevented from suicide, they attempt it again as soon as an opportunity presents itself. This impulse lasts for the rest of the scene, and the Storyteller may impose flare-ups over the next full day or so at his discretion. Those who succeed on the Willpower roll still become enchanted with the prospect of death, whether mortal or Cainite, and lose two dice from all dice pools for the rest of the scene.

Cainites who fail the Willpower roll do not attempt suicide; as they are already dead, the malign influences of undead humors do not have as strong an effect on them. Instead, the affected vampire sinks into torpor



(those with Interred in the Earth, page 206 of *Dark Ages: Vampire*, may use it if they wish). The duration of this torpor is based on the Cainite's road rating, just as if lethal wounds had forced him into it.

## Ogham

"No," Lord Jürgen said to the scantily-clad, blood-painted woman, "I refuse to acknowledge your supreme authority in this little glade. I find your strange behavior and habits tiring and gruesome." He laid a hand on the hilt of his sword and looked at her sharply, magic behind his gaze. "Stand aside and let me pass."

The woman did not move. "In this place," she said, her voice like rotting leaves, "the spirits and land are mine to control." As if in response, the grass near Jürgen's feet curled and uncurled with a pulse like one of the kine. "Return to your own domain, Warlord. I speak for this land."

The Ogham Discipline is only found among the Lhiannan bloodline; they do not (some say cannot) share its secrets with those who do not suffer from their line's curse. As described in the bloodline's write-up (see page 16), all Lhiannan share a splinter of a dark, once-vast and powerful forest spirit. Ogham allows them to tap into that spirit's power, and into its communion with free spirits of its ilk. Although the Lhiannan's spirit is weak and growing weaker, Ogham works consistently for them; the power of vampiric blood seems sufficient to overcome the waning strength of the ever-dissipating being that animates them all.

All uses of Ogham are extremely personal, and touch the core of each Lhiannan's being. When she activates this Discipline, she is tapping into a spirit that is bound to her soul and Beast, and so no Lhiannan ever uses Ogham casually.

Ogham is a limited form of blood magic; it is neither as flexible nor as powerful as Tremere Thaumaturgy, nor other clans' blood sorcery, but within the bounds set by the Lhiannan's territorial nature it is quite powerful. Ogham is strongest within a Lhiannan's home territory. More than five miles from her home territory, the difficulty of using Ogham increases by one across the board, as the Lhiannan's own spirit-shard comes into conflict with unfamiliar local spirit life.

### • Consecrate the Grove

The Lhiannan with this ability can use the power of her blood to awaken the spirits of plant life in her territory; they will act in her defense against any unwelcome intruder. Roots tangle feet, grass grasps at boots, trees sway unnaturally in foes' way, and so on. Typically the Lhiannan slits a wrist and whirls in place (counterclockwise, or widdershins), or stabs a palm and walks a widdershins spiral pattern through the foliage that she wishes to awaken.

**System:** The player spends from one to three blood points. The character must undertake the process described above. One blood point rouses the plant life in a 10-foot diameter; two blood points doubles that to 20 feet; three makes it 40 feet. Tracing the desired area takes one turn per blood point spent.

When the blood has been sown, the player rolls Charisma + Survival (difficulty 6). If the roll garners even one success, the plant life animates as the local spirit world is roused to action. Enemies in the area suffer a 2 dice penalty to all dice pools from distraction and physical interference. Additionally, players must make a Stamina + Dodge roll to avoid three dice of bashing damage from the local flora (provided the local plant life is





capable of such damage; trees and brambles probably are, but a grassy meadow doesn't contain the kind of flora necessary for such an assault).

This power lasts for one scene.

## •• Crimson Woad

The Lhiannan traces mystical runes or script on her own body in vitae, inviting spirits of war to infuse her and gird her for battle. When so imbued, she ignores many wounds and retains greater control of her mind as the spirits direct her Beast. The Lhiannan can also lash out at her enemies with a fierce, blood-borne attack.

**System:** The character spends one scene tracing the woad on her body; this costs one blood point. The player then rolls Intelligence + Occult (difficulty 7). Each success enables the character to ignore one die of wound penalties from injury; it also subtracts one from the difficulty to avoid frenzy or Röttschreck. This ability lasts through one scene; additionally, if the character receives more than four health levels of damage, the mystic inscriptions are ruined, and the spirits flee her body.

The Lhiannan may also lash out at her enemies, adding the fury of the woad to her attack. The player may add the number of successes achieved on the above roll to the number of dice rolled for damage for a single close combat attack (this ability can only be used once per application of Crimson Woad).

## ••• Inscribe the Curse

The Lhiannan inscribes the name of an enemy on her body in vitae, in whatever language or set of symbols she likes. When the name is so inscribed and the Lhiannan's enemy can see it, baleful spirits become bound to the name and enact a curse upon that enemy. The curse takes effect the moment the victim sees his name scrawled in blood.

**System:** The player spends three blood points. The Lhiannan must write the foe's name in vitae and it must be displayed on a part of her body visible to intended target in order for Inscribe the Curse to take effect. The player chooses which curse to enact on the target from the list below; the curse takes effect as soon as the target sees his name. He does not need to understand the language used, but if he can comprehend it, he may resist the curse with a Wits + Occult roll (difficulty 8).

The curses described below expire when the glyph is erased, worn off, or defaced by the Lhiannan taking four or more health levels of damage. The curse works differently depending on where the Lhiannan inscribes the target's name.

**Body:** Inscribe the name on arms, legs, or belly. The victim's body becomes ill and weak (+2 to all difficulties on Physical rolls and all wound penalties are increased by one die) or, in the case of Cainites, the victim cannot use blood other than the one point per night necessary to remain active.

**Mind:** Inscribe the name across the forehead. The foe becomes confused as parts of his mind become disconnected from one another; he must spend one Willpower point in order to attempt any Knowledge roll, or use any magical ability or Discipline (other than Potence, Fortitude, or Celerity). This Willpower doesn't buy him a success on that roll; it simply allows him to make it.

**Voice:** Inscribe the name on the throat. The victim loses the power of speech; he can grunt or moan, but cannot say any words.

**Soul:** Inscribe the name down the sternum and over the heart. The subject loses his will to resist the Beast: difficulties to avoid frenzy are increased by two. Non-Cainites are overcome by fear; the target must flee the Lhiannan's territory unless he succeeds in a Courage roll (difficulty 8).

## ●●●● Moon and Sun

The unlife of a Cainite is dominated by two celestial bodies: the sun, which she must fear and hate; and the moon, her only safe source of light. A Lhiannan can trace ancient sigils of those two orbs on her body to gain gifts; the spirit of the moon, ever the vampire's friend, blesses her by its current phase, while the sun's spirit wards off some of that orb's fiery curse.

Werewolves, who are said to worship the moon, are enraged at the sight of a lunar emblem on a vampire.

**System:** The player spends three blood points. The Lhiannan inscribes the desired sigil on her body over the course of 15 minutes; the sigil can be inscribed anywhere, but must be exposed. The character may choose to inscribe both the moon and the sun, but each symbol requires the same blood expenditure and 15 minutes to trace it. She can also inscribe these sigils on any voluntary subject.

The sun emblem protects a vampire from the worst effects of fire and sunlight. So long as the symbol remains on the character's body, the player makes a Stamina roll (difficulty 8) when afflicted by fire or sunlight. If the roll is successful, the damage is considered lethal and the player may roll to soak it normally. This roll must be made every time the character faces such damage.

The moon emblem adds one to the difficulties of Self-Control/Instinct rolls to avoid frenzy (but not Courage rolls to avoid Röttschreck). Other effects of the moon emblem depend on the current phase of the moon:

**New Moon:** Add one die to Dexterity and Stealth dice pools.

**Crescent Moon:** Add one die to Wits and Occult dice pools.

**Half Moon:** Add one die to Perception and Subterfuge dice pools.

**Gibbous Moon:** Add one die to Charisma and Expression dice pools.

**Full Moon:** Add one die to Strength and Brawl dice pools.

## ●●●●● Drink Dry the Earth

The spirit within every Lhiannan is drawn to sites of mystical energy, whether ancient stone circles, faerie rings, or dragon tracks. That spirit-shard can wrest spiritual energy out of those places of power, and use it to aid the Lhiannan. A word of caution, however: stealing too much power from any mystical site renders it barren and lifeless, much as if the Cainite had consumed the very blood of the Earth. Also, wizards and werewolves frequent these same sites, and destroying these places can rouse their ire.

**System:** The player rolls Perception + Occult (difficulty 8). One success determines if a given location is a suitable site (a decision generally left in the Storyteller's hands, though a Lhiannan with a high Domain Background may have such a site within her holdings).

Two or more successes on this roll grants a rough idea of the site's power on a scale of 1 to 5. If the character wishes to tap the power of that location, she must spend a scene and one blood point marking various parts of the site with sigils of power, keys for her spirit-shard to unlock the location's energies.

Once the site is prepared, the player makes a second, reflexive Perception + Occult roll (difficulty 7). Any successes beyond the site's power rating are ignored. For each success, the player gains two dice, which she may add to any dice pools (except those to avoid frenzy or Röttschreck) for the remainder of the scene. These dice are gone when used, but the character may tap the same location again from turn to turn. The player must make the Perception + Occult roll each time. Each "drink" of the site's energies depletes it, however, as described below.

The Lhiannan's spirit-shard is a greedy thing, wearing as it does the garb of a Cainite's Beast, and drinks the site's energies recklessly. A Lhiannan can only garner a number of successes equal to 10 times the site's power rating, after which point the area turns into a barren wasteland, incapable of sustaining life. This sort of activity in particular is certain to attract the attention of Lupines or wizards. A site may replenish itself over a period of years. However, a site that is tapped with Drink Dry the Earth at any point during the year is unable to replenish lost dice at all that year, and if the site is completely drained, it is irrevocably dead.

## ●●●●● Inscribe the Forgotten Names

When the Lhiannan reaches this level of Ogham, she reverses the relationship between herself and her spirit-shard and can dominate and extract information from it. The Lhiannan's ancient spirit knows the names of many mythical beings, from demons to dragons, and it can be bludgeoned into giving the Lhiannan one of those names so that she may invoke such a creature.

These beings are dangerous, and not to be trifled with; many are on a par with Cainite Methuselahs. Indeed, it is rumored that some Lhiannan can call forth Methuselahs of their own clan with this power.

Inscribe the Forgotten Names allows its wielder to communicate with the being she summons, but it does not give her domination or control over that creature. She must appease it in whatever manner she can, and hope that it does not take offense at being called up.

**System:** The player spends three blood points. The Lhiannan must spend one half hour undisturbed as blood oozes from her skin to sate the spirit-shard's hunger. At the end of this time, the player rolls Intelligence + Occult (difficulty 9, or 8 if the character has summoned this particular being before). If the roll succeeds, a mythic beast arrives in the immediate vicinity before the end of the current scene.

The Storyteller is free to assign game statistics to any creature summoned. Such creatures have their own desires and demands, and many do not take kindly to being called. Demons demand sacrifices of the innocent, and mythical carnivores like griffins or dragons demand huge quantities of flesh before they will consider taking action on the character's behalf.

## Valeren

*Fatima drew her blade, but silently admitted that the situation looked hopeless. At a dead run, she might make it to the city's walls, but her charge would fall behind. A rush of wind and the sound of beating wings told her that the gargoyles weren't far off.*



*The man she had been charged to protect stood his ground with an odd smile on his face, and removed his headdress. He raised his hands to the sky, and as Fatima watched in awe, a clear blue eye opened on his forehead. The gargoyles dove, seeing their prey helpless and exposed... and stopped short as though they had flown into a stone wall.*

*As the hideous beasts retreated, frightened, Fatima's companion turned to her. "They'll return soon. And we still have a long way to travel."*

*Fatima could only nod.*

Valeren is the proprietary Discipline of the Salubri clan. Research into its origins shows claims by some ancient Salubri that Saulot himself, the Salubri Antediluvian, created Valeren. Indeed, some Cainite scholars note that Saulot's quest of discovery is documented in an apocryphal fragment of the Book of Nod.

Valeren is divided into two paths: the Path of the Healer, which focuses on using Cainite blood to bring weal to vampires and mortals; and the Path of the Warrior, which concentrates the Salubri's power for more martial defense. A single Cainite can learn powers from both of these paths, though it is not easy (see below). As with many Disciplines, Valeren is something of a clan secret to the Salubri; they rarely teach it to outsiders. This was not always so, but in the years since the death of Saulot and the coming of the Usurper Tremere, the Salubri have used the healing powers of Valeren as bargaining chips with various princes. Usually, the Salubri swears to use Valeren to aid favored members of a prince's court, and in return the prince gives asylum to the Salubri against the Tremere purge. Only a few princes have granted such asylum, notably those in the lands under Assamite sway as well as a few in France and some other more northern cities. These princes find themselves balanced between the welfare of a few Salubri and the political pressure of a growing band of Cainites who wish to take advantage of the Salubri clan's political weakness.

Despite widespread belief to the contrary, the Salubri third eye is not part of the clan's curse. Instead, it appears on the forehead of any Cainite who learns the second level of Valeren. The eye is nearly invisible when closed, as it has no lashes and leaves a barely noticeable slit in the forehead. However, the eye opens whenever any Valeren power (of either path) of level two or higher is activated. The third eye is said to provide the Salubri with insight into a higher plane of existence, in which the energies of life, death, and unlife are made manifest. Those students of Valeren who wish to hide themselves from the Tremere frequently conceal the third eye with a helm or head-wrappings—such things impede the power somewhat, but that can't always be helped.

When a character first learns Valeren, the player must declare whether the character intends to pursue the Healer or Warrior path. Thereafter, the character can raise that path just as he would any other clan Discipline. The cost of the first dot in the opposite path is the same as with the primary path, but subsequent levels in the Discipline cost as though they were one level higher. For example, a character whose primary path is Warrior and who wishes to learn Shepherd's Watch (Valeren path of the Healer ●●●●, see below) would have to pay the 25 experience points, or 35 if Valeren is not a clan Discipline. A Salubri cannot have a higher rating in his second path than he has in his primary path, though the two ratings may be equal. The character must also learn the secondary path sequentially (that is, a character with five dots of Path of the Healer can't simply learn the fourth level of Path of the Warrior without learning the first three).

## Path of the Healer

### ● Sense Life

Through the Salubri's mystical access to a higher plane of existence — access later made obvious through the manifestation of

the third eye — she can determine with a glance whether another individual is alive, dead, or undead; she can also see how far from death that person is. The Salubri must touch the target at some time before exercising this ability on a given night. In the case of the living, she knows if the target is injured or sick. If she touches a corpse, she can tell how long it has been dead, and possibly how it died. Similarly, the Salubri can tell how long a given vampire has been undead, and may be able to determine how long that vampire lived as a mortal before the Embrace.

**System:** The character must touch the target at some point on the same night he uses this power. If the target resists this, the player must make a successful Dexterity + Brawl roll. Once the character has touched the target, any time the target is visible to the character, the player may roll Perception + Empathy (difficulty 7) as a standard action to assess the target's state of health. A single success on that roll indicates roughly how healthy the target is — in game terms, how many health levels the target has left. It also reveals whether the target is living, dead, or a vampire.

If the first roll succeeds, the player may, as a reflexive action, make a second roll to gain more detailed information (also Perception + Empathy, difficulty 7). Each success allows the player to ask the Storyteller a simple question regarding the target's current state of health. In the case of Cainites, the only information that can be gleaned this way is the subject's age at death and the time since the subject's demise.

Having Sense Death (see below, under the Path of the Warrior) and Sense Life grants the player an additional two dice for the roll to activate this ability.

### ●● Gift of Sleep

With a touch, a Salubri with this ability can put a living being to sleep. If the target is willing, it takes neither time nor particular effort on the part of the Salubri; a bit of concentration is required if he wishes to knock out an unwilling target.

**System:** The player spends a blood point. This ability only works on living targets, including ghouls or Lupines. If the target wishes to sleep (in order to heal or gain needed rest), nothing more is required. If the target is unwilling, the player and target must engage in a resisted Willpower roll (difficulty 6). If the player succeeds, the target sleeps. If the target wins, there is no ill effect. If the player's roll botches, however, the Salubri falls asleep as if the sun had just risen.

If the character possesses both Gift of Sleep and Morphean Blow, the player may roll two additional dice on the Willpower roll.

### ●●● Healing Touch

By this point, the Salubri has learned enough about his own undead "healing" processes to turn those energies on to others. He still "burns" his own vitae as he does so, but rather than turning its replenishing power toward his own flesh, he focuses it outward, onto the target. The target feels healing warmth from the Salubri's hands and sees a faint, warm light from the Salubri's third eye, followed by a rush of energy to the site of the target's greatest injury. This faculty makes Salubri quite popular in regions plagued by battle, and allows a cunning Salubri to accrue quite a few owed boons.

**System:** The player spends one blood point for every bashing or lethal health level to be healed, or two blood points for every aggravated health level to be healed. This power works on the Salubri herself, so healing aggravated damage becomes much easier.

## •••• Shepherd's Watch

The Salubri with this level of mastery of the Healing Path of Valeren can create an invisible barrier between those under his care and those who would do them harm. The Salubri himself must stand among his charges as he generates this barrier; he cannot defend them from afar. Enemies armed with crossbows, bows, or even hurled rocks can still attack, but none may approach closer than about four paces.

**System:** The player spends two Willpower points. Erecting this barrier is a standard action, but maintaining it from turn to turn is a reflexive action; dropping the barrier is also a reflexive action. The invisible barrier extends to about a 10-foot radius from the character, and no one outside that barrier may cross it while she maintains the power. Those within it at its creation may leave and return, however. The barrier moves with the Salubri; it cannot be maintained at a distance.

Those who wish to cross the barrier from the outside, whether friendly or hostile, must best the character in an extended, resisted Willpower roll (difficulty is the opponent's Willpower for the Salubri, and the Salubri's Willpower for the opponent). The opponent may cross the barrier as soon as he accumulates three more net successes than the Salubri.

## ••••• The Ailing Spirit

Mischievous demons of madness plague many souls in the Dark Medieval era, but Cainites, due to their unholy nature and dastardly activities, are among the most frequent victims of madness. By invoking The Ailing Spirit, a Salubri can briefly drive off the demons that cause insane fits, and bring a subject to lucidity. This ability even works on Malkavians (albeit temporarily), for it is said that gentle Saulot himself was the first to use The Ailing Spirit — on his brother, Malkav. Some Cainites — not all of them under the sway of the Tremere and their allies — hear legends that Saulot used this ability to enslave his beloved brother for a time. Using this power on mortals known to be mad may attract the attention of the local Church, so the kind-hearted Salubri is warned against pursuing demons of madness *too* fervently.

**System:** The player spends two blood points and rolls Intelligence + Empathy (difficulty 8). Success indicates that the character has cured one of the subject's Derangements. Failure means she cannot try again that night, and a botch pulls the Derangement from the subject onto the Salubri's own psyche for the rest of the night. This ability is subject to certain limitations. First, the character cannot use it on himself; one's own demons are too slippery to grasp. Second, it can only be used once per night on a given subject. Finally, it cannot heal the permanent Derangements of a Malkavian. It can provide a Malkavian with a scene's worth of lucidity, however.

## ••••• • Warding the Beast

The most damaged souls that a Salubri might come across cannot be healed by ordinary means. Some of them show remorse, or at least wish they had not fallen quite so far from the moral state they held as mortals. Others are subject to incapacitating Derangements — strange fears, uncontrollable anger, or even demonic voices speaking to them.

The Salubri at this level of mastery can remove a subject's soul from its physical shell, to comfort and heal it within his own body. In so doing, he can even ward it against the demons that cause madness,

so that the soul will be protected against the insanity that plagued it when it returns to its body. The subject's body is an automaton while its soul is absent; it does not drop into torpor. Responsible Salubri do not use this ability on an unwilling subject, but the subject's cooperation is not required.

In the case of a willing subject, the use of this power feels pleasant; the subject's soul slips from its shell into the warm embrace of a loving healer. The sensation of being ripped from one's body against one's will, however, is as unpleasant as might be imagined. Some Cainites liken it to reliving the first death.

**System:** The player rolls Stamina + Empathy (difficulty is 10 minus the subject's Road rating). Warding the Beast does not work on those with Road ratings of 1 or 0, nor on anyone on the Road of Sin. These souls are either beyond saving (in the former case) or have deliberately chosen a road that the Path of Healing cannot mend (in the latter). A failure on this roll means that the character cannot try to use this ability until the following night; a botch means the same, and the character also acquires one of the subject's Derangements.

While the subject's soul is within the character's body, the character may take a few different actions. First, he may repair Derangements by using The Ailing Spirit (Valeren Path of Healing •••••); this power works normally on captive souls.

Second, he can attempt to repair the soul's corrosion inflicted by the nightly unlife of the Damned. To do this, the player spends one *permanent* Willpower point to raise the subject's Road score by one. Each point of Willpower spent in this fashion takes a full hour to restore the subject's Road. The maximum number of permanent Willpower points that can be spent in this fashion is equal to the character's Empathy score. However, she cannot increase the subject's road rating to a level higher than the sum of his appropriate Virtues (Conscience/Conviction + Self-Control/Instinct).

The subject's soul and his soulless body both cry out for one another, regardless of the Salubri's intention toward him. Holding a soul away from a body (be it Cainite or mortal) for more than a night is cruel in the extreme, and should be considered a serious sin against most roads (especially Humanity and Heaven). The soulless body needs nourishment and can even be forced to move around under its own power, but it lacks a motivating force. It is ripe for demonic (or ghostly) possession unless precautions are taken against that. If the body is destroyed, the soul knows immediately, and if it doesn't merely dissipate is likely to become a hostile poltergeist or worse.

Souls that wish to escape the embrace of Warding the Beast must engage in a resisted Willpower roll with the player (difficulty is the trapped soul's Wits + Empathy). If the soul earns more successes than the Salubri, it returns to its body.

## Path of the Warrior

### • Sense Death

This ability works much like Sense Life, save that the Path of the Warrior concentrates less on the target's state of health than on its proximity to death. The Warrior Salubri sees throbbing lines of darkness like pulsing veins superimposed across the subject's body; the closer the subject is to death, the darker and thicker these lines are.

**System:** See Sense Life, above. Having Sense Death and Sense Life grants an additional two dice in the Perception + Empathy roll to activate this ability.



## •• Morphean Blow

This ability works like Gift of Sleep, above, save that the power is more focused on removing an opponent from combat than on providing sweet rest.

**System:** See Gift of Sleep. If the character has this ability and Gift of Sleep, the player may roll two extra dice in the resisted Willpower roll to subdue an unwilling target. This Discipline can be used in combat; the player must simply spend the blood and declare her character's intent to use it before rolling to hit the target.

## ••• Burning Touch

A Salubri's knowledge of the body's inner pathways of agony allows him to induce searing pain with a touch. No mark is left on the target's body and the pain inflicts no actual injury, but that is bitter comfort to any sinner afflicted by a Warrior Salubri's wrath.

**System:** The player spends a blood point. The character must touch the target; if the target does not wish to be touched, the player must roll Dexterity + Brawl to grab him. If the character makes and maintains contact, the target's dice pools are reduced by two so long as the Salubri holds on. If he wishes to induce more agony, he may intensify the attack — the player simply spends additional blood (each point so spent removing another two dice from the target's dice pools). The target must make a Stamina roll (difficulty 6), modified by the penalties already applied by this power, to avoid crying out, dropping held items, and so on.

## •••• Armor of Caine's Fury

Warrior Salubri, in their crusades against the Baali, frequently invoke this power; it surrounds them with a shining halo reminiscent of crimson mail. The phantom armor created by this ability protects the crusader against most sources of physical injury; it also keeps him or her from entering Röttschreck due to an ongoing battle, when such a frenzy of fear would lead him into greater danger. The Ventrue clan in particular is said to envy the Salubri for this ability, and a few Ventrue princes have welcomed Warrior Salubri into their domains on the strength of the Salubri's ability to teach this power.

**System:** The player spends one blood point and rolls Stamina + Melee (difficulty 7). For each success, the character gains one point of armor protection against bashing and lethal damage, to a maximum of five points of protection. Additionally, for every two successes rolled, she gains an additional die to resist Röttschreck from the effects of battle (but not fire or sunlight). This power works for one scene.

## ••••• Vengeance of Samiel

Samiel, an ancient childe of Saulot, is said to have been one of the Salubri clan's finest warriors; he created the Path of the Warrior, and he taught the clan's greatest warriors how to fight. This power calls out to the spirit of that long-dead Methuselah in the blood of all Warrior Salubri, and guides their weapons to strike true.

**System:** The player spends three blood points (which may necessitate building this power up over several turns, depending on the Salubri's generation); the character's next attack automatically hits its target and inflicts an additional two dice of damage. The attack cannot be dodged or blocked, although it can be soaked normally. However, against this blow physical armor is halved before soak is calculated.



## ••••• • Fiery Agony

With this ability, the Salubri may inflict continuing pain on a target, much as with Burning Touch (see above). However, the Warrior need not maintain direct contact with the target; he needs only to brush up against the target once, and then he may apply agonizing pain for as long as the target remains in sight.

With Fiery Agony, the Salubri has more control over the level of pain than he does with Burning Touch; for instance, he may create a minor irritant, or just enough pain to test the target's tolerances. This ability can drive Cainites and other supernatural beings into frenzy, and can actually kill mortals.

**System:** The player spends one blood point, and rolls Willpower (difficulty 8). The character must also touch the target. If the target resists being touched, the player rolls Dexterity + Brawl. If the Willpower roll succeeds, the Salubri may inflict pain upon the target. The player may levy any penalty she wishes, up to -5, to all dice pools for two turns. A second success on the Willpower roll grants this ability two additional turns of duration; three successes allows the Salubri to keep the power active for the remainder of the scene. Each additional success beyond three allows the character to continue using Fiery Agony over multiple scenes.

Alternatively, the character can inflict actual damage on the target. This requires the player to spend one blood point per health level of damage. Vampires and other supernatural beings heal this damage in a single day without blood expenditure or special effort; mortals must heal normally (the damage is considered lethal). The victim can only escape this damage by getting out of sight; once line of sight between character and victim is broken, the character must touch the target again in order to invoke Fiery Agony.

Inflicting physical damage in such an agonizing fashion provokes frenzy, provided the target can enter such a state. Once the Salubri has done more health levels of damage with Fiery Agony than the victim has Willpower, the victim must immediately roll to resist frenzy (difficulty 6).

## Gargoyles

*Vykos entered the University grounds with barely a backward glance toward the gate. He knew he'd find the Tremere he wanted within. It was a beautiful night, warm and clear, and the moon was high enough to silhouette the leering faces of demonic carvings on the façade of the library's roof. As he took another twenty paces, he felt an eerie premonition. He shifted his shoulders uncomfortably and hurried on.*

*He continued toward the library, his senses sharpening as he glanced about him. He sensed no mortals nearby, which made him all the more wary. Closer to the building, his alertness flared into panic as a large piece of masonry — one of those leering stone monsters — detached itself and gently glided to the ground in front of him.*

Gargoyles have supernatural abilities unlike those of other vampires. Gargoyles can barely be called Cainites at all — they are more like magical constructs than the damned childer of Caine. Because the true Curse of Caine does not resonate in their veins, neither do the blessings of vampiric nature: Gargoyles cannot learn Disciplines from other Cainites. Instead, their abilities come from the surging mix of blood that fills their veins, and from rituals performed on them individually by members of Clan Tremere.

The powers that Gargoyles have render them excellent servants to the Usurpers. They become strong enough to lift heavy loads;

they can fly over battlefields, guard their masters' havens and scout strange locales; and they grow more deadly in hand-to-hand fighting with each passing year. One Gargoyle of sufficient experience takes the place of a handful of a Tzimisce's fleshcrafted human and animal servants.

The Tremere created the Gargoyles' inherent abilities to play to the beasts' strengths: a Gargoyle's powers rely on its Strength, Stamina and Dexterity, and to a lesser extent on its Perception. Gargoyles have no powers that depend on other Mental Attributes or Social Attributes.

## Purchasing Gargoyle Powers

While Gargoyle characters start with four points to spend on Disciplines, just like every other Cainite, their alchemically corrupt vitae lacks the strength to bear any proper Disciplines. Instead, a player with a Gargoyle character must purchase abilities from the list below. Additional Discipline points cost seven bonus points during character generation, or a flat 10 experience points per Discipline point during play. Other abilities are available at the Storyteller's discretion; Storytellers should remember that most of the advantages available to Gargoyles cause gross bodily modification to the beasts. The abilities below can be purchased once each, unless specifically noted.

- **Fortitude (1 point per dot):** The Gargoyle's flesh becomes dense and rocky, and he gains resistance to damage just as if he had purchased dots in the Fortitude Discipline. The player may purchase this ability multiple times, to the character's generation maximum.
- **Foulness (1 point):** The Gargoyle's appearance and odor become so vile that all those within five feet of him receive a one-die penalty to all dice pools.
- **Gargoyle Rituals (Level 1 or 2, 1 point):** The Gargoyle has been the subject of a Level 1 or 2 Tremere Gargoyle Ritual (see Gargoyle Thaumaturgic Rituals, below). He can receive the benefits of multiple rituals, but must pay for each one separately. The Gargoyle must be in touch with a Tremere who knows these rituals in order to purchase this power.
- **Potence (1 point per dot):** The undead musculature of the Gargoyle expands and develops, giving him unholy strength just as if he had purchased dots in the Potence Discipline. The player may purchase this ability multiple times, to the character's generation maximum.
- **Terrifying Visage (1 point):** The Gargoyle's mien is horrifically twisted, more akin to a leper's or a demon's than a man's. The character is considered to have the Level 2 Presence power Dread Gaze (see *Dark Ages: Vampire* p. 203).
- **Extra Arms (2 points):** The character gains two additional arms, jutting out from his ribcage. He gains a two-dice bonus to dice pools to attack, block, or parry enemies in close combat so long as he faces more than one foe. He also gains two dice to Hold or Clinch attempts, and can keep a foe in a Hold or Clinch and still take action with a free arm.
- **Flight (2 points per dot):** The character's wings grow wider and stronger; see Flight, below, for more details. This power can be bought multiple times, to a maximum determined by the Gargoyle's generation.
- **Gargoyle Rituals (Level 3 or 4, 2 points):** As with Gargoyle Rituals (Level 1 or 2) above.



### Costs for Gargoyle Powers

- 1 Potence
- 1 Fortitude
- 1 Gargoyle Rituals (Level 2)
- 1 Terrifying Visage
- 1 Foulness
- 2 Flight
- 2 Gargoyle Rituals (Level 3 or 4)
- 2 Heightened Senses
- 2 Talons or Claws
- 2 Extra Arms
- 2 Huge Size
- 3 Horror
- 3 Embrace
- 3 Gargoyle Rituals (Level 5 or 6)

- **Heightened Senses (2 points):** All of the character's senses become finely honed; he can use the *Auspex 1* ability *Heightened Senses*. See p. 176 of *Dark Ages: Vampire* for more details.
- **Huge Size (2 points):** The Gargoyle becomes enormous, between nine and 12 feet tall. This gives him a one-die bonus to Intimidation dice pools in most situations, and he also gains three Bruised health levels (on the minus side, however, opponents subtract one from difficulties to hit the Gargoyle in combat).
- **Talons (2 points):** The Gargoyle's fingers and toes extend and sharpen, permanently giving him the effects of the *Protean 2* ability *Talons of the Beast*.
- **Embrace (3 points):** The Gargoyle may Embrace childer as any other Cainite. The childe is a Gargoyle one generation higher than the character; it suffers the same mind-altering effects of the Gargoyle Embrace, and is in all ways the character's vampiric childe. See p. 28 of *Dark Ages: Vampire* for more details on the Embrace. A Gargoyle who does not purchase this ability may not sire childer.
- **Gargoyle Rituals (Level 5 or 6, 3 points):** As with Gargoyle Rituals (Level 3 or 4) above. Storytellers should note, however, that higher-level rituals are rarely known and even more rarely performed.
- **Horror (3 points):** The Gargoyle's appearance becomes so twisted and revolting that most people — mortals and Cainites alike — are driven away in fear if he does not cover his face and body in wrappings, a heavy cloak, robes, and so on. Those with Willpower scores less than 6 simply cannot approach within 20 yards of the exposed character; those with scores of 7 or higher must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 7) to approach. Once a character has overcome his fear enough to approach, the Gargoyle's appearance will not trouble him further for the rest of the night.

### Flight

All Gargoyles — save those created specifically to look like an ordinary Cainite — sprout wings upon their creation or Embrace. For the newest (youngest?) of these creatures, the wings can be merely decorative: they do not enable the Gargoyle to fly. A new Gargoyle can

still move his wings for show, or in combat (a strong enough Gargoyle could well inflict damage with his wings, at the Storyteller's discretion), but the wings cannot even help him glide down from a height.

Most Gargoyles do fly, however. They must purchase dots in *Flight*, as described above under *Purchasing Gargoyle Powers*. Each level of *Flight* gives the abilities described in the flight table.

Additional dots in *Flight* increase the character's maximum speed by 15 miles per hour (40 yards per turn) and carrying capacity by 100 pounds, though this amount is always limited by the character's *Strength*. *Flight* cannot be increased beyond the Gargoyle's generation limit.

### Gargoyle Thaumaturgic Rituals

The Tremere use several rituals to create and strengthen their Gargoyle servants. Storytellers should assign the effects of the following rituals to Gargoyle characters as befits the needs of their chronicle. The Storyteller should also bear in mind, however, that the Tremere do not have infinite resources with which to empower their servants — each of these rites takes time, blood, and gold to perform. Even the rare Tremere outside of Ceoris who know of the rituals do not always have the resources to perform all of them on a given Gargoyle (and besides, most Tremere are wary of giving a servant so much power).

### FLIGHT

Level	Effect
•	Glide; the Gargoyle may fall from nearly any distance without harm. Winds strongly influence the character's landing spot and her Dodge pool drops by three dice while flying. The character can travel roughly 15 miles per hour (40 yards per turn) over short distances. Carrying more than 20 pounds turns the glide into a plummet.
••	The Gargoyle can fly with a running (or falling) takeoff and carry up to 20 pounds without danger. She can travel roughly 30 miles per hour (80 yards per turn) over distances, but does not have much maneuverability. A <i>Dexterity + Athletics</i> roll (difficulty 8) is required for any abrupt maneuver, and Dodge pools decrease by two dice while flying.
•••	The Gargoyle may take to the air at will if she isn't carrying anything, and carry 50 pounds after a running takeoff if her <i>Strength</i> allows her to do so. She can travel roughly 45 miles per hour (120 yards per turn). Her maneuverability improves somewhat ( <i>Athletics</i> difficulty drops to 5 to maneuver), and her full Dodge pool is available while flying.
••••	The Gargoyle can carry up to 100 pounds while flying, but still needs a running start if she carries more than 50 pounds. She can travel 60 miles per hour (160 yards per turn), and can maneuver as easily as if she were on the ground. Her full Dodge pool is available while flying.
•••••	The character can lift up to 200 pounds, and take directly to the air while carrying half that much. Her maximum flight speed is 75 miles per hour (200 yards per turn). Her full Dodge pool is available while flying.

Unless otherwise noted, the effects of the following rites are permanent. They can only be used on Gargoyles, though they function equally well on humanoid or animal-shaped Gargoyles. Gargoyles who have had these rituals performed on them before play begins (or through a Storyteller character, during play) should purchase them as Discipline powers, as described above.

**House of Tremere** has more Gargoyle rituals, as well as information on strange and hideous creatures created by the Tremere within the mountain fortress of Ceoris. Storytellers interested in featuring the Tremere and their servants in a chronicle may wish to consult that book for more information.

### Feather-Stone (Level 1 Ritual)

One of the problems that sometimes plagues the massive Gargoyles, particularly when laying siege to Tzimisce fortresses, is their weight. Those that can fly can collapse wooden floors beneath them if they land too heavily, and those that can't are often too hefty to climb well. This ritual allows a Gargoyle to become much lighter than his stony appearance would indicate.

The Tremere performing this ritual must acquire a small chunk of a soft, brittle, or lightweight stone (talc, pumice, etc.) and coat it with a small amount of vitae. The Gargoyle must crush the stone in its jaws; thereafter, the servant can call upon the ritual's effects at will.

**System:** Spend one blood point in addition to the usual Willpower roll to activate the spell. Assuming it succeeds, the Gargoyle may invoke the effects if the player succeeds in a Stamina + Athletics roll (difficulty 6). The Gargoyle is then considered to weigh a fraction of what he normally does, but does not lose any of his physical prowess. If the Gargoyle also possesses the Flight power, activating Feather-Stone reduces all Flight difficulties by two.

### Know the Unnatural Beast (Level 2 Ritual)

Gargoyles most commonly engage Tzimisce, Gangrel, and Nosferatu in combat, all of whom are often capable of controlling—or becoming—animals. Since Gargoyles are not created for their discerning minds, the Tremere developed this ritual in order to allow their troops to identify, at a glance, whether an animal is a natural beast or a Cainite in disguise.

Preparing this ritual is fairly quick but sometimes a bother, as it requires a small quantity of blood from a natural animal and either a Cainite from one of the three clans mentioned above, or some other supernatural being that can take animal form (Lupines, for example). Each sample must be mixed with special herbs and then fed to the Gargoyle, who can thereafter attempt to tell the difference between a normal animal and a disguised Cainite.

**System:** The Tremere must succeed in the ritual as usual. Thereafter, the Gargoyle's player may roll Perception + Survival while looking at an animal to tell if it is a genuine beast or simply one shape of another being. Detecting natural animals requires success at difficulty 5, while supernatural animals raise the difficulty to 6 (for a Cainite using the Protean power Form of the Beast); 7 (for the Animalism power Ride the Wild Mind); 8 (for Lupines) or even 9 (for ghoulish animals).

### Skin of the Chameleon (Level 2 Ritual)

The Tremere often use Gargoyles as guards over their havens and favored hideaways. The creatures are stationed outside, to watch for unwelcome intruders and, where possible, ambush them. To that

end, Virstania and the other Gargoyle masters of Ceoris developed this rite, which allows a Gargoyle to slowly change the appearance of his hide to match the texture and color of objects nearby. If a Gargoyle leans up against a building, for example, his arms, torso, and head might begin to take on the building's hue and shading, while his lower legs and feet might appear more like the grass or cobblestones beneath him. It takes about thirty seconds for the Gargoyle's hide to change in this fashion.

To perform the ritual, the Tremere must acquire a set of pigments fashioned of rare and expensive materials. He mixes some of his own blood with those pigments, and then paints mystical patterns on the Gargoyle's body. Some Tremere stake a thoroughly subservient Gargoyle, to ensure that it cannot move and interfere with this process; others use this rite as a test of their servant's loyalty and willpower, and maim or destroy any Gargoyle that cannot remain still throughout it. The rite takes 30 minutes to complete, most of which is spent in painting.

**System:** This ritual can only be used on Gargoyles of 11th generation or lower. Spend one blood point to enchant the pigments used in the rite, and roll Intelligence + Expression (difficulty 7). Only one success is needed. When the ritual is complete, the Gargoyle's player can expend one blood point to change the character's hide to match his surroundings. In game terms, this grants an extra 5 dice to Stealth dice pools so long as the Gargoyle stays more or less in the same area.

### Defender of the Haven (Level 3 Ritual)

The Tzimisce and their vile minions attack Tremere strongholds regularly. Sometimes these attacks come as frontal assaults; other foes use stealth and guile to gain a foothold within a Tremere outpost. Gargoyles who have been subjected to Defender of the Haven gain an instinctual knowledge of the locations of everyone within their master's haven. In this fashion, they can coordinate defense against a large-scale attack by directing their allies to ambush and trap invaders. They can also detect thieves or other intruders, if they are paying attention when the thief enters.

To perform Defender of the Haven, the Tremere must prepare a clay brick, inscribed with dozens of runes and glyphs. He then gives the brick to the subject Gargoyle, who must crumble it with his bare hands. Preparing the brick takes about an hour.

**System:** This rite can only be used on Gargoyles of 10th generation or lower, and requires the expenditure of one Willpower point as well as the usual roll for the ritual. Thereafter, the Gargoyle needs to take one turn of concentration (and the player must spend one point of Willpower) to attune himself to a building. After that, the player can, as a reflexive action, roll Perception + Occult (difficulty 7) to allow the Gargoyle to detect everyone within that building, so long as the Gargoyle also remains within it. A single success on this roll reveals the population of the building to within a factor of 2 (for example, if 10 people are in the building, the Storyteller might give the Gargoyle's player any value between 5 and 20). It will also tell him the location of the single largest concentration of people in that building. Two or more successes gives him the location of every person not mystically warded against detection (via Obfuscate or Thaumaturgy). However, the Gargoyle does not learn the identities of those in the haven.

If the Gargoyle leaves the building, he remains attuned to it until he attunes to another building. However, he cannot use the power granted by this ritual unless he is in direct physical contact with the building to which he is attuned.



### Rite of Sorcerous Shield (Level 3 Ritual)

Gargoyles in the service of the Tremere frequently find themselves subject to hostile magics, from wizards of various other clans. The Tremere do not know much about how other clans' sorcery works — except that it functions somewhat differently than Thaumaturgy — but they can protect their servants against the worst ravages of enemy magic using this ritual. The rite enchants a Gargoyle's essence with the patterns of Hermetic blood magic in the forms the Tremere use to defend themselves against foreign magics. In so doing, they similarly protect the Gargoyle subject of this ritual.

**System:** Only one Gargoyle at a time can be under the protection of the Rite of Sorcerous Shield by a given Tremere. Performing it takes about an hour, and generally requires that a silver torc or necklace be placed on the Gargoyle subject. Like the other rites in this section, Rite of Sorcerous Shield only works on Gargoyles. If the ritual is successful, the Gargoyle is protected from non-Tremere magics (*koldun*, Assamite sorcery, or Setite sorcery, as well as mortal magic) for a period of one month; the character gains two dice to all rolls made to directly resist the effects of such magic. The rite cannot protect the Gargoyle against secondary effects of enemy sorcery — for instance, if a small spell of fire sets a barn alight, the ritual does not protect against that inferno, though it would protect against the initial fire.

When the rite's duration ends, the silver necklace or torc used as its focus dissolves into an acrid mist. The rite cannot be transferred to another individual even if the necklace is removed; removing the necklace takes the enchantment off of the character, but the calendar continues to run. The necklace dissolves after a month whether it is worn or not.

### Infusion of Earth (Level 4 Ritual)

On extended scouting or combat missions, a Gargoyle may find himself more than one night's flight away from his master's haven. Given the average Gargoyle's appearance, it is impossible for him to find shelter among mortals. Therefore, the Tremere developed this rite, which takes advantage of most Gargoyles' Gangrel heritage to enable them to use a facet of the Protean Discipline. The Gargoyle subject of this ritual can meld with the earth, just as masters of Protean can. Additionally, Gargoyles can meld with rock or stone.

To perform this rite, the Tremere prepares a clay mold of the Gargoyle's face. This mold is baked over a night to harden it, and then shattered just before dawn. The sorcerer must pay close attention to the clay mask; should it crack or break while hardening, the rite is ruined and must be enacted again the next night.

**System:** This rite only works on Gargoyles of 9th generation or lower and requires 10 successes in an extended Willpower test (difficulty 7), rolled once an hour. A failure simply means that no successes are accumulated during that hour. A botch shatters the clay mask, destroying the rite's efficacy for the night.

If the rite is successful, the Gargoyle can meld with earth, rock, or stone at a cost of one blood point. The ability granted by this rite functions as *Interred in the Earth* (Protean 3) in all other respects.

### Transform the Skin to Stone (Level 5 Ritual)

This ritual increases the subject Gargoyle's resistance to nearly all forms of damage: blunt weapons, cutting and piercing



attacks, Cainite teeth and claws, and even fire. It provides no additional protection against sunlight (for that, see Gift of the Immobile Form, below).

To perform the ritual, the Tremere must collect a great deal of Gangrel vitae; it must come from at least three Gangrel, none of whom share a sire. The vitae must be contained in specially prepared clay bottles until the rite begins; at that time, the blood is mixed in a separately enchanted cauldron and set to simmer over low heat for three full days and nights. The properties of the cauldron are sufficient to keep the vitae from boiling, evaporating, or turning to dust, though of course it must be kept away from sunlight and thirsty Cainites. At the end of this time, the subject Gargoyle must consume all of the near-boiling vitae in under a minute. If the rite succeeds, the Gargoyle becomes impervious to damage as described below.

**System:** This ritual only works on Gargoyles of eighth generation and lower. The Tremere character spends one point of Willpower, as well as making the usual dice roll. At least 10 blood points of Gangrel vitae must be available. If the ritual roll botches, the subject Gargoyle permanently loses one point of Stamina (which can be bought back with experience points).

If all goes well, the Gargoyle adds one permanent point of armor (with no corresponding Dexterity dice pool penalty), as well as eliminating one point of wound penalties at all health levels. Additionally, the Gargoyle character takes half the usual damage from fire (before soak is applied). The Gargoyle's hide becomes considerably rockier after this rite is complete, and he loses some touch sensation as a result (lose one die from Perception pools for rolls involving touch).

## Heart of Stone (Level 6 Ritual)

The enemies of the Tremere learned early on that Gargoyles were vulnerable to the usual Cainite weaknesses: fire, the sun, and a stake through the heart. Transform the Skin to Stone, above, protects Gargoyles from fire; Gift of the Immobile Form, below, is a defense against sunlight. Heart of Stone protects Gargoyles from stakes intended to pierce the heart and immobilize them.

Performing this rite is a lengthy task. Over the course of seven full nights, the Tremere provides the Gargoyle with a great deal of vitae. The Gargoyle is then staked to immobilize him, his rib cage is opened and his heart magically removed. The Tremere enchants the heart (this "ritual within a ritual" takes two full nights), and then returns it to the Gargoyle's body, around the stake. Finally, the stake is removed and the Gargoyle permitted to heal his damaged torso.

**System:** This rite only works on Gargoyles of seventh generation or lower. The rite itself requires only the activities described above, and the usual point of Willpower and Willpower roll. At the end of the time described, the subject Gargoyle receives the following benefits:

All damage dice pools against the Gargoyle from piercing attacks (spears, short blades, stakes, etc.) are reduced by half before soak is applied. Actually staking the Gargoyle requires a Strength + Potence total of at least 7; the usual dice rolls are only made if the attacker has that strength, and the restriction described above on the attacker's damage dice pool applies.

## Gift of the Immobile Form (Level 6 Ritual)

One of the greatest of Virstania's triumphs, Gift of the Immobile Form enables Gargoyles to circumvent the curse of God Himself on Caine and his progeny. After this rite has been performed, a Gargoyle can avoid taking any damage from sunlight, so long as he does not move. Virstania herself keeps closely guarded the theoretical underpinnings of the rite. Some Tremere occultists believe that the metaphysical distance between the Gargoyles and the progeny of Caine — Gargoyles are artificial creations of the Tremere, a clan that itself became vampiric through sorcery rather than the usual Embrace — allows sufficiently powerful Gargoyles to evade God's notice if they just keep still.

The rite itself is simple, but cruel, and very dangerous to the Gargoyle subject. The Tremere master inscribes a circle a few inches in diameter around the crown of the Gargoyle's head in vitae. At that point, the Gargoyle can withstand the power of the sun for one hour, as long as he remains perfectly still. As a condition of the rite, the Gargoyle must bind the power of the vitae into his body by standing in direct sunlight for that hour. If he moves, he will likely erupt into flame and be destroyed. Whether or not that happens, the rite fails if he moves. If he does not move, the rite succeeds, and the mystical energies of the inscribed vitae let him avoid damage from the sun at any time during a given day so long as he keeps completely still.

**System:** This rite can only be performed on Gargoyles of seventh generation or lower. Unusual for a high-level rite, Gift of the Immobile Form takes very little preparation on the part of the Tremere. Mechanically, the ritual requires the Tremere character to spend one Willpower point and one blood point, as well as making the usual Willpower roll. The Tremere knows ahead of time if his rite has failed, and so he can stop the Gargoyle from continuing with the rest of the ritual. However, on a botched roll he believes the rite has worked properly, an error only revealed when the Tremere's trusting servant exposes himself to direct sunlight. Gift of the Immobile Form exacts a particularly high price for failure (for the subject, anyway).

To remain perfectly still for up to a minute requires the Gargoyle's player to make a Stamina + Athletics roll (difficulty 6). Periods longer than that require Willpower rolls — the difficulty is 8 for periods of up to 10 minutes, or 9 for any longer stretch of time. Only a single success is needed for any of these rolls, unless the character is caught in a particularly precarious position — remaining still while standing on a 45 degree slope might require two or three successes, for instance. The Storyteller may do away with the Athletics roll for the first minute of stillness and simply use the Willpower roll if the Gargoyle intends to remain still all day.

If at any time during the day the character suffers health levels of damage from sunlight, he cannot use the ability granted by Gift of the Immobile Form until the following day. However, if he soaks all the damage inflicted by the sunlight, the player may immediately attempt a Stamina + Athletics roll to allow the character to become still again. This rite protects the Gargoyle against Röttschreck caused by the sun, so long as he remains motionless; should he move and begin to suffer damage from sunlight, he risks Röttschreck like any other vampire.





MANIRAKE



# CHAPTER FOUR: STORYTELLERS' TOOLKIT

Chapter Eight of *Dark Ages: Vampire* contains detailed information on the role of the Storyteller in a Dark Ages chronicle. This chapter is intended to complement that material by providing tools and systems that you can use when running your chronicle, making elements of that task easier and quicker.

## *Those Who Walk the Night*

The Dark Medieval is home to a wide range of characters, mortal and supernatural, who may be allies of the troupe's characters, incidental encounters, or their steadfast foes. This chapter contains two types of character templates for use in a chronicle — ready-to-use supporting characters and a series of templates for either player-controlled or supporting characters. Also included is a list of character names for the various regions of Dark Medieval Europe, together with regional titles for the nobility.





## Supporting Cast

The following templates for supporting characters are not complete characters, though all have sufficient detail to allow their immediate use in chronicles. You can use them as-is or tailor them to meet your needs. The templates contain only notable traits (those with three dots or more, or Traits unusual for the character type), to which you can add several dots of “color” traits as you see fit.

### Adding Depth to Supporting Characters

Though secondary to the coterie and the major Storyteller characters, supporting characters should not be treated simply as set dressing. As mentioned in Chapter Eight of **Dark Ages: Vampire**, adding a few personalizing touches to each supporting character turns them from two-dimensional cutouts into fully fledged characters with lives of their own, giving depth to the chronicle.

These finishing touches need not be extensive — certainly not as detailed as the questions found on page 124 of **Dark Ages: Vampire** — but even a few minor touches can turn the supporting character from a cipher into a “real person.” Unlike major supporting characters, where the fine details and motivation are created in advance, you often need to improvise when creating minor supporting characters. This isn’t to say that the character’s “life” in the chronicle is limited to that one appearance; in fact, you may find it worthwhile to note down these details for future reference. After all, who knows when the “nosy fruit seller on the Rue de Rivoli” will become “Angelique, the sharp-tongued but knowledgeable hag,” one of the characters’ Contacts?

The depth and breadth of character detail is at your discretion, but here are some things to consider:

- **Physical description:** This element is often more important than a name for the character. The players may not ever discover the character’s name, but will definitely know what she looks like, her age, the quality of her clothing, and so forth. You can make these things minor

### SUPPORTING ABILITIES

The supporting characters below are given only the Abilities relevant to their professions. However, Storytellers may assume that they possess other, related Abilities. These can vary wildly — Commerce and Expression are ideal for a craftsman, while Etiquette and Hearth Wisdom are more appropriate for a guardsman — but listing every such Ability for each template is restrictive and impractical. Instead, assume that whenever a supporting character needs to use a skill relevant to his profession or status but not included in the template, he has one dot in the relevant Ability.

details, or design them to attract attention. For example, a blonde, pale-skinned warrior in Iberia stands out more than one with dark hair and swarthy skin, and so may prompt the characters to ask questions.

- **Attitude:** Is the character passive? Surly? Vivacious? Nosy? Does she seek to ingratiate herself with others? Is she angry at the world, or with a particular group?

- **Quirks and Mannerisms:** Is the character native to the area? Does she have an accent? Does the character have any notable physical or linguistic quirks? A stutter? A nervous tic?

- **Name:** Names are a useful hook if the character is intended to play an ongoing role in the chronicle, but less important if the character will make only one appearance. The tables later in this section provide a selection — by no means exhaustive — of names by region.

- **Motivation:** Though motivation is more important to major supporting characters, minor characters who become regular fixtures in a chronicle may nonetheless have their own reasons for acting. These may be as simple as a stall-holder wishing to sell his wares so that his family can survive, or a tavern wench who seeks to improve her place in the world. You may also opt to assign the supporting character a Nature and Demeanor from Chapter Five of **Dark Ages: Vampire**.

### Creating New Templates

Storytellers who want to create new supporting characters for chronicles may use the templates in this chapter, modifying them as needed, or may start afresh. The system presented below mimics the full character creation system found in **Dark Ages: Vampire**, but simplifies the process to better suit the speedy creation of minor characters. Storyteller characters produced in this manner are notably weaker than those produced by the standard character creation system, as they lack a full range of Traits.

- **Character Type:** Select a supporting character type appropriate to the concept. There are two mortal groups, everyday and notables, and two supernatural, ghouls and Cainites. The character type determines the number of bonus points available to the supporting character and her access to Advantages such as Backgrounds and Disciplines.

- **Attributes:** Each Attribute automatically has a rating of two dots. Depending on the supporting character type, additional points will increase these values (to a maximum of 5). You can, at your discretion, reduce an Attribute to one and add a point to another Attribute.

- **Abilities:** Each supporting character starts with between three and eight Abilities, each with a value of two dots. As with Attributes, you may choose to raise one Ability to three and drop another to one. Exceptional characters may have one Ability at four dots.

## STARTING TRAITS FOR SUPPORTING CHARACTERS

Character	Attributes	Abilities	Backgrounds	Disciplines
Everyday mortal	+0	3	1 dot	None
Notable mortal	+0	4	2 dots	None
Ghoul	+3	6	4 dots	1 dot*
Cainite	+7	8	8 dots	4 dots**

\* Potence only

\*\* Clan disciplines only

• **Backgrounds:** Depending on type, the supporting character has points to spend on Background options. Some, such as Generation and Herd, are applicable only to Cainite characters. Others are suitable for mortal supporting characters, though Storytellers should take care to match Backgrounds to the character concept. No Background may have a value higher than 4.

• **Disciplines:** Supernatural supporting characters assign dots to one or more Disciplines. Ghouls may only purchase Potence, while Cainites can only choose Clan Disciplines. No Discipline starts with a value higher than 3.

• **Virtues:** Select Instinct or Self-Control, and Conscience or Conviction for the character. All Virtues begin with a value of 2, though as with Attributes, you may choose to reduce a Virtue to 1 (no lower) and add a point to another Virtue.

• **Willpower:** Mortals and ghouls begin with 3 Willpower; Cainites begin with 4.

• **Blood Pool:** Roll one die to determine a Cainite character's starting blood pool.

• **Generation:** All Cainites are 12th generation unless modified by the Generation Background.

### Experienced Supporting Characters

The supporting character templates given here are the base-line versions of each type, representing the lowliest and least powerful form of the character. If you wish to use a more powerful version, you can enhance the basic template by adding points to the various traits. Storytellers may determine the exact number of points;

the following are suggested as guidelines, added as the Storyteller desires to the relevant traits.

For a Storyteller character intended to play a major role in a chronicle, the complete **Dark Ages: Vampire** character creation system is more appropriate to develop a well-rounded character, with a full range of Attributes, Abilities and Advantages.

### Everyday Mortals

Everyday mortals are the common folk of the Dark Medieval, the serfs, peasants and freemen who eke out a meager existence. They are ubiquitous and often discounted by their "betters," which can be both a boon and a curse.

### Craftsman

The lifeblood of towns and cities, craftsmen span a wide variety of professions, from carpenters and leatherworkers to bakers and brewers.

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 1, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

**Abilities:** Alertness 2, Crafts 3, Etiquette 1

**Backgrounds:** Resources 1

Conscience 2, Self-Control 2, Courage 2

Willpower: 3

### Farmer

In the Dark Medieval, the rural way of life predominates and farmers are the most numerous of the kine.

## TRAITS FOR EXPERIENCED SUPPORTING CHARACTERS

Character	Attributes	Abilities	Backgrounds	Disciplines	Generation
Experienced Mortal	+2 dots	+2 dots	+1 dots	0	N/A
Exceptional Mortal	+3 dots	+4 dots	+2 dots	0	N/A
Experienced Ghoul	+2 dots	+3 dots	+1 dots	+1 dots*	N/A
Exceptional Ghoul	+3 dots	+5 dots	+2 dots	+2 dots*	N/A
Experienced Vampire	+3 dots	+4 dots	+2 dots	+3 dots**	10th
Exceptional Vampire	+5 dots	+7 dots	+3 dots	+5 dots**	8th

\* At least half must be in Potence

\*\* At least half must be in Clan Disciplines



**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

**Abilities:** Animal Ken 2, Ride 2, Hearth Wisdom 2

**Backgrounds:** Allies 1 (family)

Conscience 2, Self-Control 2, Courage 2

Willpower: 3

## Tavern Server

Be it a buxom wench or a strapping lad, a tavern server is often a mine of information.

**Attributes:** Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 1

**Abilities:** Alertness 2, Empathy 2, Subterfuge 2

**Backgrounds:** Contacts 1

Conscience 2, Self-Control 2, Courage 2

Willpower: 3



## Cutthroat

For every kine who works hard to get on in life, another seeks to live off the blood and sweat of others.

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

**Abilities:** Larceny 2, Melee 2, Stealth 2

**Backgrounds:** Contacts 1

Conscience 1, Instinct 3, Courage 2

Willpower: 3

## Entertainer

From tavern musicians to court jesters, entertainers are a feature of all levels of Dark Medieval society.

**Attributes:** Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 1, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

**Abilities:** Etiquette 2, Expression 2, Performance 2

**Backgrounds:** Allies 1

Conscience 2, Instinct 2, Courage 2

Willpower: 3

## City Guard

Charged with maintaining order in towns and cities, guards have rudimentary martial training but lack the experience of soldiers.

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

**Abilities:** Dodge 2, Intimidation 2, Melee 2

**Backgrounds:** Allies 1

Conscience 2, Self-Control 2, Courage 2

Willpower: 3

## Levy Bowman

Crossbows and longbows convert a peasant levy into a deadly fighting force.

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

**Abilities:** Dodge 2, Archery 2, Crafts 2

**Backgrounds:** Allies 1

Conscience 2, Self-Control 2, Courage 2

Willpower: 3

## Notable Mortals

Notable mortals are those who, as a result of birth or their own hard work, stand out from the masses. They have knowledge, skills and advantages not available to lesser characters — though the price of their services may be high.

## Scholar

Men of letters study a wide range of subjects, including theology, astronomy, and the teachings of the ancients.

**Attributes:** Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

**Abilities:** Academics 3, Law 2, Occult 1, Theology 2

**Backgrounds:** Contacts 1, Mentor 1

Conviction 2, Self-Control 2, Courage 2

Willpower: 3

## Wise Woman

Some call her witch, others wise woman; many go to her for medicines and advice.

**Attributes:** Strength 1, Dexterity 1, Stamina 1, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

**Abilities:** Empathy 2, Hearth Wisdom 3, Intimidation 1, Medicine 2

**Backgrounds:** Contacts 1, Influence 1

Conscience 2, Self-Control 2, Courage 2

Willpower: 3

## Noble

Numerous tiers of nobility provide Dark Medieval society with leadership — or think they do.

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

**Abilities:** Etiquette 3, Expression 1, Leadership 2, Linguistics 2

**Backgrounds:** Influence 1, Retainers 1

Conscience 2, Self-Control 2, Courage 2

Willpower: 3



## Mercenary Footman

Hardened by wars and skirmishes, mercenaries know how to fight by the rules — and when to fight dirty.

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

**Abilities:** Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Melee 3, Survival 1

**Backgrounds:** Allies 1, Contacts 1

Conscience 2, Self-Control 2, Courage 2

Willpower: 3

## Knight

Mounted troops, synonymous with nobility, provide a decisive edge on the battlefield.

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

**Abilities:** Etiquette 2, Leadership 2, Melee 2, Ride 2

**Backgrounds:** Allies 2

Conscience 2, Self-Control 2, Courage 2

Willpower: 3

## Trader

Part merchant, part diplomat, the traders of the Dark Medieval are a source of goods and news.

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 1, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

**Abilities:** Commerce 2, Etiquette 2, Linguistics 2, Ride 2

**Backgrounds:** Contacts 1, Resources 1

Conscience 2, Self-Control 2, Courage 2

Willpower: 3

## Ghouls

Bound and fortified by the vitae of their masters, ghouls are free to act by day and night. They are the principal agents of Cainites who seek to influence mortal affairs.

## Aged Castellan

Managing the domain by day, the castellan is as accomplished as he is loyal.

**Attributes:** Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

**Abilities:** Alertness 2, Dodge 1, Etiquette 2, Intimidation 2, Law 2, Seneschal 3

**Backgrounds:** Allies 1, Contacts 2, Influence 1

**Disciplines:** Potence 1

Conviction 2, Self-Control 2, Courage 2

Willpower: 3

## Cat's Paw

When you want to manipulate the situation through someone completely trustworthy, the cat's paw is the perfect tool.

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

**Abilities:** Alertness 3, Dodge 3, Etiquette 3, Melee 3, Stealth 3, Subterfuge 3

**Backgrounds:** Allies 2, Contacts 2

**Disciplines:** Potence 1



Conscience 2, Self-Control 2, Courage 2  
Willpower: 3

## Cainites

Masters of the night, Cainites run the gamut of Dark Medieval life, from ashen thieves lurking in woods and sewers to mighty lords influencing affairs from behind the scenes.

### Information Broker

Skulking in the shadows, the information broker knows the secrets of the mortal and Cainite worlds. Remember though, that anything he offers is *quid pro quo*.

**Clan:** Nosferatu **Generation:** 12th **Road:** Humanity (Path of Vigor)

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

**Abilities:** Academics 2, Alertness 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 1, Law 2, Linguistics 2, Stealth 3, Subterfuge 2

**Backgrounds:** Allies 1, Contacts 3, Herd 1, Resources 2, Status 1

**Disciplines:** Animalism 1, Obfuscate 2, Potence 1  
Conscience 2, Self-Control 2, Courage 2  
Willpower: 4

### Ashen Crusader

Faith plays a role in the unlives of many Cainites. Some take the Cross because of it, or for political ends.

**Clan:** Brujah **Generation:** 10th **Road:** Kings

**Attributes:** Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

**Abilities:** Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Intimidation 2, Leadership 2, Linguistics 2, Melee 2, Politics 2, Ride 2

**Backgrounds:** Allies 2, Contacts 1, Generation 2, Herd 1, Retainers 1, Status 1

**Disciplines:** Celerity 1, Potence 1, Presence 2  
Conviction 2, Self-Control 1, Courage 3  
Willpower: 4

### Heretic Priest

Cainites gravitate toward the centers of power, and in the Dark Medieval none is more powerful — or far-reaching — than the Church.

**Clan:** Lasombra **Generation:** 12th **Road:** Night

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

**Abilities:** Dodge 1, Empathy 2, Expression 2, Leadership 2, Linguistics 2, Occult 2, Politics 2, Theology 3

**Backgrounds:** Contacts 2, Domain 2, Herd 2, Influence 1, Retainers 1

**Disciplines:** Dominate 2, Obtenebration 1, Potence 1  
Conviction 3, Self-Control 2, Courage 1  
Willpower: 4

## Magus

Whether a mortal practitioner of the arts, embraced by the Clan, or one who learned Thaumaturgy after becoming a Cainite, the magus seeks knowledge and power.

**Clan:** Tremere **Generation:** 12th **Road:** Kings (Path of the Vizier)

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

**Abilities:** Academics 3, Alertness 2, Crafts 1, Herbalism 2, Intimidation 1, Linguistics 2, Medicine 2, Occult 3

**Backgrounds:** Allies 1, Contacts 2, Herd 1, Mentor 3, Resources 1

**Disciplines:** Auspex 1, Dominate 1, Thaumaturgy 2  
Conscience 1, Self-Control 3, Courage 2  
Willpower: 4



### Power Behind the Throne

Domain is important to Cainite and mortal alike, but is the lord truly the leader of his lands?

**Clan:** Ventrue **Generation:** 11th **Road:** Kings

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

**Abilities:** Alertness 2, Dodge 1, Empathy 2, Etiquette 3, Law 2, Leadership 2, Politics 2, Seneschal 2

**Backgrounds:** Allies 1, Contacts 2, Domain 2, Generation 1, Influence 2

**Disciplines:** Dominate 2, Fortitude 1, Presence 1  
Conviction 2, Self-Control 2, Courage 2  
Willpower: 4

## Names and Titles

Naming characters — players' and Storyteller's — can often be a problem, particularly when attempting to remain true to the setting. Some modern names have their origins in the medieval era, but many do not. Depending on locale and background, names such as Christopher, Claire and Giles can be appropriate to the Dark Medieval, but Jo, Buffy and Marty certainly aren't. The following sidebars present a selection of authentic names, grouped by language, that players and Storytellers can use to name characters or to provide inspiration.

## Surnames

The modern concept of surnames is unknown in the Dark Medieval, but most characters — commoners as well as nobles — add a second part to their names. In the case of commoners, these likely relate to their occupation — Tanner, Cooper, Wood and so forth. Examples include William the Smith or Johannes Fleischer (butcher in German).

Distinguishing features or characteristics also serve as inspiration, either descriptive or ironic, for second names in the same manner as nicknames. John Little — the giant of the Robin Hood legends — is a classic example, but others include Rosamund “the fair,” Ekaterina “the wise” and Angus Bullneck. Nobles too can receive such nicknames, as typified by Richard Coeur de Lion (the Lion-Hearted), John Lackland and Edward Longshanks (long-legged).

Some cultures — notably those of Scandinavia and the Levant — utilize genealogy (usually patronymic) in their second names. Olaf Sigurdson is Olaf son of Sigurd, while Astrid Gudmondottir is Astrid, Gudmond's daughter. Similarly, a Muslim called Ahmed ibn Mahmud is Ahmed, son of Mahmud, while Halima bint Musa is Halima the daughter of Musa. More details of Muslim naming conventions appear on pages 152-153 of *Veil of Night*; pages 67-68 of *Wolves of the Sea* provide a brief overview of Scandinavian names.

Some commoners use location-based second names (known as toponyms). Examples of these include Simon of Newark, Isabella of Anjou, or Wolfgang Zumwald (Wolfgang of Zum forest). Location-based second names are most common to the nobility, and usually refer to their holdings (or principal holdings, in the case of major figures). Eleanor of Aquitaine, Martin of Lyon and Simon de Montfort are good examples of noble toponyms.

Players and Storytellers familiar with the relevant languages may give their characters added flavor by using appropriate wording — for example, substituting the French *particule* “de” for “of,” as demonstrated in Simon de Montfort, or using native words, as with Johannes Fleischer.

## Mortal Titles

Titles are a vital part of the social stratification of the Dark Medieval. They are inextricably linked with the feudal structure, denoting the bearer's rank, power and lands.

Specific titles vary from region to region, but generally fall into the five broad categories outlined below. Forms of address are noted for each, as are key regional variations.

In general, Cainites care little for mortal titles; their own vampiric equivalents reflect their lordship of the night. Many of these Cainite titles use the same nomenclature as those of mortals, but reflect considerably different areas of influence and importance, as outlined in Chapter One of *Dark Ages: Vampire*. Care should be taken not to confuse the two. For example, in mortal society, baron is the lowest true rank of nobility, while in the Cainite Court of Avalon, Mithras' principal subordinates — equivalent to mortal dukes — are referred to as barons.

- **Knight:** Knights form the bulk of the nobility, usually receiving a fief (a manor, farm or other small land grant to support their family) from their local lord in exchange for military service. Knights also form a lord's retinue, usually referred to as bachelor knights (*bas chevalier*). Knights are addressed as “sir.” Regional variations include *chevalier* (France), *ritter* (Germany), *caballero* (Spain) and *ritsar* (Russia).

- **Baron:** The barons are the first true rank of nobility, often wielding power over a large swathe of land, which they often sub-let to their knights. The barons in turn hold the land from their superiors. Barons are addressed as “your Excellency.” The German title of *freiherr* is equivalent to baron.

- **Count:** The middle strata of the nobility, counts hold their lands directly from the king and are the principal lords of their regions. Their power is circumscribed by the laws of the land, however, and restricted to administering low justice (non-capital crimes involving common folk). Like barons, counts are addressed as “your Excellency.” Regional variations include earl (England) and *graf* (Germany and Russia).

- **Duke:** The most powerful noble rank except for King/Emperor, dukes wield immense powers. In some regions, most notably France, the power of the dukes has rivaled and in some cases exceeded that of the monarch. The holdings of some counts may exceed those of a duke, but many dukes are entitled to administer high justice (cases involving a noble, treason, heresy and the like). Dukes are addressed as “your Grace.” The Eastern European title of *voivode* is roughly analogous to duke, but in many cases is an elected post.

- **King:** Nominally the ruler of the land, and thus the person from whom all landholdings and powers descend, kings wield immense influence. Their power is restricted, however, by the need to keep lesser nobles in line (as demonstrated by the Barons' Revolt against King John of England and the resulting Magna Carta) and the influence and of some dukes may equal or exceed that of the monarch. Kings are addressed as “your Majesty.” Regional variations include *roi* (France), *konig* (Germany), emperor (Germany), and *czar* or *tsar* (Russia)



## ANGLO-SAXON NAMES

Male	Female
Aethelred	Agnes
Aelfwine	Aldiva
Alfred	Brigit
Berthun	Cynwise
Caedmon	Edith
Edward	Emma
Edric	Estrild
Godwin	Godeleva
Harold	Gunnilda
Hengist	Hawis
Hereward	Heresuid
Horsa	Hilda
Offa	Runild
Osbert	
Radwald	
Ringer	
Sabert	
Thrydwulf	
Uffa	
Warin	
Wolphere	
Wymer	

## FRENCH AND NORMAN NAMES

*French version appears in parentheses.*

Male	Female
Adam	Adele
Arthur	Anne
Baldwin (Baudouin)	Alice
Bartholomew	Agnes
Christopher (Christof)	Beatrix (Beatrice)
Edward	Christiana (Christiane)
Eustace	Cecilia (Cecile)
Francis	Eleanor (Aileanor)
Geoffrey	Emma
Guy	Etienne
Henry (Henri)	Genevieve
Hugo (Hugues)	Helen (Helene)
John (Jean)	Isabella (Isabelle)
Louis	Isouda
Martin	Jeanne
Michael (Michel)	Juliana
Nicholas	Katherine
Peter (Pierre)	Laurente

Phillip (Philippe)	Louise
Richard	Lucy (Lucie)
Robert	Matilda (Mathilde)
Roger	Margaret (Marguerite)
Simon	Martha (Marthe)
Stephen	Melisande
Thomas	Rosamund (Rosamonde)
Walter	Therese
William (Guillaume)	Yvonne

## GERMAN NAMES

Male	Female
Albrecht	Adele
Bernard	Birgit
Christoph	Brunhilde
Djeter	Carla
Emil	Dagmar
Eugen	Edith
Felix	Elke
Franz	Gudrun
Friederich	Hedwig
Gunther	Ingrid
Gustav	Karin
Heinrich	Krista
Jans	Lena
Joachim	Liesl
Klaus	Margarethe
Leopold	Marike
Markus	Mathilde
Matthias	Rosamarie
Otto	Sabine
Theo	Sara
Tobias	Sigrid
Viktor	Steffi
Volker	Thea
Werner	Therese
Wolfgang	Ute
Xavier	Ulrike

## ITALIAN NAMES

Male	Female
Alberto	Agnesina
Alessandro	Anna
Augustus	Bianca
Balsamo	Catarina
Bernabas	Colleta
Cristiano	Donata

Enrico	Elizabeta
Frederico	Gerita
Giacomo	Gianeta
Giorgio	Helena
Giuliano	Lucia
Leonardo	Magdalena
Lorenzo	Maria
Marco	Marte
Michael	Pasqualina
Nicolo	Penina
Palmerio	Thomasina
Paolo	
Raffiano	
Thomaso	
Uberto	
Vendramino	
Vitaliano	
Vito	
Zilo	

### SLAVIC NAMES

Male	Female
Aleksei	Akulina
Andrei	Anastasia
Boris	Anna
Dmitrii	Dominka
Droz	Ekaterina
Fedor	Elizaveta
Georgi	Feodosia
Grigori	Fekla
Ivan	Fevronia
Iakov	Gostiata
Iosef	Irena
Maxim	Iuliania
Michail	Kristina
Myca	Martha
Nikita	Maria
Pavel	Melania
Radoslav	Nezhka
Sbyslav	Pelagía
Sidor	Tatiana
Stepan	Varvara
Vasili	
Vladimir	
Zavid	

### SCANDINAVIAN NAMES

Male	Female
Asgeirr	Aesir
Bjorn	Alouf
Brand	Astrid
Einarr	Brynhild
Flosi	Dalla
Grimr	Dis
Helgi	Groa
Hroaldr	Gudrun
Ketil	Gunnhild
Oddr	Halla
Olaf	Hallbera
Ormr	Helga
Refr	Hlif
Snorri	Kolfinna
Stein	Jorunn
Thordor	Otkatla
Thorkell	Rannveig
Thorstein	Salgerder
Ulf	Sigrí
Wolfram	Thuridir
Yngvildr	Thordis
Vigdis	Unn

### SPANISH NAMES

Male	Female
Alfonso	Aldonza
Alvar	Beatriz
Antonio	Constanza
Diego	Elvira
Domingo	Ermendarda
Fagildo	Eva
Ferdinand	Ildaria
Garcia	Ines
Gonzalo	Isabella
Jorge	Lucia
Juan	Lupa
Martin	Maria
Osoro	Mayor
Pedro	Paterna
Phillip	Sancha
Ramon	Theresa
Salvador	Toda
Sancho	Urraca
Velasco	



# Personalizing Paths

The roads given in *Dark Ages: Vampire* (and here in the *Storytellers Companion*) present Hierarchies of Sins to indicate the offenses that would give the Beast a foothold in a character's soul. However, road and paths are mutable things, and sin often varies from one Cainite to another, even on the same road. The following guidelines and systems allow players and Storytellers to customize an individual character's Hierarchies of Sins.

Storytellers note: These rules are meant to enrich a player's experience of her character's journey down a road, not to provide an easy out for mass mayhem. You may veto any changes to Hierarchies if they seem too permissive or out of place on the road (or for that particular character).

## Hierarchies of Sins

Each road has its own Hierarchy of Sins. As explained in Chapter Seven of *Dark Ages: Vampire*, major sins are actions that violate the principles most basic to the road (principles that any follower should consider innate behavioral tenets), while minor sins are more difficult to avoid.

In particular, each Hierarchy of Sins is arranged thusly:

- **Minor Sins:** Sins ranked 10, 9, and 8 pertain to obscure tenets of the road. A modern Christian might place "Not going to church every Sunday" at this level. Circumstances might conspire to force a character to commit these sins, or he might simply forget or have other priorities. Only Cainites who are *extremely* far along on their roads need concern themselves with these sins. Minor sins are the most likely to change based on an individual character's beliefs.

- **Basic Sins:** Sins ranked 4 through 7 on the Hierarchies define nightly behavior for a "pious" Cainite. A modern Christian might list "Committing adultery" at the lower end of basic sins, while "Speaking in an unkind manner to others" would be a higher-level sin (that is, harder to avoid but still important). While these sins can change to reflect an individual Cainite's proclivities, they are fairly intrinsic to the road's beliefs. The Storyteller should make sure that any sins in this category are sins that the character will find it a struggle to avoid.

- **Major Sins:** These sins breach the prime tenets on which a road is based. A modern Christian would probably list "Murder" as a major sin. These sins should change rarely, as doing so changes the focus of the road too much for it to be considered a simple offshoot. As with everything else, however, changing major sins is at the Storyteller's discretion.

## Systems

Adopting a path — which is essentially the same as changing the Hierarchy of Sin on one's road — is similar

to changing roads, but not nearly as extreme. The Storyteller decides when a character can begin this process, but as a general rule, the character must be an adherent of the road (i.e., she has experienced a moment of truth) and must have a Road rating of 6 or better. No character can alter the sins of her road without reaching that level of understanding. For example, a character with a Road rating of 5 cannot alter any sin rated 6 or higher — she simply doesn't possess the necessary insight into the road.

The player must describe what changes to the Hierarchy of Sins she feels are appropriate to her character. Look carefully at the existing Hierarchy and decide if the changes would alter the road too drastically. For example, a character on the Road of Sin who bases her path around inflicting pain on others might change the sin "Failing to indulge a new desire" to "Failing to inflict pain whenever possible." This distinction is subtle, and showcases the character's own beliefs. However, the character should not be allowed to alter the sin "Encouraging virtue or aiding agents of virtue," because the belief that virtue is a falsehood to be combated is intrinsic to the road. When in doubt, use the Ethics of the road as a guideline.

If you approve the changes, the player must begin to work them into her character's nightly routine. At first, this involves avoiding both her chosen sin and the sin already listed in the Hierarchy. She must understand where she is coming from, spiritually speaking, and where she wishes to go before she can step off the road onto her own path. This process continues until the character experiences a moment of truth (usually by studying with a mentor or by some related momentous event), at which point the player must roll the character's Road rating (difficulty of 10 — the level of the sin she wishes to change, minimum 3). Success indicates that the character has changed her moral outlook, and the original sin no longer holds value. However, her new sin is just as binding as the old one ever was.

If, at any time before the moment of truth, the character commits *either* of the sins in question (the one she is replacing or the new sin), the player must roll Conscience or Conviction (whichever the character uses) against a difficulty of 6. Success means that the character repents as usual. Failure results in degeneration as usual, but also requires the character to avoid both sins until she can raise her Road rating to its previous state. A botch has no specific effect, other than the usual loss of Conscience/Conviction and the infliction of a Derangement.

## Blood and Tears

Large-scale battles are major features of the Dark Medieval as the forces of rival nobles clash to assert their dominance. Most such encounters take place during the day and thus do not feature Cainites (though ghoulish servants can play a devastating role). Nonetheless, the increasing turbulence of the War of Princes ensures that

some battles occur at night, perhaps not on the same scale as those of the day but no less bloody.

The following system does not attempt to recreate all the nuances of a medieval battlefield — that is the role of a wargame, rather than the Storyteller system — but it does endeavor to give the characters a taste of the action as fighters or as commanders. These roles are not mutually exclusive — indeed, in the Dark Medieval a leader is expected to fight alongside his troops — and so the core of these rules deal with character participation in a battle.

## Battle Sequence

Like any combat in the Storyteller system, each battle — be it a skirmish or a large-scale engagement — uses a series of turns to organize time and determine the sequence of events. Each conflict lasts between 6 and 10 battle turns (not to be confused with the short combat turns of the main Storyteller rules), though there may be maneuvering before and after the main conflict. While a regular combat turn represents a few seconds, a battle turn represents a distinct phase of the conflict, usually from 30 minutes to three hours. If required — for example, by a duel (see Troop Quality, Ghouls and Enemy Personalities, page 68) — a number of combat turns can take place within a single battle turn.

## Initiative

Characters act in order of their Dexterity. Those with the highest Dexterity act first, and those with the lowest act last. If two characters have the same Dexterity rating, their actions take place simultaneously. Only major characters (player-controlled and other notables) have their own initiative values. Lesser characters (for example, foot-soldiers) react to what the troupe's characters do rather than taking an active role in the engagement.

## Instincts and Circumstance

Before taking any voluntary actions, a Cainite must overcome her own Beast and cheat Fate of any pitfalls placed in her path. Both rolls are mandatory unless the vampire wishes to enter frenzy, in which case the player need only make the Fate roll.

## Frenzy

Blood pervades the battlefields of the Dark Medieval, coating the ground and the combatants while its scent fills the air. In such an environment, even the most resolute Cainite struggles to hold his Beast in check. To reflect this reality, each turn the Cainite must either enter frenzy or else allow her Beast to come to the fore. A variant of the standard rules for frenzy (*Dark Ages: Vampire*, pp. 263–264) applies: the difficulty of the Self-Control/Instinct roll is 6 and the player needs only a single success to hold the Beast at bay. In addition to the

usual effects, a frenzied character reduces the difficulties of her Melee or Brawl rolls by 1 but adversely affects the morale of *all* mortals in the vicinity (see below).

## Fate

A host of mishaps may befall a warrior on the battlefield. She might slip on the blood-slicked ground, a piece of equipment may break or the enemy's cavalry might charge the Cainite's position. The possibilities are limited only by your imagination.

To reflect these random occurrences, the player rolls Dexterity + Athletics (if his character is on foot) or Dexterity + Ride (if mounted) against a difficulty of 6. Success indicates that the character gets his full allocation of actions that turn, while failure means that for this turn only, the character's Dexterity (and therefore his number of actions) is lowered by one (to a minimum of 1).

A botch indicates that the character loses all of her actions that turn. Continuous actions carried over from a previous turn (such as the Arms of Ahriman Obtenebration power) may remain active if the Concentration roll (see Extended Disciplines, p. 66) is successful.

## Selecting Actions

Each supernatural character (ghoul or vampire) taking part in a battle has a number of actions equal to her Dexterity. For each dot, the character can carry out one of the following actions. Each is considered a complete action (that is, the player does not need to subtract dice from her dice pool). If the character wants to carry out more than one action per dot of Dexterity, the normal multiple action rules apply (for example, subtracting dice from pools or using Celerity).

Characters may have specific objectives in mind during the battle, such as capturing a key position or eliminating a particular opponent. These intentions will likely shape their actions during the battle, and so you may impose limits on the type and number of actions each character can take, or may impose specific victory conditions to meet the objective (see *Winning the Night*, page 68).

Cainites wishing to spend blood to raise Physical Attributes must do so when selecting an action.

## Attack

When attacking, the character uses her Brawl, Melee or Archery Ability. She can take a few steps as part of the combat, but gains no real ground. If mounted, the character gains an advantage over non-mounted troops.

## Move

A moving character can walk, jog or run around the battlefield according to the standard *Dark Ages: Vampire* rules. Normal movement requires no dice rolls. Complex movement — for example, leaping a stream or balancing on a narrow beam — might require an Athlet-



ics roll. Celerity permits a vampire to move quickly around the battlefield, allowing “shock troops” to exploit enemy weaknesses or plug holes in their own defenses. Mounted Cainites are limited to the speed of their horses.

### Use an Ability

Characters can use non-combat Abilities during a battle if those Abilities can be activated quickly. Examples include Intimidation, Leadership or Stealth, all of which have practical applications during a conflict and can be used swiftly and easily regardless of the actions of others. Abilities that require more time to execute (such as Medicine), or that require specific conditions or tools (such as Crafts), cannot be used during a battle, though they may have a role in preparation or in the aftermath of combat.

### Use an Instant Discipline

As with Abilities, Disciplines that have immediate effects or require only a single action to activate may be used in a battle. In some cases (such as the Protean power Talons of the Beast), the effects in combat are obvious. In other cases (such as the Obtenebration power Nocturne), the Storyteller must adjudicate the effects of the Discipline on the Cainite’s combat or on the wider battle.

Some Disciplines, notably Dominate, are more difficult to employ in combat because of conditions attached to their use (for example, eye contact). The Storyteller may require the use of such Disciplines to be Extended rather than Instant to represent these problems. Instant Disciplines include the Auspex power Heightened Senses, the Presence power Awe and the Valeren power Morphean Blow.

### Use an Extended Discipline

Some Disciplines require multiple actions to activate. Such abilities can have a devastating effect on the battlefield, but maintaining the concentration required to successfully execute them can be a challenge in the maelstrom of combat.

If a Discipline requires multiple actions to execute, the player must either spend a Willpower point or make a Wits roll (difficulty 6) and gain at least one success for the character to maintain her concentration. If the roll succeeds (or the player spends a Willpower point), the Discipline activates normally. If the roll fails, the activation does not succeed. A botch indicates that the activation fails, and also that the vampire’s efforts distract her from her own defense, making her easier to attack (see Resolution, below). Extended Disciplines include the Animalism power Quell the Herd, the Dementation power Howling Lunacy and the Quietism power Ripples of the Heart.

Disciplines that require considerable preparation and time to enact — such as Thaumaturgic rituals — cannot be used on the battlefield. Some may, however, be enacted beforehand, with their effects persisting into a battle (or perhaps activated during one). If such Disciplines require concentration on the character’s part, the

player must spend an action (or declare a multiple action) and make a Concentration roll or spend a Willpower point to maintain the effect. If the roll fails, the Discipline effects dissipate.

### Defense

Characters cannot use the Dodge Talent in battles, as each turn reflects a number of encounters rather than an engagement against a single opponent. Each character can, however, enhance her chances of avoiding damage by dedicating some actions to her defense. Doing so increases the difficulty of enemy counterattacks but requires half the character’s actions for the turn (round up, minimum of two).

### Feed

A Cainite can feed from one or more of her opponents in combat. If the player declares that feeding will be the character’s only action that turn, she may fill her character’s blood pool to capacity. If the player only wishes to dedicate one action to feeding, roll one die to determine how much blood the character can consume (a low roll indicates that the character chose a vessel who was already wounded). A character who feeds in combat is easier to attack and risks revealing her nature to any mortal witnesses to her actions.

### Resolution

As a whole, the resolution of actions on the battlefield differs little from the standard system in **Dark Ages: Vampire**. The Storyteller interprets character actions in the context of a swirling melee of bodies and weapons, but the core mechanics of doing so are unchanged. The principal difference is combat, which is streamlined and simplified to better represent the large number of participants as well as the superior combat abilities of Cainites and their ghoul servitors.

### Character Attacks

The player makes combat rolls for her character normally. The difficulty for all attacks is 6; frenzied characters or mounted Cainites facing non-mounted foes reduce this to 5. For each success, one mortal opponent is eliminated. The mortal may be cut down by a sword blow or an arrow, or may be knocked unconscious or flee from combat. Whatever the case, that opponent is removed from the battle. Health levels are not tracked for the human masses, only for major characters.

Whenever a lethal Discipline is used on the battlefield, it eliminates two opponents for every dot used in that Discipline. For example, if a Lasombra warrior uses the Obtenebration power Arms of Ahriman, he would cause six casualties, as Arms of Ahriman is a three-dot power. Some powers have more restrictive targeting or a wider area of

effect; the Storyteller adjudicates the effectiveness of a Discipline depending on the specific circumstances.

## Counterattacks

Cainites make superlative warriors, but they are not immune to the rigors of warfare, even when faced with “weak” mortal troops. The battle system handles counterattacks against Cainites in an abstract manner, representing a host of small engagements throughout the turn. Rather than making attack rolls for each opposing soldier, roll 5 dice against a difficulty of 6. Increase this difficulty by two if the Cainite took a defensive action (see Defense, above, or reduce it by one if she was distracted (by feeding, botching an Extended Discipline, etc.)). The counterattack dice pool increases or decreases according to the quality and nature of the opposing troops (see Troop Quality, Ghouls and Enemy Personalities, page 68).

If the opposing troops get five or more successes, the Cainite is immediately staked and/or driven into torpor. The fate of a torpid/staked Cainite is at your discretion. Otherwise, for each success roll two damage dice. Every third success on the damage roll indicates a point of aggravated damage; otherwise, the damage caused is lethal. The Cainite can attempt to soak the damage as usual (using Stamina, Fortitude and any armor benefits). However, she may not dodge, nor does she gain the benefits of active or passive parrying (a blocking or parrying Cainite is assumed to have taken a defensive action and receives no further benefit).

## Complications

The battlefield may be nothing more than a press of bodies and flashing steel, but most often it encompasses a host of complicating factors. A conflict can have supernatural entities on both sides — ghouls, Cainites and possibly others — and the clash of these forces may terrify the mortal hordes. Additionally, fortifications or terrain features help or hinder the participants, while a good (or bad) leader can likewise have a dramatic effect on the outcome.

## Morale

Even though many mortals of the Dark Medieval believe that demons and devils walk the night, most will balk if they see someone rip another person limb from limb with their bare hands, or tear a throat out and gorge on the blood. Battlefields are scenes of incredible butchery, but even so, mortals on both sides may bolt when faced with supernatural powers.

Roll three dice against the difficulty indicated below for each side whose troops witness a character’s supernatural actions (yes, it’s just as likely that the character will scare the hell out of her own soldiers). On one or two successes, the force remains solid, either oblivious to the actions or not cowed by the enemy. Three successes trigger an Enhanced Counterattack (see Enhanced Coun-

terattacks, below). A failure indicates that the witnessing side is shaken; reduce the difficulty of attacks against shaken troops by one in the next battle turn. A botch indicates that the troops break, reducing the difficulty of attacks against them by three in the next battle turn. These penalties for failure and botches apply to either side of the encounter, reflecting the enemy’s increased chances to attack as mortal bannermen and guards shy away from terrifying events.

Action	Difficulty
Supernatural killer (10+ slain in a single turn)	6
Cainite feeding	6
Frenzied (or Röttschreck) Cainite*	7
Minor supernatural power (e.g. Murmur of the False Will)	5
Blatant supernatural power (e.g. Tenebrous Avatar)	8

\*This difficulty assumes clear demonstration of fangs and the like. A simple berserk rage is not enough, particularly in cultures such as Scandinavia or Ireland where such traits are prized among mortals.

## Enhanced Counterattacks

As long as they keep their supernatural powers in check, Cainite warriors appear to be no more than superbly gifted mortal fighters. However, should a character do something unusual to draw attention to herself — for example, using observable Disciplines or single-handedly killing massive numbers of the enemy — she may draw savage reprisals from the opposition.

If an enemy unit achieves three successes in its morale check, not only does the unit stand firm in the face of the “demonic” enemy but it launches a concentrated attack (for example, a targeted shower of arrows or a cavalry charge) on the Cainite or ghoul whose action triggered the roll. The enemy’s next counterattack gains two dice to reflect this assault.

## Leadership

An accomplished leader, of the entire army or of an impressive unit, can often make the difference between victory and defeat. Brilliant mortal leaders such as Salah al-Din, Phillip Augustus and Richard the Lionhearted used their martial prowess to the advantage of their realms, while poor commanders — such as John Lackland — brought their nations to the brink of disaster. The same applies to the Cainite world, with the War of Princes making martial prowess a virtue in line with mastery of the political battlefield.

If you wish to incorporate command into mass battles, have each army commander roll Perception + Leadership (difficulty 6) at the start of the engagement. This is a



resisted action, with the winner adding the margin of success to her side's dice rolls for the duration of the battle (damage and soak rolls are exempt from this bonus). Alternatively, the rolls can be made each turn, in which case they are resisted and extended, with the net successes to that point in the battle applied as a modifier.

Such command advantages assume, however, that the elements of the army are working in an organized manner. A character operating independently of the commander does not receive any benefit for superlative leadership; likewise, a Cainite in frenzy gains no advantage from superiors, save perhaps as a source of vitae.

## Troop Quality, Ghouls and Enemy Personalities

Many Cainites revel in the slaughter of the battlefield, but for the most part mortal soldiers pose little challenge to Cainite warriors. The true opposition is their fellow Cainites, their rivals in the War of Princes, and other supernatural beings. The Storyteller determines whether a battle turn involves a mortal levy, quality troops, ghouls or another Cainite.

The normal rules assume the opposition is standard troops, the typical feudal levy raised by mortal and Cainite lords. A badly organized peasant levy has only three or four dice with which to counterattack. In stark contrast, high quality troops — elite foot soldiers or knights — have six or even seven dice. Elite units such as the Knights Templar use seven or eight dice. Ghoul units use eight dice when attacking and also subtract one from the difficulties of morale rolls. Units composed of Lupines or other, stranger things can have as many dice as you see fit (possibly as many as 10) and ignore morale checks altogether.

Cainite foes (and significant mortal opponents) should be created using the supporting character or character creation rules, and their conflict with the player character worked out according to the standard **Dark Ages: Vampire** combat system rather than the mass battle rules. These duels may last for any number of regular combat turns, though you should set a limit — perhaps 10 combat turns — at which point things switch back to battle turns as the tides of war sweep the combatants apart. Dueling is the only action the Cainite takes in that battle turn. A character involved in a duel does not suffer a mortal counterattack, though retainers of the enemy duelist can seek to intervene on their lord's side or loyal troops may seek to engage the enemy personally.

## Terrain, Fortifications and Defensive Positions

Terrain and positioning on the battlefield can provide troops with a substantial advantage over their opponents. The Storyteller determines the exact bonuses a unit receives; these can range from increasing by one the difficulty to injure a unit on a ridgeline, to near-immunity

from specific forms of attack (for example, a unit storming a castle's walls).

Terrain	Effect
Open	None
Wooded	+1 difficulty for all close combat, +2 difficulty for cavalry, +3 difficulty for missile attacks.
Attacking uphill	+1 difficulty for attackers in close combat and cavalry attacks
Attacking across ditch	+1 difficulty for attackers in close combat and cavalry attacks
Attacking across stream	-1 action (Cainites) or +1 difficulty (mortals) for attackers in close combat and cavalry attacks
Defended with stakes	+2 difficulty for cavalry attacks; defender gains 2 extra counterattack dice
Wooden palisade	+1 difficulty for all close combat, cavalry and missile attacks
Stone wall (Building)	+2 difficulty for all close combat and cavalry attacks, +1 difficulty for missile attacks
Stone wall (fortification)	+3 difficulty for all close combat and cavalry attacks, +2 difficulty for missile attacks

## Winning the Night

Battles are rarely spontaneous, but rather take place for a wide variety of reasons: destroying the opposition in order to seize or retain power, securing a resource, or simply to delay the enemy in a rearguard action. In such different situations, victory varies wildly. If the aim is to crush opposition, then the goal of the battle may be to destroy the enemy army, or at least its leaders. In such cases, the battle is to the death and the number (and quality) of casualties determines the winner. In a battle for a specific resource, the willingness to take losses depends on the objective's importance to either side; its defenders might opt to withdraw after a token engagement, preferring to conserve their forces to fight another day. In a rearguard action, delaying the enemy's advance for an hour or a day may constitute a "victory" for the defenders.

You may simply choose the outcome of the battle, making the actions of the characters irrelevant, or you may use the characters' actions to determine the result of

the battle in full or in part. For example, you may stipulate that the coterie wins a minor victory by eliminating a dozen or more opposing troops, while they win a major victory if they dispatch 20 or more. Alternatively, a leader's net success in the battle can determine the victor, either by meeting specific criteria for winning (for example, 6+ successes) or by having the highest score.

## Battle Example

Anatole and his associates are embroiled in a battle with the forces of a Tzimisce lord. The Storyteller determines that the fight will last 6 battle turns, during each of which Anatole may take four actions (his Dexterity score). No other Cainites are fighting on Anatole's side, and the Tzimisce lord (Dexterity 3) is the only Cainite with the opposing force. As Anatole has the higher Dexterity, he acts first.

At the start of the first round, Anatole's player makes a Self-Control roll and gains the requisite success to hold off the Beast and avoid frenzy. He also rolls Dexterity + Athletics (as Anatole is on foot) and gains a success, avoiding any mishaps. Anatole's player decides that his first action will be to dash into the heart of the battle (a Move action). His second action sees him enter the fray, hacking about with his sword. For this action, the player rolls Dexterity + Melee (7 dice) against a difficulty of 6 and gains two successes. Two of the enemy troopers fall to his sword. For his third action, Anatole attacks once more. Again, the player rolls two successes, and again Anatole slays two of the infidels. For his fourth (and final) action, he activates Soulsight, his level 2 Auspex power, in order to locate the Tzimisce lord.

Now the enemy troops act. The Storyteller judges them to be mortal troops and so rolls 5 dice for their counterattack, getting 2, 2, 3, 6 and 10. The difficulty is 6, meaning that the enemy troops have rolled two successes. The Storyteller rolls

four damage dice (successes x 2) and achieves two successes. Anatole must attempt to soak two levels of lethal damage. Anatole's player rolls six dice (his Stamina of 4 + 2 for his light armor) and gets three successes against a difficulty of 6. Anatole suffers no damage. Meanwhile, the Storyteller contemplates the Tzimisce's actions.

## The March of Years

The passage of time is central to many chronicles; the following rules are intended to allow you to run a chronicle that spans decades or even centuries. These rules cover expanded mechanics regarding character development and systems relating to the physiological changes that affect Cainites as they age. Also included are suggestions for linking chronicles begun under **Dark Ages: Vampire** to those using **Vampire: The Masquerade**.

## Maturation

Chapter Five of **Dark Ages: Vampire** contains a system for character growth through the use of experience points and maturation points, the former recognizing activity during game sessions and the latter for the less active time between stories. This section expands on the information contained in **Dark Ages: Vampire**, providing more details and guidelines.

Maturation points accumulate over a much slower period than does experience — years and decades rather than days or weeks — reflecting the inert nature of Cainite existence. Without the immediate stimulation of activity and adventure, Cainites have fewer opportunities to learn and develop abilities. As they age, physiological and psychological factors further impede development, as indicated in The Ages of Caine and Elder Characters, below.

## MASS COMBAT SUMMARY CHART

### Stage One: Initiative

- Characters act in order of their Dexterity. Tied characters act simultaneously.

### Stage Two: Character Actions

- Character attempts to resist frenzy (Self-Control/Instinct roll, only one success required).
- Player rolls to avoid mishaps (Dexterity + Athletics, difficulty 6, one success required).
- Player specifies a number of actions up to her Dexterity score.

### Stage Three: Character Action Resolution

- Player makes attack roll as appropriate.
- One mortal opponent dies or flees battle for each success in the attack roll.
- Two mortal opponents die or flee battle for each point of an appropriate Discipline used.

### Stage Four: Counterattack

- Storyteller rolls 5 dice (difficulty 6) for a mortal counterattack against the Cainite.
- If all five dice are successes, the Cainite is staked and/or driven into torpor.
- For every success, roll two damage dice. Every third point of damage inflicted is aggravated. Others are lethal.
- The Cainite may soak the damage, but cannot dodge.



Years of Downtime	Maturation points
1-5 years	1 per year (1-5)
6-35	1 per 5 years (6-10)
36-135	1 per 10 years (11-20)
136-500	1 per 20 years (21-40)
501-750	1 per 25 years (41-50)
751+	1 per 30 years (51+)

## Gaining Maturation Points

Maturation points reflect “off-screen” activities by Cainites to improve themselves. The exact number of points depends on the length of downtime and the activity level of the character during that period. A Cainite who has spent a century of downtime sulking in a haven in the Carpathians will likely only gain a handful of maturation points, while another character who spent a decade embroiled in the politics of Venice would easily earn as many points. The nature of the downtime also influences the number and nature of maturation points gained by the character.

- **Active:** The default level of downtime is “active,” indicating that the character is leading a normal unlife with no exceptional risks or undue caution. For such characters, the number of maturation points gained per period is determined by the duration of the downtime alone, and there are no restrictions on spending these points.

- **Research:** A Cainite might spend years or decades researching a manuscript or intellectual matter. Such research is usually very focused, allowing the character to gain an extra maturation point per decade of downtime. However, points gained from research can only be spent to improve Knowledges. Characters engaged in research are considered “inactive” when rolling for Backgrounds.

- **Practice:** Like some mortals, a Cainite may spend many years perfecting a physical — often martial — ability. This quest for physical excellence requires single-minded determination, and such efforts gain the character an extra maturation point per decade of downtime, but such points may only be used to improve Skills or some Talents (such as Brawl, at the Storyteller’s discretion). Characters engaged in practice are considered “inactive” when rolling for Backgrounds.

- **Seclusion:** A character may seek to minimize her exposure to risks, perhaps hiding herself away in the wilds or a monastery, or maybe just acting very cautiously in her dealings with others. Characters in seclusion reduce the negative effects of any activity during this period (see Risks and Rewards, page 77) but also miss many opportunities. Consequently, they gain only half (round down) the normal number of maturation points. Characters in seclusion are considered “inactive” when rolling for Backgrounds.

- **Danger:** Sometimes a character may find herself in constant danger, prompting continuous activity to ensure her survival. Such characters have ongoing learning experiences and gain additional maturation points (multiply the number of points for the period spent in danger by 1.5; for

example, a period of downtime normally worth 10 points is worth 15 if the time is spent in danger). However, improving and even maintaining Backgrounds while courting danger is extremely difficult (see below).

- **Torpor:** Cainites in torpor may, at your discretion, earn maturation points during their slumber. To do so, however, the character must have superlative mental faculties (Willpower of 7+ and Perception 4+) and be at least 500 years old. She may only spend points gained while in torpor

## AN EXAMPLE OF MATURATION

Embraced in AD 775, the Brujah Ranulph plays in a story involving the Vikings’ sacking of Lindisfarne. At the story’s conclusion in AD 785, the Storyteller announces that the chronicle will advance to 1064, the years immediately before the Norman invasion of England. The Storyteller awards Ranulph 30 maturation points (10 for each century of the almost 300 years that pass between the stories) and asks Richard, who plays the Brujah warrior, to describe what happens to Ranulph during that period.

Richard rolls a number of dice equal to Ranulph’s Willpower (5) for each century of the downtime. He decides that during the first century of this period, Ranulph will be “in danger” (difficulty 6) as he fights the invaders, his second century will be spent in seclusion (difficulty 9), and the third will be active downtime (difficulty 7). Richard gets four successes on the first roll, but no successes on the second. Unfortunately, he botches the third roll. He next rolls a single die to determine the number of lost maturation points. The result is a 3, almost canceling out the successes he gained in his first roll. He has a total of 31 maturation points to spend: 19 (10 x 1.5 + 4) for the first risky period, five (10 / 2) for his time in seclusion, and seven (10 - 3) for the third.

Richard first improves Ranulph’s Potence rating from 2 to 3 for a cost of three maturation points (as the character is under 200 years old), and he also seeks to improve the Brujah’s Auspex from 1 to 2. The latter costs four maturation points, as Auspex is not a clan Discipline for Ranulph. He decides to improve Ranulph’s Dodge and Melee skills to 4 from their current values of 3, and to buy a second dot of Leadership, for a total cost of six maturation points (two points each). He also buys one point each of Dexterity, Strength and Perception, costing a total of 15 points (five points each, as Ranulph’s Willpower is 5 and he is under 500 years old). Richard chooses to increase Ranulph’s Road rating from 4 to 6. This costs three points, one for the first increase (4 to 5), and two for the second (5 to 6) as it exceeds his Willpower of 5.

on developing mental traits and can earn a maximum of one maturation point per 30 years.

A period of downtime may involve the character in a single task, or in a wide range of activities. The Storyteller may allow downtime to be broken by small periods of discrete action, played out as a scene within the story or some other method, and reflecting key events during the downtime. These vignettes may be pre-planned, or may come from journals or other player suggestions. However, if the period of activity grows into a full-fledged story, the character ceases to earn maturation points. In the case of continuous downtime, the activity levels given above can be used as is. Where different types of activity occur in the same period of downtime, you must decide which types of activity are used for each 20-year period. You also need to decide the predominant activity level of the character (active, inactive or torpid) during each 50- and 100-year span of downtime, to determine the ease or difficulty of maintaining Backgrounds during the downtime.

Maturation points are awarded at your discretion, and you may increase or decrease these awards as you see fit in light of player activities and other factors. For example, you may give the character of a player who wrote a downtime journal a higher award than one whose player decided not to contribute to the story. Take care, however, not to allow downtime and its management to become a divisive factor in a chronicle. Maturation is a useful incentive for such advanced techniques (as described in *Advanced Story Telling Techniques*, p. 77), but it should not detract from the

main gaming experience, nor should players be allowed to regard maturation points as "easy money." There are limits to the number of points that characters can earn in a given period, no matter how detailed the backstory. Maturation points are a means of simulating development over time, not replacing hard-won experience.

Normally, unused maturation points carry forward to the next period of downtime. You may wish to take a more hard-line stance with maturation points, judging them lost if unused when a new period of "uptime" commences. This choice may seem harsh, but it reflects the distractions that go along with intense activity.

## Risks and Rewards

At the end of each period of protracted downtime (or century, whichever is shorter), each player makes a Willpower roll (difficulty 7). If the character has been avoiding danger (for example, by going into seclusion) the difficulty increases to 9. If the character has been actively courting danger, the difficulty is 6. Characters in torpor cannot make this roll.

Each success achieved indicates a bonus maturation point for the character. Those avoiding danger cannot botch this roll. If the character is experiencing active, research or practice downtime, she loses one die of maturation points if the Willpower roll botches (but will earn at least one maturation point for the period). A character actively courting danger must get at least one success or else lose one die of maturation points.





## Spending Maturation Points

Like experience points, maturation points can be used to improve traits. This reflects a steady growth in the Cainite's experience and knowledge base as the years pass, progressive refinement and insights that stem from the vampire's undying state. Unfortunately, this growth is incremental rather than innovative, and so maturation points can usually only be used to improve traits already possessed by the character rather than to buy new Abilities and Advantages. Building the necessary knowledge base and making appropriate connections are better suited to experience points than the slow-pace learning of downtime. You may allow players to spend maturation points to gain new Abilities or Advantages, but doing so should cost at least double the usual experience points. Maturation points may, at your discretion, be combined with experience points to raise existing Traits. For example, a character with two maturation points and three experience points could combine them to purchase a second dot in a clan Discipline.

The Storyteller determines when the maturation points can be spent. This could occur at the start of the learning process, reflecting prior efforts toward gaining the new dot, or perhaps at the end, representing the effort the character has put into study and practice. Points may also be spent during the period of study, perhaps with an initial investment to represent a firm commitment to the improvement. In many cases, the method of spending points has little impact on a story, and so should be tailored to the chronicle and your preferences. As with spending experience points, the player should explain how her character came to gain the new dot, perhaps requiring a small vignette within the story. Learning a second dot of Archery may not play a significant part in the character's development, but finding a teacher of Valeren likely involves considerable adventure and risk, and could easily form the core of an entire uptime story.

The time required to gain the new dot is considerably longer when using maturation points than experience points, because of the less active nature of the character's pursuits. The exact length of time required to earn the new rating varies considerably, depending on the trait and the character's activities. In general, raising the rating requires between a year and a decade per dot. For example, buying the third dot of a trait would require between 3 and 30 years. Additionally, players using maturation points may increase each individual trait by no more than one dot for each period of downtime (or century) that passes, whichever is shorter.

Ancient Cainites who have gained maturation points while in torpor can only spend them on Mental Attributes, Knowledges and mental Disciplines. Any trait that requires physical activity by the character—as part of its execution or learning—cannot be acquired using such points. Improving mental traits while in torpor costs only 75 percent (round up) of the normal downtime or experience points.

## Gaining and Losing Backgrounds

Backgrounds operate differently than other traits. They are volatile, subject to a host of outside influences that can

cause them to rise and fall. For example, Ranulph may have a host of mortal retainers in AD 775, but by AD 1064 the original retinue will be long dead (provided he does not change them into ghouls or recruit replacements). The player must make some effort to maintain such resources, but even then, the vagaries of Fate could devastate the Background—or improve it immeasurably.

For each century of downtime, the player must spend a maturation (or experience) point to maintain the Background (two downtime points if the character was not active). If the player cannot (or chooses not to) spend these points, the rating of the Background automatically decreases by one. Improving a Background is a much riskier proposition, as the Cainite's own efforts risk adversely influencing the trait.

To improve a Background costs one maturation point, plus an additional point for every two centuries after the first two. Unlike other expenditures, the success of this endeavor is not guaranteed. Instead, the player rolls a number of dice equal to the Background's current rating against the difficulty indicated for the respective entry in the Downtime Backgrounds section. An inactive or torpid character cannot attempt to improve Backgrounds.

Usually, a character attempts to improve only one Background for every 50 years of downtime. The player may attempt to improve additional Backgrounds during this period, but at higher costs and increased difficulty. Attempting to improve a second Background costs twice the normal amount and the difficulty is increased by one. Seeking to improve a third Background costs three times normal and suffers a +2 difficulty modifier, and so forth.

The Generation Background is an exception to the above rules. A player need never spend maturation or experience to maintain Generation. Likewise, it is impossible to improve this Background during downtime (as the only way to improve it is via diablerie, which deserves its own story).

## TEMPTING FATE

Characters who spend downtime in danger receive more maturation points, but may also find their holdings and contacts falling away. This is due in part to the fact that a character taking part in dangerous activities has less time to maintain her Backgrounds, and in part to the attention that such activities can bring back to the character.

When a character spends downtime in danger, her player should roll Willpower (difficulty 7) for *each* Background the character possesses, with the exception of Generation. If the roll is a *botch*, the character loses a dot from the Background. If the roll fails, the rating remains the same, but the player may not attempt to raise that Background during this period of downtime. If the roll succeeds, the player may attempt to raise the Background as normal (see below) but adds one to the difficulty for doing so

New Backgrounds cannot be purchased with maturation points. Characters can only gain them by roleplaying or with Storyteller approval.

## Maintaining Pooled Backgrounds

One of the most important facets of **Dark Ages: Vampire** allows players to pool their characters' Backgrounds and build a sphere of influence collectively, rather than individually (see page 157 of **Dark Ages: Vampire**). This means that when the chronicle shifts into downtime, the troupe must have some means of maintaining these pooled Backgrounds.

If the "anchor Background" has a rating of five or less, then one character can effectively maintain it. However, this character must remain close to the Background's location, so to speak. For example, if the coterie has chosen Herd as their anchor, then the maintaining character must remain in the same general area as the Herd during downtime. The character looking after the anchor must spend the requisite one maturation point to maintain it, but all characters who contributed to the Background must contribute a point if they wish to attempt to raise the Background rating.

*Example: The Byzantine coterie known throughout the Mediterranean as the Durazzo Fist holds power anchored in their estate, wherein they grow olives and other foodstuffs. This Background is represented in game terms by a Domain rating of 5. Two of the players contributed two points to this Domain and a third contributed a single point. During downtime, one of the characters may stay on the estate and maintain it by spending a single maturation point. The rating remains the same even if the other members of the coterie choose to travel away from the city for a time. However, if the players decide to attempt to increase the coterie's holdings, each of the three players who originally contributed to the pooled Domain must chip in a maturation point. The maintaining character's player then makes the roll as described above to see if the Domain can be increased.*

If the anchor Background is rated 6 or higher, then it is too big or extensive for a single character to maintain. At least two of the characters must work to maintain the Background, and each of them must spend a maturation point. In all other regards, this higher-level Background functions as normal, except that raising it is more difficult. Increase the difficulty for raising such Backgrounds by one; for example, raising Herd 6 to Herd 7 would require a roll against a difficulty of 7.

Other Backgrounds peripheral to the anchor Background still require maintenance, but do not require an additional caretaker. Any member of the troupe may spend the necessary maturation point to keep up the other pooled Backgrounds. Raising them, however, requires one maturation point from each contributor, as for anchor Backgrounds.

Characters who have contributed part, but not all of their ratings for a given Background to a pool effectively have two separate Backgrounds. For example, if a player purchases Resources 4 for her character during creation, but contributes only two of those points to a Background pool, she has a personal Resources rating of 2. If her coterie wishes to raise their pooled Resource rating during downtime, she

must contribute a maturation point. However, she must also spend a point to maintain her own Resources rating, separate from the pool.

## Downtime Backgrounds

### Allies

**Difficulty:** 7

- **Botch:** You said the wrong words to the wrong people. You lose a dot as a former ally shuns you, or worse, turns against you. At the Storyteller's discretion, the character receives the Enemy Flaw (2 points) but does not gain any bonus points.

- **Failure:** Your attempts to woo a new supporter become bogged down in local politics. No change to the rating.

- **Success:** Your well-chosen words, gifts and favors sway others to your cause. Increase your Allies rating by one dot, plus an additional dot for every two additional successes (one dot for one or two successes, two dots for three or four successes, etc.). The player may use one of the additional dots to increase the character's Retainer Background instead of Allies.

### Contacts

**Difficulty:** 6

- **Botch:** An enemy subverts your contacts and uses them to feed you bad information. Lose a dot of Contacts and, at the Storyteller's discretion, a point of Status.

- **Failure:** Attempts to grow your network of informants come to naught, but you maintain the status quo. No change to the rating.

- **Success:** You turn an enemy to your cause, or gain appropriate leverage. Increase your Contacts rating by one dot, plus an additional dot for every two additional successes (one dot for one or two successes, two dots for three or four successes, etc.). The player may use one of the additional dots to increase the character's Allies Background instead of Contacts.

### Domain

**Difficulty:** 7

- **Botch:** Disaster! Efforts to expand your holdings have brought serious reprisals as the War of Princes rages. A powerful enemy (mortal or Cainite) ravages your lands and you lose a dot of Domain. At the Storyteller's discretion, the character may also lose points of Herd or Resources.

- **Failure:** The War of Princes churns on, but for every gain you make you lose an equal amount. Or perhaps your efforts to better your standing simply go unnoticed. No change to the rating.

- **Success:** None can stand against you as your efforts — martial and political — extend your power and influence. Increase your Domain rating by one dot, plus an



additional dot for every two additional successes (one dot for one or two successes, two dots for three or four successes, etc.). The player may use one of the additional dots to increase the character's Allies or Resources Background instead of Domain.

## Generation

Players can only increase Generation through the Amaranth, and it must always be played out as a full chapter or scene rather than as part of downtime.

## Herd

**Difficulty:** 6

- **Botch:** Disease, neglect or your enemies ravage your source of vitae. Lose a dot of Herd.
- **Failure:** New recruits to your herd balance out losses through accidents, disease and old age. No change to the rating.
- **Success:** Whether by creation of a blood cult among nobles, access to an infirmary, or by prowling the streets, your sources of nourishment grow. Increase your Herd rating by one dot, plus an additional dot for every two additional successes (one dot for one or two successes, two dots for three or four successes, etc.). The player may use one of the additional dots to increase the character's Retainers or Contacts Background instead of Herd.

## Influence

**Difficulty:** 8

- **Botch:** You overplay your hand; your mortal pawns escape your grasp or are subverted by an enemy. Lose a dot of Influence.
- **Failure:** You play the great game with alacrity, but despite your best efforts you have not managed to expand your influence over mortal affairs. No change to the rating.
- **Success:** A political stratagem pays dividends, or perhaps you use the blood oath to bind a lord or priest. Increase your Influence rating by one dot, plus an additional dot for every three additional successes (one dot for one to three successes, two dots for four or more successes). The player may use one of the additional dots to increase the character's Allies or Contacts Background instead of Influence.

## Mentor

**Difficulty:** 7

- **Botch:** Perhaps your progress was unsatisfactory or you supported the wrong cause; whatever the case, your mentor is displeased. Lose a dot of Mentor as your patron spends less time and energy on you. At the Storyteller's discretion, the character receives the Oathbreaker or Sire's Resentment Flaw but does not gain any bonus points.
- **Failure:** Your mentor ignores you as often as she helps you. No change to the rating.

- **Success:** Your efforts win increased support from your mentor, or perhaps you earn the tutelage of a hitherto distant figure. Increase your Mentor rating by one dot, plus an additional dot for every two additional successes (one dot for one or two successes, two dots for three or four successes, etc.).

## Resources

**Difficulty:** 8

- **Botch:** A fire strikes your residence, or perhaps an enemy's forces target you. Lose a dot of Resources. At the Storyteller's discretion, the character also loses a dot of Domain or Retainers.
- **Failure:** Thanks to wise investments — and a canny seneschal — your income keeps pace with your expenditures. No change to the rating.
- **Success:** You invest in a profitable trading venture, or discover a new source of riches within your Domain. Increase your Resources rating by one dot, plus an additional dot for every two additional successes (one dot for one or two successes, two dots for three or four successes, etc.). The player may use one of the additional dots to increase the character's Domain Background instead of Resources.

## Retainers

**Difficulty:** 6

- **Botch:** Disease ravages your retainers, or they fall to old age, or perhaps they flee your neglect or tyranny. Lose a dot of Retainers. At the Storyteller's discretion, the character also loses a dot of Domain or Resources.
- **Failure:** Though years pass, the families of your initial retainers — mortal and ghoul alike — continue to serve you. No change to the rating.
- **Success:** With your patronage, your servants and companions prosper and others are drawn to your service. Increase your Retainers rating by one dot, plus an additional dot for every two additional successes (one dot for one or two successes, two dots for three or four successes, etc.). The player may use one of the additional dots to increase the character's Allies Background instead of Retainers.

## Status

**Difficulty:** 8

- **Botch:** The balance of power in Cainite society shifts and you find yourself on the wrong side, either through your own actions or those of your enemies (and erstwhile allies). Lose a dot of Status. At the Storyteller's discretion, the character also loses a dot of Allies or Influence.
- **Failure:** You hold your own in the games of Cainite politics, but the extent of your influence remains unchanged. No change to the rating.
- **Success:** Your successful ventures — or those you take credit for — expand your power and standing in Cainite society. Increase your Status rating by one dot, plus an

additional dot for every three additional successes (one dot for one to three successes, two dots for four or more successes) The player may use one of the additional dots to increase the character's Allies Background instead of Status.

## An Example of Backgrounds

Ranulph undergoes another period of extended downtime between AD 1070 and 1170. He has the Domain 2, Generation 1, Influence 1 and Retainers 1 Backgrounds, and must spend at least three maturation points (one for each Background, excluding Generation) to maintain them at their current values. Ranulph's player, Richard, decides that Ranulph will use the period following the Norman invasion to expand his Backgrounds.

As he is now over 300 years old, it costs Ranulph two maturation points to attempt to increase his Domain rating from 2 to 3. He pays the points and rolls two dice (his current Domain rating), getting a ten and a four. With a base difficulty of 7, that result gives him one success, and his Domain Background increases to 3.

As a century of downtime passes, Ranulph's second attempt to improve a Background does not suffer a penalty (he is allowed one roll per 50 years) and he attempts to increase his Influence rating. This attempt costs him another two maturation points. He rolls a single die (his current Influence rating) to improve the trait. Horror! The result is a 1, a botch. Ranulph loses his one dot of Influence as Norman interlopers supplant the Anglo-Saxon nobles under his sway (the Storyteller is merciful, however, and does not impose the loss of another Background as well).

## The Ages of Caine

For young Cainites (those active for less than two centuries), the cost of gaining and improving traits with experience points differs little from that outlined in **Dark Ages: Vampire**. Cainites are not, however, dynamic creatures. The Embrace imposes a degree of physical and psychological inertia, and as a Cainite ages she finds it increasingly difficult to develop her aptitudes. As the character passes into her third century, the cost of improving traits

begins to rise, steadily increasing as the character becomes more distant from her Embrace. "Keeping up with the times" is ever more difficult, and a Cainite birthed in the millennia before Christ may find the Dark Medieval as alien and incomprehensible as the Final Nights are to vampires Embraced during the Long Night. The following table indicates the increasing difficulty of purchasing improvements with experience points. The cost of increasing traits with maturation points is unchanged from **Dark Ages: Vampire**.

## Elder Characters

Elder Cainites may play a significant role in many **Dark Ages: Vampire** chronicles, both as players' and Storyteller characters. Though they largely follow the same rules as normal characters, a number of other physiological and psychological forces dog the activities of these ancients. In addition to the effect of age on the learning process, the Sleep of Ages (age torpor) and the Thirst of Caine (desire for Cainite vitae) also afflict older Cainites, usually after their fifth century.

## The Sleep of Ages

Injury is the most common reason for entering torpor, but after a protracted period of activity, the average Cainite finds herself increasingly drawn to this death-like sleep. She will use this extended time of inactivity to refresh herself before emerging once more to face the world. This type of torpor is called age torpor or voluntary torpor. Any player may decide to have her character withdraw from the world and enter torpor as outlined in Chapter Seven of **Dark Ages: Vampire**. Such characters are temporarily removed from play (perhaps associated with downtime) and "sleep" for a number of months or years, dependent on the character's road rating. The character may attempt to awaken once half the indicated time has passed, though usually she sleeps for the full duration. A player may spend Willpower to reduce the time in torpor, each point halving the required time.

Cainites who are over 500 years old have less choice in the matter. The Sleep of Ages calls to them, and the character must enter torpor or defy the pull through sheer strength of will. Resisting the Sleep of Ages requires the player to spend a point of

## EXPERIENCE POINT COSTS

### Cainite's Age

	Up to 200 years	201-350 years	351-500 years	501-750 years	751+ years
New Ability	3	4	5	6	7
New Discipline	7	8	9	10	11
New Thaumaturgy Path	10	11	12	13	14
Humanity/Road	CRx2	CRx3	CRx3	CRx4	CRx5
Virtue	CRx2	CRx3	CRx3	CRx4	CRx4
Ability	CRx2	CRx3	CRx4	CRx4	CRx5
Attribute	CRx4	CRx4	CRx5	CRx5	CRx6
Thaumaturgy Path	CRx4	CRx4	CRx4	CRx5	CRx5
Clan Discipline	CRx5	CRx5	CRx6	CRx6	CRx7
Other Discipline	CRx7	CRx8	CRx8	CRx9	CRx10



## CREATING ELDER CHARACTERS

The rules for creating elder characters are those in **Dark Ages: Vampire**, with the following modifications:

- **Step Two: Select Attributes**

Start with one dot in each Attribute; divide 10 additional dots among primary Attributes, seven dots among secondary Attributes, and five dots among tertiary Attributes.

- **Step Three: Select Abilities**

Divide 20 dots among primary Abilities, 12 dots among secondary Abilities, and eight dots among tertiary Abilities.

- **Step Four: Select Advantages**

Divide 10 dots among Disciplines (at least half of which must be Clan Disciplines), 15 dots among Backgrounds, and seven dots among Virtues (plus one free dot in each Road Virtue and Courage). The base generation for elder characters is ninth, so buying one dot of Generation results in an eighth generation character, etc.

- **Step Five: Finishing Touches**

**Road:** The base road rating is calculated normally, but subtract 1 for every 150 years the character has been active (which means that all elder characters automatically subtract 2 from their base rating).

**Blood Pool:** Roll two dice to determine the initial blood pool. Any points above the elder's capacity are discarded.

**Bonus Points:** Spend 30 bonus points.

Elder characters are assumed to be 201-350 years undead. You may choose to add 15 bonus points for every 150 years that the character has been active (meaning that an elder who has spent several centuries in torpor won't be as potent as one who has been awake and pursuing her agendas). However, this choice loses points for the character from her starting road score (see above).

Willpower and roll a number of dice equal to the character's road rating against a difficulty of 8. Success allows the character to hold off the call of torpor for another few decades (one decade per success), after which time she must roll again or enter torpor. Failure means that the character can no longer hold off the seductive pull; after making suitable preparations, she enters voluntary torpor. A botch also indicates the character enters torpor, but the effort to remain active has adversely affected her mind and so she Cainite gains a suitable Derangement. A character who enters torpor after failing or botching an attempt to remain active cannot awaken early unless her player spends Willpower.

A sufficiently strong-willed character (Willpower of 7+ and Perception 4+) in torpor continues to gain and spend maturation points, and has a distinct advantage in developing his mental faculties. Also, at the Storyteller's discretion, time spent in torpor is not counted toward the character's age and so does not impose the attendant penalties in learning traits.

## The Thirst of Caine

Elder Cainites can be immensely powerful, drawing from their knowledge, experience, and the strength of their blood to drive them on. In her early years (and centuries), vitality and strength of will are enough to power a Cainite's endeavors, but with increasing age and the steady degeneration of other faculties, she begins to find this insufficient. There may come a point in a Cainite's unlife when the blood of mortals is not enough to support her, and she must instead drink the blood of her fellow vampires.

No set trigger exists for this change in the vampire's metabolism, and factors that bring about the change in one character may not (immediately) have the same result on another. The passage of time (most characters who are forced to drink Cainite vitae are over 500 years old) and a low road rating are widely accepted as the principal factors, but others, including Derangements, diablerie and blood oaths, may also play a part.

The decision to require a character to survive on Cainite vitae is a major element in an ongoing chronicle rather than a random decision or a fixed system. As a guideline, the more trigger traits a character exhibits (in the sidebar below), the more likely that character is to require vampiric blood to survive. Once required to subsist on Cainite vitae, it is nearly impossible for a character to return to normal vampiric habits. The mythical state of Golconda is reputed to cure the Thirst of Caine, but the only proven method for escaping the addiction is for a Cainite to become a paragon of her road (see **Dark Ages: Vampire**, page 96). Even this may not be sufficient for adherents of the Roads of the Beast or Blood, who regard such cravings as part of their philosophies.

Storytellers who prefer a systematic approach should require players to make a Willpower roll every few centuries of game time. The difficulty of the roll is the number of "trigger conditions" the character possesses, with a minimum of 2 (one trigger equals a difficulty of 2, seven triggers results in a difficulty of 7). Success on the roll means that the character need not drink vampiric vitae (though she may choose to). Failure indicates the Cainite is wavering, experiencing a

### Potential triggers for the Thirst of Caine include:

- Character is a Diablerist
- Sire is addicted to Cainite vitae
- Character's Road rating is 3 or less
- Character follows the Roads of the Beast, Metamorphosis, or Blood
- Character is active for 500 or more years
- Character has a Derangement related to blood or feeding
- Character has created five or more childe
- Character has placed five or more Cainites under blood oath
- Character has a Nature other than Architect, Caregiver, Cavalier or Martyr.



thirst for Cainite vitae and drinking it when the opportunity presents itself, but not yet required to do so. Such characters must roll again after a period determined by the Storyteller (perhaps a few years within the chronicle). If the roll fails again, the character must drink vampiric blood to survive. A botch at any point means the character can only draw nourishment from Cainite vitae.

## Advanced Storytelling Techniques

It's all very well for the players to show up every week, experience (or endure) whatever challenges you have in store, and advance the story. However, as the chronicle progresses and players and Storyteller become more familiar with the game and the setting, you might want to spice things up a bit. Below are some elements to consider for a long-running chronicle, including potential challenges and new techniques to make the stories as interesting and fulfilling as possible.

### Dark Medieval to Gothic-Punk

Some Storytellers limit their chronicles to the Dark Medieval, telling stories of the Long Night and the War of Princes. Others prefer a long-term story, advancing their chronicles through the centuries between **Dark Ages: Vampire** and **Vampire: The Masquerade**. The former can take place solely under the Dark Ages rules, while the latter will at some point require a shift to the "modern" rules.

The mechanics of **Dark Ages: Vampire** are closer to its sister game of the Final Nights than was the previous version, but many differences remain, particularly in the treatment of Disciplines and certain Abilities. These differences are deliberate, designed to reflect the changes in Cainite and mortal society during the nearly 800 years between the two games. Integrating these changes into a long-running chronicle is a challenge.

Some changes are easy to peg to a specific date — firearms appear in the fourteenth century and by the seventeenth century have largely supplanted bows — but changes in Disciplines are harder to pin down. The exact point to switch from the **Dark Ages** to the **Masquerade** version of a Discipline is up to you to determine. However, the early sixteenth century is a prime candidate, following major upheavals in the Cainite world (the Anarch Revolt, the formation of the Camarilla, and the establishment of the Sabbat). Certainly the change should take place by the end of the seventeenth century, by which point many of the features of the Final Nights are coming to the fore.

Storytellers can change rules wholesale, switching from the **Dark Ages** to the **Masquerade** version of the game in one fell swoop (perhaps after a period of torpor or downtime). Alternatively, a Storyteller may wish to introduce changes gradually, perhaps introducing "modern" skills and



Disciplines via new characters appearing in the game. The dichotomy between new and old can become the theme of a story, as older characters find themselves increasingly out of their time and forced to adapt or face the consequences.

## Journals and Dramatic Interludes

Game sessions represent snapshots of a character's unlife, brief interludes in a tale that spans years or centuries. They need not represent a character's whole existence. The players may wish to carry out actions between game sessions (indeed, this assumption is central to the concept of downtime), either in conjunction with other characters or on their own. This part of the chronicle may be organized in any number of ways: The players can discuss it among themselves, talk directly to the Storyteller, or may decide on their own. The ideal method is a combination of all three — some actions require cooperation while others happen at the whim of a single character, but all are at the Storyteller's discretion. Journals are a common method (also referred to as "blue-booking," after the cheap school notebooks that were originally used). Between game sessions, players may jot down ideas for their character's actions and then pass these on to the Storyteller so that she can determine the outcome. Any ideas accepted are woven into the chronicle. The player has no guarantee that any action he suggests will succeed, or even be allowed. You, the Storyteller, are the final arbiter of what is and isn't possible in your chronicle.

In the case of simple activities, you can quickly deal with the player's suggested series of events; for example, if Ranulph goes to the market in search of news from London, the Storyteller may simply tell his player what he discovers. More complex activities require several communications between player and Storyteller, either to add detail to events or to allow each to react to the other's suggestions. If an activity looks likely to require a lot of communication, it will be easier for the player and Storyteller to run a short one-on-one session than to do this via journals. This is particularly true if the event(s) to be described play a major role in the chronicle or for the character.

Players can cooperate using journals in a number of ways. Each can describe her character's contributions to a particular downtime action, adding unique details and outlook while allowing you to judge each set of actions separately. This provides you with an interesting perspective on the coterie's actions, but it may also confuse the issue if details are contradictory or difficult to reconcile. To avoid this problem players may wish to use a single journal for collective actions, each player describing her own character's actions as part of a single narrative rather than a series of distinct tales.

Journals can be used to describe events that take place over a few days, years or centuries. For example, a Storyteller has ideas for a chronicle that takes place over a broad sweep of time from the Viking invasions to the early years of the War of Princes. She has plans for distinct "up" periods during the Viking invasions of northern Europe (late 8th century), the Norman conquest of England (AD 1066), and the

Fourth Crusade (AD 1204). The characters may simply leap from period to period, but journals make an ideal method of describing their activities in the intervening years, providing a rationale for earning and spending maturation points and for any changes in Backgrounds. Characters' journal activities can also provide inspiration for small "up-time" vignettes dealing with some of the events that take place as a result of the downtime activities.

These "dramatic interludes" may act like preludes, lasting a few minutes and played largely without dice, or they could become a full-fledged story. How to play out such encounters depends on the preference of the players and Storyteller, and the demands of the chronicle. The Storyteller may deliberately plan such events, for example mandating that the characters meet up at Rouen in 1064 so they can take part in an interlude that corresponds with an encounter between Harold Godwinson and William of Normandy.

Journals need not describe every action a character takes over the years. It may be more appropriate to cover the broad strokes of what has happened over time, describing in detail selected high points rather than every encounter. This method provides a substantial framework for the character's background without forming a straitjacket. If you plan to use flashbacks in a chronicle — perhaps playing out a past encounter with a prominent figure or a visit to a key locale — it will be much easier to do so if there are gaps in the character's histories.

Journals should not, however, be allowed to take precedence over actual face-to-face gaming. While you and your players can use the technique to tell long, complex stories, it often lacks the depth of human interaction. Journals work best when used in conjunction with other techniques such as those described below.

## Flashbacks, Parallel Stories and Troupe-style Play

Storytellers may wish to backtrack in the timeline to tell a story in the past (from the character's current point of view). If the character's history allows it, this vignette can feature her younger self, particularly if the scene is intended as a flashback and takes place in a time that has been leapfrogged in the main chronicle. One or more characters may be unable to take part in the flashback, however, perhaps because their backstory places them elsewhere at the time. In such cases, a second group of characters can be used, perhaps the childer (or sires) of the main characters, or associates such as ghouls. These new characters can be confined to the one-off flashback session or may play an ongoing part in the chronicle. It may even suit the chronicle and your plans for each player to have several characters (perhaps several Cainites, or a mix of Cainites and ghouls) and to either run a parallel story with the different characters or vary which characters appear at different stages of the chronicle. This "troupe-style" of play allows the group to tell of a broader and more intricate story, incorporating multiple perspectives and a wider range of character types and traits.



# Dark Ages

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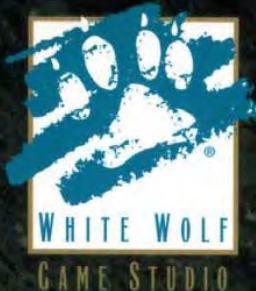
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