

# CLANBOOK: BAALI



A BLACK DOG CLANBOOK FOR VAMPIRE: THE DARK AGES®  
FOR ADULTS ONLY

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# Clanbook Baali

## NOTE

Clanbook Baali is intend for individuals over 18 only, and even then we want you to think twice about playing one. WhiteWolf in no way condones any of the practices ascribed to the Baali herein, and wishes to make it perfectly clear that we don't encourage anyone to emulate anything that these guys do. The Baali are evil, vicious, sadistic, demented, twisted, hateful - and completely fictional.

If you want to add a Baali to you Chronicle, here's everything you need to do so. If you want to play a Baali, be very, very careful that you separate in-game and out-of-game attitudes, and that the other players in your game are OK with that you're doing.

There is undoubtedly content in this book that many people will find offensive. Remember, it is the in-character narrator espousing those views, not White Wolf or anyone else associated with project.

Relax, enjoy, and if you find the book problematic, PUT IT DOWN. No one's forcing you to read it.

## CLANBOOK BAALI (Contra - Capa)

There are greater power in the world than mere vampires.

These powers have secret names, names of power.

The Baali know those names.

These powers have hidden themselves in shadow and blood,  
lest they be awakened too soon.

The Baali know where they sleep.

These powers will someday awaken, and lay waste unto the world.

The Baali know this, too - and work to hasten it.

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*Not because he and I are one, but because we are opposites, I take to me the services which thou has done to him, for I and he are of such different kinds that no service which is vile can be done to him.*

- C.S Lewis, The Chronicles of Narnia

Like others of their kind, they have forever said their farewells to the light. As do their European counterparts, they hunt the night, living on the spill remnants of others lives. But what do the other Childer of Caine truly know of darkness?

## Chapter One: The Opening

Jonathan , half-lost in the bliss of inter course smiled stupidly at the naked youth straddling his man hood. He did not know the boy's name; they had exchanged no words. The boy was half the age of abbot's eldest daughter, but that meant little to the older man. Redemption, after all, was but a breath away, waiting in the confines of his confessor's cubicle. From the moment Jonathan had first laid eyes upon the boy - smooth, moon-pale skin, soft, supple curves, long, flaxen hair spilling down past unblemished shoulders - he had wanted him. The wherefore of whatever spell had so suddenly enraptured him were lost in the throes of his passion. Jonathan wanted boy, and thus had taken him. It was that simple.

Jonathan continued thrusting, lost in the vision of his comely companion writhing in silence. Passers-by could hear as he took in urgent breath as boy paused, shifting ever so slightly while still keeping his lover deep inside. The child rose up once, working his hips and driving th abbot into new throes of ecstasy. Again the pair moved together, features contorted in paroxysms of perverse delight. The jonathan thrust forward a third time, and the boy came down hard, face twisted into an unrecognizable feral mask as the monk screamed in agony.

Something moved toward Jonathan, surging from deep within the boy's bowels. It skittered through the fey child and into Jonathan, crawling inside his sex and distending the sides. Each continued thrust - for he would not, could not stop - was accompanied by a searing sensation, intensely painful, yet strangely pleasurable. The moving thing was a swarm, Jonathan realized in a moment of horrific lucidity between thrusts; he could feel the chittering things forcing their way into him. He screamed and pitched, but could not throw off the boy; the child-monster's thighs held him a sensual death-grip.

The torment and pleasure in tandem became unspeakable. At length, Jonathan could hear the wet snap of his hip cracking, yielding to stresses a mortal frame was never meant to bear. He fell, sprawling, into the merciful gulf of unconsciousness.

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## Clanbook Baali

The abbot spent the next fortnight in a fitful state of half-wakefulness. Vaguely he wondered why none of the monks came to see him; vaguely he wondered about his duties and masses. His nights were filled with visions of his torturer's leering face. Then there were the nightmares, surreal tableaux in which Jonathan's captor capered about his prostate form, pushing, prodding, cutting. There were scenes which played dangerously close to the edge of sanity, in which the monster squatted over Jonathan's face, forcing blood - salty maggot and formless writhing masses into his mouth, then holding his jaws shut and forcing him to swallow.

The days, if night could be separated from day in the perpetual darkness enshrouding him, were worse. On those occasions when sleep deserted him, Jonathan, raw, rent and broken, was exquisitely aware of every sensation his tortured nerves brought him. His tongue, cracked, parched and swollen from countless stings, was about the only thing he could move. Flies landed on his eyes and he could not so much as blink to dislodge them. They were a constant companion in his torment, their buzz an excited drone against the slow beat of his heart. Misshapen creatures and vermin crawled and slithered over his bloated body, and a unseen thing - things - moved within his abdomen with chilling deliberation.

Then, one night, he awakened to find his captor waiting for him. The child was seated upon his chest, stealing his breath and staring him full in the face with black, bottomless eyes. The boy's body was cold, Jonathan noted, as cold as the corpses he had laid out for burial. More of the insects scampered across Jonathan to scuttle onto the boy-thing's naked form, welcoming his presence. Countless black forms darted in and out of the boy's nose, his smiling mouth, his groin.

"You have cow's eyes," the youth hissed as he idly caressed Jonathan's face. The boy spoke in a voice that too old, too evil to come from a child. Whatever spoke in that voice had known degradation beyond imagining. Jonathan moaned, terrified his tormentor would scoop out his eyes with small, cold fingers.

"Cow's eyes," the creature mused, retrieving a threaded needle attached to a skein of silk from beside Jonathan's prostate form. "The same wide-eyed gaze as a beast of the field. It marks you as unaware, unsuspecting, not yet opened with understanding. It betrays you as prey."

The creature pushed the needle into his own palm, passing it through his hand and out the other side. Without pausing, he then pinched the fat of the abbot's gut into a small fold and slid the needle through, eliciting whimpers of pain and fear.

"I can see your thoughts through those eyes, Jonathan," the best continued, eyes wide as he held his victim down. Slowly he continued to sew into abbot's flesh, embroidering it with ancient patterns. "I can your fears. Oh, don't worry, I won't take your eyes from you now. They'll be needed later."

Each wound closed scant seconds after the needle's passage, made whole by the potent vitae that soaked the thread, but Jonathan kept trying to scream until no more sounds escaped his mouth. Silently, his body was wracked with shudders.

"Here," the abbot's grinning assailant finally said, pausing to place Jonathan's hand over his own swollen groin. "Squeeze that, if you will, and think about what you want. It will help to pass the time while I tell you should know before apotheosis."

## Chapter Two: Dissonant Echoes

*The voice you hear is one and all Baali; it is third person and first, neutral and personal. Why?  
Because no one voice speaks the entire truth.  
----- The Voice of Truth*

### ***Eight In Eternity: A Fragment of Baali History***

Excerpts from the Distrustful Dreams of Angra Mainyu the Deceiver, High Priest of Baali

First, o my best beloved, is the number of the ancestor, whose name is not known.  
It is our origin - the Circle of Unending Truth, the elemental singularity of being.  
It is the unseeing eye of our dread lord, and the passage into world through which he peers.  
It is our conclusion - the return of our masters, the time when all will again be one.

Second are the razored blades of the beast, the blood-drenched shores on which man and bull dance. Ariadne's shining thread winds its way between worlds there, leading the seeker into the maze.

It is our inexorable might - the fist that lashes forth to breach the barriers between profane and celestial, and rises again and again to smite all unbelievers.

It is our enemy - the battle host of the brutish fools whose armies unmade our unity in crete.

Tripartite is the infantile heresy of those who make kings of children, kneel before false gods, and waste the lives of thousands in an incomplete understanding of the mysteries of life and death.

It is the Folly of Egypt - a place where our brethren walk among serpents and serpent-lovers, and great monuments are erected to the paltry lives of insignificant men.

It is our dominion - a bridge between earth and sky, and all that lies within the world and beyond it.

Four is the number of the crossed timbers of the carpenter, he who wears a hundred names and is to be our greatest adversary. Four are the fables formed from his death, and four the winds an which his blasphemous drivel shall be spread.

It is a testament to their conviction - the suffering, sacrifice, and strength born of belief that can thwart our smaller designs.

It is our warning - a constant reminder that, for good or ill, ours are not the only masters.

Six are the intersecting corners of heaven and earth, the indistinct boundaries between this world and beyond; twice six are the tribes ruled over by a ragged shepherd-king, he whose brothel's bounty of blood is paid unto his people again and again across six land and six oceans.

It is a carefully crafted prison - fetters of hidebound tradition and laws to which we are no subject.

Seventh is the number of the new comer, mohammed, the one who submits, camel-driver who moves the black stones and forces his flock westward to mecca, merchant who teaches the

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trade of tolerance and, in the same breath, trains pupils to extract their pilgrim's price in pounds of infidel flesh.

It is the spiked helm and curved blade of blind hostility, and fear of the unknown, the unknowable.

It is our covenant: pinpricks of our masters' blinding light shining forth from the night skies.

Eighth is the number of the ancient, he whom the wardens of wisdom name Zarathustra. Eight, too, are his revelations, eight points ensconcing the circles of the oldest mystery, sought by the servants of the two true masters, once halves of the same whole.

It is a great gulf, a whirling vortex of empty platitudes calling itself the bridge of the separator.

It is fortunes's wheel, a war lord's wheel which will reverse course to crush a people it once favored.

And here, o my children, heirs to the power and promise that is your birthright, unwavering notes one and many in the unheard, unconquerable symphony that is our father's song, you have seen the inconsistency.

The inconsistency is here, o my beloved. Here all begins, and ends, to begin anew. Five are the essences of existence: five senses, hermes' five elements, Caine's five childer, five ages of man.

It is a number indivisible, an endless circuit devoid of symmetry and resolution; a five fold pattern without beginning or end, portal and protector, an enigma incomprehensible to the mind.

Infinity

Our destiny

### ***The First Tribe***

There was a time before it all, when heaven's hosts were still one and humanity was but a lump of unformed clay. It was then the Lord - or Allah, or El, or Yahweh, or whatever else you wish to call "It" - proclaimed "Let there be light," and there was. The darkness had spawned its own children, however, and they suffered terribly beneath the brand of the inquisitor God. In those ancient days, the sky was ablaze with his wrath. His luminance scoured the world like Greek fire and struck the foundations of existence like a battering ram. The children, the offspring of Night, fell from their heavenly moorings and plummeted to the ground like falling stars wreathed in flame. Most of the Children were blackened husks by the time they struck the earth, but some few survived long enough to seek refuge. As the Children's fall had split the earth, great chasms opened into the lightless depths. The survivors of the Fall crawled into the fractured ground. There slumber overtook them, and they allowed time to seal them in their dirt wombs. Humanity, formed to satisfy the narcissist God, never knew of the hallowed ground they trod upon. Ignorantly, they built cities over the graves of the Children, all unknowing of the power that attracted them to these places. Like flies drawn to the sweet aroma of decay, they raised their temples and altars to the heavens, even as they were moved by the dark dreams of what lay buried beneath their monuments.

A band of mortals we call the first tribe were the first living creatures to come across one of night's offspring. While digging a well just outside the fledgling city of Ashur, the first tribe uncovered one of the Children. It writhed and screamed beneath God's eye, the sun, and cursed his name. Each of the beast's words carried power and the ground shook when the dying sleeper called out its true name. The beast could not save itself with words, however. Its flesh bubbled like wax and melted away, revealing bone, muscle and burning flesh. It called out to its brethren, crying for rescue and for succor, but its cries went unattended. The Child perished within a few minutes, its flesh climbing to the skies as poisoned smoke. This brief revelation, however, was enough to change the first tribe forever. The Child's words carried with them seeds of darkness that infected those responsible for uncovering the dread beast.

The first tribe had heard the names of other Children when the first one had cried out, and touched by the power in those names, could now hear their murmurs through the wind. The dark sleepers whispered to them through the moans of the dying as the first tribe learned to mude, and sang of untold power in the screams of those they raped and killed. In turn, the first tribe saw the power that the dead Children possessed and coveted these gifts for themselves. They sought out the chthonic sleepers, whispered to them while they slumbered and prostituted their souls to them.

In exchange for sponsorship from the Children, the first tribe became their acolytes. The mortals accepted the burden of remembering their master's existence when they vanquished them from mortal memory. The first tribe accepted the bargain in bad faith, however, believing that by knowing the true names of these malignant creatures they would have true power over them. Such is the ignorance of primitive people. Knowing something's true name gives it sway over you as well. Power is never free for the taking, or for the giving.

You may have noticed that I am vague with the terms I use, that I neither name the first tribe nor its patrons. Such omission is deliberate. Certain names have the power to echo across the worlds when intoned, and there are always things listening for those names to be spoken. Even knowing these names is akin to catching a disease, a kind of leprous affliction that atrophies the soul. Speaking those names spreads the contagion.



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The first tribe grew strong in the flesh, but withered in spirit as they passed this alimant on to their children and grandchildren. Worse yet, by playing with these cursed names, the first tribe made the Children more aware of the world outside of their dreams. The only thing that tethered the Children to reality was their names, and each time a name was called, that tether pulled a Child closer to wakefulness.

Eventually, the first tribe realized that their servitude was worthless. Because of their actions, soon the ancient masters would awaken and stride the world like colossi. Plagues would spread in the wake of each titan step, and the tribe's service would not protect them from death and darkness. Belatedly, the acolytes of the Children did the only thing they could: They hid the accursed names within their thoughts, never daring to speak them, to breathe power into them, to tempt the Children closer to consciousness. This act served its purpose, barely; deprived of a steady stream of sustenance, the Children remained teetering on the border between dream and waking. Fortunately, the sleepers did not know they still slept; they lived in their dreams, rulling a shadow world that existed only in their fevered imaginations. But to keep the Children trapped in these fever dreams took power, as much power as had been wasted over the centuries in calling the Children closer to wakefulness. To keep the Children asleep, the first tribe tortured their brethren, raped their own children, mutilated themselves, devoured the weak in cannibalistic orgies and wallowed in filth and degradation. Sacrificing waht shreds of morality remained to them, they filled the dreams of these monsters with the sounds of anguish and misery, keeping them asleep with a murderer's lullaby. As long as there was sufficient rapine in the monster's dream-worlds, they would not stir to seek it elsewhere.

The true names od these creatures still carried power, however, and the first tribe was not stupid enough to turn their backs on this magic completely. Human acolytes formed cults around the various entities and learned to dilute the names of the Children. Taking the Root of s name and changing it, or masking it behind foreign mortal languages enabled a sufficiently cunning priest to draw upon a fraction of a sleeping entity's might have been, but the risk was also proportionally lessened, and for these priests that was good enough.

It is ironic that the creatures you know now as demons were once revered as Mesopotamian deities - who were in demoniac Children. You may sleep well knowing that the names assigned to the Children these days hold little power - centuries and generations of conquering languages have diluted their strength to almost nothing. Occadionally, however, some fool stumbles across a correct string of letters and intones it well enough to capture... unwanted attention. The Children slumber fitfully yet, and their dreams are less pleasing to them than once they were.

### ***Wells of Sacrifice***

The first tribe, under the guise of various mystery cults, served the faceless entities for many generations. They played a careful game of taking power without compromising their survival. As other tribes waxed powerful, members of the first tribe came to them as priests and holy women, bringing them learning, rites and rituals. They also brought with them the worship and abuse of the power of the Children, but masked it well, so that entire cities turned their strength to serving the Children without knowing that they were doing so.

The strongest cult dwelt in the city of Ashur, tending to a now-hidden well and protecting the remains of the first Child uncovered generations earlier. The well was a marvel and a terror to the people of Ashur, but they never wavered in their reverence. Over the centuries, the cult of Ashur made constant sacrifice into the great well. When Ashur made war on other cities, they sacrificed prisoners and slaves; when Ashur was at peace, they stole livestock and children with which to make offering. Victims were eviscerated and their blood collected in stone jars; organs were carefully removed, read for augury and tossed in the well to rest on top of previous victims' corpses. When no augury was needed, cultists tore sacrifices limb from limb with their hands and teeth, then threw the broken bodies into the well. Come nightfall, the collected blood would be poured over the still-warm corpses, brewing a draught of corruption and rotting flesh in which great swarms of flies buzzed and bred.

This ritual of murder and dismemberment, however, could not go unnoticed forever. Other powers of death walked the world even in those days, and knew when reverence was done unto them.

Is it any surprise, then, that a Cainite of great power and majesty found the well one night! The priests of the first tribe raised their voices against him, using even the forbidden incantations, but they were as wheat before the storm. The power of his voice struck the priests dumb and silenced their cries; his gaze struck down the weak-minded and feeble. Those who were strong in body but not in mind he ripped limb from limb, then tossed aside as long shreds of flesh. Those who were strong of mind but not of body, he commanded to rend their own bodies with long knives, and they did so. Those who were comely he forced to couple, then he melted the flesh of their bodies and their bones together. He drew forth their ribs from their bodies so that each thrust was an impalement, and watched as they died. For the Cainite had witnessed their rites, and found them wanting. He had seen their rituals, and wished to show them that their depravities and atrocities were as nothing, that they were children playing at evil. And lest none remain to learn his lesson, he tossed the bodies of his playthings into their own pit, and let flow his own vitae into the well. Three mortals survived to lap up the blood that he gave unto them; only three, from the hundreds who had worshipped at the well.

The following evening, these three victims clawed their way out of the organ pit. They were filthy with gore, caked in blood and howling with unquenched fury and madness. Their creator had abandoned them; their patrons had deserted them. They were mad and hateful and thirsty for death.

The Baali had been born.

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### ***The Three***

Three Baali arose from the well of carrion, each equal to the others in power. Three Cainites howled madness at the uncaring stars, each thrice removed from Caine in blood. The three Baali did not know the name of their sire, but as they learnt more about their existence, each came to ascribe his existence to a different progenitor, and to hate his fellows for hewing to different beliefs.

The first of the three was Nergal, the terror behind the legend of the Babylonian deity. He remained within the cradling arms of the Tigris and Euphrates, eventually establishing the city of his cult, Mashkan-shapir. Of the three, he was the most adept in dealing with other Cainites. He believed his sire to be none other than Ashur, who bore the name of the city where the Baali were born. He chose to Embrace those outside the first tribe.

The second of the three was Moloch, who went by the names Andramelech and Ba'al Hammon. He was the progenitor of several orders, including the Avatars of the Swarm. Like the proverbial plague of locusts, he spread the Baali across the Phoenician Empire. He mostly Embraced those descended from the first tribe.

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***ASHUR THE UNNAMED***

Few mysteries of any sort have plagued Cainite scholars with such persistence and urgency as the details of the origins of the Baali, not to mention the identity of their mysterious progenitor. There are many, many tales; mutually contradictory accounts that blame everyone from Caine to Saulot to demon-kings of the mysterious East for the plague that is the Baali.

The libraries of European ancients are rife with accounts of a Mesopotamian slave-boy, sole survivor of a long-dead empire, who was supposedly "brought into darkness" by an ageless wanderer.

Arabic legends instead point to the ruins of a forgotten city, erected in the crater of chorazin, where "a ball of blinding flame, shining as even the Eye of Allah, fell from the heavens." In this city, these legends maintain, a lost nomadic tribe was unwittingly snared into the service of "the fly-king whose minions ride the bodies of men."

Still older, Eastern apocrypha tell of a warrior-philosopher-Ashur, god-king of an unconquered empire, "great king, legitimate king, king of the world, king of Assyria, king of all the four rims of the earth, who rules from the Upper Sea to the Lower Sear." This semi-mythical ruler's continued efforts to push boundaries of his realm eastward, past Thebes and the cruel peaks of the Zagros, ended in failure...

...And enigma.

Chaldean lore traces the Baali progenitor to the northlands of Cappadocia. Other sources insist his concealment and desire for seclusion, Assyrian or otherwise, stemmed from a hideous deformity he carried back with him from the Far East: a third, unsleeping eye, which, legend has it, could see into the fear, secrets, and dark desires of man.

Which tales contain the truth? Were the Baali born of Ashur-Called-Cappadocious? An unmade ancient From the East? Gentle Salute himself? Or another wellspring entirely?

The secret may lie hidden forever. In the meantime, there is no shortage of speculation, though scholars who draw too close to the truth find themselves studied in turn...

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### **The Lords**

Vampires have always assumed that the name "Baali" referred to Baal, the Canaanite deity of fertility. It does not. The name instead serves a dual significance, born from the cultures of ancient Mesopotamia.

The name of the Baali stems from the word Ba'al, meaning "Lord." Throughout Phoenicia, for example, every town had a Ba'al - Lord - or Ba'alat - Lady - who was undisputed master of city. Ba'alat of Berytus was a nymph whom Adonis loved, Heracles had the title of Ba'al of Tyre, and Chartage worshipped Moloch as Ba'al Hammon. The Bloodline's name is thus an indication of the Baali's self-assigned importance, but it is also a means of hiding one's real name. A person who identifies himself as Baali and by no other title protects his true name, and forces others to call him by a name of power.

The Mesopotamian empires used the appellation Ba'al to hide the names of their gods, thus preventing other cultures from "wooing" their deities away. The Baali adopted this practice to hide the identities of secret lords, and ascribed the name Ba'al to the sleeping Children. Cainites stumbling across Baali scriptures mistakenly drew a connection between the beings the Baali called Ba'al, and the entity by name whom mortals worshipped. This served the Baali well enough, as it obscured the names of Children even further even as it degraded the bloodline's perceived origins.

Meanwhile, Ba'al, through legend alone, turned into Baal-zebu or Beelzebub the demon. He became the "Lord of the Flies" when the israelites worshipping Jehovah told the Philistines that Beelzebub was a god of "Litle things," such as flies and bugs. During the first Crusades, Ventrue-backed Knights Templar uncovered a sect of Avatars of the Swarm - an ancient Baali sect worshipping plagues of insects - in Tyre. Unsurprisingly, the Crusaders drew an erroneous connection between these Baali and Beelzebub, "Lord of Flies," further cementing the mistaken perception.

Unfortunately, the Baali of the last millennium have fallen prey to their own propaganda. Younger Baali mistakenly believe in the mortal version of Baal as their patron demon, rather than seeing "Ba'al" as a title ascribed to the true powers the bloodline venerates. This misconception aggravates the rift between the various orders and generations of Baali.

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The name of the third of the three, and even its gender, remain a mystery. Nergal and Moloch rarely spoke of their sibling, but each would grow wroth at the mention of the third. Some claim the third Baali was the lover of one or the other, or both; others claim that it was in fact a pair of lovers merged at the organ pit. The presence of hermaphroditic deities in various ancient pantheons is evidence of such, supporters of the latter notion claim.

The most popular explanation is that the third Baali is female, but even those who accept this idea argue vehemently as to her name. Some support the notion that the third is Zillah; others claim Lilith herself. Still others say she has no name and is simply called the Crone.

Throughout the ages, dozens of usurpers claiming to be the third one have come forward under a host of names: Pazuzu, Ahriman and even Ba'al himself. All were charlatans, ofcourse, and each was revealed and destroyed in rum. Despite the many suppositions surrounding this apocryphal third Baali, there are some historical questions best not probed too closely. Loose tongues have a way of being cut out, especially when they wag with tales that the third was none other than the revered Saulot himself.

### **NERGAL'S LEGACY**

In Moloch's words, Nergal was the whore of the Baali. He was powerful, but self-centered to a dangerous fault, and fully convinced of his own dark divinity. He consorted with other children of Cain before they knew any better, and wormed their secrets out of them through pretty words and seductive whispers. Nergal served as Arikel's wench, traded secret vices with the Antediluvian Tzimisce and debated philosophy with Troile. How he must have laughed at their stupidity.

Nergal's center of power was Mashkan-shapir, a city on the banks of the Tigris. It was a place of wondrous advancements for its time -- it boasted two harbors within its battlements, river streets for ships and a temple to Nergal over a quarter of the city in size. Mashkan-shapir served as the center for Mesopotamian Baali for centuries, sheltering the malignant darkness beneath the skirt of its walls. In his vast temple, Nergal conducted corrupt rites, afflicting his mortal followers with plagues and sloughing the flesh off their bones with which to decorate his temple interior.

Within Mashkan-shapir, Nergal was god. According to myth, he was the Lord of the Underworld and consort to Ereshkigal, the princess of the Kingdom of Shadows. The D'habi, a line of ghoulish priests well trained by Nergal, managed his temple. They served their master loyally and without any hint of mortal or moral compunction.

Nergal's knowledge of the Children's true names was by far the most complete of all the Baali. Fortunately, through the efforts of the first tribe, the original names of the Children had long since been lost. Nergal was forced to rely on secondary names and false titles with which to elicit help, and as such he was far weaker than he might have been. This knowledge of his inadequacy gnawed at Nergal, who plotted ceaselessly to add to his power.

Nergal's dark hungers drove him to commit abomination upon abomination, and when prophecy told him how it might be accomplished, he grew willing to sacrifice his own city in return for power. Demons and lesser creatures had whispered to Nergal that a Child slept beneath Mashkan-shapir; the mortals had supposedly sensed his presence and named him Namtaru, Spreader of Plagues. Nergal knew how to contact this sleeper through rituals of summoning, but did not know the sleeper's true name. Nor could he locate Namtaru's body despite massive excavations beneath the city, though he drove his subjects to tear up all that they had built in the search. At length Nergal decided that the only way to awaken Namtaru was to offer him a suitable sacrifice. The form that sacrifice would take was to be the mortals of Mashkan-shapir.

To feed the sleeping Namtaru, Nergal planned to release virulent and deadly plagues upon his own populace, but his own priests betrayed him. In fear for their lives, D'habi ghouls sought out Moloch and told him of Nergal's machinations. They understood the danger of awakening Namtaru and knew that their master would sacrifice all to the delusion of his own godhead. Moloch, wishing to prevent a Baali "civil war" with Nergal's children, in turn betrayed his brother to the clans. The move cost the bloodline dearly, but there was no other way. Other Cainites were already suspicious of the Baali, and Moloch's revelations strengthened their fears, but the alternative was too terrible to contemplate. The hatred of the clans would be as nothing to the appetites of an awakened Child.

The clans played the part Moloch expected of them. They assaulted Mashkan-shapir -- albeit in highly disorganized fashion -- and slaughtered the already disease-infected populace. The corpses were heaped on pyres and reduced to ash in order to end their contagion forever, and then the city itself bore the Cainites' wrath. They razed each building to the ground, but Nergal's power

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shielded his temple against intruders. Against the barriers Nergal had erected, even the mightiest Cainites hurled themselves in vain.

Finally, Lasombra priests to the goddess Ereshkigal, using powers now lost to the clan, penetrated the temple through the shadows that hovered within and flooded Nergal's haven with liquid darkness. Nergal and his remaining loyal followers were washed away by the black tide and vanished into whatever domain from which the Lasombra summon their servants.

Mashkan-shapir died on that day. The Baali charade with the clans was over, however, and many from the bloodline had already been destroyed as a result. Others, more wary, slipped away into the wide world to work their rituals in seclusion.

## **MOLOCH AND THE ORPHANED**

Moloch was far quieter and less brash than Nergal. He saw the ancient Children as necessary tools, yes, but he knew that to awaken them was to invite disaster. Moloch advocated the pursuit of quiet agendas and subtle machinations, a direction that displeased many Baali. Regardless, Moloch's word was law among the remaining Baali. Any who dared to question him felt his wrath. Moloch's tongue burnt like acid when it touched flesh, and few survived his attentions long. Some few did, and bore their scarred flesh as mute witness to Moloch's displeasure.

When Mashkan-shapir fell, the Baali dispersed throughout the Fertile Crescent, Arabia Felix and North Africa. They hid in Sidon and Tripoli along the Mediterranean, claimed Wabar in Arabia and remained ensconced in Ashur on the Tigris. The Akkadians ruled Mesopotamia and the D'habi switched allegiance from Nergal to the Baali (serving the bloodline as a revenant family).

As Moloch suggested, the Baali remained hidden, pursuing their agendas quietly, watching and waiting over the following centuries as new mortal empires came to the fore. Sumerian, Babylonian and Akkadian pantheons absorbed and renamed old deities -- some of them masks of the Children to fit their own purposes. Most Mesopotamian "gods" were fictitious creations of mundane imaginations, but occasionally, an actual name of power surfaced in a foreign pantheon. How certain mortals came to learn of these things, the Baali never knew, but by pride and lineage, the Baali believed those names were theirs to use and theirs alone. The first tribe, from which the Baali were descended, had been the first to discover the power of names; that knowledge was theirs by right. Alas for the Baali, then, that someone betrayed their knowledge. The traitor sowed the seeds that would blossom into true infernalism by spreading names of power to other vampires. Moloch never realized this traitor was none other than Nergal himself. All the details of this horror, however, unfold later.

Another problem facing the Baali was the emergence of those called the Orphaned. These were descendants of Nergal who found themselves bereft of a sponsor following the destruction of Mashkan-shapir. Various orders under Moloch tried to indoctrinate those they could, but many refused to join the servitors of their ancestor's Judas. Some followed lesser philosophies and espoused the worship of minor names -- and here we see the roots of the Baali who believed in mortals' feeble Baal as their god. In general, however, the Orphaned were not subtle in their actions, nor did they see the harm in summoning various heralds of darkness to this world.

To pursue and punish these wayward factions would have cost Moloch much time and effort, and he was weary still from the battle with his brother. He allowed the Orphaned to continue to exist, lying to himself with the excuse these fools served him better as decoys, boogeymen to serve as a distraction for the Baali's enemies. Rationalization firmly in place, Moloch allowed them to exist. He encouraged their acts of senseless barbarity and mockingly applauded their so-called "accomplishments" because it diverted attention away from him and his goals. Cainites destroyed the cults of Pazuzu, Ahriman, Baal and Mot in turn, never realizing the fools that they massacred were weak and worthless in the grand scheme of things. No great evil was destroyed in these crusades of blood; only nests of self-important fools. While this distraction served Moloch well, it also weakened his position within the bloodline. Despite threats of torture and even death, more and more Baali defected to the ranks of the lesser Orphaned. Some of the traitors were potent Baali, and brought with them names of power.



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As the years passed, this trend continued. Though the Orphaned were troublesome, Moloch's brood was safe from most external attention. Their greatest adversary, however, would soon arise from within the bloodline itself.

## **SHAITAN, THE GREAT DECEIVER**

Two millennia before the birth of Christ, Shaitan made his presence known in Ashur. He appeared out of nowhere powerful, ancient and devious beyond any the Baali had ever seen. He claimed to be the bloodline's progenitor, father to the first three, and grandsire to all the rest. The Orphaned flocked to Shaitan's banner, but Moloch remained quiet on the matter. He forbade those beneath him from fraternizing with Shaitan, but took no other action. The Baali later learned Moloch had been granted visions of the destruction to come, and he sought a means of weathering the coming storm rather than rushing into senseless conflict. Other Baali were not privy to this knowledge, though, and thought his inaction was cowardice.

The Orphaned quickly rallied beneath Shaitan's flag; those who refuted his claims of lineage died of a virulent plague that turned Cainite vitae into dust. In response, Moloch gathered the strongest Baali who were still loyal to him and took refuge within the cities of the Phoenicians along the Mediterranean coast. Only a few trusted disciples remained with Moloch in hiding.

As the older Baali suspected, this Shaitan was a charlatan. Unfortunately, he was a potent charlatan with many secrets, the first of which was his identity. Shaitan was Nergal. His previous attempt to summon Namtaru, the D'habi's betrayal of him and his supposed destruction at Mashkan-shapir had all been an elaborate ruse. There was only one kernel truth to the entire matter: Nergal did indeed intend to awaken Namtaru, but quickly realized he had neither the support nor the time to complete his plans. So Nergal did the only thing he could, and acted exactly as they all expected -- to a point.

Nergal told the D'habi to betray him, and conditioned them to forget they were following his orders. He infected the populace of his own city to lend weight to his threat and then waited for the repercussions. When Mashkan-shapir fell, it was one of Nergal's childer, disguised as the Methuselah, who vanished in the flood of darkness. The real Nergal had long since traveled to Ashur.

Over the centuries, Nergal sent a small supply of blood to the D'habi so that they could bind their children to him with the Blood-Oath. This kept the family blood-loyal to the Baali Methuselah. With the D'habi as his eyes, ears and hands, Nergal infiltrated the Baali orders and learned their secrets. When the time came for his return, Nergal knew his enemies and their weaknesses intimately. He then infected enemies with the blood-dust plague by poisoning the vitae of his ghouls, or assassinated Baali opponents using a corrupt sect of Assamites -- who will be discussed later. The D'habi, however, remained his perfect assassins and spies.

When Nergal chose to appear again, he did so under the guise of Shaitan. His centuries of isolation served him well, for he knew that Namtaru's resting place was in fact north of Galilee. He seemed to regard Moloch as beneath his contempt. Shaitan ignored his brother for centuries and spun a web of lies to enthrall the more gullible Baali. He promised them a kingdom of darkness and built Chorazin, a palace of shadows, over Namtaru's tomb. What Shaitan really needed followers for, though was as foot soldiers to delay his enemies while he reawakened his lord.

Shaitan eventually uncovered Namtaru's desiccated but dormant form, and brought the giant sleeper to Crete, which had been a stronghold of the Orphaned before Shaitan's arrival. The bloodline then constructed a great maze below Knossos, around the body of Namtaru, to focus the ritual of awakening. It is said Shaitan peeled open the skulls of 700 mortals, studying the surface canals and chasms of the brain as inspiration for his labyrinth. Baali who were not privy to the

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Methuselah's methods believed the maze spelt out the true names of dark entities Shaitan was trying to awaken, and wandered its corridors tracing sigils of power with their footsteps. Fed by sacrifice and song, Namtaru grew stronger. The waters around Crete turned blood-red, quenching the thirst of any Baali who waded in it, and the sun refused to shine on her shores. Namtaru himself stirred, exercising its will to shield the island from the accursed light that vanquished it eons ago. The Child's very presence caused nature itself to recoil from his touch, turning water to vitae and air to smoke. From far and wide the scattered Baali came to Crete, drawn by whispers in their dreams. Shaitan was ready to unmake the world as soon as his lord awakened, and wished as many of his brethren as possible to bear witness.

In an unusual show of solidarity, the clans united to stop Shaitan. They could not breach the island's defenses, and so were forced to drastic measures. Calling upon ancient powers, they commanded the island of Thera to belch forth a cataclysm. Earthquakes, titanic waves, a storm of ash and a torrent of liquid fire claimed Knossos; Shaitan reputedly died when the labyrinth partially collapsed and the ritual of summoning was interrupted. Namtaru, buried again, fell back into fitful slumber. It was too weak to awaken completely, but grew more aware of the world around it. It was no longer trapped in dreams.

## ***Desperately Seeking Satan***

A sect of Christian-born Baali believe Satan is already walking among society. Following Christ's crucifixion, according to Christian theologians, the Son of God journeyed to Hell before ascending to Heaven. During His sojourn into Hell, Christ reputedly defeated Satan and rescued Adam from the torments of the afterlife. He then sealed Hell for one millennium, at the end of which time Satan would supposedly return with his son, the Antichrist.

After announcing this revelation, the Church belatedly realized that without Hell to serve as a threat for the wicked, even the devout could act without fear of retribution in the afterlife. To staunch the spiritual bleeding, Christianity borrowed Limbo from the Greeks and Romans as the temporary opposite to Heaven. The prescribed millennium passed, however, and still there was no evidence of Satan anywhere on the horizon. Church theologians then theorized that Satan was already on the Earth, wreaking havoc and mischief in subtle ways while preparing for his attempt to storm Heaven.

Many Christian-born Baali believe this theory, and commit flagrant acts of depravity in hopes that Satan will acknowledge them. While the terrible reputation consigned to the Baali is well-earned, this segment of the bloodline is by far the most violent and blatant in its activities. Indeed, these would-be Satanists are the reason most believe the Baali to worship Christian devils - they certainly proclaim that they do so loudly and often.

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Although Nergal is long gone, his legacy is not. Occasionally, another "Shaitan" surfaces, claiming to be the original. More often than not, this new Shaitan gathers a small group of followers before whatever Cainites are in the vicinity destroy him. Invariably, a weak "Shaitan" will gather a cult of those who accept him as the returned messiah or caliph, then feed on their devotion and sacrifice until such time as he is annihilated, and his followers with him. Most Baali dismiss the impostors as suicidal glory-hounds; a few wonder if they are stalking horses for Nergal or even the real Shaitan, lulling the Baali into complacency so that a real return might be relatively unopposed.

Nergal is also responsible for humanity's familiarity with certain names of power. Nergal did learn the true name of his master before the end, but was afraid to share his information with anyone. He did, however, distribute secondary and masked names to humanity and lesser Baali, so as to weaken Moloch's monopoly over knowledge. These inferior names were still useful enough for petitioning "demons" for small boons and gifts, however. The practice of true name rituals spread from the Baali to other Cainites, eventually blossoming into the practice of infernalism.

## **THE FRACTURING AND CARTHAGE**

With the collapse of Knossos, Shaitan was gone, though his foul legacy remained. The Orphaned were lost without his guidance and control, and fracturing under the growing religions of the kine. New orders formed around the monotheistic cults of Judaism, Mithraicism and Zoroastrianism. The Orphaned claimed they infiltrated these cults to corrupt the beliefs of man, but they sought the subversion of these new doctrines only because they lacked direction and guidance. In essence, they needed to believe in something else -- or at least have something to work against. Witnessing this, Moloch's Baali knew their lesser brethren had become like the cattle they tortured. They no longer knew whom they worshipped or why.

Having wearied of Tyre, Berytus and Sidon, Moloch gathered his disparate allies and left for Carthage on the northern coast of Africa. Carthage was, in the remaining centuries before the coming of Christianity, the jewel of the Mediterranean. She was the premiere power of the oceans and wealthy beyond comprehension. It was a perfect playground for Moloch.

The Baali claimed Carthage's shadows as surely as the Brujah claimed her structures and populace. Do not allow the Brujah to tell you otherwise when you speak with them. In their desire to build something greater than Caine's Second City, they consorted with the Baali. Whether it was to gain more power in the courts of Carthage, to increase personal wealth or improve their standing within the dan, young and old Brujah alike secretly petitioned the bloodline to enrich their holdings and help immortalize their city. Slowly, deliberately, subtly, the Baali desensitized the Brujah to the growing brutality of their own actions. It was the Baali who advised the Brujah to make ghouls of Hannibal's war elephants, so that the animals could withstand their journey across the Alps and wreak that much more havoc. It was so much easier for this dan of "philosophers" to embrace and drain their victims when the Baali convinced them it was for the greater good of the city to do so. Oh, the Brujah deny it now, but in Carthage, Moloch rose to become Ba'al-Hammon, a god. Troile even looked the other way when kine sacrificed their children to Moloch, and when their limbs and organs filled the scarcely hidden Baali wells.

While Troile despised the Baali presence, he and Moloch had a special rapport that mystified all who witnessed it. Moloch suspected Troile of having a taste for Diablerie, and encouraged this aspect in him. Eventually, Troile would drain others to lessen his thirst, sharing his feasts with his beloved Moloch.

Over the centuries, it became easier for Moloch to talk Troile into committing various perversions. It started with the drinking of Cainite vitae, when the Baali Methuselah convinced Troile to drain his enemies as a lesson to others. That worsened the Antediluvian's thirst. Troile then embraced victims simply to drain them of their vitae. After a few decades of this, Troile began attending rites at the organ pit and watched as Baali sacrificed children in his presence. Although he never took part in the rituals, he watched quietly. Moloch once told his most trusted child, Tanit, that Troile came to the rituals to see if any shred of his conscience was left to decry the atrocities he witnessed. There was none. The Baali celebrated Troile's continuing plummet, not realizing that in the century of Moloch's friendship with the Antediluvian, the two had become Blood-Oathbound lovers.

When Carthage finally fell during the Third Punic War, the Brujah dream was already dead. Troile suffered the kind of quiet depression that eventually leads to the triumph of the Beast, and even his own childer deserted him. They fled mostly out of shame for what they had done in the

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name of Carthage, blaming the Baali and the Roman Ventrue for their weakness, of course. The Baali had merely shown the Brujah their true faces, and nothing more.

As Troile fought the invading Cainites who accompanied the Roman army, the Baali were shocked to see Moloch fighting alongside him. The Blood-Oath between the two forced Moloch onto the field of combat to protect his lover. The Baali saw both fall -- twined in each other's arms - - and melt into the ground. The Romans, guided by their Ventrue and Lasombra masters, salted the earth and performed rituals to prevent either Cainite from ever rising again. The Baali could have interceded, but Moloch had sadly proven himself weak. He allowed another to gain the advantage over him; despite his standing and lineage, he had earned, and thus was left to, his fate.

Following Carthage, the Brujah despised the Baali with special vigor. They say their uncontrollable rage comes from the loss of their ideals, and the Baali are inclined to agree. It is just that the Baali know that the Brujah lost their ideals, not when Carthage fell, but rather when they prostituted their ethics for power and legend. Deep down, the oldest Brujah know this. Such knowledge is a curse they will carry with them forever, and a wound the Baali enjoy salting when they can.

### **ROMAN EMPIRE & MONOTHEISM**

It took decades, but well after the fall of Carthage, the Baali successfully infiltrated Rome. The sheer number of Methuselahs vying for power in the Eternal City made it impossible for the bloodline to interact on a political level not that they wanted to -- but there were other avenues of influence. Cainites enjoy playing games of politics, but fledgling religions do not concern them. Only when a religion becomes an institution and not a code of ethics do they show any interest in manipulating it.

In the first centuries after the fall of Carthage, Rome was a hotbed of different faiths vying for attention and adherents. The populace had long since tired of the old pantheon of Roman gods, and sought enlightenment and divine favor from other sources. The strongest of these cults was that of the Ventrue Mithras. Mithraicism was a religion whose doctrines attracted the military, but one whose beliefs were open to slave and master alike. It preached moral obligation, prohibited divorce and demanded celibacy. It was a hard religion, but it had many acolytes among the elite of tired Rome. Unfortunately for the Baali, the Ventrue Methuselah Mithras and his childer controlled the cult tightly, and resisted any attempts at infernalist infiltration. The Baali could not find a way to erode support for this religion from within, ergo they chose to attack it from the outside.

While the cult of Mithras maintained multiple temples across Rome, Christianity hid in the catacombs. The Baali saw the potential within the cult of martyrs, however, as it offered forgiveness rather than demanding the stem morality of the Mithraists, and thus could be positioned in direct opposition. The Toreador Beshter and the Lasombra Montano also worked to raise Christianity to a place of ascendancy, and thus the Ventrue's attempt at a new and rigid state cult was smashed by an unlikely, unknowing alliance.

When Rome eventually fell to the Germanic hordes, the Baali believed Christianity had taken her last sharp breath. The Trinity of Methuselahs who went east to forge Constantinople, however, ensured it survived as part of the Eastern kingdom. In truth, the Baali were happy enough to see it continue; it was easy enough to manipulate arguments over doctrine into full-blown heresies in those fervid days.

### ***WINGS OF PLAGUE***

In the 6th century, the Baali discovered just how dangerous Shaitan's legacy still was. Although the Setites thoroughly controlled Egypt, Egyptian Baali hid in the shadows there. Many were followers of Shaitan who escaped the destruction of Knossos, and first among them was Hay-Tau, a child of Shaitan reputed to have learned some of his father's skills. Unfortunately, Hay-Tau was also a Setite thrall and responsible for betraying his own sire at Knossos.

Shaitan followed Namtaru, but hid his lord's true name carefully. His childer, on the other hand, worshipped this demon of plague through one of 36 other names. Under Christianity these names became known as the Decani, 36 spirits of disease. Hay-Tau must have learned more than just corrupted names, though, for he stirred Namtaru, the beast of plague, from his slumber.

The Baali's only warning of the danger to come was a blight that erupted from Egypt in A.D. 541. It spread to Constantinople -- killing thousands -- then skittered across Europe, to Britain and finally Ireland. The disease ran its course, dying out before it could murder the whole of Europe, but the devastation was terrible. Things would have been far worse had not Cainites -- Baali among them -- interceded and destroyed whole villages before infected citizens could spread the plague. The effort sufficed, even as Baali in the British Isles discovered that Nosferatu working for Hay-Tau spread the disease through their control over vermin.

The older Baali called for a pogrom against the Egyptian Baali and their agents, but the bloodline lacked the unity and strength to wage war, alone, on Setite soil. Those Baali loyal to Moloch's vision waited for what they thought was the end of the world while their lesser siblings continued their "mindless" ways. The end never arrived, however, and the Children remained dormant. The older Baali finally surmised that Hay-Tau lacked the power of his sire, and could not awaken Namtaru despite his best efforts. Unfortunately, the bloodline missed the opportunity to act upon Hay-Tau's weakness. Islam was rising in the east, throwing the Levant into a maelstrom and preoccupying the Baali with new problems.



## ***THE NIGHT OF BREAD AND PARCHMENT***

Following the birth of Islam, the Baali faced a battle on two fronts. The first was the prophet Mohammed's war against the pagans of Mecca. While nobody expected the self-styled holy-man to emerge victorious, he won two successive battles, and, at the time he attracted the Baali's attention, was on the verge of winning his third. The city of Mecca itself would have been a minor loss to the Baali, since its sole importance was the Kaaba, an edifice where adherents paid worship to several pagan deities. The main threat posed by Mohammed, however, was the startling unification of the Assamites beneath the prophet's banner. Several infernal assassins who worshipped Arabian demons made Mecca their home, and if the city were taken by Mohammed, and were the city to fall those Assamites would almost certainly be destroyed by the invaders.

By the time the Baali received the news, however, it was too late. Mecca had fallen to Mohammed, and the Islamic Assamites had captured their rebellious brethren. Unfortunately, that was not the end of the matter. The corrupted assassins confessed under torture, revealing all they knew of the Baali. The united Assamites used this knowledge to sweep through Arabia Felix and the Fertile Crescent, destroying a dozen nests in under a week. They also eliminated the Baali's hold over the cities of Baghdad, Yathrib, Acre and Sidon. Any Baali they captured were hung upside-down in shielded boxes and left in the sun. Each box had one pinprick-sized hole that allowed a thin ray of sunshine through. Moving slowly as the sun set, the beam would travel across the body of the Baali, cutting him in half like a slow hot blade.

After each raid, the Assamites left behind leaves of unleavened bread as their signature; a move of arrogance, perhaps, but a vain and foolish mistake nonetheless. Stung by the hunt and by the insult, six of the strongest Baali nests met at the Iblis-al-Akbar organ pit in Damascus to perform a ritual to counter the dan of assassins. The ritual took months to prepare, during which time the Baali used two captured Assamites and sacrificed over 200 mortals. Each victim ingested a drop of assassin blood before the Baali hung them upside-down and affixed weighted hooks to their flesh. The weights pulled on the hooks, slowly flaying the mortals in agony. The Baali collected the blood that flowed from these victims, distilled it through alchemy and offered the resulting elixir to the Decani. Once the elixir received the blessing of the Demons of Disease, the ritual-master forced the concoction to the two Assamites, then sacrificed them over the organ pit. That completed the compact between the Decani and the Baali, thus cursing the Alamut Assamites.

The Baali had decided that if they were targets of the assassins, then all Cainites would be hunted as well. Though it exacted a terrible cost, the Baali ritual increased the bloodlust of the Assamites, turning their ritual practice of Amaranth into an insatiable desire to consume. The Assamites tried to hide their addiction behind philosophical lies, claiming their desire to become one with Caine fueled their hunger, but this rationalization was a flagrant distortion of the truth. The Assassins starved after vitae with an animalistic hunger, earning them the hatred and fear of the other clans, rather than the admiration their war against the Baali should have won them.

The second area of contention for the Baali involved Islam's thirst for knowledge. Despite Moloch's earlier efforts, lesser Baali inevitably stumbled across or discovered knowledge thought well-hidden. Callow Cainites thoughtlessly distributed this forbidden knowledge to others, and like HayTau's plagues, it spread.

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The Baali's greatest enemy was Islam. They initially ignored this cult, denigrating it as a religion of tribes, but the tribes swiftly united, becoming a nation. That nation invaded others, becoming an empire. Suddenly, shockingly, the religion that had inspired a great machine of war also served to revive the knowledge of the ancient world. Baghdad became a center of learning. Scribes within Baghdad's "House of Wisdom" translated texts from Greek, Hebraic, Sanskrit, Coptic and Aramaic into Arabic.

To worsen matters for the Baali, the Saracens acquired ~' the art of paper making from the Chinese following the Battle of Talas. With translators working from Islamic Catalonia and Cordoba in al-Andalus, ancient texts were scripted in Latin onto a cheaper medium. Until that time, the greatest library of Europe, that of St. Gall, held only 36 volumes. One nobleman even paid for a copy of the Book of Hours with 120 acres of land. With the courts and scribes of Cordoba at work, knowledge became widely available to the mortal scholars of Europe. Suddenly new grimoires appeared, making the compiled knowledge of the ancient world and names of power available for any who could read. The Picatrix, the Book of Wisdom, the Sword of Moses, the Key of Solomon, Sepher Raziel and Lemegeton all flooded into Europe, properly translated and relatively inexpensive. Reputed names of power and rituals of summoning could be found within these tomes, either in plain sight, or hidden in codes and numerological ciphers.

To the Baali's horror, they discovered that one or two of the true names within these new books were accurate. Suddenly, the knowledge that they sought to keep out of common hands was available to mortals. The lesser Baali reveled in this accomplishment, for they believed they were spreading their evil, but all they did was weaken the bloodline's main strength.

### ***THIS PLAGUEY DARKNESS***

The troubles with the Assamites only heralded the bloodline's growing problems. While the elders of the bloodline dealt with the dan from Alamut, younger Baali orders fought for the acquisition of Chorazin, Shaitan's former throne. The palace of shadows remained hidden north of Galilee; it was a skeletal city whose might faded after the destruction of Knossos. Many followers of Shaitan, however, prophesied that whomever discovered Chorazin's "lower city," and the secrets contained therein would rule the bloodline. That promise alone was enough to send fortune hunters flocking into the lost ruins, with predictable results. Most never uncovered the entrance to the lower city, while those who did vanished and never returned.

In the 11th century, a Baali named Azaneal came across texts claiming the fabled gate of Chorazin was hidden in living shadows. The Baali decided that this riddle dictated his course of action; clearly, the only way to explore Chorazin's shadows was to use the masters of darkness, the Lasombra. After a century of searching for infemalist Lasombra, Azaneal met and formed an alliance with members of an angellis ater coven (see *Libellus Sanguinis I: Masters of the State*) in Valencia.

Shaitan had indeed hidden the gate to Chorazin's lower city within the murky shadows, and the angellis succeeded in ( opening that gate. What they discovered was a buried city beneath Chorazin, built after massive excavations uncovered the body of Namtaru centuries ago. The city, surmounted with wards that killed many coven members, held secrets and wisdom that would have beggared the mind of Solomon. Greatest among the mysteries was the hallowed pit where Namtaru had slept for centuries. During his fitful sleep, the Child scratched symbols and words into the stone walls of his tomb. The script thus created was of such power that it did not wait to be read, but simply leapt into the minds of those present. The new knowledge shattered what remained of the souls of Azaneal and his accomplices; they became little more than husks filled with Chorazin's darkness incarnate. A thirst for blood, perhaps to fill the void in their souls, and a lust to be sole inheritor of Chorazin's wealth overwhelmed the selfcontrol of the intrepid explorers. They fell upon one another in bestial rage.

Only Azaneal survived that night, albeit changed. He was still Baali, but armed with an inherent understanding of the shadows of his own soul and the doctrines of the angellis ater with which to guide his actions. Azaneal made Chorazin his home, and went on to Embrace Baali loyal to him alone. With a core group of supporters, Azaneal announced his mastery over Chorazin, and demanded the Baali unite under his standard. Many younger members of the bloodline flocked to him (a good thing, as all of Azaneal's childer proved sterile), but older Baali ignored his call. Azaneal repaid their consideration by declaring war and attacking many venerable nests throughout the Levant. For the first time since the manipulative heresies of false-Shaitan, Baali openly opposed each other -- one of many struggles marking the end-times, according to more than one prophet of doom.

### ***AN ADVERSARY'S AFFAIRS***

This is where the Baali are now. It is too late to stop the tainted knowledge from reaching the far comers of Europe, but it is early enough yet to punish the guilty. With the Assamites and Azaneal's war in the Levant, many Baali have fled to Europe. The eldest Baali seek quiet refuge here while newcomers are comfortable enough with the Christian world to build new nests across the Frankish kingdoms. Survivors of the older orders find those nests they can, eliminate the dangerous ones themselves and then betray the remainder to the local clans. Usually this tactic of sacrificing the young and foolish sates the clans' bloodlust for Baali vitae; the rest are left in peace when the other Cainites return home, satisfied that they are now "safe" from the Baali menace. Even the old ones of the bloodline must be careful, for there are still those Cainites who remember the Baali from Mesopotamia, or who have heard tales of Mashkan-shapir and Knossos from their sires. Azaneal is also rumored to have sent two generals into Europe to recruit new Baali and infernal allies.

## **ENDGAME**

Shadows crept in from the edges of the chamber and darkness blotted out the ceiling. Only part of the stone floor was visible in the dim light, its surface encrusted with brown stains. Flies and wasps crawled across the walls and floor, hovering in droves over the dried blood. Their wings buzzed incessantly in the still and silent air. They waited.

Standing with a lantern in his hand, the young man remained motionless. Above him, Jonathan hung from a thick chain suspended from the ceiling; intricate stitchwork covering his naked form. Jonathan screamed, as he had been screaming for night after night, but no sound issued forth from his parched throat. His ears had been folded over and melted shut with burning oil. The boy had inserted a fly into each ear, however, and Jonathan now spent his time listening to one fly who whispered its secrets to him. The other fly ignored Jonathan and rolled flecks of his earwax into a ball.

The young man watched impassively as his Jonathan spat, then choked. A fly, coated with an oily mixture of saliva and blood, emerged from between his parted and cracked lips. Several more followed. Jonathan could no longer even attempt to cry out as escaping flies filed his throat; his neck bulged and his eyes widened in mute panic. He twisted upon the chain like a hooked fish, writhing with agony as the insect tide bubbled forth from within him. The young man nodded approvingly and left. The swarm would emerge from this human chrysalis without his help, and the young man needed to watch the other mortal hosts during this, the crucial birthing season. It was time to awaken the darkness.

## Chapter Three: Descent into Darkness

*I charge thee to return and change thy shape; Thou act too ugly to attend on me. Go, and return an old Franciscan friar; That holy shape becomes a devil best.*

*-Christopher Marlowe, Doctor Faustus*

The Baali are among the least understood Cainites in the Dark Medieval world. Though they are dogged by the curiosity and speculation of other Cainites, the Baali and their goals, organization and darkest secrets are ultimately mysteries to outsiders. Uny who pry too closely are either destroyed by the bloodline or subsumed by it.

### **ARMIES OF DARKNESS**

Their precarious position leads the Baali to choose their progeny with greater care than any other contingent of Cainite civilization. The majority of the bloodline's conscripts were initially subverted from other clans (conversion being seen as the greatest tribute possible before their patron), but this practice is now changing, no doubt due to the greater care with which Cainites school their childer these days. Fledglings, on general principle, are now carefully plucked from the ranks of the mortal intellectual and spiritual elite -- scribes, scholars, schoolmasters. Harlots, soldiers and artisans are selected less frequently, and only when a situation demands their special talents.

There is one exception to this traditionally meticulous selection, however; above all other things, the Baali are drawn to those possessed of sincere and unflinching religious faith. They will stop at nothing to force, seduce, corrupt or cajole such individuals to their cause. Whether this fascination comes from simple sadism or an obsession akin to that of a moth's for the flame, none but the newly converted can say.

### **ORGAN PITS AND THE BECOMING**

The Baali are a bloodline divided by different religions and philosophies. One practice that remains constant, however, is the creation and use of flesh as the central facet of consecrated ground. Upon the creation of a new temple, the Baali construct a pit to store the dismembered bodies and eviscerated innards of their victims. These pits grow larger over time and can measure from a personal bath to an underground cistern in size. The most infamous of these abattoirs are the Ashurite Well beneath the ruins of Ashur, the Iblī-al-Akbar beneath ancient Damascus, and "Hell's Mouth" aboard the Dark Magister. The last is a Moorish pirate ship whose hold is filled with two centuries' worth of victims and booty. Manned by a crew of Baali and infernal Lasombra corsairs, the Dark Magister stalks the Mediterranean coast. The most common rumors have the ship's home port being somewhere along the North African coast, possibly near Tripoli.

Some Baali cling so closely to derived tradition that they use these "organ pits" to Embrace their progeny. A sire slits his own wrists and pour his vitae into a severed human heart. This vessel is then placed in the center of the pit -- or at the bottom, depending on the size. The sire drains his

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thrall to a point near death, upon which the weakened mortal must reach the heart by crawling or swimming through the pit. Once there he may feast upon it and Become a vampire. Should he fail, his remains fill the pit as a lesson for his successors

This ordeal is as ritual as it is selective. The Baali only Embrace the strong or those determined to survive. The act of reaching the heart is important to the bloodline, but the act of devouring it is even more significant. By eating the heart and taking the vitae stored within, the new Baali essentially Embraces himself through strength of will. Rather than forcing the Kiss upon another, thereby making a victim of a new Cainite, the Baali prefer to succor those who can seize the Embrace for themselves.

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### Embracing The Dead

The Baali still occasionally poach members of other clans, subverting them to the worship of their dark master. Such initiates are re-Embraced by the Baali in horrifying ritual fashion. The Initiate is drained completely by a Baali nest-master, who then allows the pseudoneonate to recapture his own blood by draining him in turn. While this bizarre practice does not quite re-enact the Embrace, it does firmly stamp the initiate as Baali. For more information on these creatures, see the Merit:Apostate on page 44

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### ***BELLY OF THE BEAST***

Like many other immortal creatures, the Baali seem drawn to places of antiquity. They make their havens in abandoned churches, long-disused temples, overgrown ruins, subterranean caverns, labyrinthine catacombs, and other forgotten places. The more closely the site is tied to religion, the better -- almost as if the creatures are irresistibly drawn to that which they most despise.

It is additionally rumored that no Baali can linger in one place for very long without betraying hints of her identity or true masters. Is this because of their unforgiving pantheon's demand for flagrant acts of worship ! Indiscretion brought on by a gradual uncoupling from sanity? Exposure to incomprehensible things outside the mortal world! A curse levied upon the bloodline? Or something else entirely? No one knows for sure, though the most pessimistic among the clans think that the Baali simply wish to spread their taint as far and as fast as possible.

Whatever the case, a place frequented long enough by the followers of Baal tends to accumulate certain signatures. Elaborate carvings appear on and around abandoned caverns and rock faces. Snippets of conversation in alien and ancient tongues are overheard by passers-by. Hideous deformities are seen in livestock, and stillbirths soar in the region. Milk goes sour overnight, and bread refuses to rise. The longer the Baali remain, the more pestilential the signs of their presence become.

Although such occurrences are generally dismissed by "educated" men and women as superstitious claptrap, they serve as grima facie evidence to those (occultists, Tremere, the scattered witch-hunters who will become the Inquisition) aware of what such things really mean.



## CLAN HIERARCHY

Despite their fractured, ideologically divided identity, the overwhelming majority of the Baali adhere to a single, loosely organized sequence of authority. This informal structure is as solidly rooted in necessity as it is in tradition, and no Baali breaks it without good cause. After all, both the mortal and immortal worlds loathe the Baali, and a solitary member of the bloodline is unlikely to weather that storm for long.

Above all else, of course, there are those who are called Ba'al ("Lord"), who sit at the head of the pantheon the Baali venerate. Although They are known by Their followers to wear a thousand faces and answer to a thousand thousand names, those faces and names are almost exclusively masculine. Subjects devoted to other deities (such as Astarte, once thought to be the maternal countenance of Baal-the-Father) are believed to have died out with the final sack of Carthage, though no Baali will admit to the existence of such cults, and no one else who knows is prepared to volunteer information on the subject.

Beneath the Ba'al banner, there abide any number of lesser monstrosities -- creatures of legend, such as the diseaselord Decani, unnamed insectile beings, sanity-shattering embodiments of formless chaos and others of the stuff of nightmare. These are the masters most typically venerated by individual Baali -- although all see the Ba'al as foremost among their patron powers. Indeed, most fear the possibility of even hearing a true name, much less gazing upon the unearthly presence of one of the Children. Many Baali gladly indenture themselves to an eternity of servitude to one or more of a Child's underlings in hopes of meeting with eventual favor. Not all take even this step, however, and even the vast majority who do refer to the beings they serve as "demons." To do so is safer -- and less terrifying to even the Baali themselves.

Those chosen few Cainites who are granted (and can endure) direct communion with a slumbering Master, however, are exalted as his messengers on Earth -- the highest among the high, as it were. In the East, these heralds and prophets are called the shaitan (after the first of their order, whose name ("devil") has been perverted from its original meaning, "one who sees"). These ministers bear the favor of their father like a divine brand on their persons for all of their number to behold. Such legendary figures, however, are not often seen walking the land, except in the direct fulfillment of their Father's will.

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### My Kiss

I remember watching in horror as my sire, a Brood Mother, gave birth to the swarm. They ate their way to the surface of her skin, breaking through their prison of flesh. Each emerged in slow turn, fat with her vitae. She took a handful of them and crushed them in her grip. Their red-black ichor dripped from her fingers as she drank my life, then she forced her dying brood between my jaws. I died then, but the blood within the Swarm brought me back. This is the ritual you and I shall reenact this night; take what wisdom you will from my story.

The avatars of the Swarm are the only Cainites able to pass on the Kiss in this fashion. However, while a Brood Mother may carry thousands of living monstrosities within her, the insects need living human hosts in which to reproduce. The hatching cycle generally takes 2-4 weeks, at which point all of the newborns chew their way out of their host, find their Brood Mother and take

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up residence within her flesh. The process, unsurprisingly, is always fatal to the swarm's original meal.

Brood Mothers Embrace on a timetable dictated by their inhabitants. When a swarm reaches critical mass within a Brood Mother, she will seek between one and seven disciples to infect with her children. All of these, assuming they survive the Kiss, will eventually become either drones to the Swarm or Brood Mothers in their own right.

Two or Three brood insects, bloated with their Mother's blood (though it should be noted that Cainites of either gender can serve as Brood Mother's), contains sufficient vitae to ghoul a mortal human - or to help bind a Cainite through Blood Oath. It is believed by Baali historians that it was through use of the Swarm in this fashion that Nergal-called-Shaitan was able to ghoul the entire D'habi line over the centuries.

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Beneath the shaitan, what was once an ancestral and rigidly formalized culture has since collapsed into fractious feudalism. Some few pockets of elders still exist, and they observe and enforce the ancient ways. However, they are an increasingly endangered minority. In these dark nights, the remaining Baali cling to one another in covens of five to a dozen members, scattered across Europe and other, foreign shores. Occasionally a renowned member of the bloodline accumulates a larger following, either through direct appointment on some special crusade in the name of the shaitan (such lieutenants are known as al'shaitan), intricate political navigations or repeated effective demonstrations of brute force, but such uprisings are relatively rare. In general, traditional Baali seem content to bow before their covenmasters (and mistresses), working as subversive threads in a sinister tapestry to further their Masters' ultimate ends. And the nontraditional ones? For them, there can never be enough blood in the streets.

## **NUMBERS OF THE BEAST**

As has been pointed out previously, there are as many entities called Ba'al by the Baali as there are aspects ascribed to them. Below are some of the best-known, or more accurately, most nefarious.

### **THE DESTROYER**

City streets drown in the cooling corpses of the plaguedead. Fields run fallow from the blood of a thousand battles. This world slips closer to oblivion with every passing moment.

Free me, if you will, and I will return to my masters' side, hastening the end of all. Destroy me, if you can, and my essence will join that of so many others, flowing unchecked into the cracks we have opened in your world. In either event, it will be hard for you to continue -- very hard indeed -- knowing what you now know.

We have already won.

Those who venerate Ba'al-called-the Destroyer seek an end to all things, that their masters might enter into this world and begin again. Such was their goal in the palace of Knossos; such continues to be their goal in the lightless labyrinths and catacombs where they still scuttle in darkness. They do not seek the wanton slaughter of innocents, but rather to inherit the legacy of incessant chaos, and to grant a birthright to the next turning of the cycle of oblivion.

Many among the Baali bloodline who deserve the "bloodthirsty cultist" stereotype with which they are so frequently identified are these "Servitors of the Void," as many are wont to call themselves. Militant disciples of ultimate destruction, they have been behind assorted fabrications and folktales about depraved infemalists and demon-worshippers. Indeed, to welcome the coming of their venerated Masters, they engage in blatantly obscene rites and rituals, and even muster great armies, mortal, monstrous, or otherwise, in misguided attempts to slaughter entire cities as sacrifice.

Fervent devotion, unfortunately, often drowns in unreasoning hatred and bloodlust. In recent centuries, many of these devotees have lost sight of their ultimate goal, and are becoming inextricably entangled with (and indistinguishable from) so-called Satanic hordes, diabolical hosts, and other Western conceptions of the infernal. Most of these corrupt sectarians have degenerated to such a state that they have come to believe in such deviltries themselves, and have turned their eyes from the glories that sleep beneath cities like Chorazin.

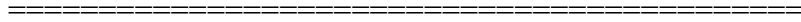
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### **The Labrys**

Wear this medallion when you come to greet your brethren. It is Labrys. Within Crete, it was the standard for the House of the Double-Axe, better known as the Minoan symbol for the Labyrinth. It represents the horned head of Ba'al, whose blows crack like thunder and split open the skulls of our enemies. It is also the weapon with which we shall smite the wall of the divine. There is power within this symbol, for those who wear it choose to become the wolf, not the sheep, the victor and not the victim. Other Cainites have forgotten its meaning, so you may wear it in their

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presence without fear of reprisal. Anywhere your gaze comes upon the emblem of the double-axe, know that your brethren are nearby.



### **THE CELESTIAL**

Let me put the question to you in another manner, one better suited to your upbringing. "O Lord, is it good unto thee that thou shouldst oppress, that thou shouldst despise the work of thine hands, and shine upon the counsel of the wicked!" These are the words of Job. They are the words of a despondent man, innocent, yet suffering and near death. These are his words, hurled in supplication at an allegedly benign creator who considers himself to be beyond judgment. These are the words of a blind man bemoaning a lifetime spent in blind servitude no better than that of a kept dog.

Many Baali insist that sages such as Solomon, beneath their Gnostic, Qaballist and mystical trappings, all served the same masters -- lofty powers beyond shedim and seraphim, beyond Heaven and Hell, beyond even such meaningless distinctions as "good" and "evil." Over these beings, in a place none can follow, their creator rules, a nameless, omnipotent entity akin to the Judaic YHWH or Tetragrammaton.

Following in the footsteps of their predecessors and parent cultures, angelic (and demonic) scholars use millennia of compiled charms and circles to yoke otherworldly beings to their will. These Baali do not often make their presence known in Cainite power struggles; such temporal concerns are unimportant to them. They are more concerned with the lifetime of lifetimes they have with which to acquire knowledge -- with the ultimate goal of using that knowledge to achieve godhead. Occasionally one such creature (or, more likely, her summoned minions) emerges from solitude to acquire some trinket or grimoire her circle does not already possess, but such occasions are few and far between.

These "Celestial" idolaters, with their thousand names, credos and magics, are among the most difficult of the Baali to identify, much less hunt down. They do not acknowledge a common name or pantheon of godlings; such names are known to have true power in the hands of those suitably informed (or indiscreet). Celestials are often found in association with mortal and Cainite occultists (including Cappadocians and Tremere), many of whose beliefs and theories intermesh perfectly with their own -- disparate parts in an unholy union.

***THE SWARM***

You look upon us, and all you see are demons and monsters. I look upon you and see nothing but a tool, a birthing vessel for the swarm, a brood mare for a greater power. Ours is the dark womb from which all sprang, and to which all will return. Ours is the vision that has been lost and regained through the shattered glass facets of the fly's eyes. And ours is the chorus whose voices soothe the dreams of pain and death.

Some Baali claim to hear the siren song of their masters that much more clearly than the rest of their brethren. To them, the world stirs with a secret symphony, the strains of which have long been chittered by some of its oldest inhabitants -- insects.

Avatars of the Swarm (for their ideology admits none of the familiar Cainite concepts of siring or generation) unfailingly cling to a single unifying principle. Their sole purpose, or so they claim, is perpetuation of the swarm from whence they were born, and promulgation of the sweet songs that issue therefrom. To this end, the insect-beings employ mortal prisoners as grotesque birthing-flesh for their larvae, defy traditional conceptions of death through the cultivation of gargantuan organ-pits, and gather in great subterranean hives -- the better to perfect their unity.

Ironically, these servitors -- drones in service to their progenitor, who is king, queen, mother, father, and shelter to them all at once -- are among the most tolerant of Baal's children, for they work to unify all oppositions into their vision. Theirs are the parts made strong in a seamless whole. Theirs is the secret that has slept since the birth of the world. And theirs is the great rebirth that will herald the return of darkness, under a sky blackened by billions of beating wings.

## **THE MYSTERY**

You creatures are such sublime embodiments of contradiction. Empty Platitudes regarding the nature of love and forgiveness flow unchecked from your mouths, like sweet fluids from an open sore -- and, in the same moment, you murder, maim, ravage and consign yourselves to an eternity of ignorance in some zealot's deluded crusade for truth.

Others have taken up your quest -- others who have cast off the shackles and blinders they unwittingly forged for themselves. From what immortal well did we spring! What is our purpose! Where will we go when all this is past! Walk with me, and surely we will discover the answer.

It is not known which of the faces of the Children are, or might be, the "original," but scholars of the enigma of existence have been a part of human society for as long as human society has existed. The same holds true for vampiric philosophers of the primal urge, and especially for the Baali. For as long as the bloodline has existed, certain of its members have pursued that ultimate Why.

The Baali most devoted to the question are alien creatures, who have turned their unflinching attentions away from the lesser concerns of society, solidarity and even survival in contemplation of their Masters' mysteries. Theirs is the secret at the center of existence, the riddle that has plagued the universe since the beginning of time. Such ancients have forsaken everything petty and temporal in their single-minded quest for the ultimate answer, and will let nothing stand in their way of their plan to uncover it -- or crack the world trying.

Driven by motivations even they do not fully understand, these "Children of the Enigma" frequently regard as earthshattering that which seems inconsequential to others. Indeed, some younger Baali dismiss these scholars as being more Cappadocian than Baali. They prize nothing so much as enlightenment -- however alien the notion might seem to others of their kind -- and thrive on fierce intellectual debate over the smallest matters. A coven of Children of the Enigma may convene to plan for a ritual sacrifice one night, concentrate their attentions on corrupting clergy the next, and then abandon both courses of action in the interests of arguing the implications of some obscure Sumerian prophecy. As irregular as they are insidious, the Children may hold the key to the bloodline's ultimate triumph -- or they may be ineffective, deluded fools.

## **THE MULTITUDE**

Some of those few who have heard more than old wives' tales about the Baali believe internecine squabbles rooted in individual (and often irreconcilable) philosophies, practices, and political divisions to be the sole reason the Baali have not

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### **Blood and Shadows: The Legacy of Azaneal**

At length the chanting stopped, and the cavern was shrouded in silence. The first of the bound and blindfolded initiates was dragged before the assembly, past the bonfire and across to the far side of the cave, where the shadows of the observers danced and played against the rock wall.

Producing a wickedly curved dagger from his sash, the high priest brought the blade to bear against the pallid flesh of his forearm, cutting so deep that the light shone on bone. The blood flowed freely down the priest's arm as the firelight threw the crimson stream's shadow against the far wall. Two acolytes held the captive's head skyward to catch the shadow-drops of blood as they plummeted down the rock face.

And the initiate screamed...

There are those among the progeny of Lasombra whose focus on the darkness within gradually becomes an obsession with the darkness without. These devil-worshippers are called *angellis ater*, or "black angels" (see *Libellus Sanguinus I: Masters of the State*)

The particulars of these infernalists' first meeting with the Baali are not known. However it happened, the unholy alliance has proven to be a strong one over recent decades. Azaneal's twelve children, and their disciples, demonstrate a mastery over darkness thought to be the Magisters' exclusive birthright. At the same time, the courts of Philip of Swabia and Pope Innocent III are known to be rife with Lasombra manipulators, some of whom just might be agents of the infernal. And it is whispered that great Monçada himself consorts unseen in his cathedrals with unearthly beings and steely-winged angels, though woe betide any who accuse the Archbishop of anything less than a perfect faith.

Players and Storytellers may wish to introduce Baali of the Azaneali strain onto their Chronicles. For such creatures, *Obtenebration* may replace either *Daimoinon* or *Presence*. Azaneali Baali, more often than not, are soulless vessels - puppet-husks wandering the world at the whim of their diabolical masters. Some, like Azaneal himself, retain some measure of free will, but their blood is weak - all of their children are sterile, and cannot pass on Caine's curse.

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triumphed. The more energy they expend on internal strife, the less is available to use in an attempt to summon the universal demiurge.

Despite their fervor and fanaticism, it is clear that a fundamental division of ideology and practice strikes at the heart of these perverse practitioners, leading to vicious battles between nests, and even the occasional betrayal of the odd infernal school to mortal witch hunters.



## ***APOSTASY AND ABSOLUTION***

The Baali propensity for exploration and veneration of the vile and unspeakable is as much a part of their legend as their fear and revulsion when confronted with the upright and virtuous. It is thought that the oldest popularized European lore concerning Cainites and crucifixes stems from some account of the Baali brood, whose reactions to prayer, religious paraphernalia and all things sacred are nothing short of extreme.

This duality becomes curious, however, in light of traditional Baali practice and preference. The overwhelming majority of the Baali do not publicly acknowledge faiths other than their own, much less lend any credence to them. How is it, then, that these same Cainites flee in terror for their unlives when confronted with a crucifix or religious text by a true believer? And what can explain the fascination (and historical association) of the Baali with those of the cloth?

The Baali themselves are at a loss to resolve this metaphysical dilemma. Many of their number, typically the young and zealous, dismiss "True Faith" as untapped inner potential. Baali Sires see those exceedingly rare and powerful individuals as all the more worthy of subversion and the Embrace, by merit of their exceptional qualities. But both of these approaches sidestep the real question.

The eldest and most knowledgeable Baali take a more metaphysical tack. When pressed on the matter, they hint at the existence of powers beyond even their comprehension, and the ability of the "faithful" to tap into such powers. Those of the bloodline who do believe in such heresies, however, invariably keep their beliefs to themselves. To suggest the existence of a being even more powerful than the bloodline's patron, after all, threatens the very foundations of his worship....

## **BAALI AND THE INFERNAL**

The Baali are all too frequently dismissed as minions of Satan by the Christian-dominated principalities of Europe. In such a simple assessment -- the Baali's patron reduced to yet another manifestation of Lucifer -- their ties of blood are nothing more than witches' covens, and their powers nothing more than the mark of the Beast. Such are the follies of cultural egocentrism. In truth, the Cainites of Europe and Asia Minor could not be more self-deceived... or in greater danger from such self-deception.

It is true that, with the turn of the millennium, many of the servitors of Ba'al have become concerned (some would say obsessed) with the Christian faith, even going so far as to incorporate it into their own system of beliefs. On the other hand, this is hardly a unilateral practice. Over the course of the history of mankind, many more have worked the worship of their patrons into the circles of such powers as Anu, Dagon, Hecate, Loki and a hundred others, as well as a number of entities too alien and removed for even the earliest civilizations to remember.

The archetypal "devil-worshipper" image, however, serves the Baali well on several fronts. Indeed, many if not most of their mortal pawns are hand-selected from prominent wouldbe cultists and demonologists. (See the Dark Ages Companion for details on mortals and Infernalism.)

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### **Infernal Investments**

While it is true that the Baali bloodline has more dealings with infernal powers than all of the clans of Cainites combined, That is not to say that each and every Baali has sold his soul to a demoniac master. Many are content to use corrupted true names to steal what power they might, and to trust in their own strengths rather than barter for expensive aid from outside. Naturally, this leads to some friction between those Baali who have traded with demons and those who haven't.

Investments are more common among those Baali recruited from other bloodlines and clans than they are among "true" Baali - many of the newcomers feel pressure to emphasize their commitment to the bloodline. On the other hand, older Baali (and particularly those on the Road of the Hive) recognize the magnitude and consequences of an investment, and are thus inclined to be more cautions in their pacts with the other side.

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### **GHOULS**

Centuries of heated conflict and persecution across the seas and shores of the Dark Medieval world (which, the Baali steadfastly maintain, will do nothing more than sweeten their inevitable victory) have taught the infernalists nothing if not caution. Consequently, those of the line exercise more care and caution in their choice of servants than do their Cainite counterparts.

#### **REVENANT FAMILY - THE D'HABI**

**Nickname:** Hyenas

**Background:** The D'habi are the descendants of Nergal's priests. With the supposed death of Nergal, the other Baali orders claimed the priests as their own, producing a unified ghoulish family to serve the entire bloodline. Over the generations, each D'habi family was cultivated by a different Baali order. Supposedly, this separation was enforced to prevent the ghouls from ever exercising any show of unity. Alas for the architects of the plan, then, that it proved the bloodline's Achilles heel.

Nergal still existed, something the D'habi alone knew at the time. Down through the generations, each member of the scattered families was secretly Blood-Oathbound to Nergal. Ensnared safely within the houses of his rivals, the D'habi were Nergal's spies and his vessels. Nergal used his network to glean knowledge from the Baali orders, to feed misinformation to his enemies and to assassinate any potential opponents ere they grew too strong or too knowledgeable.

When Nergal finally reappeared, he did so in the guise of Shaitan. Claiming to be the bloodline's progenitor, he swiftly gained the loyalty of the newer orders and galvanized them under his charismatic authority. His hold over the D'habi was instrumental in paralyzing the older orders, many of which knew that this self-proclaimed Shaitan was an impostor. Through their ghouls, he infected key Baali with a blood-todust plague, eliminating all real opposition. The Avatars of the Swarm and the Keepers of Mystery were the only two orders to stand in opposition after this treachery played itself out.

Following Shaitan's crushing defeat in Crete, those younger Baali who escaped took the D'habi as their own servitors, not knowing the role they played in Shaitan's rise. Still, Fate's wheel turned for the revenants as well, and over the following centuries, the D'habi endured harsh servitude. Experimentation became the order of the day, as the Baali used their ghouls as both researchers and subjects. The Baali forced the D'habi to commit acts they could not perform themselves, such as impregnating virgins, devouring sacrificial victims and serving as vessels for certain types of possession.

Having been forced to such depravity for centuries, the D'habi are degraded to an unimaginable degree. They are no longer the same family who served Nergal; they are monsters as vile and loathed as their masters. The family accepts whatever behavioral aberrations crop up: necrophilia, cannibalism, pederasty, and much, much worse. All that is kept behind closed doors, however -- servitude is all to the D'habi, and anything that endangers that servitude or their masters is a threat, to be annihilated post haste.

**Appearance:** The D'habi are generally quiet and reserved in public. Most bear some disfiguring marks or other, quiet evidence of harsh upbringings or sexual depravity. Common disfigurements include torture scars, missing digits (children of the family often have fingers or toes bitten off as a form of punishment) and multiple lesions and warts from sexual diseases. The diaspora of the Baali

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has scattered their servitors as well, and there is no longer a uniform "type" to the D'habi. The sole remaining trait they share is an intense, penetrating gaze.

**Family Estates:** The estates of the D'habi are virtually gone. Once, seven estates existed, each serving a Baali order, but now, that number has dwindled to one central estate in Damascus. Dozens of smaller families are scattered throughout the known world, but in live relative squalor compared to the lineage's glory days. As the Baali orders broke down into smaller covens, the D'habi estates were shattered in battles over which faction to follow.

**Backgrounds:** D'habi rarely interact with mortals while growing up, but they are educated as to how they might best fulfill a variety of functions: everything from assisting in torture to dealing with the waking world. While the D'habi are reasonably capable servants, most are unable to read or write. Understandably, the Baali are afraid their servants would learn how to use the spells of certain grimoires and turn against them. Those D'habi who can read must burn out their own tongues in a show of loyalty. Only then may such gifted ghouls assist in library research.

**Disciplines:** Dominate, Presence (Note: Those D'habi who exhibit any knowledge of Daimoinon are killed immediately by the Baali.)

**Weaknesses:** Nergal's continued use of Dominate and Blood-Oaths on the family has made them weak-willed. This inherited weakness, coupled with their current treatment at the hands of crueler Baali, has made the D'habi susceptible to suggestions. All D'habi are therefore at +2 difficulty on all Willpower rolls.

**Preferred Roads:** Most follow Via Diabolis. Via Hyron is forgotten among the younger D'habi.

**Family Organization:** The D'habi hierarchy is based strictly on age, rather than gender or any other considerations. The eldest surviving D'habi is the undisputed head of the household, with power proceeding down through the generations to the youngest.

**Baali Duties:** D'habi are the hands of the Baali in the mortal world. The revenants perform chores such as kidnapping victims, digging up graves, robbing churches and temples and assassinating those who come too close to the nests. In rituals, D'habi assist the Baali, completing roles that require a mortal "touch" -- inseminating victims, using their spit, urine or excrement to complete a rite, and so on.

## **THE OTHERS**

### **ASSAMITES**

Hah! Assur, Akkad, Babel, Sargon, Sumer -- do these names mean nothing to you! Those whom you term beasts we claim as brethren. Their forefathers were ours; our ancestors dwelt in the same yurts, shared the same salt and bread, knelt at the same shrines before Apschai, Dagon, Marduk, and a thousand thousand other houses beneath our Father. The eldest among their number remember us still, and we have never forgotten them.

### **BRUJAH**

Do not presume to judge them for their rage and fallen aspirations. Carthage is gone, and Moloch with it, and thus we can even share some of their sorrow for lost glory.

That understanding, however, makes the Brujah easy prey.

### **CAPPADOCIANS**

Respect our brothers, the Children of Ashur-called-Cappadocius, always, and do not belittle the methods by which they choose to study eternity. Realize, however, that there is no place for us in their moralist's mire of good, evil, life, death and the soul.

In the final reckoning, the only true understanding between us can be the naked blade of a sword.

### **FOLLOWERS OF SET**

Clearly these base defilers represent incontrovertible evidence of our kind's common origins. Do they not hail from the earliest civilizations of the kine? Do they not pray to a Lord of Darkness? And yet these wayward fools fall prey to the petty Western preoccupation with material pleasures, passions, and perversions. Such wasted potential...

### **GANGREL**

These creatures shun civilization and the company of others. They fear what they cannot understand, roam the land marking their territories, and become more and more like the beasts they are with each passing night. As such, they are beneath our notice.

### **LASOMBRA**

It is an amusing and not altogether uninspiring allegory that ties the darkness commanded by the Magisters to the lightless, empty visions of power to which they cling. The Lasombra cannot see past the ephemeral shadows they spawn, however. In this they are no different from the Ravnos.

## **Clanbook Baali**

### **MALKAVIANS**

Their madness poses a singular mystery. Have they truly glimpsed the Beyond, and in so doing been touched by that which others would term insanity! Or are their delusions of a more personal, insignificant sort! Listen to them and learn what you can -- but tarry not overlong, lest lunacy prove infectious.

### **NOSFERATU**

These disfigured tunnel-dwellers know the wages of sin better than any. Is it not curious, then how they parade themselves as pitiable martyrs in search of redemption on the one hand, while sneaking, worming, and blackmailing their way into confidences on the other! Theirs is a most peculiar hypocrisy.

### **RAVNOS**

There is nothing to fear here. The Ravnos are but a family of tricksters who gave up their tenuous hold on reality for the sake of pretty pictures in air. Beware of taking them too lightly, however; they are adept charlatans, and quick to rope others into their schemes.

### **SALUBRI**

Gentle Saulot. Philosopher. Pilgrim. Pacifist. Passionate. Pathetic. Of what use are his meditations on pity and purity now, I wonder!

### **TOREADOR**

These self-blinded narcissists are obsessed with beauty, material comforts, and vice. They are decadents lost in tepid fascination with the cattle on whom they feed. Do the Childer of Caine not already shoulder more than our fair share of dead weight and degenerates?

### **TREMERE**

Imagine! A fugitive band of wand-waving wizards who first pried immortality from the fingers of their greatest competitors, then subjugated the soul of an ancient in their quest for power. Such determination! Such divine treachery! And to think it is said that we are beyond the understanding of our Western brethren...

We shall speak more with the Tremere anon, I suspect.

### **TZIMISCE**

The Fiends have achieved immortality, something man has searched for since the Garden was barred to him. The mysteries of infinity, nothingness, this world and that which lies beyond are subjects given them to ponder over an eternity of lifetimes -- and yet they persist in playing their little games with the all-too-fleeting currencies of fear, fiefdoms and the flesh. Piling layer upon layer of custom and ceremony does not hide the emptiness of their existences, nor does it grant majesty.

## **Clanbook Baali**

### **VENTRUE**

They have such lofty aspirations for a hidebound circle of egotists. It is their belief that lions rule, is it not? Surely they have also been made aware that even lions have their predators -- and that in the end, the carrion beast devours all.

## **Clanbook Baali**

### ***OTHERS***

#### **WEREWOLVES**

The Mark of the Beast manifests itself in many ways; the Change is but one of them. The Lupines are primitive, warlike and dangerous. Avoid them at all costs.

#### **MAGES**

Fractionous and reclusive, these students of the unknowable wield inexplicable powers. At least, those powers are inexplicable to others not privy to our secrets. The sorcerers can glimpse parts of the truth that we alone know, and that makes them dangerous.

#### **WRAITHS**

The Restless Dead have escaped damnation by the narrowest of margins. It is our duty to assist them the rest of the way to Hell, so that our masters might feed on them and grow strong.



## Clanbook Baali

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### **An Exotic Epiphany: Baali and the East**

Although the vast majority of the so-called "histories" of the Baali are apocryphal, most make a point of tying the bloodline to the mysterious East. Nergal-called-Shaitan is thought to have marshaled his first followers after a sojourn to the Far East to study with inhuman masters in mountains high enough to be called "The Roof of the World." Stories of walking corpses hungry for life-essence and dripping corruption come from the lips of traders and madmen out of the Eastern deserts. And it has been written that Ashur himself, divine ruler of the Assyrian Empire, returned home alone, humbled and broken, years after leading an enormous army to far shores of which there are no records in Western maps or chronicles...

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## **NEW TRAITS**

### **KNOWLEDGES**

#### **Demonology**

You are versed in the lore of angels, demons, devas, devils and otherworldly beings. You may be familiar with the traditional Western schools of thought (black magic, diabolism, witchcraft), or possess insights into the methodologies of other cultures (Arabic, Eastern, Persian, Semitic etc.). With sufficient training in this Knowledge, you may even have access to a number of covenants, cultist practices and secret rituals. Demonology is unlike Hearth Wisdom in that most of what you "know" is actually true (though certainly not all of it).

- o Dabblers: Your knowledge consists largely of speculation and hearsay.
- oo Student: Although you have a hard time separating truth from rumor, you know a few relevant facts.
- ooo Learned: You possess basic knowledge of the nether realms and their inhabitants.
- oooo Scholar: Your knowledge pertaining to various incarnations of the celestial and infernal is expansive and encyclopedic. You possess a considerable repertoire of rites and rituals -- which may or may not work.
- ooooo Savant: The very manner in which you perceive reality has been altered by your eldritch understanding. The breadth and depth of your knowledge rivals that of the ancient masters of the hidden arts.
- oooooo Visionary: Your command of the great secrets is beyond the ken of mere mortals. You are known to many of the greater powers who dwell Outside -- and know them in turn.

Possessed by: Baali, Clergy, Cultists, Mystics, Scholars, Tremere, Witches  
Specialties: Christian, Gnostic, Norse, Qaballah, Sufi, Wicca

## Clanbook Baali

### Plague-Breeding

Plague is as much a part of the Dark Medieval landscape as mud and death. Without knowledge of the true causes of disease, mortals (and immortals as well) lay the blame at the feet of black cats, witches, spirits and assorted minority groups whom everybody knows to poison the wells.

But with this Knowledge you know better. You know how to brew disease in corpses, how to feed corruption and taint until you have a bubbling cauldron of plague ready to loose upon the world. You understand instinctively how to use vermin and insects to spread disease, and can even direct the spread of plague to a certain extent. When mounting sieges, you know how to use disease as a weapon with which to reduce towns and fortresses, and you can even poison someone with disease-causing agents so that the death looks natural.

o Dabblers: You know that letting a corpse rot brings flies  
oo Students: You can poison wells or direct siege engines to catapult corpses over city walls.  
ooo Learned: You know how to breed different plagues, and can tend contagion like a garden.  
oooo Scholars: You can direct your creations' spread, and can brew almost any illness known to man.  
ooooo Savants: The plague-pits are filled with your handiwork; armies wreak less devastation than do your creations.  
oooooo Visionaries: In your laboratory of the obscene, you can create new diseases and summon plagues of demonic virulence. Should you wish, you could depopulate a kingdom with ease.

Possessed By: Baali, Nosferatu, Brigand Captains, Sorcerers

Specialties: Black Death, Biological Warfare, Mass Devastation

## **ROADS - VIA DIABOLIS REVISITED**

Any number of anecdotes and "be-good" bedtime stories are told among Cainites concerning the Baali bloodline. According to the cautionary tales that Sires tell their childer, these fiendish creatures are possessed of a single-minded devotion to monstrosity - some monstrous design or purpose, dedicating them to the macabre and malign in the pursuit of evil for its own sake. In the stories, the Baali's unlives are dedicated to the greater glory of some devil-god who promises each faithful follower her own personal Hell on earth. And from there, the tales get even more unbelievable.

Though these legends are not without their grains of truth, that's a long way from saying that they are all completely true. Admittedly, many Baali do choose to embrace the alien and amoral aspects of immortality by treading the so-called Road of the Devil, but mindless malevolence is hardly the only way one can go on that Road. There are those within the Baali ranks who exult in some self-bestowed demonic epithet, piling atrocity upon atrocity in the name of a real (but unimpressed) or imaginary master. Such lackwits (often mockingly referred to as "children" or "lesser Baali" by their older and more restrained bloodline-mates) are easily hunted down and destroyed. After all, a trail of unrelieved slaughter and sadism is difficult to disguise, and easy for a hunter to follow. Thank fully, such Baali are a distasteful minority -- an embarrassment to and convenient camouflage for the ancient scholars, philosophers, prophets, and visionaries from whose line they descend.

But that minority is growing.

Ironically, something about contact with the Western world is corrupting the bloodline's sense of purpose. Perhaps the source of the weakness is too much contact with the minds of the Baali's masters, or it could be that some incestuous weakness has emerged through a taint in the blood -- but the details are unimportant. More and more Baali have lost sight of what the bloodline stands for, descending into savagery and pathetic madness.

Some of these degraded neonates, goaded by either their own inadequacy or by sheer isolation, begin to identify with the Christian concept of evil. Such lunatics commonly proclaim themselves to be "servants of Satan" (more than one has claimed to be Magog) or some such. Others seek nothing more than an eternity of bestiality and bloodshed, adopting whatever religious trappings are at hand while wallowing in offal. Many simply spiral helplessly into the clutches of the Beast. Whatever the details, the end result is the same. These hypocrites forever lose sight of the unifying principle which once bound the bloodline together.

In the eyes of the Baali elders who maintain a degree of control over their brethren, the situation is fast becoming dire. Their childer, and their childer's childer, are falling further and further into pointless decadence and degeneracy -- worse even than the hated Setites -- and, in a very real sense, becoming what their adversaries have always perceived them to be. If the trend is not reversed, and soon, the bloodline may find itself hunted to near extinction -- or immolated on the pyres it sets for itself.

## VIA HYRON: THE ROAD OF THE HIVE

Via Hyron was the original Road developed by the Baali, and the most faithful to the bloodline's original ethos still follow it. As the Baali have extended their corruption across the continents, variations in the Road's exact tenets have cropped up, but the central message remains the same.

An old Bedouin adage best describes the heart of Via Hyron: My tribe and I against our enemies; my brother and I against all others. Despite the frequency with which members of the bloodline are at loggerheads, it surprises many outsiders that this Road urges one to combat the Beast through unity and tribal support. An individual who succumbs to his Beast is of no use for the Great Works the Baali aspire to, and as such it is only prudent for individual Baali to help each other with their individual struggles.

Among followers of the Road of the Hive, loyalty is strongest between partners and Blood-Oathbound individuals. Following that, a Baali offers it to those within his nest, then to Baali of his same order, and finally to the bloodline as a whole. As the years pass, loyalty to peers has become as important as loyalty to one's order or to the Baali as a whole. Some older Baali see this evolution as the beginning of the end for the Road; others postulate that loyalty across the lines of the various orders will strengthen the bloodline's ability to function as one in a crisis.

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### Road of the Hive

Score Minimum Wrongdoing for Conviction roll

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- 10 Arguing with a fellow follower of the Road
  - 9 Taking an outsider's side against that of another on the Via Hyron
  - 8 Actively working against the plans of another on the Road
  - 7 Actively working against a member of your nest's plans
  - 6 Betraying a fellow Baali
  - 5 Betraying a fellow traveler on the Road
  - 4 Betraying a member of your generation or order
  - 3 Betraying a member of your nest
  - 2 Betraying an elder of the bloodline
  - 1 Betraying your Sire or a Baali to whom you are Blood-Oathbound
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Someone once likened the Baali to a swarm of bees and Via Hyron as a mandate for multiple queens. The Hierarchies of Sin for this Road, however, demand loyalty to the Baali and all members. The higher one progresses on the chart, the more difficult it is to refuse aid to another Baali.

This may be the most damaging aspect of Azaneal's revolt against the elders of the bloodline. A devotee of Via Diabolis, Azaneal teaches his followers the precepts of the angellis ater and not Via Hyron. As such, his Baali have no loyalty to the rest of the bloodline, or indeed to any Baali besides themselves and Azaneal.

## Clanbook Baali

### **MERITS AND FLAWS**

The following is a collection of optional Merits and Flaws exclusively suited to the Baali. Use or adapt these Traits to suit your needs. (Remember to consult your Storyteller before taking any Merits or Flaws; see the Appendix in Vampire: the Dark Ages for further details.)

#### **APOSTATE (2 POINT MERIT)**

It is said that dread Shaitan himself forged the ranks of the first followers of Baal from those Cainites of other lineages he could sway to his side. The practice continues to this day; a substantial minority of the bloodline are not Baali by blood at all, but, rather, stem from an adopted parentage - converts to the Baali banner. This unpredictably and versatility of talents has proven to be one of the infemalists' greatest strengths - but it does not always benefit those diverse talents within the bloodline.

Characters with this Merit either started their unlives as descendants of other blood, later converting to the Baali creed, or are of sufficiently close descent from one such convert so as to maintain some link to her ancestral dan affinities. Apostates may replace either Obfuscate or Presence with any one Discipline, as appropriate to her ancestral dan. (Daimoinon is innate and cannot be replaced). Furthermore, Apostate Baali can still pass with relative ease for members of other clans. A determined effort will still root out an Apostate, but how many Cainites are willing to make that sort of effort?

The one negative to this Merit is strictly a political drawback. Apostate Baali are forever barred from leadership roles in the bloodline because of their "inferior" blood.

#### **UNHOLY AURA (7 POINT MERIT)**

The other side of Infernal Aura's coin, Unholy Aura allows a Baali to remain undaunted by most expressions of True Faith. The stench of spiritual corruption surrounding the Baali is literally so strong that holy things cannot abide it. Minor relics crumble to dust in the Baali's hand, holy men and women flee his gaze (or suffer horrible consequences), and even consecrated places can be turned to evil by the Baali's mere presence.

Any being with True Faith who faces a Baali with Unholy Aura must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 8) or else flee the scene in terror. A botch on the roll indicates that the Baali's infernal power has literally reached out to taint the victim, causing some sort of injury (stigmata are popular) or even stripping True Faith away.

#### **LORD OF FLIES (2 POINT FLAW)**

This singular affliction is seen as a sign of infernal favor; indeed, among devotees of the Swarm-God, the severity of one's affliction is treated as a badge of rank. Insects find the character irresistible (despite or perhaps because of her unliving nature), and flock to her immediate vicinity. Once attracted, the vermin never leave her presence. Instead, they circle in a grotesque cloud, no matter where she goes or what precautions she takes. As this swarm can never be dispelled, Baali afflicted with such devotees have certain problems in non-Baali social circles.

## **Clanbook Baali**

### **CARRION COMFORT (3 POINT FLAW)**

Certain Baali associate too closely with spirits of corruption and plague to take pleasure from normal feeding. These vampires must instead take the cold blood of the dead, and if putrefaction has begun to set in, all the better. Of course, cold blood is less nutritious than warm, and vampires with this Flaw take one fewer Blood Point's benefit than they should from feeding.

### **INFERNAL AURA (3 POINT FLAW)**

Not only does True Faith cause Baali with this Flaw to flee, but their mere presence alerts those touched by the Divine that evil is in the vicinity. Any character with True Faith within a mile of a Baali with an Infernal Aura is instantly aware of his presence and general direction.

### **TOUCHED FROM BEYOND (1-4 POINT FLAW)**

Often referred to as the "Devil's marks" by mundane inhabitants of the Dark Medieval world, these anatomical aberrations sometimes manifest on those who spend too much time consorting with demoniac powers. Certain mortals or vampires who have entered into bargains with the infernal (see *Dark Ages Companion*) or have otherwise kept company with the denizens of the nether realms may also display these physical anomalies, at the Storyteller's option.

Possible deformities include, but are not limited to: malformed teeth, club feet, a horrid stench, slimy excretions, tough or warty hide, parasitic infestation, putrescence, vestigial wings or other ineffectual (perhaps additional) limbs. The victim may never remove or "improve" these disfigurements, although magic or Disciplines can hide them from plain sight.

Note: The disfigurements mentioned here are not a replacement for the marks of Demonic Investments. Instead, they manifest in addition to those tangible proofs of dealings with the infernal.

## **ADDITIONAL DISCIPLINE POWERS**

### **DAIMOINON**

#### **000000 GLIMPSE THE GULF BEYOND**

There are worlds beyond worlds and places beyond space and time; this power allows a Baali to shatter the boundaries between such zones of cosmic terror and the mundane world. Glimpse the Gulf Beyond is never used lightly, for even the masters of Daimoinon fear what they might see -- or what might see them. But when a Baali does invoke the face of the Void, the effects are terrifying.

When Glimpse the Gulf Beyond is invoked, the Baali literally uses his will to force cracks in the walls of reality. Through those cracks come the sights, sounds, smells and other aspects of existence outside of reality as most know it. While exactly what comes through from the other side varies from moment to moment (blasphemous whispers one second, a chamel stench and the howls of the damned the next), the impact on the target is always tremendous.

System: The player spends a Willpower point, then rolls Stamina + Occult (difficulty 7) against the target's Willpower roll (difficulty also 7). The attacker's leftover successes dictate the effect:

No successes: The passage fails to open; no effect.

1 successes: The onlooker is shaken, but physically unharmed. He loses a temporary point of Willpower and is down one die on all rolls for the scene.

2 successes: The subject temporarily loses two points Willpower, and must then roll Courage (difficulty = 10 minus his current Willpower) against Röttschreck, in addition to suffering a one die penalty on all rolls.

3 successes: The target temporarily loses three Willpower, and must make a Self-Control/Instinct roll (difficulty 7) or lose consciousness. Even if this roll is successful, the target is badly shaken, and suffers a two die penalty on all rolls for the duration of the scene.

4 successes: The target temporarily loses four Willpower, and must immediately roll Self-Control/Instinct (difficulty 8) or fall into a catatonic state for an hour.

5+ successes: The strain of perceptions battling the imperceptible proves to be too much for the victim's mind. The target must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 7) or become severely mentally incapacitated to the point of permanent gibbering idiocy. Even if the victim succeeds on the Willpower roll, treat the effect as if the Baali scored 4 successes.

Reducing a victim's Willpower to zero in this fashion may leave her with a (random) Derangement. This infirmity can be either temporary or permanent, as warranted by the severity of the victim's trauma.

A botch indicates something has gone terribly wrong with the Baali's attempt to open the portal. In such cases, Storytellers are encouraged to exercise their fiendish discretion, but some possibilities include backlash from the Other Side, the escape of an unwanted visitor into this realm or even the abduction of the Baali herself.

Baali alone are immune to this power, but even among their ranks, there are few who gaze willingly into the Void, or who do so for long.



## Clanbook Baali

### 0000000000 **OPEN THE WAY**

While the other clans prattle about the wars of the Antediluvians, the Baali have remained dedicated to a dark purpose: the release of their lords and masters onto an unsuspecting earth. Open the Way is the method by which this unholy act might be enacted, and such is the might and depravity required to use this power that it has only been attempted thrice in all of history.

Fortunately, all three attempts have failed. The past is of no moment to the Baali, however, as they maintain that such setbacks only postpone the inevitable. It will not be long, faithful Baali claim, before they release the ultimate darkness to ravage the face of the earth.

System: Open the Way is in fact a power and part of the Daimoinon Discipline. However, such is the intense formality of its use that it has become psychologically impossible to exercise this ability without an extensive ritual to "prepare" the Opener. In truth, Open the Way would function perfectly well without its trappings and folderol if performed by a Baali who did not believe in such, but seeing as none currently exist, the question is moot.

The preparatory ritual requires a tremendous investment of time and sacrifice. In order to place the easter in the proper frame of mind, he must chant paeans to the entity he is attempting to awaken, uninterrupted, for 48 consecutive hours. The slightest stammer or interruption causes the rite to fail, and may well attract the unwelcome attention of the entity being petitioned. At the conclusion of the chanting, the Baali must then make a sacrifice consisting of a hundred free, untainted souls. The victims sacrificed may be mortal or Cainite, but all must have a Conscience rating of at least four. At this point, the Baali summons and releases all of his Willpower, expending 9 points of permanent Willpower in an attempt to shatter the bonds holding his master outside the world. If a Willpower roll (difficulty 10) is successful, the Baali becomes an empty vessel and the gate through which his master flows back into reality.

From that point on, the character is no longer playable, as he has become an aspect of his foul master. On the other hand, the world now has graver concerns that the disposition of a single Cainite.

### ***OTHER POWERS***

#### **I Am Legion (Daimoinon Level Three, Obfuscate Level Two)**

One of the Baali's most devious methods of avoiding detection, this subtle magic allows the Baali to forge a temporary pact with a "speaking demon" or other malevolent spirit (Storyteller's discretion as to what sort of being is appropriate). Once the pact is sealed, the Baali's partner in mischief temporarily leaps into the vampire's body, assuming a state of limited control over its voice and movements.

While the Baali is "possessed," the interloper who answers is essentially in charge, allowing for a certain amount of leeway when it comes to answering uncomfortable question. After all, the demon can answer questions (truthfully) that might otherwise prove difficult for the Baali to respond to under magical, Auspex-based, or other scrutiny. For example, the demon within may cheerfully answer "no" to such tired questions as "Are you Baali!" or "Do you engage in the worship of demons!" In a pinch, the demon may attempt to pose as Caitiff or even mortal; "I am clanless" and "I am not a vampire" are both perfectly reasonable true statements for a non-vampiric creature to make, after all.

System: The player must succeed in a Manipulation + Leadership roll (difficulty 6) to ensnare a suitable demon or spirit. The number of successes dictates the summoned creature's intelligence and willingness to help, which in turn indicates the extent to which it is capable of concocting useful reactions to pertinent questions and/or situations. A failure indicates just that -- failure to ensnare the being -- while a botch can result in true catastrophe (a creature who does not wish to leave the vampire's body, or who betrays her, at the Storyteller's discretion).

Baali hedging their bets with this sort of deal can make "concessions" to the inhabiting creature to win more cooperation. It is up to the Storyteller to determine what sort of goodies the possessing demon might want, what it could give in return, and whether or not it will keep its bargains.

**SOME PAGES ARE UNFORTUNATELY MISSING!**

## Appendix: To Reign in Hell

### ***THE MANY FACES OF SHAITAN***

Other books for Vampire: The Dark Ages recount Shaitan's legacy in extensive detail (see Dark Ages Companion). Admittedly, there are many different tales of Shaitan and his actions; some of these stories even contradict each other. That is not surprising, as any number of Cainites have claimed the name "Shaitan" through the ages, and each has told different tales of his history, intentions and powers. Most of the impostors are long since fallen to dust; of the horde of Cainites who posed as Shaitan, only one survives to this date.

The Baali who currently claims the mantle truly believes that he is in fact Shaitan. This Shaitan would seem to be the product of Nergal's machinations several centuries past, but nothing more is known of his origins. The impostor first made his presence known in the city of Toledo in al-Andalus, where he was Magister of the infernal Black School, a college dedicated to the dark arts. Unlike Nergal, who was more interested in spreading the worship of Namtaru, this Shaitan specialized in guiding others along the path of infernalism.

It took decades for other Baali to discover the impostor's whereabouts. In the meanwhile, in a frenzy of educational fervor he taught summoning rituals and true names of power to mortals and depraved Cainites alike. Before the Black College was smashed, its graduates had already spread infernalist teachings far and wide across Europe and into northern Africa.

The Baali eventually destroyed the school and all of its students, but Shaitan himself escaped. The most popular story claims that he fled westward, across the sea; other tales have him returning to the Fertile Crescent. Most Baali simply hope he went too far west, fell off the edge of the world and dashed his head against the rocks below.

### **CYBELE**

Cybele was Shaitan's childe, though precisely which Shaitan may never be known. Embraced in the maddening corridors of the Knossos Labyrinth, she learned her craft from its whispers and advanced along paths of corruption and power far quicker than any of Shaitan's other progeny. When Thera erupted, she was among the few acolytes who escaped Crete; she bore with her the knowledge that Moloch's Baali had betrayed her sire.

Cybele was Moloch's chief adversary following the destruction of Crete. She grew in power far quicker than any could have anticipated, and dedicated her unlife to fighting her sire's betrayer. When Carthage sent Hannibal forth in the Punic Wars, Cybele helped Rome defeat the African general. Her actions to defend the city earned her praise and power from Rome's other Cainites, who were unaware of her lineage. Unfortunately, Cybele herself put an end to her advances; she suffered from a terrible blood-lust, and occasionally went on murderous and bloody rampages through her temples. Her Cainite supporters within the Roman Senate tried to hush the matter up, but before long the truth of her origins was whispered in the Forum.

Despite Cybele's favored status among Cainites, Romans regarded her cult with some fear and trepidation -- especially during festivals, when her eunuch galli priests danced in the streets, cutting themselves with knives and performing public rites of self-castration. These actions slowly ostracized Cybele from even those portions of Cainite society who disbelieved the rumors of her bloodline, and she grew increasingly angry at her isolation. That anger manifested itself in more and bloodier rampages, and so the bloody cycle spun merrily along.

The ultimate fate of Cybele remains a mystery following the fall of Carthage. It was her rituals that sealed Troile and Moloch in the earth -- where they still sleep to this day -- but she never accompanied the Roman armies back around the orbis terrarum. The last reliable sighting of Cybele instead placed her aboard a ship bound for Crete, where her unlife began. Those who saw her said she seemed tired and spent, as though the years of hatred had taken their toll.

Nearly a millennia later, unsubstantiated rumors are spreading that Cybele herself appeared at the pit of Iblii-al-Akbar, during the ritual to curse the Assamites. She identified herself as Decani, and blessed the elixir of cursed blood. Those who knew her say she served Namtaru, her sire's master. If Cybele discovered a way back into Labyrinth following Carthage's destruction, she may have also found Namtaru. If so, then she has taken one of Namtaru's 36 names and become Decani.

## Clanbook Baali

### **AZANEAL**

Azaneal, leader of the new Baali movement, is the undisputed ruler of Chorazin and the first Cainite to galvanize the bloodline since Shaitan. Although he lacks his predecessor's charisma, Azaneal is still a potent adversary. Physically, he is an imposing figure, with eyes of almost solid black, and a nearpalpable aura of darkness. Mentally, he does not possess Shaitan's subtlety, but compensates for this lack through strength of will.

Despite the forces that Azaneal gathers, he has no intention of repeating the mistakes of his predecessors. Instead, he seeks to unite the bloodline under his dominion, and to usurp the Elders of the Baali. That, at least, is what he tells his followers, and there are certainly enough Baali who are anxious for him to take the bloodline's reins. Azaneal's true agenda, however, is to uncover all of the secrets of Chorazin. He believes Shaitan meant Chorazin not to be an end unto itself, but rather a gate through which eternal darkness would enter the world. Alas for him, though, he does not know how to complete Shaitan's work.

One key Azaneal believes he lacks is the body of Namtaru. The Baali master of shadows has sent several Cainites to Crete in efforts to uncover the Labyrinth, but his agents have all vanished. Azaneal suspects the infamous Decani guard the Labyrinth, and it is they who are destroying his servants. If that is true, then Azaneal feels that he does not possess the ability to fight them at this time. Instead, he concentrates on creating fertile children, and subjugating the Baali of Europe. Perhaps with a united bloodline behind him, he can take Crete and return Namtaru to Chorazin.

### **MA-RI-AH**

Once-concubine of the king of a long-dead Akkadian city-state, this former protege of the fiendish high priest Anaduk the Black (see Constantinople by Night) has risen remarkably quickly through the ranks of her hellish bloodline.

Her extraordinarily calm, unrufed nature is legendary even among the Childer of Caine. When she acts, she does so quickly and without confusion; like many others of her kind, she works alone, preferring solitude to the company of others. Those few Cainites who have met and spoken with her note that she goes covered and veiled, in the tradition of Islam, though some whisper that she is concealing some disfigurement. Additionally, she bears an especial hatred for the children of Arikel, ensnaring, seducing, and torturing any Toreador unfortunate enough to cross her path or otherwise trespass upon her holdings. None are sure exactly why, though piles of ash throughout Europe testify to her efficiency.

Ma-ri-ah has ingratiated herself to several greater powers, including the horrid Decani and their peers. More terrifying is the fact that she serves no less an entity than the Child called Anoster, Lord of Despair -- a feat truly exceptional for one of her standing. With this potent backing, she has turned her attentions to Byzantium, its tenuous relations with the Western Church and the great games of power that are all too frequently played therein.

Unsurprisingly, rumors regarding Ma-ri-ah's eccentric, solitary nature and twisted motives abound, however. Some name her traitor to her own kind, and call her a murderess responsible for the destruction of her sire. Others believe she is not Baali at all, but a subversive agent of other powers, perhaps Setite or Tremere. One source, stemming from a fragmented chunk of an Eblaitic tablet, claims that she has evolved beyond the limitations of mortal and Cainite existence altogether, and become a dark and hungry goddess made flesh.

Whatever the truth, "Mary" has become something of a dangerous figure in to her contemporaries, and to the Dark Medieval world as a whole. She is woman, wild-card and waist-deep in the politics and intrigue of the realm. She deals with mortals and immortals, and is a prominent figure upon whom many eyes have settled.

And as always, the nail that stands too tall is inevitably hammered down.

## APPENDIX II: OF INTEREST TO SCHOLARS AND CHIRURGEONS

Many older Baali orders have abandoned the Levant for Europe or the uncharted East, in an attempt to marshal their forces far from those who know and hunt them. Their home shall always be between the cradling arms of the Tigris and Euphrates, but such lands are no longer safe for them.

There are other matters, though, of greater concern to them. Through their laxity and weakness, the Baali have allowed too many true names to slip out into the world. Uncontrolled and unbidden, these names have brought the Sleepers closer to waking than they have been since the days of the first tribe. Mysterious plagues boil forth with increasing frequency, and the Baali know this to be evidence that Namtaru is awakening. Those who know the legends of the Children fear that once Namtaru awakens, the other sleepers will be close behind. These Cainites now hide, or they seek ways of undoing the impossible. Some hope that by rediscovering the oldest true names, the first names of the Children, they can find a way to control their actions -- for should the current trends continue, the Children will rise in wrath and hunger, beholden to none. Others seek to hasten the awakening, hoping that by doing reverence unto the sleepers, they might be spared in the coming dark days. And in Europe, the children of the bloodline cavort and name themselves Mephisto, and in their ignorance shout names that echo between the worlds.

All true Baali know that the end is coming, however. And if asked, they will tell you that they think it is coming very soon.