

C L A N B O O K :

TM

TOREADOR





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TOREADOR



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SPECIAL THANKS, OUT-OF-HOUSE EDITION

John at the Highland Tap, for always being able to take care of a party of 14 rowdies at the drop of a hat.

DJ Caz 10, for keeping the vinous Old Wavers on the floor until the wee hours.

Casey Dryden, for post-club reports that leave nothing to the imagination.

The Dupree's staff, for keeping us drunk and always having some nine-ball ready.

Everyone at the Food Business, for the best damn lunch around.

HEX AND VEXING

That guy with the giant-ass sport-ute who parks next to me in the garage. What, you couldn't find a bigger car?



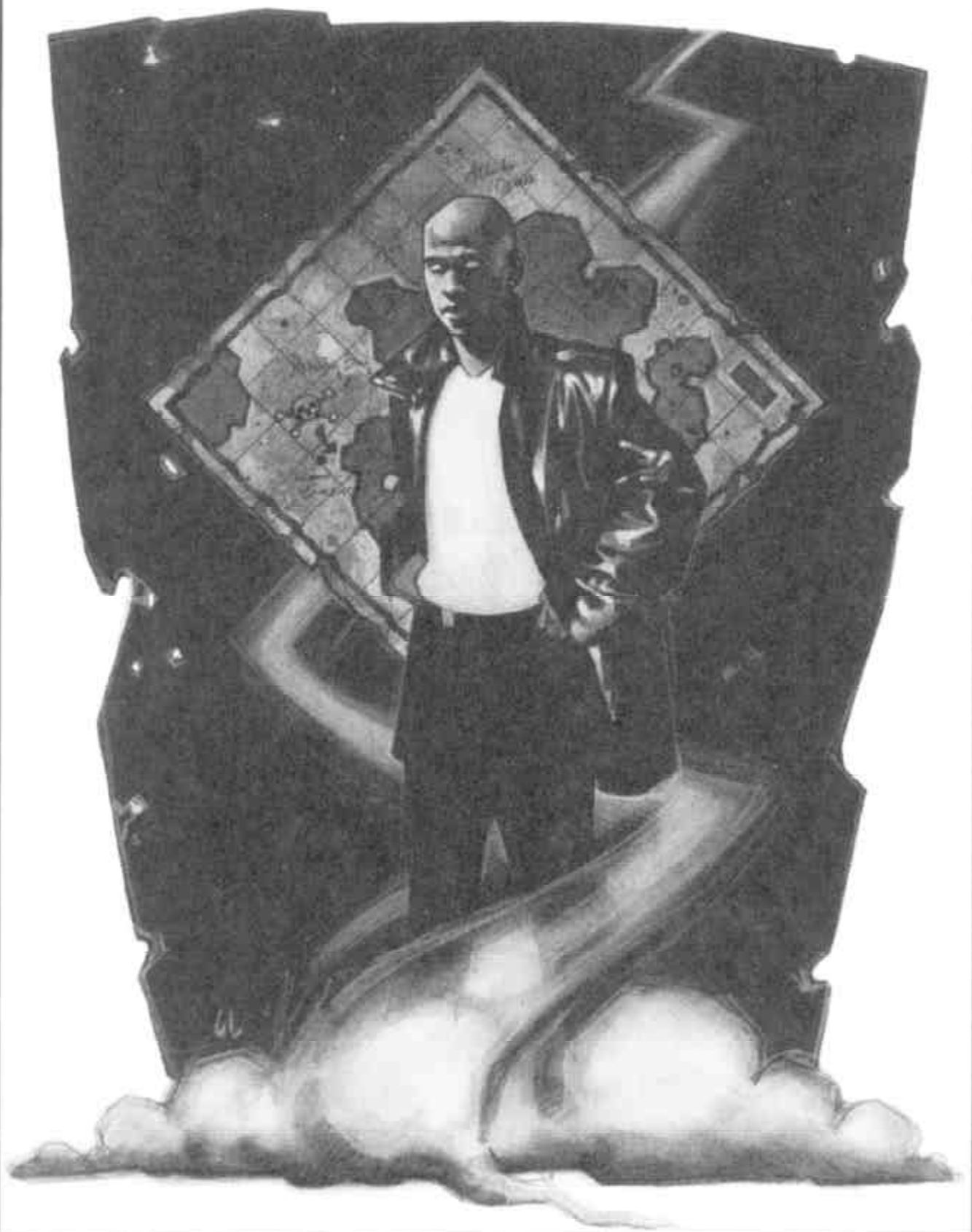
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EXODUS AND EMBRACE

It's a black-tie event. There — that one, the woman in the conservative black dress with the diamond pendant. Yes, the one wearing too much perfume. That's Emilia Prudence, one of the finest violinists in Quebec. And there, the man in the red tux. Only Baxter could look attractive in an atrocity like that. He's a chef, you know, so he gets laid a lot. Oh, I'm quite sorry. I didn't know you could still blush.

I've always felt uncomfortable in a tux. It's too restrictive. But one of my pieces is on display tonight, so I am too. You haven't seen it yet? Then let me show you. It's one of my better ones. I think.

There, you see? It's a map. Yes, I know it doesn't look like any map you've ever seen. I don't do street maps, you know. This one was painted on my finest, most expensive canvas. I made the background look like aged vellum — that technique took some practice, let me tell you. Don't mind what it really is... it's not important.

First I sketched things that night. The swamp, and the people I was with. I know there are no people on the map. I painted them as animals, you see? And the colors, well, the colors have as much meaning as the animals do. Of course I'm being cryptic, that's what maps are, my dear. Cryptic. Just like the Kindred tend to be.

I had to change the proportions of things. Really, the wooden platform was in the middle of the swamp. The earthworks weren't visible from where we were. And there wasn't a trail leading back to the huts — we only wanted people who were supposed to know the way there. It's called

artistic license. I didn't want to paint a wooden platform in the middle of an empty swamp. That would have been boring.

Anthony Swings is my name. You've heard of me? You flatter me. But I can appreciate flattery as well as anyone. Here, in return let me tell you the story of that map. It will bore you of course, but then what else should you expect in return for flattery?

The platform cracked as Anthony sat, sketchpad in hand. He wore only shorts, his feet were bare, as was his chest. He'd caked his legs up to his calves. He and Titus, as the most recently Embraced Xindred in the group, were not allowed to be fully clothed for this ceremony.

The only light emanated from four small lamps at the corners of the platform, it gleamed dully on Anthony's dark skin. As the others took their places, Anthony sketched. He worked with simple charcoal, but his eyes took in every color. Someone across from him slipped on a flashlight and peered at his sketchpad.

'I thought you always worked with color, Anthony.' The old man's voice grated harshly.

'I have a perfect memory for color. There's no need for it at this stage.' Anthony never looked up from the paper. His hand darted across the page, laying out the basic lines of the place.

Xjoroge harrumphed and turned the flashlight off.

Eight men and women sat in the circle now. Ouma was the eldest and therefore in charge. Xjoroge and Xyamira sat at his left and right hand, respectively. Anthony sat to Xyamira's right, and Titus to Xjoroge's left. Across from them all sat Kiboko, she rested in a meditative posture with her eyes closed. The tight braids of her hair spilled down past her shoulders.

A slight smell of mortal sweat and fear permeated the nighttime air, along with the musk of the swamp and the rot of vegetation. The two boys took the center of the platform. Kasuki, 17, sat facing the assembled elders and their childer. The dark blue ink of dozens of tattoos — patterns made of dots and straight lines — marked the ebony of his body. He had shed his clothes before setting out into the swamp, but his nakedness caused him no embarrassment. A trickle of sweat ran down the side of his face in contrast with his calm features.

Audei, a boy of 16, sat beside his friend fully clothed. He held Kasuki's hand, it was meant to be a gesture of comfort. Audei's body flinched as the sharp call of a night bird sounded nearby, but he held fast.

That's why I chose the bird. Birds always make me think of small, nervous people hopping about. Maybe that's unfair to Audei, he was a good boy, and eventually Kiboko Embraced him, three years later. But he was always nervous about something. The jags of violet and orange just bring the thing together. You don't understand the color choices? You really are

young, aren't you? I'm sorry, I didn't mean that as an insult. I'm not all that old myself, you know, just a couple of decades.

You see how the bird has its wings wrapped around the large cat? Audei was always very protective of Kasuki, even though Audei was the younger of the two. You grew up fast on the streets of Lagos — you have to. Kasuki's talent? Isn't that obvious? His tattoos. They aren't the sort of tattoos you'd see here. No dragons or swirling Celtic knots, no barbed wire and no hearts. His entire body was marked with the dots and lines — sometimes others applied the ink, but the designs were always his. It made him very recognizable, but it also earned him respect. If you met a tall, imposing man, always calm, with little expression on his face and tattoos all over his body, you'd probably pay him respect as well.

Don't mistake his quiet for a lack of emotion though. He certainly inspired fierce loyalty in Audei, didn't he? And look at the color of him, the rose, the yellow, the vermilion. Those aren't the colors of a spiritually bankrupt man.

When everyone had settled, Ouma nodded. Kiboko rose silently and knelt behind Kasuki. She took his blood then, slowly, lovingly, with the gentleness of a mother for a son. She gave her own in return — she opened her finger with her teeth and allowed Kasuki to lap at it. When his pained eyes cleared and his sucking grew too strong, she pushed him away.

Audei raised his friend with a hand behind his shoulders. Audei held his arm out to Kasuki, whose newly sharpened teeth sank quickly into the bare flesh. The now-made Torador fed from his soul-friend then. Audei cried out, an abortive moan of pain and pleasure, and his brown eyes widened.

When Audei grew dizzy and slumped against the platform, Kiboko placed one strong hand on Kasuki's shoulder. Stop.

Kasuki shuddered and pulled back, concern for his dear companion replacing the hunger that burned in his eyes. He closed the wound with a lick and pulled Audei into his arms. Audei's eyes stayed closed.

Ouma's voice was smooth and as dark as his skin — every bit as elegant as his striking face. This boy will be fine. Your concern for him tells me we chose well. He gave a rare smile and stood — and the smile faded.

Two men stood at the edge of the clearing. The black mortal stood with head bowed, the white man behind him waited with arms crossed, a camera over his shoulder. His long brown hair was caught back in a ponytail, his blue eyes glittered, and there was no scent or sight of sweat about him.

Ouma turned to the guide. 'Leave us.' Everyone else held their places in silence until they could no longer hear the rustling of leaves and squelching of mud over the distant sounds of the waterfall. 'Your name?'

'Jacob Gray. I was sent to tell you to leave this place.'

No, that's Jacob right there, the goat. A goat in a swamp doesn't look any stranger than a bird with its wings around a big cat! I never claimed to do realism.

Ouma is the Degeous. He deserved something majestic. Majestic really is the best word for him. You might say he was our leader, as much as we had one. It was a respect-for-age thing — actual age, not appearance. Ouma was just the oldest. Theoretically he and the other elders, like Nyamina and Titus' sire Njoroge, made all the decisions together, but Ouma always had the final say. Luckily he was smart so he listened to the others.

Shouting gold and light blue don't do Ouma justice, but it's a start. He was a strong man and good. I didn't always agree with his decisions, and I made no secret of this, but I always respected him. Oh, yes, I was quite straightforward about my opinions. He valued honesty more than flattery, and it isn't as though he was ever going to get us younger ones to shut up.

When I'm traveling I often have to remind myself that it doesn't work that way in most places. It can be hard to bite my tongue around others' elders, but I do my best. I suppose that's why I take it out on the rest of you instead. I'm not normally such an ass. I promise.

'You allowed the boy to feed from someone close to him?' The shock on Jacob's face was clear.

'To feed first from a loved one teaches one to care for the mortals he feeds from. To forbid feeding from one's loved ones only teaches that mortals used as food are worth nothing.' Ouma's voice was calm but his eyes had narrowed.

'And you allowed a mortal to be present for an Embrace. What on earth were you thinking?'

Ouma settled back as though lecturing a child. 'One is not allowed to enter into the Embrace without a soul-friend. One who cannot connect that strongly with a mortal surely stands no chance of retaining his connection to mortals for very long.' His tone was disdainful, the implications obvious.

'Do you always treat people who've come to help you this way?'

'Did we ask for your help? You are a visitor here, and that entitles you to certain amenities. It does not entitle you to question our ways.'

Instead of replying, Jacob zipped open a bag slung over his shoulder beneath the camera. He pulled out a handful of photographs and tossed them onto the platform. Anthony put aside his sketchbook and paged through them. 'Satellite photographs of the area? Nice, but sterile. Do you think this is good?'

Jacob glared at Ouma. 'Is it your custom to allow your childer to insult your guests?'

Ouma smiled. 'His insult was appropriate. You thought you would surprise a handful of ignorant natives with things of which they obviously knew nothing. You were wrong. We do not bury our heads in the sand here.'

'Well then obviously you already know about the archaeologists who plan to come study your ruins, and I can go back to Holland.' Jacob turned to leave.

'Who sent you?' Nyamina's voice quivered with old age, just as it had for a century. 'Kaumani.'

That was the magic word, you see. Kaumani was a Toreador who'd come through five years earlier. He was a fine Kindred, and we'd learned a lot from him. We respected him. If he had sent Jacob, then Jacob was important.

Even if, when it came right down to it, he was just a purple, brown, and light green goat.

Kaumani? Oh, I'd probably paint him as a unicorn, all white and everything. He wasn't naive, but he was innocent, if that makes sense. I taught him to start looking at people like animals, and he's never forgiven me — it's hard to stop once you're begun. You'll understand when you leave here tonight. It can be difficult to keep a straight face when you're dealing with an angry Brujah and all you can think about is how much he looks like a bulldog. Barking at him does not improve his temper.

Hmm, yes, I often wonder too how I've made it this far. Luck, I suppose, and very quick feet.

'You must leave this place. You aren't safe here any more.' Jacob's tone was earnest now. He'd taken a seat on the platform. Kiboko and Kasuki had retired to a corner and Audei was curled up in Kasuki's arms, his eyes still closed and his breathing shallow. Anthony sketched furiously. Kasuka glanced over his shoulder and saw a suggestion of horns and a camera.

'You say there are archaeologists coming?' Titus asked.

'Well, maybe.' Jacob avoided Titus's eyes. 'They certainly have these photos. They haven't actually decided yet where they're going, but it could be here.'

Anthony shook his head. His tone was mild when he spoke, and he kept his eyes on his sketching. 'We have known about satellite photography for some time now. Before that it was aerial photography. It's never been enough to drive us out before — why should it now?'

'Don't you hear what I'm saying? They may bring an expedition down here!' Jacob's hands waved about in the air as though he could encompass the threat between his arms.

'Why should they?' Anthony smiled and finally looked up into Jacob's eyes. 'No one wants to hear about ruins in Nigeria. It isn't as exciting as the pyramids. There are no jewels, no stashes of gold to be uncovered. It'll remind you that this place was even discussed in a scientific journal in 1959, and no one has yet come here. They found it on the aerial photos, and they didn't care. This place has protected us for centuries, why should it stop now?'

Nyama frowned. 'You just want to stay in the home of your ancestors. Maybe that is more important to you than our safety.'

'Nothing is more important to me than our safety.' Anthony's tone took on a dangerous edge. 'Anyone who says otherwise is a fool. I'm simply saying that we are safest here.'

Nyama's voice was thoughtful, and she tapped one gnarled finger on the wood of the platform. 'We still don't know how it is that this place protects us, and we really have no proof that it does. All we know is that up until now, no one has found us.'

Anthony dropped his sketchpad on the platform, the piece of charcoal he'd been sketching with rolled off into the swamp with a clatter and a small splash. 'How could it not protect us? You're telling me that we're living in a set of ruins bigger in area than the pyramids and no one has found us simply because they're lazy? Give me a break. You know as well as I do the legends.'

Nyama glared at her child. 'You put too much stock in superstitions. I think Haumain may have a point.'

'That's when I knew I'd lost. It wasn't. Jacob may have a point, but rather, Haumain may have a point.' They trusted Haumain, not Jacob. It was true, I didn't want to leave the home of my ancestors. I didn't want to abandon a place that had served us so well for so long. I didn't want to give up my home because a couple of elders were getting paranoid.

Oh, let them stare, I don't care if my voice was carrying. What are they going to do to me? They're honoring me, they're not allowed to be rude yet. The rudeness will come after the party — that's the way the game is played. It's all right, though. I don't play that game, so it won't matter all that much. Besides, I'm heading out of town tomorrow night. I don't like to stay in any one place for very long. I haven't felt safe anywhere since we left our home.

The others? Oh, they scattered. We talked about staying together, but we know it wasn't safe. We had our own little community there, so as long as we didn't kill we'd be well fed. But once we left it would be harder to hide our feeding patterns. So most of us ultimately split up. Nyamira and I still keep in touch, in many ways she's like a mother to me. She's a dominating mother who tries to meddle in my affairs too much, but a mother nonetheless. Yes, she's the hen in the corner, light green was really the only appropriate color for her.

Kaboko is the blue serpent. She really loved Kasuki, you know. I suppose they still travel together with Eudei. Yes, most of the animals are not African. I tried to pick things that best suited each person's temperament, and I'd traveled quite a bit even by that time. I think it was also a matter of arrogance. I wanted any outsiders who saw the paintings to know that I had traveled and that I wasn't a stupid savage. Only now, looking back, can I see that unfortunate lack of self-confidence. I wouldn't change it though. I think an artist's work should reflect his imperfections as well as his gifts.

We will leave, then, over the next month. It has been decided.' Eume nodded, and Nyamira and Honoge nodded with him.

For the first time Kasuki looked sad, and he held Eudei closer to him for comfort. Kaboko put a hand on his strong shoulder and squeezed. Anthony picked up his sketches and stalked off into the swamp, his feet sinking into the mud.

'He will be all right,' Nyamira told Eume. 'He adapts very well, it is one of the reasons I chose him. He just needs a little time. I predict he will be the first of us to leave.'

Anthony, who listened with his heightened senses even as he left, realized how easily his sire read him. He turned to look back at the platform, and he saw Kasuki lift Eudei into his arms. Kasuki stepped down from the platform with care so as not to jostle his friend. Kaboko steadied him with one hand. Kasuki saw Anthony looking at him and smiled sadly, shrugging.

Anthony turned again. Nyamira was correct, he would leave first. He would leave the very next night and make his way to South America. If he had to go, he might as well go far.





CHAPTER ONE: THE CIVILIZED ONES

Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy
The Night-mare Life-In-Death was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

— Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"

August 8

Dear Rebecca,

I am pleased to announce that my project was a success in all particulars. The treasure was recovered intact and, as we hoped, was quite useful when it came time to settle up with Guillaume. I do not think we shall hear him complain about our bargain.

As to the meat of the matter: As you suspected, the 'treasure' that Dermott's journal referred to was not, as he thought, a mere collection of Katherine of Montpellier's work. The chamber held the lady herself.

Once she had settled down and we adjourned to Nobstulling's chateau, I was able to talk with her. Although she declared that my Norman French was "sluttish, awkward and vulgar," she agreed to answer my questions about the Long Night — and even earlier. The whole conversation is on the enclosed DVD, but I've provided a full translation for you.

Enjoy.

— Carmelita

Carmelita: Your Grace, I was hoping that you would deign to answer a few questions....

Katherine: You insolent little snip. Who are you to question me? What is your title and what is your lineage?

C: My name is Carmelita Neillson...

K: What is that, Scandanavian? Has my clan sunk so low that we're Embracing the fucking Vikings? What's next, giving the Blood to dogs, rats and serving men? Who's your sire?

C: I was Embraced by Kenneth Chrisswell.

K: Whose childe was he?

C: I believe Phillipe L'Huiller....

K: By Onan's seed! My own ungrateful whelp giving our gift to Saxons and Vikings. Where is Phillipe? Bring him to me that I may discipline him properly!

C: Phillipe L'Huiller met the Final Death in 1842.

K: 1842? The year of our Lord 1842?

C: Quite so.

K: What year is it now?

C: It is 1999.

K: 1999! Surely there is the hand of Jyhad in this!

C: How so?

K: With the millennium's edge, can the Final Nights be far behind? Why else would I be roused from torpor, save that one of the Great Ones should take back the vitae I was lent? Oh, you do not know whose claw you are.

C: No, I assure you, I act only...

K: Silence your ignorant mouth. Have you any talent of worth?

C: I beg your pardon?

K: Can you not play, or sing, or clap your forepaws in an amusing fashion? I have been dead to time for the better part of an age, and I would be entertained while I ponder.

C: I play dulcimer, my lady.

K: Then stop raping my language with your cork-screw tongue. God grant that your hands are as gentle as your mouth is coarse.

(I played for her.)

K: Well. You have some talent at least. 1999 you say? It is good to know that not all our songs are lost. Do you know how Phillipe died?

C: I believe he stepped into the sun, madame.

K: Poor Phillipe. Still, better thus than by the hands of some mad Usurper or rutting Turk. So, if he was your grandsire, you are then... ten steps from the Original? God's wounds, you must be a watery one indeed.

C: Milady, there are those of the thirteenth generation abroad who count themselves sires of childer.

K: Feh. Such worms should be salted to shrivel. So then. 1999? I shall have much to learn. Who holds Jerusalem?

C: The Israelis.

K: Meaning the Jews? Oh, the end times are surely nigh.

C: Madame. I have restored you from your torpor, I have fed you and played for you, and I shall gladly answer any question you might have about the years of your slumber. But in return, might I be so bold as to beg a boon?

K: Hmph. It is reassuring to see that some things remain constant. What would you have?

C: I crave lore of the ancient nights.

(Pause; pointed sigh.)

K: Very well.

THE FIRST CITY

K: I sincerely hope your water-blooded age has not managed to fumble and lose every piece of valuable knowledge our kind once possessed. My knowledge stretches back to the First City, adopted and ruled by Caine after his time in the wilderness.

C: You mean Enoch?

K: Enoch? I've heard that name given to one of the first three, but that's later in the story.

C: I had heard that the name of the First City was Enoch.


K: That's the vulgarity of your modern tongue and the laxity of sloppy lore. The name of the first city was Ubar. Though from the stories I heard of Enoch, I wouldn't put it past him to tell his childer that the city was named for him. Prideful, by what I hear. No, the first city was Ubar, the "Queen of Frankincense." Years later I would hear our rivals say that Caine chose the one city that could cover the vile smell of himself and his offspring, but that was likely jealousy talking.

Caine, the farmer, had traveled far and seen many things, you know. He had seen the wonders of the Sumerians — most notably the wheel — and brought them to Ubar.

Under his guidance, the city thrived. One Ventrue scholar I knew — a dull, dull fellow named Hermias — said it was due to Caine's patience and willingness to wait seven generations for his groves to be perfect or some damn thing. Really, I paid little attention to his economic blathering. I don't suppose Hermias is still... wait, I remember now, he perished in the Second Burning. Never mind.

Regardless, Ubar thrived with Caine as its king and, as related in the *Book of Nod*, he Embraced two childer.

C: Two? According to our Noddist texts, Caine had three Childer — Zillah, Irad and Enosch.



K: No, those were the Second Generation. The First Generation was two, whose names are lost. They were the two perfect lovers, devoted to each other, and Caine hoped that by giving that love as a gift to eternity, he could mitigate the cruel deeds he had done in the past. But the two despaired when they discovered they could never give birth to children of their own. They had hoped one night to combine in the flesh as in the spirit, making a new soul that held the best of each of them. Instead they were doomed to suffer in eternity as two beings, never joined in soul through offspring. Rather than accept that fate, they walked into the sun. Caine was so overcome with grief that he forbade their names to ever be spoken. He swore that he would never Embrace again. Nonetheless his grief so sharpened his loneliness that he gave the False Life to Zillah, Irad and Enosch before even one human generation had grown old into death. Some say their bad ends came because their sire had broken his own oath to Embrace them, that they were ill starred and destined for trouble on that account. I cannot say.

C: But, then... if Caine Embraced them, wouldn't they be of the same generation as the two lovers?

K: For the love of God, girl, aren't you listening to me? Caine Embraced them *after* the lovers. [Note to Rebecca: I know that doesn't answer the question. I'm not sure if Katherine was being deliberately deceitful, if she was confused so soon after rising from torpor or was just lying to occlude the rest of the story.] Irad, Enosch and Zillah picked companions of their own, Embracing 13, who would breed the great clans. Among them was our founder, the great bull dancer.

C: Not a sculptor?

K: No, you've been misled by a common myth. Our founder was not Arikel the sculptor, any more than our clan was associated with roses before we came to Europe. Have you ever seen a rose in the Holy Land? Initially we were the "Clan of the Blossom," probably a lily.

C: What was our founder's name?

K: You don't know *that*? Christ's aching feet!

C: We've always heard that it was "Toreador," but obviously that's a Spanish word, not one from the old world...

K: This is truly a degenerate age. I suppose it's not your fault that you were Embraced by some ignorant whorson Saxon. "Toreador" was initially not a name, but a description. Listen well: We are of the line of Ishtar, later called Astarte or Inanna, but it was as Ishtar that she was mortal-born in Ubar, as Ishtar she was embraced, and as Ishtar she was worshipped in Sumer. But that comes later in our tale, of course.

CRETE

K: You do know of the flood, do you not? The battle wherein the 12 killed the three, and Caine's wrath afterward? He rose from his self-imposed grave and cursed 12 of Zillah, Enosch and Irad's 13 children with dreadful justice for their patricide. Ennoia the hunter was punished to be like a beast, Malkav the magus was given madness. (My personal theory is that Saulot was cursed to have his bloodline attached to an endless procession of common, villainous upstarts.) Only one "official" history of such a curse reached me, and that was the curse of Nosferatu. The boldest of the murderers, he spat in Caine's face and called him the great fool. "Who are you to say our sires should not have given us the False Life? Your first two choices destroyed themselves to reject your gift!" More, he spoke the two names that Caine had forbidden. Enraged, Caine said "Your taste for others' secrets will now never be slaked, for I will strike you so that your visage shall disgust all who see."

The only one who remained uncursed was the young bull dancer, Ishtar, for she alone had refrained from the slaughter. To her, Caine said "Flee far to the north, for when your siblings find that you escaped their fate, they will be angry." With her, she took Caine's blessing: That no matter how long she stayed on our side of the grave, she would never lose the human taste for beauty.

Our founder fled to the west and the north, into Sumer. There, her power and beauty so overwhelmed the Sumerians that they worshipped her as a goddess. For some time, she was happy in Sumer, and there she Embraced her mortal lover Tammuz. Her happiness could not last, however: As Caine predicted, one of her murderous siblings followed hard upon her heels.

The first to find her was the bestial Ennoia, who went at that time by the name of Enkidu. (The same tiresome Ventrue I mentioned, Hermias, claimed this was somehow related to Enki, or Enosch, the child of Caine who Embraced Ennoia, but other scholars said his grasp of cuneiform was weak and he was talking nonsense.) Ennoia had with him some object of great importance. In the *Enûma Elish*, it's referred to as the "Tablet of Destiny" — the laws for mankind, set down by Enki himself. What those clay tablets actually contained is a matter of much speculation. After his Embrace, Hesiod believed them to contain an early account of the *Book of Nod*. Monçada and Beckett thought it was a chronicle of blood powers, explaining all of Enosch's magics.

C: You mean a grimoire of Disciplines? Which ones did Eno — Enosch possess?

K: That depends on which legends one reads. Certainly he had all of the powers that were common in my time, save for the bastard sorcery of the Tremere. There were also, it is said, certain powers he did not teach his childer, keeping them rather for himself. He was, for example, said to be able to break blood oaths at will, and remove death's potency from blood fed mortals. But these are mere legends, all as likely to be true as the Malkavian Anatole's tale that Enosch's tablet contained the detailed future of every Cainite who had been or would be, from Caine's punishment through the Time of Thin Blood.

In any event, Ishtar tried to take this item from Ennoia. It is possible that another of the 13 had by that time joined Ennoia. It is equally likely that Ennoia had Embraced a woman, known in the Akkadian version of the myth as Ereshkigal, who aided him in trapping Ishtar. The two Cainites overcame Ishtar, possibly by tricking her into forsaking her powers, but Tammuz rescued her in the end. He paid the price, however, dying the Final Death to save his sire. How often does one see that in modern nights? It wasn't very fucking common in my time, I'll freely tell you that.

Heartbroken, and desperate to gain her vengeance on the murderous Ennoia, she turned to Gilgamesh, king of Sumer and offered him her Embrace if he would

aid her against "Enkidu." However, her savage rival had beaten her to him. Given the choice between the Gangrel's power and Ishtar's beauty, the king chose power. The Toreador fled from the pair, but not before unleashing upon them some great monster known as the Bull of Heaven. The obvious course of speculation is that this creature was simply a monstrous bull, gorged on her blood until it was of terrible strength and proportions, but none can say for sure.

After leaving Sumer, she arrived at length in Crete. There she created more childer and taught the people the art of seizing the horns of a charging bull and leaping over its back. The rulers of Crete honored the bull as their sacred animal, so it was natural that they took the "toreador" to their hearts. All was well for some time, until Minos, then King of Crete, learned that Ishtar could pass on her gifts of beauty and immortality to those around her. He begged this boon of her, and initially she refused. Having seen the misery of Caine in Ubar, and the cruelty of Gilgamesh in Sumer, she felt that only tragedy could come from Caine's get ruling kine. He told her that if she refused to extend his life, he saw no reason to extend hers, and asked her to leave Crete. She partially relented, saying that if he wished, she would give the Embrace to his son.



Sadly, the son was unworthy of the gift. He fell into the clutches of his Beast and never emerged. Unwilling to kill his only son, Minos had him imprisoned in a lightless maze, where he was gorged on the blood of men and maidens offered in tribute. This story, distorted and inaccurate in some particulars, came down through Ovid and Appollodorus as the tale of the Minotaur. Both agree on the name of the man who killed Minos' disowned, mad son: Theseus. He possibly has the distinction of being the first mortal to kill one of us with his hands. He must have been quite a man.

Minos, in his grief, sought the Toreador to apologize for his foolishness, but she had left his city and passed on to Mycenae, taking the arts of the Minoans with her. Some say that she was accompanied on her journeys by an infatuated sorcerer named Daedalus, who had seen no creature like her before, but this could well be a myth.

*September 22
Dear Rebecca,
To say that Katherine is having a bit of trouble adapting to the modern world would be a gross understatement. She's already destroyed two telephones, a TV set, Edgar's stereo system and a digital alarm clock. Any machine that makes noise startles and alarms her, unless the sound it makes is that of a metal or crystal bell. (Yes, she can hear the difference between an actual bell and a recording of one.) She refuses to even look at a television, declaring it diabolical and unwholesome. She's agreed to listen to recorded music, though she prefers analog recording to digital. However, she won't talk on the phone, as she is convinced that it is an implement of enchantment.
On the positive side, she's learning modern French, English and German at a prodigious rate. With her increased fluency, however, have come increased and multilingual demands to be let out of Nobstulling's house. I bought some more time by letting her see a car in motion and by telling her how many of them she'd have to face in a city. The car impressed and frightened her quite a bit.
— Carmelita*

GREECE

K: In Mycenae, about fifteen centuries before Christ, the Toreador herself drops out of the historical record. But there can be no doubt that the Cainites descended from her had an impact on the development of Greek

society. Let us examine the story of Tantalus and Pelops, for example. The story that came down through the ages was that King Tantalus killed his son Pelops and served him to the gods as an act of insolence, for which he was punished. The poet Pindar took great exception to this story — not because of its glaring inaccuracies (the details of which are known firsthand only to our kind and the dead, of course), but because he thought it was blasphemous.

The true history is this: Tantalus did kill his son as food, as a pledge of loyalty to one (or more) of our kind. My guess, from the story that Tantalus was punished in the afterlife by a hunger he could never sate, is that he was dealing with the Ventrue, who were around and about. But one never knows.

What is certain is that one of Tantalus' mortal grandchildren, the queen Niobe, competed with one of Toreador's childer for the affections of the musician Amphion. While Amphion naturally preferred the superlative charms of the undead, Niobe entreated him to remain with her for the sake of their 14 mortal offspring. Unable to forsake his children, Amphion rejected the Embrace. Livid at the rejection, Toreador's childer slew Amphion's 14 children, one after the other, right in front of their mother. Then she Embraced Amphion by force.

Amphion never spoke of the fate of his sire, nor did he ever speak her name, but starting with him we have the first unbroken line of succession. From Amphion, one of our Methuselahs, we have the lines of Hesiod, Theophano and Menippus. Theophano Embraced me, I gave the gift to Phillippe, and so forth down to your own wretched corpse.

C: Hesiod? You mean the Greek poet Hesiod?

K: No, but rather his patron, whose name the poet took in honorific. Sadly for the poet, much of his work was lost during the Roman occupation, to an unknown hand. While I'm tempted to blame it on the Ventrue, my more honest nature insists that it was likely one of our own Blood — a jealous childer striking at a rival by unmaking the work of a sire, perhaps. But, as often happens when one destroys history, there's no way to know. It's a pity though. It's a sad waste.

Ah, me. Well, where was I?

C: The Mycenaens.

K: Yes, well, to hear Theophano tell it, the contemporaries of her grandsire — that is, the fourth generation — had become fecund and reckless with their Embraces, which created a great number of inexperienced, poorly chosen childer. These nameless ones began to squabble and bicker and fulfil the curse of Uriel. As they




struggled with one another to dominate Mycenae, they succeeded only in thwarting each other and weakening the country. A great many of them wound up dead, or in torpor, leaving behind blood bound mortals ruling the country, but with no source of precious vitae. These poor lost servants went mad, leaving Mycenae without leadership. This made the entire nation vulnerable to invasion by the Dorians, who sat upon the sleeping Toreador for hundreds of years. The few who escaped the Jyhad of Mycenae departed to travel throughout the Mediterranean. Some of them met Final Death, some of them prospered, but all had learned their lesson: While Caine might have been able to rule a country as king, no lesser childe could do it — especially with other Cainites around.

ROME

K: I have spoken a great deal about our clan, but it is, perhaps, now time to deal with the other members of Caine's "family."

Recall Ishtar's flight to the north, leaving Ennoia as "Enkidu" in Sumer? Well, the Gangrel flourished there for some time, but the entire area had too many tribes and not enough livable land. The Akkadians smashed Enkidu's Sumer. I've heard tales that Sargon's soldiers chased Gangrel Cainites through the streets with torches, driving them toward a central pit where they were held, imprisoned by burning logs until daybreak. I'd like to tell you that one of Caine's lineage was behind the victory of Sargon, but besides the empty boasts of the Setites and Lasombra, there's not a speck of evidence. I honestly believe that Sargon was simply a strong man who realized the weaknesses of Cainites and used them to his advantage. But even his reign could not last, and Hammurabi and the Babylonians defeated him and were in turn defeated by the Hittites, and so on. I've no idea at what point Gangrel tired of barbarians-turned-harvesters, but if there was any region that would teach an immortal the futility of imitating the kingship of Caine, it was the Fertile Crescent two millennia before Christ.

Ashur had considerably better luck, probably because he cared less about ruling than he did about pursuing his knowledge without having to worry about his home country being put to the torch by invaders. It's possible that Ashur and his childer had some influence in the fall of the Gangrel's Sumer, but I rather doubt it. It would be uncharacteristically effective for them. But Ashur was wise enough to ally with the children of Ventrue when Rome expanded into their area, even as the terms became increasingly unfavorable. What did his brood care? Rome was even more stable than their own country, so they backed Rome.



While Ishtar fled Sumer, the Ventrue also moved north and east, while the hearty Troile moved to the south and the west. I've heard tales that the Serites and Troile's brood were very close in those nights, traveling together as far as the Nile. There, they quarreled, though over what I couldn't say. Troile and his went west across the coast, through Libya, to what (centuries later) would be Carthage.

Some other stories insist that one of Ishtar's childer followed Troile as his lover — a slattern named Tanit, Embraced for her beauty and discarded for her empty head. Many of our lineage like to dismiss the story of Tanit, but someone had to teach Troile the secrets of Presence. In any event, Carthage grew to greatness even as the Ventrue commanded their human followers to seize the Sabine women and breed a great race.

The Toreador had already learned their lesson in Mycenae, and had survived the interim centuries hidden. In Rome, this endeared them to the Ventrue, though not so much as the lessons of Presence. Even more important than that Discipline, perhaps, was their knowledge of beauty and craft. While the Toreador had followed such knowledge for the joy of it, the Ventrue took to it for more practical purposes. Where the Toreador had encouraged mortals to build temples and statues, the Ventrue helped them build roads and govern their crops. Their goal was, of course, to gather many people into a small area for ease of discrete feeding.

The childer of Troile took an entirely different approach. Where the Toreador instructed, the Brujah insisted. Where the Ventrue suggested, the Brujah commanded. All of Carthage was built around the hunger of its Cainite rulers.

Both cities turned into empires, and perhaps it is inevitable that empires collide. When Amphion spoke of the centuries of war between Carthage and Rome, he called it the precursor of the Jihad. Do vampires still scheme and squabble like children, even on the edge of Christ's 2000th year?

C: Indeed they do. As much as ever, certainly.

K: The curse of Uriel haunts us still. I cannot say I'm surprised.

I believe the Punic Wars seemed, to Carthage, almost like a game. At first, certainly. Both cities sat, like spiders, in the centers of webs of slave cities and bound states. The first war began on the edges of their webs. Neither city was threatened at first. No vampires were slain. Mortal proxies fought the entire battle, for no sane Cainite was going to make the risky wartime sea voyage to the battlefields of Sicily.

Before Rome, I do not know the history of the Ventrue, but I think it must have been dire. Some

tragedy forced them to know fear, for they clutched it close every night. I do not think the childer of Troile, drunk on easy blood, cared much for Sicily, but the Ventrue were obsessed with it. They saw it as a dagger pointed at the heart of Rome, an open gateway through which the dangerous Carthaginians could attack. The Ventrue had little direct knowledge of the Carthaginians, of course: They had heard stories only, which I suspect had grown in the telling. These stories claimed that there were armies of ghouls massing in Carthage, and that the gathered Brujah and Assassins' childer were numerous beyond counting. The Ventrue were careful shepherds of their kine, and the Toreador knew from Mycenae that a nation with too many vampires must either conquer or starve. Indeed, mortal politics in Rome often reflected the secret desires of the Ventrue, as well as the Toreador and fractured Malkavians — the three clans most prominent at the time.

The point of all these details is this: The First Punic War was a trifle to the Brujah, but deadly serious to the Ventrue. That's why the Romans spent so much time and attention on conquering Sicily. The Carthaginians responded with another strategy: They went north into Spain and began working their way east, back toward Rome. The Brujah may simply have been trying to prove themselves equal to the Ventrue; regardless, the Ventrue saw the invasion as another threat, and before this one they were helpless. Hannibal could have taken the Roman Empire entire, if only he'd had the troops to hold what he conquered. It's almost comic — Hannibal won every battle but lost the war.

Humiliated and afraid, the Ventrue dispatched a Cainite to kill the Carthaginian general. The assassin failed. It should come as no surprise that the scholarly Brujah had prepared their human agent to defend himself against vampires. Every night Hannibal slept between four raging bonfires, and his bodyguards carried both torches and stakes.

Although the Ventrue themselves had sent the assassin, they felt the death of a Cainite had taken the war to another level. Unable to rout Hannibal from their shores, Rome counterattacked directly at the heart of Carthage and conquered it. They never got Hannibal, though. He drank poison rather than face capture by Rome. He probably suspected that any other form of suicide might leave him vulnerable to the hated Romans and the licentious Ventrue among them.

The great mystery, in my mind, is why the Romans did not eradicate Carthage immediately after that victory. It would have been easy, as it was after the Third Punic War, but they hesitated before salting the razed earth, giving the Carthaginian Cainites time to scatter

and brood, dreaming of later vengeance. Perhaps the Ventrue simply had less influence than they thought.

THE FIRST BURNING TIME

C: Once the Carthaginian threat was dealt with, what happened? How did the Ventrue falter?

K: For all the Ventrue's talk about "control," they really had very little. Remember that the vampires of Rome were hidden, taking blood secretly from slaves or cultists. Their tools were the blood oath and power over men's minds, both of which have their price. One cannot maintain the oath on an indefinite number of ghouls, and total domination tends to break men down into spittle-licking idiots. Neither one is a very good tool for "control." So instead of ordering things, "Let this happen and that be done," the Ventrue and Toreador of Rome operated through suggestion.

Naturally, the Toreador were better at this than the Ventrue, which may perhaps explain something of the decadence of Rome. I've found, though, that anywhere you have more people than work for them to do, you get bizarre behavior. Regardless, Cainites of the time had a new problem: the Christians.

Initially, the undead of Rome weren't too concerned. In fact, the liturgy of the Christians held suspicious similarities to our own practices — "This is my blood, drink of it and you shall live forever" and so forth. Many early Toreador and Ventrue assumed Christianity was a cult of personality led by a Cainite from one of the other clans, or the humorous byproduct of some elder's feeding habits.

The laughter didn't last long. The Christians were a hidden religion, a conspiracy. So were the vampires and their followers. Since both operated in secret, eventually they came into contact. The nature and actions of vampires revolted the Christians, who saw them as a barbaric perversion of their own beliefs. They saw, they hated, and they attacked.

A gaggle of misfits and outcast Jews may not sound like much of a threat to the mighty ancient vampires of Rome, but every elder I knew who survived Rome spoke of them with genuine terror. No one followed the son of God back then without total, unshakable faith. Furthermore, they seemed damnably well informed about our weaknesses. I heard rumors of a "secret gospel" that listed the weaknesses of Cainites — yes, even weaknesses that we don't know — taught by one Christian to another in their catacombs.

Most importantly, they did not fear death. They were willing to burn Rome to the ground to purify it, which they did only 60 years after the death of their *savoir*. Many elders died in that fire. Their number almost certainly included the great Hesiod himself. The Ventrue implored their ally Nero to suppress the Christians afterward, but it was too late. The seed had fallen and the weed would sprout.

CONSTANTINE THE CHRISTIAN

K: The great fire threw the secret government of Rome into turmoil, and no Cainite, Ventrue or Toreador, was willing to sit back and let someone else seize the reins of power. Consequently, said reins remained slack as dozens of shadowed hands clawed for them. Cainite historians believe that the squabbles for the Roman throne mirrored the battles between factions of Toreador and Ventrue. They say Caracalla "belonged" to the Ventrue and that Heliogabalus was "ours," but I'm more inclined to think the vampires reacted to the humans than the other way around. Think of it: Around 300 AD, there were nine years when six different heads wore Caesar's laurels. Nine years! An eyeblink to an immortal, but in that time Rome was shaken back and forth, like a bone between fighting dogs.

Eventually Diocletian calmed things down and divided the empire among himself, Maximian Augustus, and his two great generals. The Cainites supported this division, or at least adapted. After all, when one empire rules everything, only one Cainite can stand supreme. More rulers meant more opportunities.

Unfortunately, all this infighting had left the Cainites of Rome unprepared for Constantine. Most of the Toreador recognized the power of a seductive idea and were thereby most angry at (or afraid of) the Christians. It was the Toreador, I think, who urged Diocletian to attack them, though he needed little persuasion. The Ventrue were more concerned with military and political power, but they couldn't figure out which general would eventually become the new Caesar.

Had either clan known in advance that Constantine would convert on the eve of his greatest military victory, they would have surely united in opposition against him. But they didn't know; the Toreador were unprepared for his military actions, the Ventrue unready for the new assault by the Christian faithful.

If the legends of Constantine's lamp are true, perhaps it wouldn't have mattered at all, and any attempt to resist him would only have been a futile waste of strength.

C: Constantine's lamp? That sounds familiar... I believe I read a fragment from the secret writings of

Hainault that referred to such a thing, but the entire story was lost.

K: I never saw Constantine's lamp. Indeed, if the stories of its power are true, no surviving Cainite could.

You know the story of Constantine's vision of Christ and the sun, correct? "In this sign, you will conquer"? One apocryphal story claims that Christ gave Constantine a piece of the sun as a reward for his conversion. This object was held in a golden lamp and kept in Constantine's chamber by night. It burned unceasingly with neither oil nor wick, but that was the least of its power. The light of Constantine's lamp was like sunlight in every particular, even to its scalding power to destroy the flesh of Caine's get. Furthermore, its mere presence could cause all Cainites within a league to fall into a slumber, just as we do right before the true dawn.

C: Do you think this item really existed?

K: I cannot say for certain. But I can think of several old histories that make more sense if one believes the lamp was present.

BARBARIANS AT THE GATES

K: The one advantage held by the Toreador, Malkavian and Ventrue Cainites was our interest in Rome. As the center of the empire, the vampires felt certain that any emperor who arrived could, in time, subtly come to favor politics that benefited the race of Caine. Perhaps one's rival might be the domitor or advisor, but in any event the new empire could be structured to the liking of Caine's children.

That is why the founding of Nova Roma in Byzantium was such a shock. Now the Cainites of Rome no longer had the Emperor's presence to protect them. Things looked grim indeed. Already rumors abounded that the Visigoths, Vandals and Suebi had vampires among them — including Brujah eager to avenge Carthage and Gangrel resentful of Rome's greatness.

Some of the Roman Cainites stayed in the city, trusting their established families of servants and ancient knowledge to protect them, no matter which mortal held Caesar's title that month. Others, generally those with less to lose, ran to the hills and attached themselves to the barbarians. The third option attracted the most Toreador: flee to Byzantium.

This was a critical division for the Toreador. Theophano, my sire, stayed in Rome with her brood, while Menippus fled to the east with his childer and those of Hesiod as well. Communication flourished between the eastern and western branches of the Toreador "family," but as Rome decayed, communication

became more erratic. Then it practically ceased altogether for several centuries.

Now we know that Menippus and his brood made it to Byzantium. That was a great risk, of course. Not only was the journey perilous (especially for those of our kind) but at the end they arrived in a city ruled by Christians. My guess is that less than half the Cainites who made the pilgrimage survived. Those who did were rewarded, however: Few vampires dared operate under the very noses of the Byzantine Christians. Those who did quickly adapted to the new Church. Where the old Christians who burned Rome were fanatics with nothing to lose, the new Christians had a great deal to protect and lives well worth living. Any vampire who could feed discretely could exist in luxury in Nova Roma.

Those Toreador who stayed behind in Rome were, perhaps, the first to give our clan its reputation for pacifism. After all, the name of Rome mattered little to them. They were concerned with its magnificence, and cared little what transitory mortal king attached his ephemeral name to it. Alaric the Visigoth? Odoacer the Herulian? It mattered not who ruled in name. Each ruler craved not only Rome's power, but its greatness, and thus, its beauty. With their lust for beauty came opportunity for the Toreador.

THE DARK AGES

K: The fall of Rome was a crippling blow to the Toreador, to the Ventrue, and — most importantly — to human civilization. Whatever the Lasombra may claim, they were with the Gangrel and the Brujah and the Tzimisce, allied with illiterate barbarian hordes who stank of shit and ate horseflesh, enviously attacking a great empire they could never have built themselves. With each conquest, more Ventrue died, and with them the power of Rome. The Ventrue had the real foresight, you see. They were the Cainites who understood that Rome's greatness lay not in monuments or strength of arms but in roads and fields and coin. To the other clans, even our own, this was incomprehensible. Those things were like the core of a tapestry, the unseen threads that support the rich surface. Among vampires, only the Ventrue understood that. Pillagers and would-be conquerors razed the roads. They destroyed the aqueducts and burned the fields in their sieges, never understanding that they were ruining what they stole. And they wondered why their pitiful "kingdoms" degenerated into squalid, insular villages of the ignorant, inbred and ignoble.

With the barbarians triumphant and the Ventrue in disarray, it fell upon the Toreador to preserve what we

could of Roman knowledge. The eastern Toreador in Byzantium did a decent job of keeping the idea of a real empire alive. Perhaps Justinian had their advice in his conquests, perhaps not. It's nice to think so, I suppose. Regardless, in Byzantium, the lessons of Rome were truly valued, at least for a time. In Europe, the best they could do was to preserve them and hope for a wiser age.

Most of this preservation, incidentally, took place under the nose of the Catholic Church. Several monasteries housed Toreador — some of them even willingly so. After all, a man of God is only a man underneath his robe, and what's a little blood in exchange for immortal allure? My own sire, Theophano, spent over a hundred years in a Frankish monastery, telling each abbot what he wanted to hear. To one, she was an Angel of the Lord, sent to inspire him with knowledge of Greek so that he might preserve ancient wisdom. To another, she was a succubus to whom he gladly sold blood, soul and obedience in return for "secret knowledge" and the pleasures of the flesh. What a game.

As the Roman roads crumbled, communication between foreign lands became increasingly rare. The greatest Cainite travelers were the Gangrel and Ravnos, of course, who could cover great distances in the shape of a beast, but they had little interest in ferrying messages between the European and Byzantine Toreador. Most European Toreador assumed the worst — that they were the last of the bloodline. Even those who knew that some of us had made it to Byzantium and survived worried when the Moors began their conquests. Like the Christians before them, the invaders followed a new religion radiant with faith; they were unafraid of death. In hindsight, it probably would have been *better* if the Muslims had conquered Europe. At least they understood the value of astronomy and mathematics! But it was not to be. Their conquest ended in 732 when they were defeated in France. But they weren't expelled from Spain for over 700 years.

C: How involved were the Assamites with the Moorish invasion?

K: Who can say? To my knowledge, I have never seen one of the vaunted Children of Assam. I would not be surprised if they were present, but if they were, they rode the Saracens like a tick, not like a horseman. They may have followed along, but I think they cannot have directed the invasion.

On the other hand, I knew a Brujah scholar who swore the Assamites influenced the Saracens to spare Constantinople. The Toreador of Constantinople offered Greek and Roman knowledge to the Assamites. In return, the children of Haqim had the Moors spare Byzantium, or so he claimed.

I find this theory somewhat dubious. In the first place, the Muslims were more interested in conquering Christianity than learning from it: Witness their seizure of vast swaths of formerly Byzantine land in Araby and in Africa. Secondly, Constantinople was the greatest city of its time, and a daunting challenge to any invader. Thirdly, the Assamites — even if they had the ability to deter the Moors — would care less for the knowledge of the Toreador than for the chance to plunder their vitæ. Remember that Menippus was supposedly in Constantinople at that time: What treasure of Greek culture could compare, in their minds, with blood from the fifth generation?

There can be no doubt that the Saracens acquired much knowledge of the ancient world, but I doubt it came through Cainite channels, save indirectly. When the Moors conquered a city, they read the books in its library instead of burning them. Alexandria was a dreadful exception to an otherwise enlightened rule.

FEUDAL EUROPE

K: While the Saracens surrounded Byzantium, Europe was beginning to recover. The Ventrue, kicked into the dirt during the nights of Alaric, finally rallied (though, in their typical plodding fashion, it took them three centuries to do it). They hoped they'd found a successor to the Romans in the Franks; with Charlemagne, it seemed they had. The Lasombra, ever quick on the uptake, made an offer to the Ventrue: accept a "partnership" and have their support, or try to go it alone and watch the Lasombra unite the other clans against them. The Ventrue, no fools, accepted the offer, and the Toreador, also no fools, offered the fruits of Greek and Roman scholarship in return for their place in the new order. It worked out very well for everyone in Europe, except the Brujah, Gangrel and Tzimisce.

Those three clans bound together in an attempt to unseat the Franks, but it was largely hopeless. Their chosen champions, the Vikings, were terrors in battle to be sure, but they were barbarians. All they could do was pillage and ruin: They couldn't really conquer.

The Tzimisce fared somewhat better on that front, possibly because they stuck to a land invasion where the Cainites had better opportunities to oversee things firsthand. They eventually influenced a robust Swedish tribe called the Russians to break off and form Kyiv, which served as a Tzimisce stronghold for many years.

The Brujah and Gangrel quarreled, as will happen whenever you have two leaders and no followers. The Vikings eventually tired of the life of constant warfare and converted to Christianity.

C: Did the Toreador have anything to do with that?

K: You can be sure we did: Theophano described the conversion of the Vikings in very personal terms. Not that it was terribly difficult. After all, their religion claimed that the whole world was destined to be consumed in fire and damnation, and not one human soul would be spared. Christianity had a similar Apocalypse, but afterward all the good people would have a lovely new Jerusalem for all eternity.

To you it may sound like a choice between two equally simpleminded fables, but the Christians had a wealth of beauty — music, architecture and paintings — the likes of which the Vikings had never seen. Faced with that, I'm not surprised they believed they had glimpsed the true path to paradise.

UNEXPECTED FRIENDS

K: It is interesting, is it not? Initially, the Christian Church was the most grievous threat faced by our blooded race. But a millennium is a long time, even for one of our ilk, and in that span the Church went from being an absolute menace to being a dangerous refuge for the daring or desperate. As the years passed, it became more and more of a haven, until it was the best tool the Toreador possessed for the creation, preservation and spread of all valuable things.

We now reach that point in our history that I can narrate myself, for I entered the False Life in the year of our Lord 1150.

That was a grand time to be a beautiful vampire in Europe. The Saracens had closed the Holy Land to Christian pilgrims, and the Church was determined to return in force. The Crusades made boys into men, men into heroes, heroes into corpses. Kindred of every stripe were drawn to the conflict and the easy blood it promised. Mostly it drew Ventrue and Brujah, many of them true believers hoping to apologize to Christ for the affront their existence posed to his reign. Malkavians were drawn by the general chaos, in which their own madness might seem one more drop in a stormy ocean. Assamites, Setites and even a few Gangrel and Ravnos often found themselves on the side of the Muslims. Others, opportunists from every clan, went motivated by greed, or gluttony, or even curiosity. After all, the romances of the Grail quest were told throughout Europe by day, and at night another set of Grail legends were sung to a more select audience.

C: I've heard some of the Toreador Grail songs.

K: Then you know the most seductive claim: That the wounds healed by the cup of Christ are not only wounds of the body. Many Brujah, Malkavians and even Nosferatu believed a draught from the Grail could

erase the devil's stain from their souls, restoring them to humanity and allowing them to walk in the sun once more. Other tales made similar claims, but with the caveat that the Grail's mercy came at great cost. According to those sources, a vampire could be freed from the bonds of Caine, but at the price of true death. The only mercy extended to the Children of Caine was the mercy to die as a mortal, not as a half-dead monster.

Perhaps the stories are true. Who knows? Perhaps the lamp of Aladdin was really Constantine's piece of the sun — I heard that claim made by students of Saracen lore. There's no way to know. All I can say is this: Many Cainites undertook the Grail quest. Few of them were ever seen again.

For me, I had no desire to return to mortal life. A few more years of sunlight seemed like a foolish trade for an eternity of nights.

And what nights they were! The smartest churchmen realized that the threat of supernatural monsters only cemented their authority, and they tacitly allowed us to have our way. The Church, armed to the teeth with Crusaders, didn't have to concern itself with lone monsters: It was too busy storming Jerusalem. That and splitting from the Orthodox Church.

With the Crusades giving Europe some semblance of unity, trade could finally commence between nations. Roads were rebuilt, currency came into common use, the Church eased its restrictions on banking, and the splendor of Rome was not only matched — in some places it was surpassed!

I refer, of course, to the greatest accomplishments of that age: The cathedrals. Does Notre Dame still stand in Paris?

C: Yes, yes it does.

K: Then surely Christ was pleased with my effort. Perhaps I'm being vain, but I take some small pride in Notre Dame. It wasn't my idea or my plan, but I watched it rise and I guarded it in what ways I could. Mortals may stitch or sing or daub, but building cathedrals is an art for those with more time than the paltry two-score years of a man's life.

I was, at that time, in Paris. Of all cities in the world, Paris was surely the queen. Even with its bulging population, there were so many Cainites that as many of the cruder hunters were staked by hungry rivals as by fearful mortals. The university drew Cappadocians and Tremere were drawn to like flies to shit, while the courts of the Capetian Dynasty drew the more refined clans. It seemed like every vampire who wasn't on a Crusade was in Paris.

Can you imagine? I remember a tavern by the quay where a Cainite with the gift of beauty could have her choice of any, or *all*, of a dozen sailors — hearty men

back from the sea, well aware of the bliss of the Kiss and eager to share their vitae. People knew. They knew and they didn't care. Feeding was easy, unless you were a Nosferatu or a Gangrel or some similar undesirable sort.

It was a glorious time for us. But of course it couldn't last.

December 22

Dear Rebecca,

As promised, I took Katherine to Paris for the first time in close to four centuries last night. Her command of French and English is passable, though an occasional anachronism sneaks in amid the more modern profanities she's mastered quite well. She still won't wear any synthetic fabrics, only wool, silk or cotton, and she still considers it unwholesome to wear pants, but once I finally talked her into creating a bra she quickly became a convert.

Her taste for beauty is unchanged. When I took her to Notre Dame for an evening choir concert, she was struck mute for the first time since her resurrection. Tears of blood came down her cheeks, and she didn't even notice me wiping them. (Fortunately, no one else of note was around to see.) She became entranced, again in the streets, gazing in rapture at the displays of Christmas lights. That trance only broke when a cab shot by at top speed. It startled her so badly that she bared her fangs and hissed, which in turn scared the cab driver into crashing into the side of a building. I suppose it's lucky he died. I wouldn't be surprised if he died of fright.

To cap off the evening I took her to Gaston's club. I'll admit it to you, I was hoping to show her something that would humble her, and I figured body-pierced "rivetheds" slam dancing at 4:00 a.m. would do it.

To my surprise, she leaps into it without hesitation. When I spoke of the dancing later, her answer left me even more perturbed. She said people used to dance like that during the Plague Years, dancing themselves into madness in the face of inevitable death and an angry God.

She called it the Danse Macabre.

—Carmelita

THE SECOND BURNING TIME

K: Perhaps I should have become suspicious when Constantinople was sacked. Not by the fucking Saracens, but by Christians. Tired of fighting Moors in the hot sun, they turned on the Orthodox Church and butchered their own kind in a fit of greed and frustration. As

the Crusades ran out of steam, the Church found its authority questioned. The schisms between popes only aggravated the problem — and no matter what the Lasombra and Ventrue and Brujah like to claim, not one of the numerous popes and antipopes of the age were “under our control.” The Church had become bloated and yes, five churchmen in ten were faithless reprobates with their manhoods plugged deep in anything foolish enough to drop a coin in front of them... but there were still those whose faith was strong. Those could turn even an elder vampire into a sniveling child with nothing but a crucifix and a paternoster.


But by and large, temporal power seemed incompatible with the power of faith. The crusading priests were around, and they were a hazard to us, but at that time they were isolated and disorganized. They were remote obstacles, not a great threat. At least, so we thought, those of us who knew the Church only as a haven for knowledge and the power of hypocrisy, those who hadn't seen Rome burn or felt the scourge of a saint's voice.

That was when the Inquisition began. At first it seemed harmless. The Church wanted to root out heretics? Why not? It seemed like a grand ruse with which to deflect the truly driven, the priests who posed a real threat to individual Cainites. You've heard the rumor that the original Inquisition of the 1200s was engineered by the Toreador to solidify our hold on the church? Well, if you let it be known outside our clan that it's true, I'll drink your death myself — but it is true. And for the first 200 years, it worked just as we wished.

Perhaps the Ventrue knew more of our power within the Church than we presumed, perhaps the Crusades soured them on papal authority, or perhaps they simply got lucky. In any event, many returning Ventrue chose to go to Britain rather than return to their former positions in France. Given the French dominance of English culture at the time, it was not difficult for them to fit in, and the English laws of Mortmain and Provisors kept the grasp of the Church looser than it was on the Continent.

As the Ventrue left France for England, the Toreador scrambled to fill the vacancy (along with a number of the odious Lasombra and villainous Tremere). A tacit agreement was reached that France “belonged” to the Toreador, in return for ceding influence in Britain to the Ventrue. This agreement seemed palatable to the two clans involved, who saw no reason to complicate matters by involving anyone else.

The Age of Exploration was dawning, and it was a thrilling time. Marco Polo managed to travel deep into Asia, even to the court of the great Mongol Khan



himself. Many Lasombra and Ventrue, eager to find new lands to plunder and infest, went east and were never heard from again, except for Cainites like the Lasombra Spaniard who went by the name "Praetor." He managed to return from the Orient after gulling a group of bumpkins from the steppes into thinking he was an immortal ancestor spirit because he cast no reflection. He came back missing many of his parts and most of his mind, mad as Malkav, babbling about flying heads and the teeth of jade skeletons. But where vampires feared to tread, caravans of mortals began to crawl.

Trade with the Orient enriched the cities of Italy, and that in turn upset the order that the Ventrue, Lasombra and Toreador had been tentatively building for centuries. The three clans were all vying for the safest position within the Holy Roman Empire, but at the same time trying to keep it free of meddling from outside clans, primarily the damnable Tremere. The Usurpers had pledged their aid to enemies of the empire, hoping the distraction would prevent unwanted attention from the three major clans. They would have posed little threat if the Lasombra hadn't made a decision based on a perfect combination of arrogance and idiocy: The decision to betray the empire they could not master.

The Lasombra began aiding the Guelph party in Italy, a group that wanted to abandon the Holy Roman Empire. I believe their decision was spurred in part by envy. The Ventrue and Toreador within the empire had a good relationship. (So good, in fact, that when the British Ventrue later struggled with the French Toreador in the Hundred Years War, a number of Imperial Toreador aided the Ventrue against their own, but I'll come to that presently.) Within the Empire, the Toreador and Ventrue combined were easily able to outmaneuver the Lasombra.

The Lasombra, however, had high hopes for the Orient. Not only did they see the trade routes as a source of tremendous wealth (and with it, the attendant power), but they thought in their arrogance that they could somehow trick or enslave the Cathayan creatures who had so brutally treated their explorer Praetor. To pursue this perceived advantage, many of them moved south into Italy and there joined the Tremere in their support of the Guelphs. Accordingly, the Toreador and Ventrue gave their attention and assistance to the loyalist Ghibellines, with predictably bloody results.

As this was happening, the Lasombra put their plan to contact Cathay into action. A number of strong Lasombra were sent to the East in an attempt to make treaties, but the results were universally bad. I hear tales that the heads of the Lasombra ambassadors were sent

back in cunningly crafted lacquer boxes, each head turned into pure glass but still able to scream.

At that time, I was still in Paris. I cared little for such politics until an Italian exile named Dante Alighieri arrived in my city in 1307. A man of tremendous learning and potential, he realized his folly in aiding the Guelphs, so I gave him my patronage. I am proud to claim that it was I who persuaded him to refuse a humiliating offer of "clemency" that would have allowed him to slink home like a shamed criminal. I insisted that he was worthy of honor, not scorn. As a consequence he stayed away from Florence — and, quite likely, from death at the hands of either the Black or White Guelphs.

By the time the Lasombra realized their Cathayan gambit was fruitless, the Tremere had already abandoned their mutual effort. I believe the Lasombra and Tremere had originally intended to use the Church as a bulwark against the Holy Roman Empire, but the Tremere came to believe that they were much more likely to suffer from papal power in Italy than the Lasombra. Thus, the Tremere backed the White Guelphs, and were promptly defeated by the Lasombra's Black Guelphs, fulfilling their own prophecies of persecution at the hands of the Church.

I suspect that the century of which I speak had parallels in the ancient war of Rome against Carthage. Only now, centuries later, can I perceive it....

C: How do you mean?

K: The first Punic war was something like a game — played through mortal proxies, it was almost gentlemanly. At least, that's how it seemed to the Brujah, and perhaps to the Ventrue as well — until they lost. The loss occasioned fear and shame, and anger that the war that followed was fought without honor or mercy. The Cainite losses were so much the greater for it.


The Italian conflict cost a number of Cainites their unlives. Next came the Hundred Years War. Italy, at least, was subtle. Was the hand of the Ancients in this? Did they give us our own conflicts in order to inflame our passions and blind them to their own, bloodier aims?

C: You believe the Hundred Years War was the doing of the Antedeluvians?

K: Perhaps the war was only a means to an end. Perhaps the goal of the war was to weaken all of our kind.

C: Did it do so?

K: There can be no doubt. The war itself resulted in the Final Deaths of many of our siblings, but war was only the attendant to the true horror: the Black Death. For every Cainite who perished in the fighting, a dozen died from the consequences of desperate hunting.



I myself had a close friend, Aubric, who had made for himself a comfortable haven in a village south of Paris. He had the power of Lethe's forgetfulness; his victims never suspected. Like a careful shepherd, he tended the village, took from those strong enough to endure and spared those who were weak. Then the plague struck, and within a month half his herd was dead and another quarter dying. He could not feed off the ill for fear of contaminating the healthy, but his attentions so weakened the few who resisted the plague that they often succumbed the very next day. He tried to escape, but no horse would bear him for fear. Other settlements stood guard against refugees from infected towns, and there was no resting place for him within a single night's run. In the end, Aubric slaughtered the remaining townspeople, using their blood for strength and speed, and bolted for Paris. The sunrise caught him within sight of the city.

Such stories are matched or surpassed by other losses. Some mortals blamed us for the illness, and indeed some of us carried the dark humors from victim to victim. These mortals — knowing enough to be dangerous but not enough to be wise — sent many vampires to the Final Death, often burned on the pyres of the plague dead.

Everywhere, Cainite prominence slipped. I blame the schism between the French Toreador and the British Ventrue. We had evaded Uriel's curse for centuries by allying against common foes, but once the Lasombra made their critical miscalculation in Italy, and once the plague began making unlife hellish for nomads like the Gangrel, the only major threat each clan perceived was the other.

Perhaps I'm too harsh on both clans. It was a century of chaos and decay. For the first time in ages, peasants began to strike at their betters, even without being incited by undead rabble-rousers. The Cossack flight to Siberia took everyone by surprise, as did the Jacquerie in France. The Holy Roman Empire was reduced to a shell of its former glory, ruled by men who cared more to be German kings than holy emperors.

But for my part, what I saw was Ventrue treachery, grasping for the wealth of Gascony. Perhaps we made the common mistake of believing the Ventrue's boasts. They had promised to return Gascony to France in return for our aid against the Scots — aid that drove William Wallace out of France and onto their scaffold in London. But the English refused to return Gascony to the French, which we, in our pride, assumed meant the Ventrue had refused to return it to the Toreador. Given what I learned later of the infighting in England, I'd not

be surprised to learn that the Ventrue tried to persuade the British King to cede Gascony and simply failed.

At first, the Hundred Years War went poorly for us (and for France) due once again to the Ventrue's matchless organization. But once again history repeated itself. Just as in Rome, the Ventrue had grown too powerful and steeled the other clans against them; the threat of a Ventrue England united the other clans in opposition. The Tremere backed their man Owen Glendower, but most importantly the Spanish Brujah welcomed revenge against the unforgiven Ventrue. With the aid of Spanish ships and arms, the English were driven back to a few coastal strongholds.

Dealing with the Ventrue and the Lasombra was like standing between a bear and a viper. Turn to deal with one, and the other can strike your back. Every actor played his part: The Brujah were peerless soldiers. The Ventrue were matchless generals. The Lasombra were treacherous, backstabbing shits nonpareil. Anywhere in England or France that one could find an envious, honorless nobleman with a lust for power, the Lasombra were there to feed that greed. Their machinations, assassinations and intrigues — not to mention the plague! — left both countries ill-equipped to fight a war.

The Ventrue recovered first. Then came Agincourt.

You must understand what happened at Agincourt. It was not merely a brutal, unbelievable defeat of a vastly superior force by a small band of British who were trying to *flee*. It was more than a humiliation. Agincourt was the death of chivalry. It was the last battle where men fought for glory and honor. It was the great triumph of utility and pragmatism and the efficient dealing of death.

For me, the last true knight died at Agincourt.

C: How were the Ventrue expelled from France, then?

K: The English, not the Ventrue. Never believe for a moment that any Cainite dictates policy through obedient puppets. That fraudulent belief gives the liar more power over you than he would have if it were true. The Ventrue saw potential in England. They nourished it and grew wealthy and fat. But the Ventrue, like the Lasombra and the Brujah and even ourselves, are nothing but parasites. Any glory we have is reflected from our mortal allies. If it seems different, it is only an illusion crafted by our vanity and age.

C: Very well. How were the English expelled?

K: As much as I'd like to take credit for Joan of Arc, I can't. She came out of nowhere, and no Cainite could come within a league of her without being struck with

the blind terror of an angry Christ. She bought us some time to re-evaluate centuries of belief in chivalrous warfare, but in the end, it was the French who figured out that the solution was cannon and gunpowder. Our greatest contribution was this: Having learned a hard lesson at Agincourt, we did not stand in the way of efficient slaughter.

Personally, I fled Paris before the English took it. I took refuge in Germany, which was a fascinating place to be in the age when ether was becoming increasingly available and block printed books were giving way to movable type.

While the production and spread of knowledge was happening in the east, however, fear and anger were growing in the west. I speak, of course, of the Second Burning Time: The Spanish Inquisition.

As I mentioned before, with dire threat, the Inquisition was initially encouraged by the Toreador as a tool of misdirection for the zealous, faithful and dangerous. If their zealotry happened to be turned on a distasteful Nosferatu, grating Malkavian or contemptible Tremere on occasion — well, what of it? But by and large, when the Inquisition was kept at the heel of the Church, it was pleasantly inefficient at its stated purpose of exposing heretics, and extremely efficient at its secret purpose of misdirecting fanatics.

Then the Lasombra and the Ventrue Ulfila got their hooks into it in Spain and conspired to have the Inquisition there answer to the king and queen, not to mild men of God. In this fashion, it became a tool of political power, cloaked in ecclesiastic authority. No one was going to question the impartiality of men of the cloth, especially when their duty was defined as punishing those who questioned the Church. A tidy bit of business, that.

It was one of those common cases where the interests of a sovereign and the interests of a Cainite faction coincided. Both the Spanish rulers and the Lasombra were concerned by the presence of Jews in Spain, especially those who had falsely converted to Christianity. The Spanish didn't like Jewish usury, and the Lasombra were afraid (with good reason) of a Jewish mystic practice called Cabala.

The Lasombra got what they wanted: The Jews were exiled from Spain. But the price for their wish was far too high. You see, their one miscalculation was Torquemada. They thought he'd be fervent in his pursuit of the heretics, and in that they were certainly correct. But they were disastrously wrong when they thought they could control him. As I understand it, the first Lasombra sent to break Torquemada's will was

quickly reduced to the level of a keening, wailing child cowering in the corner before the Grand Inquisitor's faith. Torture revealed the habits and locations of other Cainites, and soon almost no one was safe.

I know not what the grand society of the undead is like now, but in those nights it was most like a web. Most Cainites were connected to two or three (or more) others, and if they did not always know where their fellows slumbered, they knew enough. From one vampire to the next, the Inquisition moved, using torture for knowledge and knowledge to find more victims to torture. Torquemada took that lacy web of vampire society and put it to the flames.

The fear spread, like hysteria, like the Danse Macabre, throughout all of Europe. The *Malleus Malleficarum* whipped people into a frenzy. I was traveling through Italy towards Vincy, hoping to see for myself the new marvels created by a man of that city, when I was caught. My servants fought bravely, but the last thing I remember is the feel of the stake piercing my heart.

ANOTHER VIEW

March 1

Dear Carmelita,

I read with interest your account of the discussion with the ever-so-talented Katherine of Montpellier. Allow me to return the favor.


I have, in recent travels, encountered an eminent wit and observer of our august clan. He is young — perhaps your age or even younger — but his African origin has permitted him to reflect upon the Clan of the Rose unencumbered by the opinions of Western Kinfolk. Be careful how you read this by some evasive, vague and supercilious, our historian is not without his flaws (particularly toward the end when it sounds as if he believes his own screed). I am sure his own prejudices color his experience somewhat — his testament is rife with them — but somewhere between his ideas and our own lies the truth. After all, it's not like he's making any absurd claims of patronizing Dante...

In any event, enough from me. I hope my new protégé's words enlighten you as much as you mention did me.

R-

My name is Anthony Sungbo, and I am the mortal descendant of a sibling of Bilikisu Sungbo, who lived almost 1,200 years ago. I was not born with her last name, but I took it later — for many reasons.

I am a cartographer, a mapmaker. Not the pedestrian maps that you buy in the bookstore to help you find



your way around Cincinnati, but historical maps, fanciful maps, and maps of the human mind. Wealthy families hire me to draw and paint whimsical maps of their estates, on which the cliché "here be dragons" is always requested, usually at the entrance to the master suite. It's a living at least, pardon that turn of phrase, and it subsidizes the rest of my work.

My own pieces I like to call "secret history." I try to show things the way they really were, rather than the way the textbooks portray them to be. I show the hatred where the books see only good will. I show the conspiracies where the books show only friendship. I depict things you never would have believed, and most of it is true. Most of it. This has gained me a reputation among mortals as an author of "historical fiction," and I won't argue; they wouldn't believe me even if I told them in person.

Although I am yet young as the Kindred reckon such things, my work has taken me around the world. I have outrun Lupines to a waiting helicopter. I was almost burned to Final Death by a young magus in Jakarta. Inquisitors know my name; members of the Sabbat sometimes recognize my face. But I have seen sights you can only imagine.

AFRICA

NIGERIA

Approximately 1,200 years ago, an affluent widow named Bilikisu Sungbo ruled as queen over a portion of Nigeria. She wanted a monument to her rule so she ordered the construction of Sungbo's Eredo. It's huge; the earthwork and ditch enclose an area the size of Greater London. Some guardhouses and barracks stand seven stories high. By tonight's standards it may sound crude, but you must understand that Sungbo's Eredo encompasses an area greater than the pyramids of Egypt. Those who built it somehow managed to keep the earthworks on course despite working in a swamp.

The Europeans believe they "discovered" Sungbo's Eredo in 1994 — some scientist on a bike finally stumbled over it. The history of the place is actually much more complex than that. A Portuguese explorer found it in 1505, but everyone was convinced that he'd actually found a Portuguese slave-trading town. Another explorer found it again in 1959 by looking at aerial photographs, but no one paid any attention to him.

We — that is, Africans — knew about the place all along. Islamic visitors come to Sungbo's Eredo every year to pay homage to Sungbo at her shrine. She is practically worshipped. Was she something more than mortal? We don't know. There were no Toreador in Africa that long ago.

As most African history is oral, not written, we do not know for certain the details behind the building of the place. Local legends say that Sungbo was actually the Queen of Sheba, but the dates don't work out in the least. Those people who first wrote up the histories were probably just trying to relate everything they could back to the Bible. When the missionaries came and "educated" our people this became common practice. While I'm glad that education and money and medicines were brought to Africa, I can't say I'm happy about everything else that came with them.

SLAVERY

Slavery was a bizarre condition (one might call it a mental lapse) whereupon the nations of the world descended on Africa and all said "mine!" I don't rightly understand why, and I don't think anyone else does either. Unfortunately, it is a mental lapse that has had repercussions throughout history. Yes, people are greedy and like to be waited on, but to attempt to enslave an entire continent?

Some Europeans used as the excuse our lack of obvious "civilization." We didn't have developed cities like other countries did for the most part. Well, that's because the climate doesn't support it. And if the invaders had actually been looking, they would have seen plenty of civilization all around them: the Benin earthworks, the ruins of Great Zimbabwe, and of course Sungbo's Eredo. Entire continents studiously ignored what was right before them in an attempt to prove their point that we were soulless savages.

Malcolm X said, "As long as you are convinced you have never done anything, you can never do anything." As long as those who sought to enslave us could ignore our works or pretend that we'd never achieved anything in the past, they thought they could prevent us from achieving anything in the future.

Many Toreador didn't care all that much about slavery one way or the other — some saw it as being little different than the practice of ghouling mortals. If you're going to support one, why condemn the other? Others saw a great deal of difference indeed between the ghouling of one or two dependable mortals and the enslavement of an entire race of people. They tried to help us, both in Africa and later on, in other countries. But they were few.

Ultimately, what mattered most to the Toreador was, as always, the social aspect. They discovered that Africans (as everyone else) were capable of great works of art, of amazing feats of storytelling and of supporting a social order without the trappings of other civilizations. There was little dispute over our eligibility for the



Embrace. I suppose it might be said that the Toreador view is "if it can express itself, it has a soul!" Some Toreador disagreed, mostly those who had been connected to the slave trade as mortals. I suppose it takes more than a few legends and monuments to change a lifetime of bigotry.

Have you noticed that textbooks talk of slaves but they never talk of owners? They give us something to be sad about but never someone with whom to be angry. It's as though slavery magically happened all of its own accord, as though no one actually committed and perpetrated these awful crimes. Indians, South Americans, and Africans were all enslaved, but no one did it. Good God, how stupid do they think we are?

The issue of slavery split the clan for a while, as much as any cause can split the Clan of the Rose—a hot button for as long as the issue remained fashionable. It might be more accurate to say that it resulted in several rounds of bickering that resulted in the Toreador doing what they always do: going their own way.

TOREADOR PRESENCE AT SUNGBO'S EREDO

The Toreador did not arrive in sub-Saharan Africa until the 1400s, as far as we know. Somehow Sungbo's Eredo became a haven for our clan. It was large, but despite that few outsiders ever found their way to its walls. The Toreador ghoulled and Embraced those in

charge and stayed behind the scenes, encouraging the development of the culture in whatever ways they could. After a couple of centuries, almost all of the Toreador who remained in the area were black—the others had gone on their way, continuing their travels. Occasionally we hosted guests, but otherwise we were left almost alone; most Toreador preferred to travel to places that had luxurious hotels and exquisite orchestras.

A Toreador presence remained at Sungbo's Eredo until the 1980s, when our elders decided that it was inevitable that outsiders would soon find the place. This happened, of course, after some visiting Kindred told a few marveling elders about the wonders of satellite photography. Thus, we abandoned our home and spread out across the continent and beyond.

Something about Sungbo's Eredo always defied explanation. In a time of heavy archaeological exploration, few outsiders found us. I don't think it was due to anything we did. It wasn't until after we left that the ruins were well and truly "discovered." Before that anyone who stumbled across our home was dismissed and ignored by the public. Stories surfaced, too—stories of ghosts who guarded the place. Bodies of the poor were thrown in the ditches next to the earthworks. Charm pots were buried by the gates. Sometimes I wonder if we truly would have been discovered had we stayed.



HOW AFRICA CHANGED US

The concept of what we *are* was somehow different in Africa. The abilities our condition affords blended with the religions of the places we resided. Sometimes it seemed we were more than we were. Some of us, usually those who had been traditional doctors in life (what outsiders might call "witch doctors"), claimed they could do things other Kindred could not. I've seen some unusual things, but nothing to convince me one way or the other. I suspect some of those Kindred made such claims because they didn't want to give up their previous stations. They wished to be respected by the population, not just feared. I can't say that I blame them for wanting that.

My own sire was an unassuming old woman who sold vegetables when she was alive. When asked, she fetched the proper herbs and cure asthma, or impotence, or heart trouble. I didn't believe she could cure ills until I saw what she did for Grace, a young woman whose asthma had not been curable by Western medicine. Nights after my sire's treatment, Grace was not only up and walking about again, but she was back to making a living, cultivating her own little garden. Perhaps it's just a matter of herbalism — many Western medicines, after all, are based on plants. But maybe there's more to it than that. I asked Nyamira once, but she just put her finger to her lips and shushed me. I knew then that she'd never tell me.

Storytelling is a popular art among African Toreador, as are carving, dance and music. Some Toreador at Sungbo's Eredo used to tell beautiful and hilarious stories about the animals — giraffes, elephants, rabbits and hyenas. I saw a carved figure of a fat Queen Victoria that reduced anyone who saw it to spiteful laughter. Whenever I meet Toreador from other countries, they seem so stuffy by comparison. They uphold "culture" as some sacred thing and don't understand that the sacred can also be funny. I once showed a visitor from England the statue of Queen Victoria; he almost frenzied. Why Kindred should still hold such nationalistic fervor I do not understand — don't they realize that we exist in the world now, not just our own havens?

The African Toreador travel as often (or as rarely, as the case may be) as the rest of the clan, but I think it means something different to us. The others just want to live vicariously through the novelties they find in other places. Perhaps our view can best be summed up by a Kikuyu proverb: "By staying always in the same place, one gets lice." Most of us believe that to remain still only leads to complacency and danger. We might call one place home for a century or two, but we rarely

remain in the same haven for more than three months at a time.

Perhaps it is unfair to speak in such generalities, but I have the impression sometimes that Toreador on other continents prefer to Embrace the wealthy, beautiful and influential. By comparison Africa is poor. We've learned not to be so preferential. You can find the most amazing talent in a shopkeeper's child from Loitokitok, or a parking boy on the streets of Nairobi. And because these children have lived such harsh lives, they are suited to the dangers of unlife. Of course, they tend to require much discipline before they learn to obey, or show respect to a visiting prince.

THOSE WHO WALK

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the others who made their havens in the hidden parts of Africa. I don't mean the odd Gangrel wanderer or shipwrecked colony of Lasombra on the Ivory Coast. I mean the *others*.

At the Eredo, elders called them by different names. They were by turns the *Laibon*, the spawn of Kagn, Those Who Walk Under Night and ghost men. They boiled up from the mud. They could turn their ebony skin to alabaster. They commanded the beasts of desert and savanna with equal aplomb.

Most of all, though, they watched. I could see them beyond the Eredo's walls, their teeth glistening in the night. The elders always turned a blind eye to them; they never spoke of the followers of Kagn and they forbade us to do the same. In many decades, I have never spoken to one, nor have I ever seen one trouble the Toreador of our settlement. Still, their presence always unnerved me — though I could see them and feel them, I never knew what it was they wanted.

Tales from all over the continent surfaced as I traveled. It seems as if the ghost men walked all across Africa. I should not be surprised, I know, but their secret, silent numbers remain an enigma to me even now.

THE ORIENT

The Toreador learned what they know about the Orient from tour books and the Travel Channel. Oh yes, we do travel, but those who know what's good for them stay out of "the Middle Kingdom." We don't know a whole lot about what lives there, but we do know it's deadly.

Not that this stops some of us from trying. In 1576, a man named Oda Nobunaga built the Azuchi castle, on the shores of Lake Biwa in Japan. This castle was imitated by many other daimyo over the next few decades, and more than a few Toreador desperately wanted to see the first one. Five Toreador I know of went in; only one came back out. I suspect he made it



because of his former profession — he was a burglar. He knew very well how to get in and out of a place without being seen, and he had a reputation for lucky breaks. He said he never even saw whatever it was that killed the others, or at least he didn't know if he had seen it.

It's a frustrating thing for us that so much comes from the Orient. Some Toreador fund import companies in an attempt to observe firsthand the markets of Hong Kong, the theaters of Japan and the mythic courts of the Thai Kindred, and even buck pirate ships from other countries. They often use ghouls and mortal servants to enter the Orient without actually venturing there themselves. This is known as a good way to lose servants, but at least it has a higher success rate than actually going yourself.


Of course, a secondhand experience is not so revealing as an actual visit. The Great Wall certainly isn't going anywhere. And then there are gorgeous gardens, monasteries and other buildings. So every now and then a Toreador goes east. Sometimes one even returns. It seems that either the Toreador disappears or comes out wondering what all the fuss was about. The ones who return are always the ones who were smart enough to stay hidden and keep to themselves.

In 1875, the United States restricted immigration by excluding "undesirables" (i.e. Chinese) from immigrating. My own suspicion, and that of several others I know, is that the Ventrue were behind this. We weren't the only ones who'd noticed that Asia kept some secret from the Kindred. Elements of the Camarilla worried that whatever it was that held power there might come our way.

Most of our clanmates don't even know this, but an old Toreador I met in San Francisco told me that some of us had a hand in enabling Chinese immigration once again. "After all," he said, "as any wise Toreador knows, society is more important than safety." It amazed me that some of us would do such a dangerous thing — without even knowing who or what the enemy was, we might have been helping it enter the country. Yet the Chinese brought with them their artwork, and that was all some Toreador cared about. Truth be told, when I sometimes watch those Travel Channel programs, and I see the gardens and the elaborate pagodas, I can understand why these Toreador did what they did.

THE DUTCH EAST INDIA COMPANY

I know of only one instance that could be termed "cooperation" between the Toreador and the East. I don't know if the enemy who holds the East simply decided that it would be a good idea to have some actual



Kindred to observe, or if they just didn't have that much influence over Deshima.

Anyway, in 1641 the Dutch East India Company base on Hirado Island in Japan was moved to Deshima Island, near Nagasaki. A Toreador had somehow managed to acquire an interest in the company. The Dutch officials were required to undergo a number of symbolic indignities in order to keep their trading privileges. The Toreador involved, one Jan van Houten, almost frenzied during one or two of these "indignities," but barely held onto his temper in order to retain access to even a small portion of Japan.

The anecdote makes me think that indeed, the enemy was doing this to keep an eye on us. The company was forced to move the base — perhaps because the old one was near something the enemy didn't want anyone to see, or the new one was simply easier to watch. They certainly wanted the Westerners to know who was in charge, though.

THE RENAISSANCE AND THE FOUNDING OF THE CAMARILLA

In 1450, the population of Europe was approximately 50 million. The founders of the nascent Camarilla began to assert their authority. Portuguese slave trade with Africa was well underway. Square-rigged ships with three masts, capable of voyaging across the ocean, had been in use for around 15 years. And by 1450, the Renaissance was in full swing.

It was the perfect time for the Toreador; you might say it was one of our high points. Booming populations allowed for us to be a bit more prolific than we were accustomed to. Because of the Camarilla's establishment of the Masquerade, we found ourselves able to hide in the world of mortals, to move among them without some Malkavian on a crusade ruining our cover.

That may not have been the Camarilla's purpose, but it was much of what we wanted. We supported the Camarilla at least as enthusiastically as anyone else did, and we even did our best to help deal with the Anarch Movement. It was in 1493 that the Toreador Rafael de Corazon gave a moving speech that demanded enforcement of the Traditions, especially the Masquerade. Indeed, the Camarilla needs the Toreador, so important are we to the maintenance of its tenets. Second only to the Ventrue, we wield the power necessary to keep order. Even better than the Ventrue, we know how to deal with mortals on terms other than "buy low, sell high."

With the popularity of ocean-voyaging ships, the Toreador love for travel was fully indulged. No longer

was travel limited — we could go anywhere. A number of Toreador lost their unlives in their excitement to see new places. All it took was one pirate raid, and the Kindred whose body was brought up into the sunlight was history.

The Renaissance was our golden time. This cultural movement had its roots in the revival of classical philosophy, science, literature, and 14th century Italian artists. To Italian Renaissance rulers, being a patron of artists was a mark of prestige and influence — we certainly did our best to encourage this view. Unfortunately for us, the Giovanni, Lasombra and Ventrue were entrenched in Italy. We agreed to every deal we had to so we could spend time in Italy or support Italian artists on trips out of the country. Luckily for us, the other Kindred's interests were primarily mercantile. We also dealt with prominent mortals in the area — the Medici family of Florence, for example. It was their patronage that made Florence the leading cultural center of the age.

The Renaissance led to many advances. In 1455, Johannes Gutenberg developed movable type, which led to the first printed books. Or so your history books will tell you. Printing was actually developed in the East quite some time before. Still, Europe certainly needed and profited from this advance — Aldus Manutius issued the complete works of Aristotle, in Greek, at the end of the 15th century. Copies were sold for what we would consider an incredibly high price these nights, but at last important works were available to a large scholarly audience. They were also made with remarkable quality, both in beauty and accuracy. I have one of these sets myself in one of my apartments — it was a remarkable find. I can't read Greek, of course, but that doesn't detract from the books' value.

Art couldn't ignore the wealth of the time. Painters from Crivelli to Bey, Fra Angelico to Benozzo Gozzoli, depicted wealth, luxury and business in their work. Images of precious stones decorated the pages of books. The affluent wore caftans woven of silk imported at no small expense from Asia. Goldsmiths found their services in great demand. So much of life centered on wealth and beauty, and the Kindred followed suit. No wonder the Toreador felt the need to protect what humanity had to offer by supporting the Camarilla.

I could go on for pages describing the achievements of art in the Renaissance — Donatello, Botticelli, and da Vinci from Italy; Jan van Eyck, a promising Dutch painter; William Caxton set up the first printing press in London. It was art's golden time. To say more would

only make me seem flighty and superficial, so I will hold my tongue.

CHRISTIANITY

You might say that religion was the only real blight upon the Renaissance. Oh, I know, some artists' best works were religious pieces. Yet during this otherwise beautiful time, terrible acts were committed in the name of religion. The Bohemian religious reformer, Jan Hus, was burned for heresy in Constance in 1415. In 1492, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella expelled 150,000 Jews from Spain who refused to convert to Christianity.

But religious atrocities have been committed in every age. I suppose in some ways they're good things — certainly religious persecution has inspired the most amazing songs, poems and books. Sometimes I wonder if we need religious conflict in order to bring out the best in us, if only a test of our faith can truly bring out our most vivid emotions. Personally, I think I'd rather be able to discourse with a vicar or draw my maps without all the bloodshed, but I have sometimes suspected... Well, I have no proof, but... I'm sure no few Toreador Kindred have secretly sponsored turmoil just so art would react. I've certainly had conversations with Toreador who believe that only suffering can bring out the

best in an artist, or that philosophy stagnates without a stimulus to change.

SPAIN

1492 AND THE JEWS

By the time Ferdinand and Isabella established the Spanish Inquisition, the Jews had already suffered through a long and painful history in Spain. Anti-Semitism was on the rise among the nobles and clergy, and they passed restrictive laws against the Jews. Jews wore distinctive badges; Jews did not keep Christian names.

Tens of thousands of Jews accepted Christian baptism rather than suffer torture or death. Many of the converts, or Marranos, rose to high positions in the state and church, and they intermarried heavily with Christian families. They prospered, socially as well as economically. This gained them almost a century, but the hostilities merely smoldered.

This is where things stood in 1480: The lower classes envied Jewish wealth, especially after the Jews married into the noble families. And many in the Church still opposed their presence. The Inquisition reinforced the power of the Crown by taking away the lands, wealth, and influence of converts suspected of



heresy. This wealth was then used to fuel the war against the Muslims.

The Inquisition first went after the Marranos rather than avowed Jews. Many of the converts had achieved important positions in various fields and were envied by the poorer classes. The persecution of the Marranos was also advanced by some of their own who had achieved high-ranking Church positions; they desperately wanted to prove that they were loyal Christians. It is even rumored that Torquemada, the Grand Inquisitor himself, may have been a Marrano.

Once the Muslims had been conquered and the Marranos beaten into submission, the Inquisition turned its attention to the Jews. Torquemada convinced King Ferdinand that if he expelled the Jews, he could use their wealth to solve all of his financial difficulties. Torquemada also argued that the Marranos had shown over and over before tribunals that they were not actually devout Christians. Ferdinand eventually gave in to the vision of Jewish wealth.

The Crown gave the Jews four months to leave Spain on pain of death. They would not be allowed to take gold, silver or precious stones with them. Any Christian who sheltered them after the four months would have his possessions taken away. More than 150,000 Jews fled the country; the rest accepted baptism or became victims of the Inquisition for years to come.

I know; I haven't even mentioned the Toreador yet. You're wondering where they come into this. Well, when the Jews left Spain, so did the Toreador — before that moment it had been one of our favored homes. Even the Inquisition wasn't quite enough to make us leave, but frankly, many of the Toreador in Spain at that time were Jews — so when the Jews left, so did we. Apart from brief visits we have not returned since. Any Camarilla Kindred with the means wisely fled the Inquisition, and only the Sabbath were willing to remain in its wake.

GOYA

Francisco Goya is considered one of the best Spanish artists of all time, although he lived during a time in which Spain was impoverished. He drew cartoons of typical scenes from Spanish life. He made grotesque, satirical portraits of the royalty. The War for Independence and its depravity and horror never left his mind, and most of his work thereafter was based on that slaughter.

Goya's paintings gave one of the fiercest indictments of war seen then or since. He etched the dead body of a woman and called it "Truth Lies Dead." He

drew women and children reduced to skeletons holding out hands for alms, and entitled it "Shouting's No Good."

I'm told that we Embraced Goya for his talent. I have a hard time believing this; it sounds like one of those laughable "famous mortal Embraced!" legends. Besides, we still bore emotional wounds inflicted by the political climate of Spain; I doubt that one of us would have been bold enough to spend that much time on the Iberian Peninsula with the Lasombra or Inquisition about. Still, I might believe that some Toreador found Goya's work too enticing to resist. We're not always known for our judgment when passion gets in the way.

Goya led quite the wild life. He had many illegitimate children and was supposedly a fair bullfighter. He even claimed to have bedded the Duchess of Alba, his supposed mistress, and he painted very sensual portraits of her. I suppose in some ways he sounds like the stereotypical Toreador, doesn't he? Maybe there is some truth to the rumor after all. After all, it was the ugly that haunted him, not the beautiful. He would have made a fine Kindred.

THE AIR AROUND US

You wouldn't think smog would bother us. We don't even breathe, after all. It should be little more than an aesthetic nuisance, the thing that makes the sky a little less blue, that blocks out the glittering of the stars.

Not so. In the latter half of the 20th century, Spain (and, of course, other industrialized countries) developed a terrible pollution problem. In Spain, this manifested in the valuable paintings in the Prado. The museum is in an area of Madrid that has the highest smog concentration in the city, and this has had a disastrous effect on the paintings. One or two enterprising Toreador funded a project to install a filtering and air purification plant to prevent damage to the canvases. The project also included the cleaning and restoration of the facades of some important public plazas and buildings. These Toreador didn't do anything to help the general pollution problem of course; such is the curse of the Kindred. We can affect the symptom, but never effect a cure.

In other cities, similar problems have occurred and the Toreador have acted to preserve their artistic treasures. One or two Toreador with higher moral standards have begun general campaigns against pollution, but they're in the minority. Most Toreador enjoy their creature comforts too much to act against the companies that manufacture them.

AMERICA

COLUMBUS' "DISCOVERY" OF AMERICA

You might say that Columbus was not the first to discover the Americas but rather the last. The history books underplay previous explorers, but Columbus was far from being the first child in the sandbox. So why did his voyage get things started?

Most textbooks will tell you that it is because the Turks had cut off the trade route to the East, but that is not so. The Turks made money off of such trade routes and had no reason to restrict them. The historians (I use the word loosely — tellers of fanciful myths would be more appropriate) ignored the frequent advances in military technology; the Europeans happily used their new weapons to conquer ever more territory.

Wealth was the ultimate goal. It bought influence and respect in the mortal world and salvation in Heaven. No one wants to think that Columbus did it for the gold; they'd rather ascribe him kinder motives. When Representative Roland Libonati proposed that Congress declare Columbus Day a national holiday, he said that Columbus was a great Christian who did what he did to thwart Turkish pirates who preyed upon Christians. He never mentioned the gold.


Christianity was a "portable" religion, and the Europeans wanted to proselytize to the natives. Of course, the natives most likely didn't realize they were expected to convert because the announcement read to them — if they didn't convert they'd be killed and their families made into slaves — was likely read in Spanish, which they did not yet understand.

The advent of new forms of bureaucracy made it easier for merchants and kings to manage distant enterprises well. Printing presses (and the attendant increased literacy) allowed news of exploration and discovery to travel much faster and farther than news of previous expeditions.

Most importantly to us, the Kindred knew it was time to move on. We were crowding Europe, and in a time of increased knowledge that could be dangerous. The recent troubles in countries such as Spain convinced us that we needed places far from the rulers of Europe. And most elders saw America as a place to send troublesome childer. The elders could enjoy more room, influence and vitae that way. The ancillae saw the chance for new territory — everything was fairly well sewn up in Europe, so new territory was desperately needed if anyone wanted to get anywhere without bumping off the elders.

An 1847 painting by John Vanderlyn illustrates the popular image of Columbus — that of an elegant, heroic





man claiming a new country in all righteousness. This painting hangs in the U.S. Capitol. A woodcut by Theodore de Bry in 1504 shows an alternate vision of how things happened. The artist depicted various natives, all of whom were attempting to kill themselves. They were shown taking poison, impaling themselves on spears and killing their children in order to escape rape and enslavement. It wasn't a pretty picture, but it certainly was effective. De Bry's art circulated throughout 16th-century Europe, depicting Spanish cruelty at its worst.

Many Toreador were at the forefront of the Kindred movement to the Americas. True, some remained behind to wallow in their creature comforts, but many more wanted to see the new territories, experience this new place that none of them had seen before. America was a toy, a new corner of the playground to be investigated. Some Toreador became explorers as time went on, taking the American frontier west. Some helped to kill and subjugate the natives. Others, as they had in Africa, discovered the indigenous Indian cultures and subsequently tried to help the natives. At this time communication on the frontier was difficult, so this split in attitudes caused less disturbance in the clan than the slavery issue of years past.

Later, several Toreador traveled among what was left of the Native Americans, collecting and publishing their stories. Some of them still pursue this goal — a few of these collections can now be found in books or on Web pages. The oral history of the Indians fascinated these Toreador, as did their mythology. It is lucky for us that these tales survive — and it is a shame that so many others were lost. Such is the price of progress.

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

According to social psychology, the modification of one's opinions to make them agree with one's actions is part of the process called "cognitive dissonance." Very few people want to see themselves as "evil." And despite posturing to the contrary, many Kindred act the same way. We justify our actions by saying "my enemy was stupid, so he deserved it," or, "my sire was a real fiend, so I had to diablerize him — too bad I was the only one around to do it." This is what happened with Columbus.

When Columbus needed to convince Isabella to spend more money on expeditions to the Americas, he told her about the amazing natives. They were incredibly smart; they were orderly and curious. When he needed to justify his later ill treatment of the Indians, he said they were cruel, stupid and barbaric.

When Toreador first start to slide, they almost always exhibit this cognitive dissonance. They justify

their actions more than most Kindred are wont to do. After all, we're closer to humans, and that's what humans do. You know a Toreador has fallen far from humanity when she no longer bothers to justify the crimes she's committed.

THE MAYFLOWER AND THE MAPS OF SAMUEL DE CHAMPLAIN


The Pilgrims of the Mayflower ended up in Massachusetts when they'd actually set out for Virginia. Most history books explain this away as an error in navigation or as the result of storms that blew the Mayflower off course. Both of these explanations ring hollow, the former because the one aspect of ocean travel that sailors of the time measured accurately was latitude. The storm theory doesn't make a whole lot of sense either: if a storm had blown them off course, they could have turned south again once the weather cleared.

First you must understand that the Pilgrims were the minority aboard the Mayflower — they made up maybe a third of the settlers. The rest were ordinary people who hoped to get rich in Virginia. The Pilgrims, however, wanted to be far away from English governance; they never specifically wanted to go to Virginia. So maybe someone's navigational skills deserted him for a time. Or maybe the Pilgrims deliberately aimed north of Virginia. Of course the textbooks can't possibly tell us this possibility — it would make the Pilgrims out to be less than pious and wonderful.

Certainly they had plenty of information about New England. They had John Smith's guidebook to the region. They had Samuel de Champlain's maps. How do I know? I have one of de Champlain's maps under glass in one of my apartments, handed down through a Pilgrim's family for generations until I took it. It's crude, but lovely in its simplicity. When de Champlain drew his maps Plymouth was still a thriving native village, not yet wiped out by disease.

The Toreador, like most Cainites, stayed away from the Pilgrims. Religious fervor is almost never good for our kind, especially puritanical fervor. Thus, we stayed as far away from New England as we could during those first years.

My clan involved itself in the New World in three ways: One, it helped to explore, as I mentioned before. Toreador always love to see new places after all, and the beautiful, unspoiled lands they saw were as gorgeous as any painted masterpiece. Two, some Toreador worked themselves into the plantation society of the South. Leading unives of relative luxury over mortal servants suited those Toreador who had come from good families, yet wanted territory of their own that wasn't available in Europe. Three, once things were fairly



settled, the Toreador explorers returned to seek out new territory for themselves and new art and culture to cultivate.

THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

I think the contradiction inherent in the Revolutionary War is what fascinates me the most about it. Here were all these people fighting for life and liberty ("the American Way!" I hear some of you say), but they were all slave owners. Patrick Henry, the man who gave the famous "Give me liberty or give me death" speech, owned quite a few slaves. He may have owned up to the discrepancy between his words and his actions, but he never acted to change it. He never freed a single one of his slaves, even at his death. It had become a somewhat common practice for the founding fathers to free their slaves in their wills. That way they were only inconveniencing their heirs, not themselves, while guaranteeing that history would view them kindly. Why yes, I am a cynic. Why do you ask?

As at most times, the Toreador were divided on the issue of the Revolutionary War. Some feared they'd be cut off from the source of their creature comforts, from the bounty of refined treasures to be found in Europe. Most of these Toreador either fled to Europe or threw in with the Redcoats. Others celebrated the idea of freedom for the Americas — they thought only the best could come of a fresh start in the New World. Revolutionary ideas formed new cultures for the Toreador to watch or influence at their leisure. Some few Toreador helped the revolutionaries; the rest moved as far away from the action as possible. If they felt particularly magnanimous, they sent money or servants.

After all, few Toreador would call themselves soldiers. Some of us are strong, and some of us know how to fight. But en masse? Never. We're really not unlike the mortals in this regard. While you might meet someone in your squad who would eventually 'fess up to being able to whittle, you'd be unlikely to meet a regiment of interior decorators.

THE CIVIL WAR

Young Toreador, who in life had been slave owners or had grown up in the South, most often believed that the war was necessary. Some even aided their old allegiances. The rest of the clan either didn't care (in other words, they were nowhere near the battles or wanted the war to end. After all, anything that made travel difficult was to be discouraged, and the Civil War certainly obstructed travel. It also made soldiers out of artists, and killed off fine young men who might have gone on to develop great talents.

On top of that, money went to fund the war effort rather than paying for civic restoration and patronage of the arts. And any Toreador who didn't want to worry about being drafted into the fight (it isn't as though we could have gone onto the battlefield under the sun and fought!) had to immediately move away from his home or prove himself legally dead. Some of our homes were burned in the fighting; innumerable havens were lost during the war.

Those Toreador who acted as abolitionists, however, did their best to support the North — usually from afar, if they were smart.

THE ART OF HISTORY

I have sometimes heard historians called artists, and I believe this must be correct. While their style may leave something to be desired in my eyes, they certainly take great liberties with our histories. And yet, when you look a little closer, perhaps they reveal more than they intend to.

Take John Brown, a radical white abolitionist who went to great lengths in his attempt to start a slave revolution and establish a free state of slaves. Histories written before the late 1800s picture him as perfectly sane. Then until 1970, more or less, he was depicted as insane. After 1970, he was once again sane. Accounts of John Brown's life make a passably good index of racism and — what is the term, "political correctness"? — in American society.

This is the case with so many things. I wouldn't call myself a historian, but history is central to my cartography so I have studied a great deal of it. Unfortunately you need to look at histories over a period of at least a century, as the example above shows, before you really start noticing some of the patterns, and written histories only go back so far in some countries.

If you are lucky enough to know a Kindred historian, you may learn some of the most amazing things. Imagine being able to watch history, and the way in which it is recorded, for centuries! To be able to note, as it is happening, the differences between what happens and what is written. I hope that in another century or two I'll be able to tell you what it feels like. Of course, then you must find out what the historian's biases are, or the "overview" doesn't help all that much. Everyone is biased after all. Even you, even me. John Quincy Adams said, "The historian must have no country." It's too bad so few understand this.

Perhaps historians believe that the American people will only follow the government if it is perfect, if it is pictured as blameless and wise in all things. In an effort

to help this process along, that's what they present — a government that is exactly what it should be when it should be. Strong when necessary, gentle and forgiving when possible, altruistic when it's needed, and above all, wise and beneficent to its own people. Perhaps they had only the best of intentions at heart. And yet, if the past America looks so pretty, then what will we think when we see our current leaders and all their indiscretions via the modern miracle of cable TV? Perhaps we'd be better prepared for their mistakes if we knew about those of our past leaders. It wouldn't come as such a shock.

It's honestly too bad that American histories concentrate so completely on the government. Why is there so little mention of our greatest architects and composers? If history is an art form, then where is the beauty within its pages? Perhaps this is why the Toreador have Embraced so few historians.

THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

American textbooks are in love with government. They portray the government in terms of what it used to be, or was meant to be: manageable, working for the people it was meant to serve. It never occurs to the textbook authors to mention that the balance of power has shifted since the drafting of the Constitution. They


raise up the government as the instigator of all improvements, whether environmental, educational or racial. Histories are stories, and politicians are the epic heroes. Whatever happened to the private citizen? To companies or private organizations? Haven't they achieved anything at all?

In our histories, America is always the good guy. It goes forth to other countries, righting their wrongs and bringing prosperity to all. Ugh. If students saw it in a movie they'd be gagging, but because it's "true" they eat it all up. Even when the books admit that America screwed up, it was only a misunderstanding.

I might never have moved to America if I'd read the textbooks beforehand. Maybe I would have stayed in Africa. On the other hand, in many other countries what passes for history is even more blatant propaganda (where you're allowed to study history at all). We're told that we can never learn from the past unless we study it, and yet we are often not allowed to study it as it truly was. What do we learn from this except that politicians and governments are selfish?

I've spoken to one or two Toreador who dabbled in politics once upon a time. The pictures they present are never pretty. They tell of internal memos explaining that American altruism was right out of the picture — a "luxury" America couldn't afford. I think no politician





makes a political decision out of the goodness of his heart. It's always a political gambit.

Maybe that's why so few Toreador go into mortal politics, and the ones who do often excel. Who could work in such an environment and retain his humanity? Certainly those Toreador who *do* go into politics seem to little resemble the rest of us. They're caught up in their power games, in their strategies and their networking. They're useful sometimes, to be sure, but frightening all the same. They have little understanding any more of why people are important to us; mortals mean very little to them.

THE 1960S AND CIVIL RIGHTS

I'll tell you my own personal theory: the FBI murdered Martin Luther King. Oh, not directly. But they certainly helped. I'll bet you didn't learn about FBI activities in school, did you? They broke into churches. They investigated anyone they could who supported the civil rights movement, particularly those who gave speeches and held rallies. They spoke of "neutralizing" colleges that invited civil-rights leaders to speak. And how did you think James Earl Ray got the money to go to Montreal, buy a false identity, and fly to London anyway? Even Hollywood participates in the lie — did you ever see *Mississippi Burning*? Did you notice that the FBI agents accomplished everything positive in that movie? That isn't the way it really went down, I can tell you that much.

All right, so most people think I'm nuts for the MLK theory. But I did speak to a Toreador, an elderly black man who could play the smoothest guitar you've ever heard, who said he saw an FBI agent break into King's home shortly after his death. I promised him I'd pass it on, and once I found out about all the other stuff, I even meant it.

Some Toreador held signs and shouted along with everyone else — well, if they were evening rallies, at any rate. Free speech is important to the clan. We've seen ideals of all kinds censored throughout the ages, and many of us just wanted the chance to speak our minds or make our contribution. We didn't want anyone telling us what we could debate or sing, or which writers and artists we could hang out with where. The clan is younger in this century than it has been since the beginning, and so many of us remember what it was like to be mortal and to have little recourse beyond the law.

THE 20TH CENTURY

EXPRESSION IN THE LAST CENTURY


This won't be a catalog of forms and styles, I assure you. You can look up Dadaism and Postmodernism and Abstract Expressionism in an art book. This is a history.

Society underwent revolutionary changes in the 20th century; it still does rightly. Professional art training became much more accessible — artists could go to college rather than apply to specialized academies. Likewise education in, if you'll pardon my turn of phrase, the humanities are on the rise. Now we Toreador are creating childer as never before. We are finally taking advantage of our favored position within the Camarilla to Embrace a number of these new voices. We are, at the same time, becoming much pickier about whom we Embrace. It is no longer enough for someone to be a well-known artist, critically acclaimed, with work we admire. Now he must show prodigious talent indeed or possess some other trait we desire. A social critic must have valid insight or genuine emotion — no longer are the Holden Caulfields of the clan afforded much berth.

The last century tore down many of the limitations of gender and class. The poor may become artists or leaders — though lack of money for training and education is still an issue, there are always community colleges and interim jobs as interior decorators or graphic artists. It takes longer for the poor because they must dig themselves up out of obscurity by their own fingernails, but at least it's possible now. It used to be that most artists, no matter how good, were simply ignored if they were poor. Also, while critics still laud the male artist more readily than the female, women have a much better chance than they used to. Colleges accept both men and women now, where the masters might have only taught men.

Because of this new equality, the makeup of our clan is changing. We always Embraced a few of the unusual here or there. It was sometimes easier for us, in our place just outside of humanity, to see that even a woman or a poor man could have *some* contribution to make. Because we Embraced patrons and politicians and people of beauty, a greater diversity always manifested among the Toreador more readily than among the community of thinkers themselves. The increased frequency of Toreador Embraces guarantee that we will become even more diverse. This also means there's a gap growing between our elders and younger generations of Toreador. The higher generations are no longer simple appendages to older Toreador upon their Embrace. Now the young are a culture unto themselves.

When communication — across states, nations and continents (not to mention around the world!) — became so much easier, cultural influences spread quickly. Each country has absorbed influences from the others. Trends become ubiquitous only to be overtaken at the speed of thought by other trends. It used to be that cultural influences spread from one region to another



primarily via travelers, Toreador among them. Now we no longer have quite such an influence on the spread of these trends: Who needs to go to Morocco when one can sample its cuisine, literature and linguistic heritage at the corner store — or from one's desktop?

It used to be that the Toreador could gather in one place — for example, in 1900 this place would have been Paris, New York or Cairo — and observe the changes in the civilized world since their last visit. Now that "civilization" has become truly global, this is more difficult to do. Multiple cities are considered the "civilized" centers: London, Berlin, Rome, Paris, Prague, Hong Kong, Tokyo, New Delhi, Sydney and so on. Some Toreador elders even travel much more often than they used to because it is no longer possible to sit like a spider in a web waiting for the flies to come to us.

Movements in popular culture come and go much more quickly. Critics and media package each new trend with its own fancy name — much like adding a pretty new ribbon — in the hopes that buyers and viewers will find the new word worth spending money on. Generation X. E-commerce. Corporate identity. The global village. Emphasis shifts toward the sale rather than the content itself. It's the consumers who are responsible for the revolving tray of names; Toreador are as proportionately responsible for this as the mortals.

Consumerism and worldwide cultural information tides even affect the "high ground" of civilization. The art community finds "low" art to have a sort of power and impact that high art lacks. Political comic strips hit harder than elegant landscapes. Artists working for advertising companies craft their work with the specific aim of appealing to their viewers' or listeners' emotions. And where art appeals to the emotions, it sells, regardless of the critics.

Over the last century, different styles of art came and went. Scraps of metal bolted together became sculpture. Splashes of paint became iconic masterpieces. Performance art arose as a valid field. As long as it appealed to *someone* it could be called art; no longer could the masters of the field pronounce with great dignity what art was. This reduced the power of the Toreador in the field of art; we could no longer shape the field from the outside. It did, however, give us license to Embrace those we personally saw as artists, rather than those to whom the rest of the clan gave their stamp of approval. We still had to contend with the opinions of our clanmates, but we were less likely to find our tradition-minded sire looking down his nose at us. As the mortal judgement of what was art widened, we expanded with it as a clan. Many elder Toreador cer-

tainly retain their biases, but Embracing of new shapers of the mortal culture inevitably shaped us as well.

Unfortunately, few artists in the modern nights can afford to live by art alone. The patron system has almost entirely faded from sight. Federal grants are too small to cover rent. Most artists take on other jobs to support themselves. I can tell you how frustrating it is to have to do something you hate to make ends meet, when that which makes you transcendently happy lies just beyond your reach. It's enough to drive some artists mad.

Growth characterizes 20th-century art. Some say it's change, but I disagree. It isn't that styles are changing every year, it's that a new style appears every year and adds its followers onto those of all the other styles. An infinite number of media are now called art by some portion of society. Art is seen as entertainment for the masses rather than something divine to be savored by the wealthy and powerful. Critics must amuse rather than inform. Expectations have changed. The masses now decide what they want; who can shepherd taste these days?


The result is that most art now functions as entertainment, yet artists can follow their own passions rather than society's. Museums can host successful exhibits that most people decry as crap. Art has split in two very different directions — the popular and the individualistic — and it shows no sign of repairing itself any time soon.

Nor should it. We have far more to choose from than ever before. While some believe this variety dilutes the field, I think it only improves things. Everyone who wants to make his mark has his chance. My only regret is that so many artists means so little support to go around.

That's where we come in, or so the hope goes. I have patronized three talented artists since I left Africa — but even if the clan as a whole devoted the entirety of its purpose toward "cultivating creative expression," it could not support all artists forever. Nor should all artists be supported; sometimes a growling stomach can galvanize a creator in a way nothing else can.

ART AS A GAME

By the end of the 1960s, expression of emotion within art no longer seemed nearly so valuable as cleverness in popular media. By the end of the 1970s, art had become a game: An artist was meant to work images and styles of the past into her art while making sarcastic or ironic commentary on the modern world. I'm afraid to say that the Toreador are as guilty of this as the cynical mortal world.



That the true curse of the Toreador — upon our Embrace, we lose a certain flexibility that we had as mortals. In some ways, our art will never change. When I was alive I intended to study other types of painting besides maps. And I intended to study other ways of making maps than just painting and sketching — sculpture, for instance. But now that I'm dead, every time I approach one of these endeavors I never really get anywhere. I can make new and beautiful maps by painting and sketching, but there's a limit to where I can take that.

By and large, the clan is in denial over this, and I don't blame them. Besides, it can take a while to notice it — decades if you're lucky. Some of us, in response to our newfound lack of creativity, resort to a sort of game. It isn't about what new sort of art you can come up with — it's all about how snide or caustic or self-referential you can be. Toreador show off their knowledge of the past while making commentary on those aspects of the present that they don't like. We can't *create*. We can't make anything new, but we can forever reinterpret what we already know.

This rubbed off on the mortal world, and although I wasn't around for it, I have never stopped regretting it. When those who can no longer create guide the direction in which creativity recognizably travels, the mortals suffer for it far more than we do. I sometimes fear we have done irreparable damage, but luckily people seem determined to keep generating novelties.

THE POWER OF ART

In the 20th century, art descended from its status as the pinnacle of man's achievement to become mere entertainment. At the beginning of the century, artists saw impressionism as a destructive force attacking all ideals and skill. The power to destroy the ideals of man was attributed to a style of art. Can you believe it? Now "art" populates Web sites selling CDs with songs like "Uncle Fucka." Anyone can turn on the TV and see something that is supposedly art. Art has lost its power.

Or has it? Impressionism didn't destroy our ideals; it became just another style of art. And yet we turn on our TVs and buy what the advertisements tell us to buy. We go to those Web sites and purchase thousands of dollars of music just because we saw it on MTV. Political cartoons shape our votes.

I'd say art's power is just being realized.

THE PRIMITIVIST-GOD DUALITY

A strange pair of things happened toward the beginning of the century. First, an emphasis upon "natural" art emerged. Statues that preserved the qualities of the material from which they were sculpted

became the rage. Found bits of nature were held up as art, even though no man had touched them. At the same time, some artists spoke of a loss of control in art. They intimated that someone else had created the work; they were simply conduits.

This brought a sense of intimacy to art that it had lacked up until that time. It was in almost every way the opposite of traditional art. The "process" of art became as important as the art itself. This paralleled a growth in the image of the artists as egotistical and arrogant. No longer did the artist simply create. Now the artist channeled the divine. When he held up a piece of nature and called it art, he made a divine pronouncement. He had the ability to define art itself, not just to create it.

For a time, this new artistic authority damaged the relationship between Toreador and mortal. When mortal artists saw themselves as divine, what did that make us? Some Toreador believed themselves to be the divine inspiration of these mortals. Such arrogance caused many more problems than it solved. Others, who had never felt this ecstasy when they were alive and creating their own art were jealous. And almost every Toreador who was dismissed by these mortal artists held a grudge.

Finally, this movement came full circle. Simple art became popular. Inexpensive Japanese woodblock prints were in high demand, as well as Russian icon painting. Many Toreador were quite surprised by the return to folk art. There was a high demand for tribal artifacts, and artists from underdeveloped countries made a surprising impact.

THE INFORMATION AGE

I love having access to the world's knowledge at the click of a button. I think it's great that any artist with the money to buy a computer (or with access to a decent school or library) can put his artwork out there for anyone to see. I think it's fantastic that magazines can operate without printing costs — as long as they can pay for their Internet access and computer, they're golden.

In recent years, a number of Toreador have come together over the Internet and the World Wide Web. They display their art online on Web pages and bulletin boards. They e-mail missives all over the Internet. They are something of an artists' collective, and they even call themselves a guild (see p. 55 for more on guilds). Most of the clan refuses to recognize them as such; after all, guilds are meant to be regional groupings. The Electron Artists, as members of this loose group call themselves, are from all over the world. The EA claim, however, that they are a community and thus just as entitled to call themselves a guild as any other group of

Toreador. Perhaps more so, as they come together out of something other than just the fact that they're neighbors.

Personally I'm with them, but not for the reasons they give. I don't care if they want to call themselves a guild. Why should any of us care? It isn't as though calling them a guild gives them any kind of power.

The Electron Artists overlap strongly with a new movement among Toreador that holds as one of its tenets that art must be ephemeral, not permanent. So they care little about such things as the pollution in the Prado. Why should the fate of some centuries-old paintings matter to them? They say let such things pass; art is meant to fade away and then rise anew. They liken it to the Phoenix, which dies in flame and then is reborn. One or two extremists in this movement have been known to break into museums and destroy particularly old works of art, but incidents like this are thankfully rare. If these incidents continue, however, you can bet that someone will hold the EA accountable.


Me, I'm young enough to not fear the computer, but old enough to not want to spend all of my time there. Yes, I've put a few of my maps up on the Web. I've received feedback by e-mail, everything from "Wow, dude, can I buy one of those off of you, like, a real one?"

to "Just give up and die; the world would be a better place for it." Everything seems magnified in the electronic world: The highs seem higher and the lows seem lower. It appears to me that Toreador who spend too much time there get a little extreme themselves. Me, I find that tempering any online experience with a good dose of Miss Manners' column (available on Netnews) brings me back to earth.

Didn't expect me to be a fan of hers, did you? Ever read one of her columns? They aren't about forks. She's a fabulous writer, with a sharp wit and, when necessary, an acid tongue. She can clothe sarcasm and disapproval in the sweetest tones, and she has no patience for human stupidity. Now *that* is art. I rather hope that one of us Embraces her eventually.

The EA have achieved one thing that no other Toreador have: a cohesive group. I admire their ability to rally around a cause, though few permanent causes catch their eye. Still, when they want to achieve something in the world of computers, they often can. It's a frightening thing. If all Kindred could organize that way, the world would be a very different place. Perhaps it's a good thing that this particular group is as slack and lazy as they come and doesn't care about many causes.





About the only things that catch their eye are laws that threaten their freedoms, and I think it's better that way.

A NEW MILLENNIUM

Everything changes as we move blindly forward into the modern nights. Writers used to create utopias for us in which war was a thing of the past, ethnic cleansing unheard of. Science fiction — one of the most optimistic themes of this century in terms of hope and idealism — used to present the most beautiful views of what was to come. Science and technology were going to lift us out of the grave we'd dug for ourselves.

Somewhere along the way this changed. Utopias gave way to terror and destruction. During World War I, images of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse began to haunt us. Not only were people dying in military conflicts, but our effect on the planet was being noticed for the first time. The ozone layer deteriorated. Smog covered our cities and children developed asthma. Birth defects surfaced in towns where hazardous waste was dumped.

How can our art not be dark and terrifying? Terrorism, famine, plagues, sexual exploitation, neglect of underdeveloped countries and genocide haunt us. Toreador *antitribu* thrive in this climate. When the ugly is all there is to see, some people learn to appreciate it. And too many of these Perverts are recruited by the Sabbat. Our opposite numbers were once rare — the occasional dark cloud obscuring the stars on a clear night. Now it's storm season. The *antitribu* are everywhere.

All right; perhaps "everywhere" is an exaggeration. But it isn't an exaggeration that they've been able to turn more Toreador from the Camarilla within the last decade than ever before. We've always been a reflection of humanity in one way or another, and in this time of nightmares we have stayed true to the role. As the mortals grow darker, so do we.

This is a terrifying time. One of America's own citizens bombed a federal building in Oklahoma. The breakup of Yugoslavia escalated into an ethnic war marked by appalling atrocities. Ethiopia and Eritrea war

almost daily and the accusations of brutality fly. We cannot help but reflect that rancor.

Art has always highlighted the hopes, dreams, fears and nightmares of the living. In the 20th century it became possible for anyone with a typewriter or a computer to at least try to record his thoughts. Granted, many of these people lacked the discipline or talent to be writers, but some amazing minds emerged from this experiment who would never have had the chance to blossom if not for technology.

The millennium is nothing, when it comes right down to it. It's a date on a calendar that has changed numerous times over the history of civilization. Not all countries even follow this calendar. It's an entirely arbitrary date, especially when you consider that people are actually celebrating (and dreading) the millennium a year early, technically.

But that doesn't take away its power as a symbol.

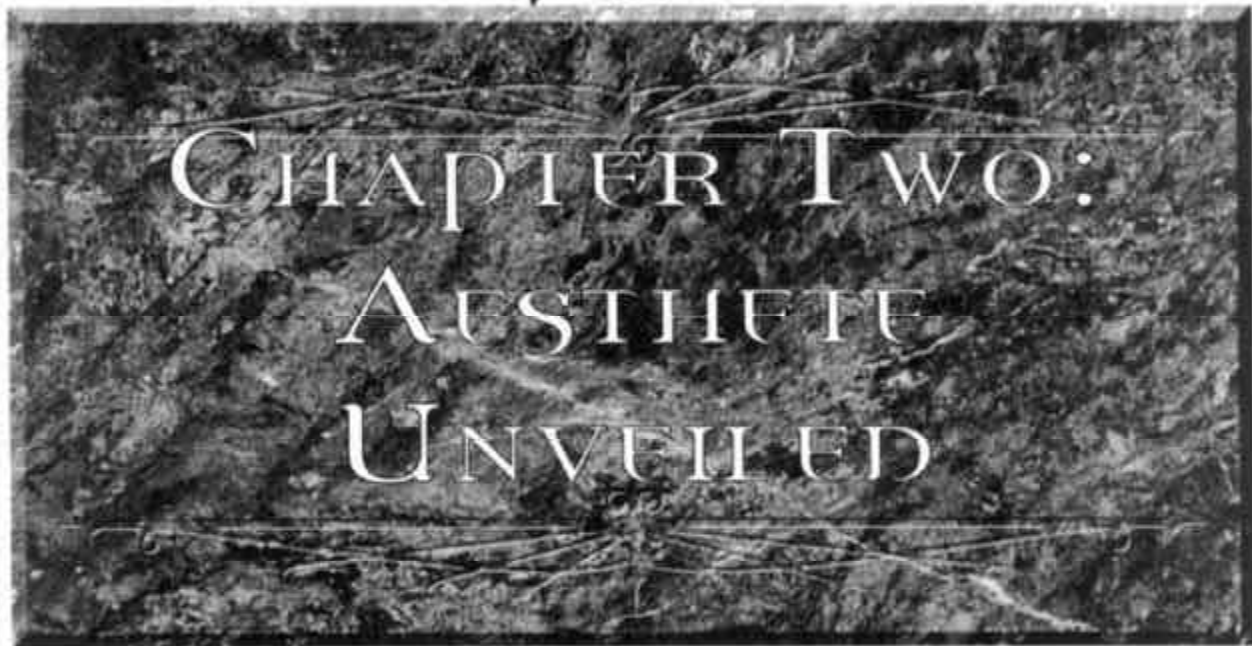
People have always held borders as powerful. The fae folk supposedly appeared at crossroads, at midnight, or twilight or dawn. Border times. The millennium is a border time — one of the biggest of them all. It's the divider between years, decades, centuries and millennia. The changeover happens at midnight, the witching hour, another border time. It's arbitrary, and yet incredibly significant.

I like to think this is just a reflection of man's superstitious nature, and by extension the Kindred's. It's another fear of borders, the way our ancestors feared crossroads at midnight on the summer solstice. But sometimes I wonder.

The Curse of Caine itself has become a border condition. Have you noticed? The youngest of us are as much mortal as vampire. The thin-blooded act as a bridge between the two races, and bridges were borders too — or have you forgotten your childhood tale of the three billy goats gruff, with the troll beneath the bridge? Maybe nothing will come of this. Maybe it's just the natural order of things.

Maybe it isn't.





CHAPTER TWO: AESTHETE UNVEILED

She's barely gained consciousness and when she sees me, standing over her, naked, I can imagine that my virtual absence of humanity fills her with mind-bending horror.

— Bret Easton Ellis, *American Psycho*

As told by Goddard

Greetings. I was told you were coming. I've been asked to explain a few things to you. Most particularly, what it means to be what we are. What it means to be Toreador.

Take a look at this picture. Nice? No, it's not a photograph. Look closer. I painted it, pointillist style, using single horsehairs as brushes. There is more detail than the average photograph, more than on a magazine cover or a TV screen certainly. It took me two months. You can have it if you want.

In terms of technique, it's a masterpiece. Few humans have the patience for such painstaking work. I've shown it, and similar work, to humans who own galleries. Most dismiss it as some sort of fraud or trick. None have been particularly interested. I can sell them, but if I need money I can make more by doing portraits of the self-indulgent rich. It certainly takes less time and effort.

Artistically, it's shit. I've been making worthless tripe since before Monet. I've tried, and mechanically mastered, the techniques of cubism, abstract expressionism, surrealism, impressionism — name your poison. In each instance, the technical challenges held my attention for years, until I became too capable with them. Then, like upended jars, their meaning and importance drained out onto the floor of eternity.

Here is my best painting. I did it when I, like you, was a neonate. It's a bit clumsy, but it has heart, emotion, intensity. It commemorates my first lethal feeding, the first time I lost control to the Beast. See the onlooker, smudged in the shadows? The wide eyes and mouth, the horror? That used to be me.

Since that time, there have been many deaths, many paintings to remember them. The killings became far more brutal as my "dark side" grew more insistent. The paintings were executed with far more grace and balance.

And yet there is something vital in this sophomore effort that is lacking in all my work since.

That's the ultimate horror in our existence, you see. Not that we kill, or enjoy killing, or any such claptrap. The true horror lies beyond the immediate horror, beyond the blood and frenzy. True horror is boredom. On the other side of terror is a tired acceptance.

You see, after your first few unchanging decades, you've seen it all. Not literally, of course. You see things that are arguably more hideous, or more beautiful, or more inhuman, or more seraphic. But by that point, a Cainite has endured so many shocks and reversals that the reactions are firmly established. The first time I saw a child murdered, it was horrible — it made me nauseous. I tried to put a stop to it. By the time Auschwitz rolled around. By the time a thousand, or a million children were murdered, it was not a million times more horrible. It was merely the same horror for the millionth time, and the repetition of any suffering a million times begins to wear out one's sensibility. Murder became banal.

Do you not wonder why so few of the great artists, painters and composers of history have been preserved by the Toreador? We are, after all, the great archivists of human expression, are we not? I'll let you in on a secret: For all our centuries of practice, we are no better than mortals at recognizing living genius. Time truly is the test of greatness. During Picasso's heyday, I was granted the right to take a child, and I chose another instead — a nobody. Picasso's work looked cartoonish and absurd to me. Perhaps I'd gone too long without seeing by sunlight... But more than that, I'd seen so many fads, schools and manifestos come and go. The sensory battering of constant change can drown even something truly revolutionary. How many rock-and-roll bands are one-hit wonders? Even a terribly popular group like the Beatles may well be swept under history's rug in a hundred years. In even fifty years, who will know George Gershwin? He'll fade, forgotten. Who was the greatest harpsichord player of the 1800s? No one knows. No one cares.

A hundred years is about as long as you can exist before your feelings, your consciousness, become surfeited. I have nothing new to report about the last few centuries. With no new tale to tell, I am reduced to repeating the same stale story, painting the same pale impression, over and over and over. My style changes or improves, but the substance gradually erodes under inexorable familiarity.

Some nights it makes me cry. Some nights it makes me sick. On most nights, though, I just can't feel a thing. And that is my greatest failing — and that of all Toreador.

BEING VAMPIRE

You are what, a poet? Yes, I can tell. Don't be embarrassed by your transparency. The first time you come out of frenzy and realize you're grunting and rubbing some unidentified but blood-rich organ against your stiffening nipples — then you can be embarrassed.

I can also tell that right now you're thinking, "Surely I shall never commit an act so heinous and distasteful. I'm refined, a young lady of culture!"

You will.

Your "Embrace," as we so laughably call it, has either instilled or awakened within you something called the Beast. It's an apt name for a set of urges that calls out to you from within, calling for blood. The hungrier you become, the sharper the Beast's call. But it's more than hunger.

I believe that the Beast is your frustrated death. Even now, you do not breathe, your heart is still, and your cells remain in stasis only through the grossest violation of the natural order. You should be dead, but you're not — and the Beast is nature's rage at being thwarted, expressed through the remnants of your natural self.

Some kindred try to quell their Beast, starve it into submission by living ascetic lives. They take only what they need to avoid hunger's frenzy, and at all other times strive to hold on to the values of their human life. But this approach is dangerous, for remaining blood-starved is only an intellectual solution. While one is cognitively sure one is acting ethically, the hunger of the Beast grows until the intellect is swept away like a twig in a downpour. Then it's time for the nipple-stiffening I mentioned earlier.

Other Kindred try to make peace with their Beast by pampering it. Regular, full meals can dull its howls into grumbles, but there is an inexorable downside to this strategy as well. The act of feeding loses its horror through constant repetition, and once the act of stealing blood from a human is no longer horrible, but actually pleasurable and essential — well, then resisting the Beast becomes much less of a priority. One succumbs to one's deadliest nature, not out of weakness, but simply because it no longer matters. Decency is no longer a priority.

We are, it seems, damned if we eat and damned if we starve. What is a moral vampire to do?

This conundrum is brutal and has driven many of our kind into the sun's merciful annihilation. (You never hear of it, never witness it, but I suspect that among the many, many Kindred who disappear without a trace, most cease to exist by their own free will.)

There is, however, an escape clause. It's not easy, but it's there.



BEING HUMAN

The Beast is our thwarted death, lashing out by seeking the destruction of everything worthwhile. What, then, can we say of this strange urge that holds us transfixed by the most common of sights? What is it that shows us the beauty that was hidden before?

Humankind has been called a compound creature — half angel, half clay. This chimerical contradiction is doubly true of us Toreador, for we are half corpse, but half vibrant, aching soul.

Most vampires deny their living part; so much so that there is no name for it, other than the "ego" of the Freudians or the "soul" of those who've carried their faith through a monstrous parody of the resurrection. We alone seem to experience a sharpening of it, and this is what holds our Beast in check. Every moment we spend engaged in the stuff of life — making something that lasts, learning something unknown, opening ourselves to the touch of another's art — makes our human element stronger. This element can hold back the Beast.

You have felt the rapture already? Good. Every time you feel rapture is one more night you can retain your will and agency, free of the Beast's clutches.

Do not make the most common neonate mistake, however. Do not assume that the enemy of your enemy is your friend, even when that enemy is you. After all, we are often our own worst enemies.

To be plain: Humanity is not perfect. Mythical Caine was human before he was cursed, human when he invented a nasty new way to sin. Humans invented torture, genocide and bland phrases like "ethnic cleansing" to conceal their perversion. The Beast craves destruction, annihilation, entropy. But our humanity craves stimulation, aggrandizement, the satisfaction of selfish demands. This can be good or bad, depending on a great many variables. But in the larger scheme of things, it does not matter if it is objectively right or wrong. It is necessary.

Artists are told to "obey your muse" or "follow your bliss," always by those who assume that our muse of bliss leads us inevitably to fragrant meadows and not to some den of morbid self-abasement. But how many artists are pure? Coleridge, the laudanum addict? The incestuous Mr. Shelley? Sappho the lesbian? Holy David, the psalmist, the philanderer? Ginsberg, Whitman, de Sade, Baudelaire? Deviants to a man. That's merely within your discipline. In painting we have our share of sadists and

drunkards and drug addicts, and the annals of music are rife with pederasts, perverts and fetishists.

To be human is to be a contradiction, angel and animal tied in one flesh. We long to be part of the tribe, so we agree that those who are different are bad, naughty, sick, twisted, impure, damned. But at the same time our pride demands that we be individuals. These desires are the foundation for art, by giving us the different perspective that allows us to see something old as if it's new, to understand it in another way, to take us back to the wonder of our first perceptions.

Listen to your urges, neonate. Your leftover human lusts can strengthen you against the Beast, no matter how degraded they may seem to you. Most mortals limit their humanity to what is "acceptable." That is a luxury we cannot afford, either as artists or monsters.

Let me give you a metaphor.

I knew a mortal. I'll call her "Polly," though her name is unimportant. Polly liked nothing so much as being fucked by a vampire who was drinking her blood. Among those warm kine who've learned the pleasures of the Kiss, this conjunction is not altogether uncommon. Polly took it farther. She liked being drained past the point of ecstasy, past the point of safety, right to the edge of unconsciousness. Like those who practice erotic asphyxiation, Polly

found that as her brain became blood-starved, her body's sensations became lengthened and intensified. She had hallucinations, ecstasies, incoherent experiences that drew her back to the same dangerous practice.

She told me it was like being a single molecule at the mingling point where God and the devil made love. Sounds like a fellow poet, no? Unable to separate the experience from the pretense of being known for it?

The point of this story is that we, like Polly, play a dangerous game and must strike a dangerous balance. Like her, we are on the cusp of life-holding and life-taking. Like her, we must play our urges against one another. And like her, most of us lose control sooner or later and wind up dead.

In the best cases, these dead souls cease movement. In the worst, they proceed onward to share their condition with others.

TOREADOR AND MORTALS

In the words of Mira Seghir

The Toreador as a whole remain closer to mortals than perhaps any other clan, with the possible exception of the raucous Brujah. What we are and what we do



inherently involves the kine — what would civilization be without them? How could we partake of the best in humanity without remaining close to it, aware of it? We walk the fine line between Kindred and kine, removed from significant portions of both worlds, indulging in the best and worst of either.

Many of us prefer the company of mortals to Kindred. Some Toreador even indulge ourselves by keeping a mortal identity or a mortal family. So few other Kindred can say they know what it feels like to come home to a loving spouse and children. So few other Kindred can say they know what it feels like to love.

Unfortunately, the highs make the lows all the more horrifying. Some Toreador never recover from killing a loved one in a frenzy or even from outliving them “naturally.” Our closeness to humanity makes it all the more terrible to witness mortality.

Some say that the Toreador are skilled manipulators who adore intrigue and backstabbing. Understanding and cultivating relationships with mortals is, after all, what we do best, and this often leads to using others to have our way — some claim that every emotional interaction with a mortal is, in its own way, manipulation, but I disagree.

I once spoke with a Toreador who claimed he understood mortals so well that he could read what was really being said in a letter if he knew the person. He showed me a note from his stepdaughter’s father that he’d intercepted. It spoke of how sad the man was that his daughter didn’t show him “the love of a daughter for a father.” He laughed. “What he’s really saying is, ‘Why are you making me look bad in front of my sisters when they’re paying my rent?’” I asked him if he was going to change the letter at all and give it back, or just hide it from her. He said neither. “She knows him even better than I do, and I’ve taught her well. She’ll know exactly what he’s saying. She’s been loath to cut off connections with him until now, even though he’s treated her like shit. This will be the final straw.” He grinned at me then and pulled out a fresh envelope.

Intrigue is a complex thing. It’s hardly a clanwide pastime — some of us have more important things to do with our unlives. But some of us certainly find that it springs naturally from an unlife of gossip and prestatation.

TOREADOR AND GHOULS

Toreador rarely ghoule people they truly care about, but we often have a larger number of ghouls than most other Kindred. We have many reasons for this. For one, we prefer to surround ourselves with beauty, and most of our ghouls are beautiful people. For another, the sort of lifestyle most Toreador enjoy requires money, and one of the easiest ways to get money is by associating with people

ON THE PASSAGE OF TIME

Toreador operate on a fundamentally different time scale than most other Kindred. The mortal world moves quickly, and so do we. While our elders and Kindred from other clans might spend centuries laying careful plans and strategies, Toreador spend decades doing the same thing. Where other Kindred think on a scale of years, we Toreador think in months or weeks. While a Ventrue’s stock portfolio might be based on tried-and-tested companies decades old, a young Toreador might prefer to invest heavily in high-risk mutual funds or tech-stock IPOs. The Malkavian may flaunt his finery from the period he was Embraced, but the Toreador socialite wears what’s in now.

So it’s very difficult for other Kindred to take Toreador by surprise with their schemes, unless they lay very long-reaching, very subtle plans. Toreador have quicker mental reflexes, but we’re less likely to pick up on centuries-long patterns of behavior, which can be a real blind spot for Toreador with acute notions of humanitas.

Some Kindred consider the Toreador flighty because of this, when they understand it at all. We Toreador prefer to think of ourselves as flexible.


As a Toreador’s Humanity drops, this scale of time begins to warp back toward what a normal Kindred experiences. After all, it is the Toreador’s connection to the mortal world that keeps them on its time scale.

Because of their different desires, Toreador tend to think much more like mortals society, even as they age. They learn how to use a new technology as soon as it becomes popular rather than trying to catch up years later. They also avoid clothes centuries out of date; they’re more likely to be found in the latest fashions — or at least something presentable.

Certainly, this is also true of young Kindred of any clan, at least until their ways start to become obsolete. For the Toreador, however, even jaded ancillae can keep in touch with modern times and may have a better grasp on the world of mortal affairs than other Cainites of the same age.

who know how to make it. And, of course, we require people to protect us and run our errands. Someone’s got to walk the dogs.

It is widely considered foolish to blood-bond an artist, for we believe it saps his creativity or at least makes him dependent upon us. This can present us with a difficult



choice at times: either we must Embrace the artist if we believe him to be worthy, or we must allow him to die of old age and remove his gift from the world. It may seem easy in this circumstance to Embrace every artist we see, but not everyone is suited for the unlife of a Toreador. It requires a certain perspective that many lack. More than one creator has cracked after he was Embraced — it can be difficult to discover that you, who were so sensitive in life, are now a predator who must drink blood to survive. We also prefer not to Embrace every somewhat-talented artist who comes along, for it dilutes the worth of the clan as a whole. Also, an artist preserved forever, quite frankly, never sees the value of her art increase — she becomes a commodity, an artisan rather than a true artist.

It is considered cruel to blood-bond one's family or friends, for it takes away a great deal of their free will. What is the satisfaction when your daughter hands you a finger-painted picture with a whispered "I love you mommy," if you know she's forced to love you? Besides, ghoul-ing a child keeps her young forever, which is cruel in its own right.

Some Toreador do blood-bond their family or friends, but we regard this practice with a certain amount of distrust. It's poor form.

KEEPING A MORTAL IDENTITY

Some of us choose to hold onto a mortal identity. Usually Toreador establish themselves as scions of their local community — pardon me, *society* — and then do their best to fit in. Obviously this can be difficult, since we can't go out during the daytime. There are ways around this. Most rely on the archetypal "socialite's eccentricity" to explain their behavior. Those with enough money add to it the stereotype of the peculiar rich person (stereotypes can be so useful when misused correctly).

Still, it isn't easy. We're bound to irritate people when we continue to refuse their invitations to dinner. Of course, there are ways around this as well — so many mortals today have unusual and varied food allergies that it's easy to say we don't want to be a burden. We Toreador are also more adept than most other clans at passing ourselves off as mortal. Many of us know how to use our blood to appear flush and warm. Some of us even know how to eat, although we rarely display this ability in front of other Kindred — how vulgar the very idea! Other clans tend to view these proclivities as signs of how decadent we've become.

If we maintain a certain identity for too long, of course, someone eventually notices that we aren't aging. We can put this off for a little while with simple mannerisms or by using wigs, hair coloring and stage makeup — I've done so before — but it gets tiring to do it night after night. And all it takes is one slip of the wig or one

accidental swipe at the makeup, and one's deception is unmasked.

Truly, the keeping of a mortal identity is a tedious undertaking. The worst part is that in tonight's world of television, international news and airplanes, we can't just travel a hundred miles and be assured that no one will ever recognize us. Some settle for eking out unremarkable, largely unnoticed mortal lives and use pseudonyms when they wish to make public appearances. This all seems very counterproductive to me, for what is unlife for if not to be enjoyed? Why make things worse for yourself?

KEEPING A MORTAL FAMILY AND FALLING IN LOVE

Keeping a mortal family is even more difficult. Not only must we face all of the dangers inherent in maintaining a mortal identity, but we must also deal with the relations themselves. Relationships with mortals are discouraged, for they all too often end in disaster. If the family involves children then the hard questions arise — Do you tell them what you are and risk them revealing the secret to their friends or teachers? Do you leave them in the dark and field their questions every time they ask why you only wake at night, or why your room has no windows, or why you feel so cold when you kiss them goodnight?

To keep a mortal family is truly the most terrible and most wonderful of things. It can make us feel alive again, or it can point out to us just how far we've strayed from the path. Other dangers come with it as well — like the possibility of frenzy. More than one Toreador has come out of frenzy to find her stepson or stepdaughter, or even her husband, torn apart at her feet.

Some Toreador find lovers who aren't mortals. Toreador have been known to fall in love with each other, with the other creatures that prowl the night (how gauche!), or even with Kindred of other clans. Love is one of our most prized and precious possessions; it keeps us close to humanity and allows us to understand mortals better than any other Kindred. It can renew one's will to continue when everything seems cold. It is also our greatest weakness. Through love we go mad with grief when our enemies target our families. Through love we experience loss in a way no other Kindred can. And after all is said and done, we are already dead — love between Kindred can only end in tragedy.

THE KISS

Toreador are of two minds when it comes to feeding. Many believe that feeding upon or near one's mortal friends devalues them, and of course most also worry about what sort of impression it leaves. Consider the incredible difference between having a wife who knows, in the abstract, that you're Kindred, and having your wife see you

with your teeth in someone's neck. It tends to bring a fuzzy concept home with a hell of a punch and has ruined more than a few Toreador relationships.

Those Toreador who refuse to feed from their loved ones claim it would be treating them as cattle. What's the point of trying to remain close to humanity by interacting with them if you're just going to treat the ones nearest to you as prey?

Others claim the pleasure of the Kiss is simply another way to express one's love to a caring spouse. Still others claim frustration at the inability to make use of a ready source of blood in a time when safe blood supplies can be scarce. The majority of Toreador, of course, see this for the rationalization it is. Some say that feeding from one's family is the first sign that a Toreador has lost touch with humanity. Most of those who indulge in this sort of behavior do so behind closed doors.

THE MASQUERADE

The Masquerade is a very tricky thing for Toreador. Many members of the Camarilla see us as the keepers of the Masquerade, and not without reason. We spend so much time with mortals that breaches of the Masquerade tend to come to our attention very quickly, and we can very easily pass undetected among the kine. Through us, problems come to the attention of other members of the Camarilla, when we believe this to be appropriate. Then we make use of our mortal contacts to take care of the situation. After dealing with such breaches, we come out heroes to some, whistleblowers to others. Most important of all, we come out looking squeaky-clean.

You see, the Masquerade is a thin, thin line, and we walk it right down the middle. In order to enforce the Masquerade and remain close to humanity, we must move among the kine. More Toreador have revealed their secret to mortals than probably any other clan in the Camarilla — and yet we suffer no blame. It is precisely the fact that we interact so well with humanity that makes us able to identify and clean up the messes of the other clans. Anyone creating an obvious threat to the Masquerade will likely find himself the object of scorn — our society has no place for those who would have us destroyed in the name of their own laziness, stupidity or greed.

Regardless, it remains a thin line. We have simply learned to repair cracks in the Masquerade's façade ourselves, before anyone else finds out. We may also have a better sense of which mortals can be trusted not to spill our secrets. And because we remain in touch with our humanity, most of our violations of the Masquerade are not as flagrant as those of the other clans.

Although we are not generally capable of clanwide, or even citywide, movement — the Toreador are too selfish

and cliquish to be team players — we do our best to maintain the Masquerade. I mean our Masquerade, not the Camarilla's. If we break the Camarilla's Masquerade we lose a great deal of face among our Toreador peers, but those peers never repeat the stories to the others of Caine's get. Well, almost never. A few Toreador have been known to carefully let such secrets fall into the hands of the Camarilla in order to ruin a rival. Luckily this doesn't happen very often. Still, the clan claims no few spin doctors, socialites, media types and more traditional artists who can sway the popular opinion from, "Vampires!" to "What a weirdo! He really thought he was a vampire!"

BOWING TO PRESSURES

I'm sure I don't need to tell you that not all Toreador are sweetness and light. I've presented the best of us so far — wink, wink, smirk, smirk — but undoubtedly you noticed the little things here and there. We indulge our humanity, our human emotions. But human emotions are terrible as often as they are wonderful. Humans love, but they also hate. They commit great acts of heroism and horrible acts of violence. They achieve great things, but they also waste their lives in the pursuit of hedonistic pleasures.

I suppose we aren't the trendsetters we like to think we are after all. As go the mortals, so go we.

BURNOUT AND HEDONISM

It's difficult to keep up with kine. The vampiric condition isn't suited to it. It takes so much effort to think on their time scale and to feel (or emulate) their emotions. Most of us go through periods of feeling burned out. More than other Kindred, Toreador weather periods when we become immersed in the pleasures that mortality has to offer — food, parties, drugs, flesh, and our own food, drink, and drug all in one: vitae. It can be difficult, when faced with such pleasures, to remember that staying in touch with humanity means staying in touch with its pains as well as its pleasures.

When Toreador burn out, most of them have the sense to withdraw from mortal society. When you can't easily think in terms of "days" any more, it becomes difficult to perceive the minutiae of mortal existence. Many tired Kindred become involved instead in the machinations and petty Jyhads of our kind. In some ways it's good that these are the Toreador who most often represent us among the other Kindred. It keeps the others from seeing just how close we are to the mortals. However, when these Toreador even bother to claim to be keeping the "best interests of the clan" in mind, those interests are rarely anyone else's. These Toreador are perhaps the most likely to Embrace people purely for their usefulness in

whatever agenda that particular Toreador currently pursues. This is most prevalent among elders, such as primogen who have no common ground with the rest of the clan and isolate themselves with their own incestuous broods, or degenerate Kindred who have grown jaded and cold.

Toreador are prone to succumbing to ennui. I believe it to be inevitable. After all, we're immortal beings who operate on the time scale of a world that rejects us. We feel the passing of the decades and centuries far more acutely than other Kindred. Remember all the times you felt bored as a human. Now imagine what that would feel like if you had not just an afternoon to kill, but a year.

Listless Toreador do almost anything to occupy themselves — the more fun the better. These are the Toreador who hold wild parties overflowing with drugs, sex, and kine. These are the Toreador who are most likely to ghoul their friends, feed from their families, and Embrace people purely for their good looks or skill in bed.

Particularly bored Toreador have been known to create blood cults. They gather a flock with themselves as preacher, god, angel, spirit or other such figure of religious authority and feed their blood to their followers; sometimes they even Embrace a few. They often abuse their

flocks, physically or emotionally. They feed from them, screw them, make them take drugs so the Toreador can get high, and sometimes even torture them. It takes a Toreador with a great deal of ego to be willing to do such a thing, but then there's no shortage of ego among the Toreador. Cults became a particular problem in the late 1980s; a few Toreador had to be quietly removed from the public eye before the private investigators, police, and concerned parents found out too much for their own good. I'm given to understand that the phenomenon is nothing new — surely blood cults have existed since the Kindred have walked the earth — but the new resurgence worries many of the race of Caine.

It usually takes decades, at least, before a Toreador feels the weight of her years. Young Toreador do exist, however, who find their unives so exciting that they become immersed in pleasure and refuse to face the pain. It can be difficult to tell the difference between these Toreador and the older, more jaded hedonists. I have also known some Toreador who find unlife so deplorable that they remove themselves from humanity as much as possible. There's little practical difference between these neonates and those older Toreador who have withdrawn utterly.



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THE SINS OF HUMANITY

Because we spend so much time with mortals, we sometimes succumb to their temptations. We do drugs vicariously. We sleep around — not that we enjoy it, but sometimes it's difficult to avoid "going through the motions." We fall prey to jealousy, rage and self-pity.

A number of Toreador involve themselves in the black market — originally as a means to obtain art or illicit thrill, I'm sure, but once you're involved it's hard to stop. To some it's a game to pass the time and to others it's just a means of making money. Who can resist the opportunity to get their hands on artwork that would otherwise end up in the hands of a private collector, never to be seen again? Some Toreador operate on the other side of the deal, acting as thieves, fixers, pimps and procurers. It takes all kinds to make the Toreador go 'round.

Some Toreador become involved in the skin trade. The pleasures of the flesh have a certain attraction to us, even if we cannot truly enjoy them. Some use sex as a way to feel close to people. Others have sex because it makes them feel alive in a way that few other things can — it helps them to pretend, for just a little while. A few even believe they're actually enjoying it in the way a mortal does. I believe these poor bastards are deluding themselves, that they just don't want to face the fact that they aren't mortal anymore.

Every now and then an infamous Toreador becomes involved with prostitution, pornography, slavery — even snuff films and other depravity. Some do it because they enjoy those pleasures of the flesh. Others do it because they like having power over other people. Still others enjoy titillating the mortals around them, spurring them on to greater grades of sin.

Some dare call it art.

Although sex is one of the most popular sins, humanity has others. Some Toreador take an interest in gambling. Others lust after political power. One or two operate high-priced fighting circuits — I once knew a lady who loved to get off on the expressions of mixed revulsion and ecstasy on the faces of her guests at these events. Other Toreador murder over anger and envy just as mortals do. Although it certainly doesn't fit our image, Toreador serial killers have existed. One claimed he did it because it "felt like what 'alive' was." Another alleged she did it because you could never truly understand mortals unless you killed as they killed rather than as a vampire for inhuman reasons.

Certainly, the clan has its ugly side.

RIVALRIES

Many Toreador carry on rivalries with other members of the Damned. To some it's a way of passing time, of staving off the boredom: a game. To others it can be a way

of gaining prestige, assuming they actually best their rivals. Other Toreador indulge in these competitions because of some slight, real or imagined, that they received. There are as many reasons to carry on a rivalry as there are for any two Kindred to argue. If this sounds familiar, that's because it is — the Jyhad in a nutshell.

That all sounds very cut and dried, of course. And sometimes that's true. But sometimes rivals carry it much farther than that. Toreador embarrass their rivals, harru them, ruin their reputations and sometimes even arrange their Final Deaths. To carry a rivalry so far, of course, is the height of cruelty — but such is all that remains of some Toreador.


The clan, in its infinite wisdom and patience, had devised myriad ways to hurt a rival: Sabotage her art showing. Use your connections to make sure that someone with a great deal of prestige publicly shames her or her protégé. Spawn a rumor that will result in her humiliating herself or placing herself in a dangerous (possibly deadly) situation. Cause the local Camarilla to believe that she has done something to endanger it, such as break the Masquerade or undermine a prince. Incite Lupines or Sabbat to overrun her haven (or arrange a fire when she's absent that destroys precious belongings). Drain her favored ghoul or have her mortal husband killed by muggers or, even worse, Embraced by the Malkavians or Sabbat. The tactics are as dizzyingly diverse as the participants in the Jyhad itself.

REVENGE AS AN ART FORM

Some Toreador turn revenge into an art form (those with morals try to call it justice). They don't just plan the most efficient way to take revenge upon someone, or the most elaborate, or the most appropriate. They turn the objects of their "affection" into special projects of their own, on which they spend just as much time and effort as upon any masterpiece. This is particularly likely to happen among those Toreador who have burned out, who have lost sight of the beauty in life, and have a greater sense of the expanses of time waiting at their fingertips.

In some ways these Toreador are useful to us. They keep us from stepping too far out of line. After all, the last thing you want is to become the object of the affections of a vicious Toreador with too much time on his hands. For this reason (among others), we often step lightly around our elders.

One or two Toreador have been known, for a time, to call themselves "revenge artists" and spend their time planning and enacting the most beautiful "justices." Their targets might be Kindred or kine who have wronged them, who have wronged someone else and caught their attention or simply caught them in a bad mood. Their plans



often involve not just the object of their twisted affections, but also that person's friends, allies, family, and lovers. They make revenge last. When they take on a Kindred, that revenge can last for years, decades or even centuries.

UNWANTED PRESERVATION

As I said some time ago, Toreador often make it their personal crusade to preserve art. Sometimes art doesn't want to be preserved, however. Not all artists want to live forever. Not all artists want to give up their masterpieces so that someone else can enjoy them. Some say this is shortsighted. Certainly a number of Toreador believe that the preservation of their idea of art takes precedence over anyone else's wishes. After all, the mortals can't see the big picture, right? They don't know how important their work is.

Trying to preserve a piece of artwork that someone doesn't want preserved can range from mildly difficult to a disaster. Usually the theft of a painting, in the long run, doesn't have terrible consequences. But despite what the other Kindred believe, paintings are in the minority of what we consider to be art. Photographs are similar to paintings in their vulnerability to theft. Food is more difficult — you can't just layer shellac on top of a cake and put it in a gallery for a hundred years (and shellac doesn't taste very good).

It is likewise difficult to hijack a handful of dancers and force them to perform over and over for you for years, although some Toreador have done such things. You might use a video or digital camera to capture a dance (although not the taste of a culinary masterpiece), but many Toreador still refuse to use such things, and almost everyone agrees that a reproduction is never quite as good as the original. Architecture is usually a little easier. It's difficult to protect against lightning and floods, but you can make use of historical societies to keep old buildings from being destroyed. This can be difficult if the owner wants it flattened, but it isn't impossible.

What is more difficult is to preserve an *artist* who doesn't want to be preserved. Embracing someone against his will is a tricky thing. Certainly it's been done before, but it presents all sorts of dangers. A Toreador who doesn't want to be a Toreador isn't guaranteed to be discrete. We can't keep our neonate in the dark about our practices forever, and he might decide to spill the knowledge of our Masquerade violations to some prince. He might even be believed, if that prince is looking for an excuse to thin our ranks. If we're lucky, the neonate just sits out in the sun and we're out one artist who might have produced good work for decades more if left alone. If we're not lucky, he runs to the mortal authorities and tries to prove to them what he is. Of all the clans, we're the best equipped to clean up after this sort of thing, but if such a neonate were to fall into the hands of the Inquisition — and I'm not convinced it

hasn't happened before — we could all be in trouble. The whole prospect makes the entirety of earning the right to Embrace a gamble, at best. Unlife makes no promises.

Despite the dangers, a number of Toreador do these sorts of things. After all, it is our duty to cultivate what is best in man. Most Toreador are careful enough that it doesn't become a problem. Some are not.

Recently a belief has sprung up among some Toreador neonates (especially among a group known as the Electron Artists) that art must be ephemeral. Nothing that is truly art can withstand the passage of the centuries. They prize the least lasting of art forms the most — food, performance art, dance, and other more inventive creations. One recent neonate used short-lived chemical reactions to create the most stunning light show that lasted only two minutes and fourteen seconds — almost the entire room of viewers sat entranced for the an hour and a half after that show and many stayed longer. Another put on a brief piece of performance art that consisted of dipping roses in liquid nitrogen. This produced the most incredibly lovely, absolutely perfect frost-covered roses, which he promptly shattered against a wall. Most of these neonates eschew traditional arts. A number of them have become involved in the electronic world, especially the World Wide Web, where expressions of all kinds can be put on display and rearranged night after night.

RELATIVITY AND ART

The whole "our mission" thing makes us sound so wonderfully united, doesn't it? Unfortunately art is the most subjective thing on the face of the earth. What I believe to be art you might throw on your compost heap. This results in all sorts of arguments and grief.

Imagine that you've just Embraced the most marvelous chef you've ever met. Her puff pastry melts in your mouth. The icing on her cakes looks like lilies. She can make a butterscotch tart that leaves you rapt for hours from the smell alone, and a Darjeeling granita that has won awards on three continents. You're incredibly proud of your new childe, and you bring her to the latest party only to be told that she isn't welcome. "She isn't a *real* artist," you're told. "Come back when you've found yourself a sculptor or an architect."

Toreador destroy each other's students over the issue of whether the students are artists. We ruin what artists believe to be their best works in a fit of pique because the work just offended us *at the moment*. We close down museums because they show works we don't like. We blackball galleries for the same reason. Toreador commit some of their worst crimes in the name of preserving what is art.

After all, everything is relative.



CLAN HIERARCHY

The Toreador have no stable clan hierarchy. One reason for this is that prestige within the clan is easily won and lost within a short span of time — it's hard to maintain a clearly defined hierarchy when the ranks change constantly. One night's artiste is tomorrow night's poscur. And many Toreador have more on their minds than Kindred politics — they'd rather be out among the mortals. Certainly I know I'd rather be singing than keeping a tally of who owes whom a boon and who's disgraced herself by not honoring said boon. Third, the Toreador operate on a mortal time scale, and it's harder to maintain an international conspiracy organization when your clanmates flit about like gadflies. It's also hard to keep things organized when they travel all over the world, and occasionally wind up in hiding, in torpor or subject to the Final Death.

We have plenty of organization — if you can call constantly changing cliques and social networks organization — it just isn't put to much use. After all, very few Toreador want to attend to business at a party or gallery showing.

GUILDS, CARNIVALS, AND AFFAIRS OF THE CLAN

The Toreador hold frequent, informal gatherings called "affairs of the clan." No one is forced to attend but almost everyone does — how are you supposed to make others jealous if you don't strut your stuff? These affairs are usually parties, "dinners" (with sustenance provided) or art showings, although some Toreador try to hold actual meetings instead. A great deal of energy is lost on petty squabbles when we try to conduct business, so very little of import to the clan is achieved at these gatherings. Plenty of Toreador, however, use affairs to network and advance their own personal agendas.

Some local groupings of Toreador are called guilds — based upon some Toreador's acceptance of a specific code of etiquette — and traditionally they hold formal meetings called balls once a month on the night of the full moon. In actuality, balls are usually held near the full moon; attending Toreador often like to play power games with the monthly date, each trying to prove that he is more important by having the ball put off to accommodate his personal schedule or to support her interpretation of the

specific code the guilds adopted. Outsiders to a guild may only attend balls by prior invitation. Also, guilds seem to pop up and disappear at random — in a given city, it's fashionable to belong to the guild one year, and the next year guilds are embarrassingly passe.

Prominent Toreador and elders of the clan like to throw a Grand Ball on Halloween — one is held on each continent — and it is put on collectively by several guilds (or broods, or coteries, or whatever's "in" this year). The site changes every year and many Toreador fight over who is to put it on. Recently some of the younger members of the clan have boycotted the Grand Ball in an attempt to have it moved to something other than Halloween. They complain that having the Grand Ball on Halloween is silly and makes the clan look like a bunch of pretentious stereotypes to outsiders. Personally, I think that's the point. Remember — always make them underestimate you. And, to be honest, it never hurts to find beauty in the less-pleasant aspects of the world, but I must confess that I have a Romantic affectation right now.

Guilds are difficult to explain to outsiders. Technically guilds are regional groupings, usually by city or county. In other words, every member of the Chicago Toreador theoretically belongs to the guild in Chicago. However, some Toreador attempt to make the guilds into, well, Guilds. So occasionally you find a guild that calls itself "the Chicago Painters' Guild" or the "Annabelle Triabell Society" or some such. Inevitably this only causes


more factionalism — what about the computer-graphics designers and the chefs and the musicians and the people on the outs with Annabelle Triabell? Either the guild makes the others feel so unwelcome that they leave, and thus it truly becomes an exclusive party, or the Toreador of the city become divided (and sometimes those who feel outcast may attempt to start up a second guild). Or it becomes a "Painters' and Sculptor's Guild" if those two types of artist predominate, or it will be called a "Painters' Guild" yet admit all sorts of other Toreador.

Toreador tend to be individualistic enough that we don't expect much of our guilds. After all, if we expected our guilds to leap up to defend us at every turn, then we'd have to be willing to leap up and defend all the other Toreador in the city and — quite frankly — the hell with that. To be sure, we have better things to do with our time. Most guilds are social clubs. A guild here or there might become involved in politics or Kindred activities, but that reflects the interests of the Toreador who populate those guilds, not the guilds as a whole.

Once every 23 years the Toreador gather for Carnivale, a weeklong global festival. Toreador artists save their best masterpieces to display at Carnivale. At the end of the celebration the mortal whom we acclaim as the best of her generation is Embraced. Or that's what's supposed to happen. Honestly no two Toreador can agree on the "best," so they inevitably choose a compromise candidate. Lately there's been a suggestion by some neonates that categories should be established. They want one mortal



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to be Embraced for his skill with the visual arts, another for the written arts, and so on. In the interests of reducing even a little of the squabbling, the possibility is being entertained.

Rumor has it that all Toreador attend Carnivale. At least, that's what the neonates are told when they first hear of the spectacular, costumed festival. Do you really think we'd line up all of our clan in one city for an entire week, like ducks flying in formation over a hunter's blind? Theoretically, each guild chooses one representative to go. What really happens is that each guild might well choose one representative, and then anyone else who feels left out shows up on their own. It isn't as though we check tickets at the gate, after all. A number of elders refuse to go on grounds of paranoia — that is, danger.

Carnivale usually corresponds to some mortal event taking place in the city in which the Toreador decide to host their gala. This adds to the exhilaration of the event — the city seems truly to never sleep, and the atmosphere of celebration pervades. In truth, Carnivale is nothing so much as a collection of smaller parties or performances thrown against the backdrop of the host city's festivities. Think of Mardi Gras or the Chinese New Year with special, VIP Kindred-only soirees taking place after sunset.

SECTS, CLIQUES, AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

The Toreador hardly restrict themselves to socializing by geographic area. If we did, we'd lose all the wonderful connections we make when we travel. Toreador cultivate contacts in all sorts of places. Most are Kindred or mortals with whom one corresponds once or twice a year, just enough to keep in touch and pretend to compliment each other's work while skillfully working in the barbs.

All right, not everyone's acquaintances are like that.

Toreador seek to find allies wherever they go, in whatever endeavor they may be pursuing that month. So you might know two people you met in Europe with whom you've been plotting to popularize a certain philosophical school. At the same time, you're working with a Toreador in the U.S. Midwest who wants you to visit his salon when you're in town. In addition, you've been financing a little cohort who's been carrying out guerrilla actions against the Sabbath in New England. Many Toreador have their hands in a number of little groups here and there.

Many clans have their secret (or not-so-secret) little factions, carrying out all sorts of devious business. You wouldn't think the Toreador would have such things, would you? That we're too busy having parties to get involved in such things? That we wouldn't want to risk breaking a nail or getting our hands dirty? You'd be wrong.

We have our little secret societies just like any other clan. We have our cliques. Some of them operate rather


differently than those of other Kindred, however, so they may not be as noticeable. For instance, we're much more likely than the other clans to simply hire or ghoul mortals and employ them to attend to our goals rather than doing the dirty work ourselves. That way the other clans just see us sitting pretty at parties and don't realize that we're working as many angles as they are. We also finance other clans' objectives. We let some young Ventrue pup think he's bamboozled us into financing his political power play, when we know very well that his sire is embezzling his funds and using them to back the candidate we want elected. The Ventrue do all the work, and we get the benefits — not to mention two Ventrue in debt to us, which we wouldn't have had if we'd simply financed our candidate. How else do you think someone like George W. Bush or Al Gore could rise to power? Competency? Please.

Mind you, such machinations are dangerous work, and there are plenty of Toreador who get themselves very, very hurt when they try them. Not all Toreador are cut out for Kindred politics. To these types, I suggest you stick with art, fashion and other, less dangerous arenas.

Not all Toreador have the best interests of the Kindred at heart, either. I know *that's* hard to believe. There's been a rumor going around for the past decade or so that a hidden cabal of resentful Toreador has been behind the cuts in art funding we've seen recently. Some few believe the group to be outside the clan, but popular rumor has it that they're Toreador who have some grievance with the "artistic" bent upheld by the clan's scions. Some believe they're behind efforts to restrict free speech on the Internet as well.

Needless to say, some Toreador retaliated — do you remember all the blue ribbons that went up on Web pages, and the accompanying notes about support of free speech? That was supported strongly by a rather enterprising group of neonates who call themselves the Electron Artists. They support all kinds of artistic expression on the Web and the Internet. They host pages of poetry, writing, art and comics. They write loquacious diatribes about free speech and forward them by e-mail to anyone who might be listening. They organize electronic petitions and artists' collectives whose members communicate only online. Their programmers have been working on tools to assist long-distance collaboration. Rumor has it they run a number of pornography and fetish sites, just because they believe *all* expression has a right to be protected. Besides, it produces income.

Other groups are out there as well. One of them, the Watchers, has been trying to stir up action against the Tremere. They claim the Tremere are trying to outbid the Ventrue for power, and that if the Tremere take over leadership of the Camarilla, the Toreador will be in



trouble. Personally, I can't imagine the Tremere ever dominating the Camarilla, and most Toreador agree with me. So what's the point of antagonizing an entire clan for no reason? We do our best to dissuade these Toreador when we can and clean up after them when we can't. I've passed through a few cities where we're no longer welcome because of what this group did — something may need to be done about them.

Secret societies among the Toreador come and go like fashions. Every now and then someone takes up a crusade. Either she finds a few people who agree with her and go about doing something, or she realizes no one cares and she gives up or strikes out on her own. If she's smart, she keeps quiet about what she's doing so she doesn't aggravate others, Toreador or otherwise.

ANARCHS

Publicly, any Toreador who goes anarch is likely to suffer the derision of the entire clan. We say that to make the Ventrue happy. Off the record, any anarch with enough passion to make us sit up and beg can pretty much write her own ticket. Of course, it depends on whom she goes to. As in any group, there are those who follow the party line and those who don't. Anyway, enough about the anarchists. Ugh.

PRESTIGE

Prestige is a complex thing among Toreador. Many intangibles can increase or decrease your prestige. How much an event affects your prestige depends much less on what you did and much more on whom you pissed off when you did it, what sorts of connections he has, and how loudly he's been passing on the word.

Disrupting someone's planned social event is likely to get you in trouble. Most guests at a party feel at least a minimal obligation to pay lip service to their host's anger, so agitating the host is the quick way to encourage everyone to say bad things about you. This means you don't want to insult the host of a party. You shouldn't ever *assault* someone at a party, for the love of God, particularly if he's a special guest of the host. For this reason, some Toreador try to avoid drinking drug- or alcohol-tainted blood at fetes — in order to avoid embarrassing yourself, you must remain in control. Allowing yourself to be embarrassed wrecks your prestige, whether it's the result of something you did or something that was visited upon you. Ultimately, however, disrupting someone's party will only make you an outcast in your own town. You could easily move to another locale, and odds are no one there would know what had happened. Nor would they care. Unless, of course, your reputation precedes you....


Another way to lose face is to be responsible for the destruction of an icon of cultural significance, even indirectly. While it is considered a great honor to be asked to protect, say, a major work of art, many fear such an honor. After all, if the artwork is harmed while it is in your possession, then you are considered responsible. Likewise, allowing a great artist to come to harm results in a commensurate loss of prestige. If you Embrace an artist who chooses to destroy himself, that counts — it was obviously your poor judgement that resulted in his destruction. These are prestige losses that tend to be talked about much farther and wider than misbehavior at a party.

For the expressively inclined, substandard artwork or performances, as well as substandard discoveries (in terms of other cultural contributions), also result in a loss of prestige. The danger here is that, as I've already told you, "culture" is a relative thing. So what really matters is whether someone who is particularly good at caustic critique trains his sights on you, and whether you or your supporters can out-talk him. The behavior of your protégés and childer affects your reputation as well as theirs, as does the prestige of your sire or any mentor you may have. In fact, their prestige in general affects yours — if your sire is a social outcast in Paris, then so are you. Guilt by association and all that.

It's easy to lose respect and not so easy to gain it. You can certainly try, however. If you have the finances, you might host a party or organize a ball or other "affair of the clan." It takes care, money, and a willingness to try again if someone decides you'd make a lovely target — after all, it's much harder to get a party right than it is to screw someone else's party up. Again, unless this party of yours is particularly memorable, it isn't likely to increase your prestige beyond the local guild's appreciation for a night or two. This also isn't a good way to gain prestige if you don't have any to begin with — you have to *have* it to make people want to come to your parties.

Patronage of prominent mortals is another way to gain prestige, as is patronage of galleries, schools and museums. The discovery of particularly good works of art, lost masterpieces or burgeoning new popular media also helps. An Embrace that's seen as a particularly wise one can establish your credibility very quickly. Impressive performances also earn prestige in the right company.

Another, somewhat trickier source of prestige is boons and favors. If you're in a position to give other Toreador something they need, then they may offer their support and good word in return. Honestly, this is perhaps the most effective way, although the most dangerous, to gain prestige. After all, everyone has an agenda. This might be the



one reliable way to have someone put that agenda aside and tell people that you (or your work, or your salons) are wonderful.

TOREADOR AND OTHER KINDRED

Toreador relations with other Kindred are somewhat complex, as we are much more comfortable with mortals in general. And, of course, those Toreador who represent us to the Kindred are not necessarily those who best represent the clan....

THE CAMARILLA

The Toreador support the Camarilla wholeheartedly. The Camarilla is what keeps the clans in line and vice versa. The Camarilla is, in short, what protects the mortals from the vampires — even if that is not the intention of every member, even if it is only a side effect. Without the Camarilla we could not simply walk among the mortals, stalk among them, and learn from them so easily.

This is why the departure of the Gangrel has sent us into a panic. For one of the seven clans to leave is not a small matter! Some Toreador worry that nothing less than the dissolution of the Camarilla as a whole is around the corner. A few are even trying to do something about it. Certainly most Toreador who are involved with Kindred society and politics are doing their best to calm fears, reinforce relationships between Camarilla members of differing clans and otherwise hold things together. Most of this is done Kindred by Kindred, using individual contacts and acquaintances.

It's probably one of the few things that most of the clan has ever been able to agree on. Still, you won't see much of an organized movement; it's just that many Toreador have had similar reactions to what's going on.

ELYSIUM

The Toreador strongly support the concept of Elysium. After all, many of us spend less time among Kindred than kine, so we are at somewhat of a disadvantage when the clans meet. Because of this, it's good to have a safe way in which we can interact with the others that puts us on higher ground. Besides, we like to make most of our points in ways that don't involve vulgar fisticuffs or the use of arcane abilities. We're masters of the caustic rumor, the phrase that was carelessly dropped within the hearing of the wrong Nosferatu, the innocent comment. The other clans may think us stupid or loose-lipped, but this only helps to keep them from suspecting us when we do such things. They walk away laughing about the foolish Toreador with the empty head and the big mouth, and we walk away smiling innocently as though we haven't noticed a thing.

When we must deal with other Kindred, Elysium is where we do our best work. It is the perfect location — it helps us to project the aristocratic, influential and somewhat flighty image that serves us so well while allowing us access to those ears we need without worry of being clawed open.

You might think the Toreador act as keepers of Elysium. After all, Elysium demands grace and culture, and that's right up our alley. As it happens, we take on this task only infrequently. A number of reasons contribute to this. Rumor among the Camarilla has it that it's because we become entranced by our surroundings and thus fail to do a good job. Nonsense. If that were the case, how are we involved with so many other galleries and museums and such around the world? If it were the case, we'd never get *anything* done.

As with most things, we have no universal rules about Elysium and no formal movements. But events simply conspire such that most of us choose not to be keepers of Elysium. For example, many of us see such a job as being for more physical Kindred. Many Toreador are great proponents of delegation. In some cases, Toreador servants keep Elysium (oh, to be sure, the Kindred believe it's the Toreador doing all the work).

For another, we like the rumor about us not being able to function in the presence of beauty. The other clans know as well as we do that we spend most of our time around art. Why not let them think that we're effete, especially in Elysium, where we watch, listen and subtly ravage?

We also don't want to be blamed should anything go wrong. Nothing's worse for the reputation than having a vampire hunter or cagey journalist found in the hotel service halls when you're supposed to be in charge. Besides, security is most of what's needed by the keeper of Elysium, not cultural deftness — and since when are we security forces? Let the Gangrel — er, the Brujah handle that. Keepers are little more than glorified sheriffs, in any event.

CAMARILLA POSITIONS

Toreador are varied and flexible, so you may find us in almost any position within the Camarilla. Madame Guil is the current Toreador Justicar; she has held this post for some time and wields her power well. She is just as prone to using her power to fulfill her private agendas as any other justicar, but she has also been known to destroy princes in her efforts to maintain the Masquerade and maintain the other Traditions. Unfortunately her ongoing rivalry with the Tremere Justicar, Anastasi di Zagreb, has made for some painful clashes between the two clans.

Toreador archons can be incredibly effective, mostly because of the stereotypes the other clans hold of ineffective and bitchy Toreador. A Toreador archon may pose as a daft gossip with an empty head if he's trying not to be noticed, or as an older and less "mortal" manipulator if he just needs to get the job done. Rumor has it Madame Guill employs a few Ventrue archons, as well as others from more disparate clans.


Toreador only occasionally become princes, but it does happen. Many Toreador prefer either to delegate or to bend the prince's ear rather than paint bull's-eyes over their hearts. Some Toreador have difficulty holding power because of the same stereotype that may protect us in other situations. That image the other clans have of us may be useful, but in some cases it does interfere. The Toreador primogen, however, is often a position of appreciable power. Most Toreador understand the value of camaraderie and manipulation, and so the Toreador primogen rarely places himself at odds with the prince of a city. Unless of course that prince is determined to make trouble for the primogen or appears to be not long for this world.

In large cities, Toreador primogen only occasionally appoint whips. Given balls and "affairs of the clan," it can be difficult not to keep members of the clan apprised as to recent happenings. When a whip is appointed, it is usually for the purpose of guiding discussion at clan meetings — after all, some Toreador seem positively allergic to getting things done. The other purpose a whip might serve is to stand in for the primogen when the primogen is abroad — we do so love to travel.

Many princes prefer to appoint Toreador as seneschals. After all, most princes want a seneschal who knows all the latest rumors, who knows what's going on everywhere, and who doesn't want to replace him — that way the seneschal has reason to protect the prince and not to betray him. Sounds a lot like us, or at least our public image, doesn't it? If I were a prince, I'd certainly want a seneschal who could tell me who'd been seen with whom but was too busy scheming against his sire to betray me. Besides, many of the responsibilities of the seneschal that other Kindred deplore — being a point of contact for other Kindred, acting as a clearinghouse of information and performing other secretarial duties — we find very useful. More than one ambitious Toreador has even used this reputation to do exactly what the prince hoped to avoid by choosing a Toreador — betraying the prince and taking his place.

The Toreador are accomplished gossips. If this makes us "harpies" (such an ugly word, isn't it?) then so be it. Certainly we have our influence on the local social scene and on the passage of news. We rarely "appoint" ourselves to such a bizarre position; others just call us harpies once





they notice our influence. I think they started doing it because they thought insults would stop us; instead we ignored them, and somehow the insult evolved into something akin to an office. Sometimes there's just no understanding Kindred society. Make the best of it.

Believe it or not, there exist Toreador sheriffs. We may not be chosen for our strength or prowess with weapons, but there are plenty of us who have strength and know what to do with a gun. Besides, social skills are far more useful to sheriffs than you might think. Sufficient contacts and the ability to call upon favors can be much more useful than physical strength when attempting to haul someone before the prince. And the ability to choose good deputies and to understand strategy (one or two strategists have even been Embraced on the theory that military strategy can be an art) are just as valuable in wartime as good aim. Sheriffs are supposed to watch for breaches in the Masquerade as well, and that's something we're very good at. Besides, nine-tenths of investigation is talking to people.

Very few Toreador hold the position of scourge. Who wants to spend their nights hunting for poor neonates Embraced without permission when we could be doing something less odious (and more wholesome) instead? Murder is so rarely in style.

THE BENEFITS OF NOT BEING IN CHARGE

Again, the image we project (sometimes intentionally, sometimes not) is both a blessing and a curse. It can make it easy to conduct one's affairs without being noticed, which many Toreador prefer. Some of us, though, have ambition, and some of us desire power, and these Toreador are often frustrated by that image of ours. They are in the minority, however. Not to mention that the kind of Toreador who want power aren't necessarily the Kindred we want representing us.

Most of us prefer to influence events without being the guy on the chair with the big sign over his head that says, "Stake me!" Fewer enemies target the advisors than target the prince. Therefore, when the prince sadly disappears and someone else takes the reins, we stay where we are because we're smart enough to cultivate contacts with Kindred other than the prince. Our influence endures. The prince's does not.

THE SABBAT AND TOREADOR ANTIMBU

Most Toreador try to keep as much distance between themselves and the Sabbat as possible. The Sabbat attitude that mortals are cattle is about as opposite to the Toreador view as you can get and still be on the same continent.

Toreador are ill equipped to handle Sabbat tactics. Subtlety and grace may help against some Sabbat such as

the Lasombra, but it doesn't do a whit of good against roving gangs that frenzy at the first sight of the Other Team. Contacts may help us to find out when the Sabbat come to town (not that you need many contacts to go down to the police station and read the blotter that describes the "corpse with no blood"), but since the Sabbat see mortals as cattle, contacts don't help much beyond that. Especially since, as we care about mortals rather than just their vitae, we're rarely willing to use them as fodder while we escape through the back door. Unless, of course, there's no other choice.

Toreador *antimbu* are something of a mystery to us. The concept of a Toreador willing to view mortals the way the Sabbat does is difficult — all right, so some of our elders or those Toreador who've burned out might get this way from time to time. But en masse? Never. It's entirely contrary to who and what we are.

Someone once put forth the idea that Sabbat Toreador are the way they are because they have so lost their connection to humanity, and only that which is ugly, terrible or flawed entrances them. They see the horrific as lovely, the monstrous as beautiful and the dreadful as orgasmic. I try not to think about this theory too much — not because it doesn't make sense to me, but because it makes *too much* sense.


TOREADOR AND POWER

Toreador and power are lovers. They have a mad, passionate coupling, they quarrel, they break up, they get back together — you get the picture. Temporal "power" was always more for the Ventrue than for us, but certainly some Toreador want it and are very good at attaining it. The clan as a whole exhibits no movement toward consolidating such vague and dubious "power." It's more a side effect of what we are. Although not all Toreador seek influence over political aspects of the society of the Damned — not even a majority of us — those who seek it out are often very skilled at acquiring it.

POLITICS

I would say that most Toreador do not appreciate the niceties of politics. It's a small part of what mortals do, over all, although it certainly engenders some of the strongest emotions. Perhaps those emotions are why those Toreador who appreciate politics get so into it. Politics has its dirty hand in so many pots — education, religion, business, and yes, cultural development. From politics one can dip into so many other sectors.

One can quantify the reasons why so few Toreador explore this opportunity. We're social engineers, not campaign managers — that's what Ventrue are for. When a Toreador wants something done, he's more likely to



Blackmail a politician, buy off a school official or seduce a religious leader than rely on the big wide world of politics. Admittedly some Toreador see politics as its own art form, but those are mostly the Toreador who have become frustrated with larger trends of society or burned out from the inevitable pain of dealing with mortals.

As I've said before, we delegate. We call in favors. We employ agents — the willing and the oblivious — to push for policies we favor. The Cairite on the throne is usually too busy waving and fending off political attacks to make any social contribution. Some Toreador groom mortals for power and help them on their way up rather than simply bullying officials the way Ventrue do. Honestly, anyone who relies on the gifts of Caine to get him what he wants is only asking for trouble (besides, it has so little style). Toreador are more likely to involve themselves in arts councils and community-interest groups than more visible government positions.

COMMERCIALISM, RELIGION, EDUCATION, AND NONPROFITS (FOR FUN AND PROFIT)

While the Ventrue have a good hold on the corporate side of the mass media, we have our fingers on the actors, actresses and journalists. We may not be able to have shows funded or wiped out with a wave of a hand, but we can influence those actors who act as spokesmen for companies (a practice that happens more and more often in the modern nights). We also know journalists and columnists who can slant their stories to help our causes. Where the Ventrue own shares in publishing houses, we have some sway over the authors.

Religion is an interesting subject. Charismatic Toreador have been known to start cults of all kinds or worm their way into more traditional religions. This latter practice is a dangerous game to play. Mortals can be very passionate about their faith. This is both good and bad — they're more likely to follow us if we can pass ourselves off as their religious leaders or fellow parishioners, but they're also more likely to burn us out of our havens if they're tipped off to our deception. Cults are easier to dominate, but are more likely to catch the notice of concerned parents, the government or local police forces.


The commercial sector is, as the media, more the territory of the Ventrue. But while the Ventrue may have interest in the large corporations, we often slip in under their noses with the smaller ones. They don't see the small companies as a challenge to them, so they ignore us. Besides, if they keep the small companies around then their giants look less like monopolies (even when they are) and so they evade the Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission. Sometimes they even help us out on the sly, so long as we testify to their eminently fair business practices.

Start-ups are especially useful to us. We fund someone's venture, maybe help it become successful by calling in favors, infuse them with cash or put them in touch with clients, then arrange for it to be sold once it becomes big enough to be noticed. It's a wonderful way to turn a little profit and keep one's toe in the pool without pissing too many people off. It's also a marvelous way to make yet more business contacts. Most venture capital firms refuse to fund anything for less than 5 million these days, so we pick up a number of the small projects that fall through the cracks. Besides, many Toreador don't have the attention span to handle a large company. Most Toreador understand that cultivating a business contributes to society, and they enjoy watching the young entrepreneurs they fund.

Nonprofits are another, oft overlooked, arena where Toreador sometimes ply their trade. Many wealthy and famous people like to give their money away. Some few do it because it makes them feel good. Many more do it because it makes them look good. But for whatever reason, it sends them looking for the nonprofit organizations. All you need is a good sales speech and a seemingly worthy project, and you can walk off with millions and the home phone number of a concerned (and wealthy) celebrity. If you really care about people, you might even make sure that money does some good. If you don't, well, there are all sorts of ways to make sure that you get your cut. You can even use your nonprofit to fund some of those little business ventures by contracting work out to them. Sometimes charismatic Toreador join with business-savvy Ventrue to clean up with back-scratching schemes like this.

Education is a gold mine for Toreador. Where better than in the relaxed atmosphere of a college to locate budding artists, encourage those with talent and send the incompetents sniveling home to mother? So many students attribute their growth to the encouragement of one teacher or mentor. Some Toreador prefer to spend their time tapping previously unnoticed talent in older kine returning for a late degree. Some of these Toreador say they'd never deal with actual "college age" students, that those children don't have the kind of experience and discipline of the returning students. Other Toreador say the older students don't have the fire, energy or vision necessary to make a worthwhile contribution. The campuses are full of budding radicals, after all, many of whom can't be distinguished from each other...

Some few Toreador have become involved in education at an earlier level — high school or even elementary school. This is more troublesome, as schools at this level very rarely have evening programs. Thus, those Toreador who do this generally act through a mortal agent. Some



Toreador, however, offer special evening art classes at local high schools, organize children's community theater or fund reading programs in an attempt to find the good ones early, or just to raise the standard of living for the local populace. A tasteful community is a desirable community, after all.

Many students who major in literature, foreign languages, art, or other such "soft" disciplines in college end up waiting tables or flipping burgers. Those who cultivate some unrelated talents — such as programming — may end up with decent jobs, but they aren't doing what they were meant to do.

It's said that technology companies often prefer to hire non-computer science majors from large engineering schools. These students don't have pre-existing ideas of how it's all done and can be trained to do it the company's way more easily. Thus, history majors become sysadmins. Writers end up coding. It's wonderful from a financial point of view — technology companies pay more than those graduates would have made otherwise — but from our point of view it's a tragedy. A very creative, enterprising soul has been guided away from her talent. She thought she'd have spare time to work on her writing, but she now works 60-hour weeks to pay the bills. Thus, one of our goals at colleges is to convince students that they can make decent livings as something other than corporate employees. If we have the money, then maybe we act as patrons to the best of them. It's a constant battle, but it's well worth it for the ones we save.

Medicine is a sector you probably wouldn't expect to see us in. And honestly, it isn't one of our hot spots. But the field is hard to ignore in the modern nights. Sure, maybe practicing medicine can't make you as rich anymore in the age of HMOs. But there's always research. I know — Toreador lab rats aren't your idea of artists. You might find one or two, though, who were Embraced for practical reasons or managed to convince some starry-eyed Toreador lover that their experiments were of lasting value.

Biotech companies are doing quite well in today's volatile market. New drugs need research all the time, for cancer, AIDS and all sorts of little bugs. All right, so not all drugs are created on such grand scales. Some are engineered for much baser reasons. A Toreador who can concoct designer drugs, holistic herbal supplements and even poisons can write her own check. And Toreador who fund such companies, and perhaps influence their scientists in other ways, gain all sorts of benefits in addition to the direct return on their investment....

WEALTH

You must believe by now that every Toreador is wealthy. How else do we patronize protégés, fund research

companies, purchase stolen art through the black market, travel around the world, and keep our wardrobes stocked with Pal Zileri and Issey Miyake?

It's far from that simple. Yes, many of us are wealthy, and I'll explain that in a minute. But plenty of us aren't. Some Toreador care so much about their art that they don't bother cultivating wealth, despite its uses. Other Toreador simply have bad luck — a rival forced the company they were funding into bankruptcy, or a flood destroyed the precious piece of art they were going to sell or any number of other things. Nothing about the Toreador Embrace guarantees one an unlife of wealth and opulence. Many Toreador have money to support themselves but simply never made that jump to what we might call rich. Believe me, it's easy to not become rich. Everyone thinks wealth is just around the corner. Everyone thinks there's a secret to it — you have to know the right lottery numbers or develop the right business plan or find the right broker, kill him, and steal his little black book.

If it were that easy, all mortals would be wealthy. Things can always go wrong. Companies with great products go out of business just because they got in the way of a larger company's business plan. Not everyone is brilliant enough to put together the right scheme. Not everyone who's brilliant has the common sense to make that scheme work; not everyone who has common sense is lucky enough to have things come off as planned.

There are, however, certain things that most Toreador do that usually put us a cut or two above the average pay scale. Some of us sell our artwork for large sums of money. Some turn on the charm to obtain funding from all sorts of sources. Many shameless Toreador forever pay their bills out of the pockets of their lovers. Perhaps most importantly, we tend to choose ghouls well. Some Toreador care only about the physical attractiveness of their ghouls, but most ghouls at least one mortal who's good at making money or who at least has plenty of it. That way you don't need to be brilliant and lucky and have all that common sense — only your ghoul does. Unfortunately the blood bond often works to the detriment of a mortal's life, so every now and then you probably have to replace your moneybag with a new one. Most Toreador care enough about those in their service that they find something else for the poor worn-out ghoul to do rather than discarding her. Well, let me amend that to "some."

It's the first taste of money that's hard. For that, you have to marry well, kill well, ghoul well, be born well, or be very lucky. Once you have that first bit, the rest comes more easily as long as you don't do something stupid. Investments, buying companies and so forth are great ways to make money, but only once you have that first bulging bank account. Once you do, investments only work if you

or your ghoul know what you're doing, you're lucky, or you have a market-savvy acquaintance who owes you one.

If a Toreador wants to have the high unlife, wear the latest fashions, act as patron to the best new cultural icons and maintain his pretty little collection of creature comforts, then he needs to spend more of his time than he'd probably like looking over his finances. It's a sad fact of existence, but one that we adjust to if we want to be able to keep up with our neighbors.

DEALING WITH THE OTHERS

As spoken by Ferdinand Chu, ancilla

Tonight is the first night of the rest of your unlife. You're new, aren't you? Don't be offended. I know a lot of elders who would sacrifice the people nearest to them to regain what they've lost and what you still have. The way you fiddle with your hair, crack your knuckles, nip at the inside of your lip — those are the habits of life, and you do them naturally. You haven't forgotten what it's like to be alive yet, have you? I bet you still wake up in the dark sometimes and wonder why the sun hasn't risen.

Enjoy this time. Those little human touches drift away one by one, and you miss them the way you can only miss something you took for granted. I've seen elders who've lost even the simplest human gestures — blinking, licking their lips, showing emotion on their faces.

I've seen others, centuries old, who have every human gesture down pat. Every night, as soon as they awaken, they take a lengthy massage from specially trained blind servants. Decades of practice have taught the servants how to propel the blood through still veins, how to keep joints limber, how to keep their skin flushed and warm, how to break up the purple clots at the buttocks and the back of the scalp. The illusion is almost perfect. Almost.

I don't know which type frightens me more. Fear seems to be the one human trait that none of us ever forget.

You don't need any of that yet. You're still more human than dead, lucky thing. If you stay lucky, you can drag that out for decades, centuries, maybe even longer. It all comes down to your own inner struggles with the Beast. I can't help you with that so much — I've been around since 1841 myself, so my Beast and I are on quite intimate terms.

No, what I'm going to tell you about is the others. The other clans of the Kindred — yes, "other families of vampires" if you want to be vulgar — what? Yes, the word "vampire" is vulgar. Jesus. I'm also going to tell you about the *other* others. We're hardly alone in this weird world of

crap. There are beasties out there who make the nastiest Kindred you can imagine look like Winnie the fucking Pooh.

Someone asked me why I was doing this. Never you mind who asked me, just listen. Listen good. Yeah, there's a test at the end: It's called "tomorrow night."

TREMERE

The Tremere remind me of those uptight, homely girls in high school who thought that since they weren't getting any, no one else should have a good time either. Start with that kind of bitter, joyless priggishness. Marry it to a longing to control everyone who's actually figured out how to have fun or do something noteworthy. Add an unhealthy dose of truly scary magic tricks. Let it simmer for a couple decades... and you wind up with the typical Tremere. They're joyless, stagnant seekers after the power to turn everyone else into joyless, stagnant peons.

They're very good at gaining power and completely inept when it comes to using it. They're the kind of people who make an elaborate plan that looks great on paper. It disintegrates at the first touch of reality of course, but it should have worked. When this happens, the Tremere insist that the plan was perfect. It's reality that's wrong.

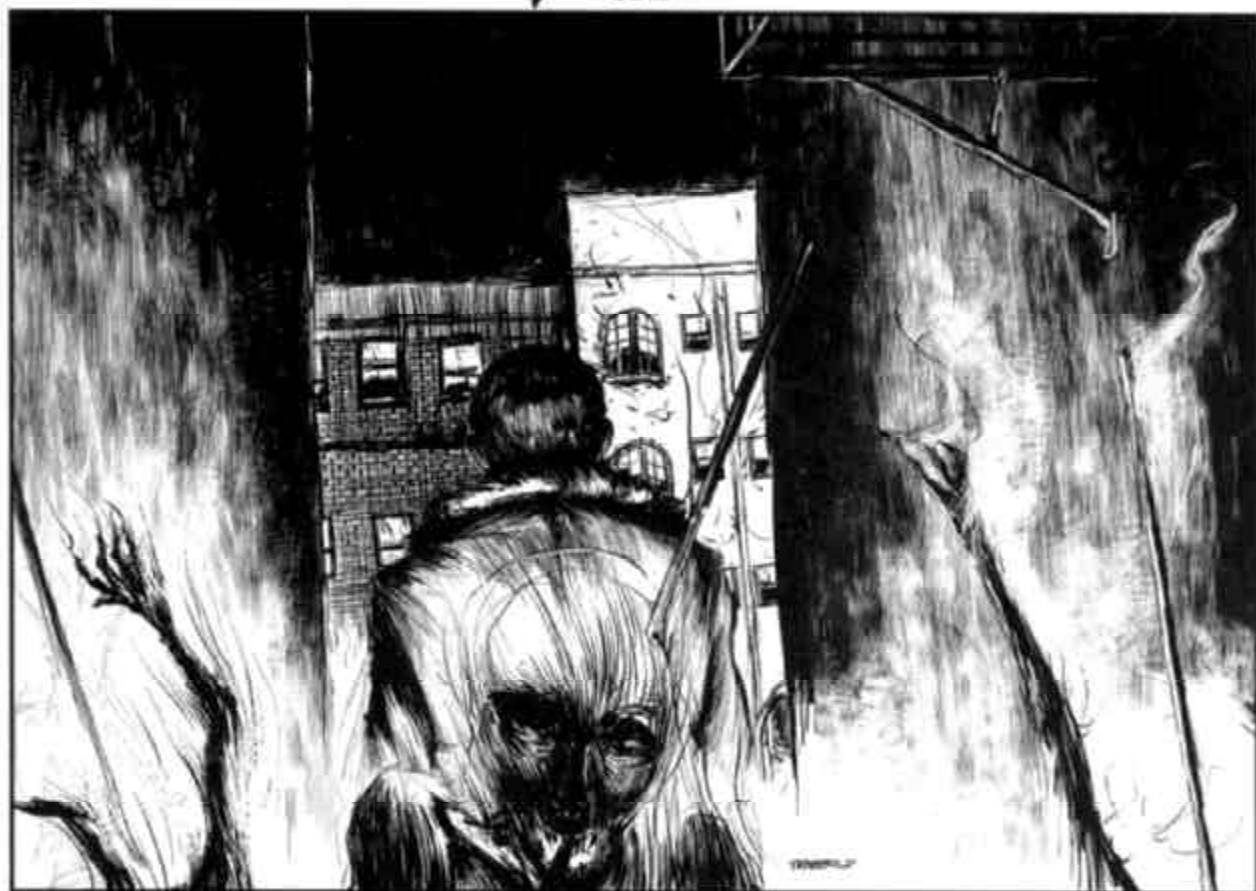
That's why they're so dangerous. They've got a peculiar combination of genius and stupidity that could let them seize the world in their blood-soaked fist, only to drop it down the steps and break it into shards. They're brilliant numbskulls.

Luckily for us, they've organized themselves in one of those swell lockstep hierarchies that look so good in the abstract. They think power is like a ladder you can only climb by knocking off the fellow above you, so they keep a tight rein on those beneath them through partial blood bonds. This makes a Tremere chantry like a string of dominoes. Knock over one, and all the ones behind it fall.

Many Tremere are suspicious and paranoid, but still naive when it comes to manipulation. Do them enough favors and they think you're a fool. Once you're in that category, they take everything you say at face value — after all, the poor foolish Toreador could never put one over on the fucking brilliant Tremere, right? Even if their underlings suspect you, most never dare contradict The Boss. Half of them are hoping The Boss gets removed so they can move another step up the Big Rock Candy Ladder.

But don't get cocky. Just because they can be easy to fool doesn't mean they like it, and once you've made a fool of them, they don't have much to lose by fucking you up.

One final thing: Don't put a blood bond on one. The elders will find out, they'll find you, they'll suck out your soul and no one will ever know.



MALKAVIANS

This is the most dangerous clan in the Camarilla, even worse than the Tremere. The Tremere are like a big fat python — nasty, but they die when you cut the head off. The Malkavians are like a swarm of piranha; getting rid of one only leaves a space for the next set of jaws.

Here's what's dangerous about the Malkavians: They've somehow convinced themselves that the alienation that comes from listening to the Beast is "true wisdom." Given the choice between their living and dead halves, they pick death every time. I wouldn't mind if it was a personal choice where they just went sun walking, but their lust for death goes deeper. It's not just their own death, or the death of mortals that they seek: They attack the very foundations of order, structure and peace. They undermine, erode and erase — not for their personal gain, but because they're servants of entropy, existing only to suck the rest of the world down into their madness. When everything that's worthwhile has been extinguished, when the pulse of life has been smashed and beauty can't be recognized and the Beast has finally triumphed, the Malkavians will turn out the lights.

That's how they see it, anyhow.

Lucky for us, the soldiers of disorder are not very orderly. This is their strength, since you never know where they're coming from. It's also their weakness, because not even they know where they're going.

The best way to deal with Malkavians is to ignore them most of the time: They've got nothing you want, and they don't perceive us as a threat. Since they're all batshit, you can sometimes trick or provoke them into violating the Masquerade, then either turn them over to the prince or blackmail them into doing your dirty work. Or some combination of the two options. Use your imagination. Be careful with this though: Blackmail is predicated on the survival instinct, and lots of Malkavians are too far gone to have one. Of course, that tends to be a problem that solves itself, as long as they don't drag you down with them.

What you really have to look out for is a Malkavian who has the ear of the prince. Their madness gives them insight to the madness of the world, and a prince may crave this information as he attempts to keep his city together. To their credit, some princes can actually use the devil's tools to tear down the devil's house, but too often those who try it find out the devil didn't want that house there anyhow.

ASSAMITES

First and foremost, if you've heard the stories about Mozart: Yes they're true, and we will never forgive the Assamites for it. He was the greatest genius of a brilliant age, but to them he was nothing but potent vitae in an inexperienced vessel. We're pretty sure his assassin was a bastard called Muhammad Muzabir — it means "the Sword Juggler." I'll show you a portrait from the Renaissance, if you want, and what we think is a more recent photo from an airport in Monaco. But if you see him, don't think about going after him yourself. I'll show you the pictures just so you can get away.

The Assamites are like a reversed mirror image of the Tremere. Where the Tremere are too smart for their own good, the Assamites are full of the kind of brute, efficient stupidity that built the Third Reich. They don't have a complicated master plan, other than "drink vampire blood," so it's very hard to tangle them up.

That said, there are some advantages to having a single-minded opponent. Primarily, they're easily led and they wear their hearts on their sleeves. Plus, they hate the Tremere, which is worth points in my book.

Don't even approach these guys if you're close to Caine: Do all your assassin shopping through a thin-blooded vassal. If an Assamite even sniffs elder vitae, they're prone to snap and go for the gusto. They're not known for deferring gratification that way. Of course, given your condition, you're likely to be someone else's thin-blooded vassal....

One way to play these guys is to hire them on the sly against elder Tremere. (When I say "on the sly" I don't just mean "hide it from the other Kindred." Make sure the Assamites don't know who's footing the bill either. That way, if they lose, the Tremere can't pull the information out of that small-caliber Assamite brain.) Give the Tremere as much warning as you feel like (ideally by way of the Nosferatu), then sit back and see which bastard gets fucked and which does the fucking. If you're feeling particularly brave, you can try to mop up the winner. I don't recommend it unless you're sure he's down before you start kicking.

There's another way you can take advantage of their simpleminded blood hunger, but it's dangerous. Still, I know someone in New York who did it, and now she's got a leashed Assamite to protect her from the Sabbat.

My friend was an honest-to-God master of disguise. She hired this Assamite to whack "Mildred von Santos," supposedly a Tremere over in Jersey. Part of the pay was a sip from her wrist. The assassin really should have known better, but he was addled by Presence, and he really wanted

a taste of elder vitae and besides, she was just some Degenerate, no one to worry about, right?

Only there was no "von Santos" — just my acquaintance in some really good stage makeup. I don't even think "von Santos" means anything. Anyway, since she was ready for the attack and was far faster than a Tremere has any right to be, she conveniently fought her way free in the middle of feeding. Now the Assamite is two-thirds bound and doesn't know it. A "lucky" ambush by the *real* Tremere left him weak enough that my friend's ghouls could hold him down and she could administer the third drink by force. Voila. It's a pretty sweet deal, but I wouldn't try this at home, kids.

BRUJAH

It can be hard to cope with the Brujah because in many ways they're like us. They're attached to strong feelings from their mortal life. We're lucky. We're attached to culture — and while you can debate the virtues of this dancer or that philosophy, for the most part culture is something you can point to, evaluate and look at from the outside.

The Brujah, poor souls, are connected to ideas. Have you ever held a pound of liberty? Gone around looking for a few yards of justice? Hopped next door to borrow a cup of honor? I didn't think so.

The reason the Brujah can't get along with each other (or anyone else, for that matter) is that each one seems to be bound up with some personal, intangible crusade. They're very particular. Two Brujah howling for "freedom" may have an entirely different interpretation of what "freedom" means. Younger Brujah often don't have a very firm idea of what they mean when they cry for whatever virtue they're championing. They just feel good making noise and watching the reaction.

That's where we come in.

If you painted a picture, you'd like the person who seemed to understand and encourage your work, right? Well, it's just the same with the Brujah and their "causes." Figure out what they want to hear. Say it. Now you have a comrade who likes to fight. Trust me, the rhetoric of revolution is a lot easier to chatter on about than theater criticism. Throw out a few catchphrases that sound good and mean nothing, and the Brujah eats out of your hand. Up your banners! Fight the power! You've nothing to lose but your chains!

(It helps a lot if they think you admire them. But that works with almost everyone.)

SETTES

Oh yes, the feared and vaunted "masters of corruption." I was intimidated until I realized that "corruption"

is a catchphrase. It's like in the 70s when "authoritarian" meant "our dictator" while "totalitarian" meant "their dictator." It's like when the CIA talks about "termination with extreme prejudice" or a personnel officer talks about "de-utilizing an employee." Or when we call ourselves "Kindred," I suppose.

Anyhow, what "corruption" means is "getting back in touch with that human stuff." Let's look at what the Setite's notorious "corruption" shtick consists of, shall we? Oh gee, sex? Oh, that's not any kind of throwback to mortal days. Drugs? There's another tool in their box that has the musk of humanity all over it. Knowledge? Possessions? These are all cravings of the human half, not the Beast.

Most of the Setites you're likely to meet are almost as familiar with their human selves as you or I. They're just not as tasteful and stylish. They can be creepy, icky freaks, but they're creepy *human* freaks nonetheless.

That describes about 80% of the Setites — sybarites trying to cling to the human pleasures that we get for free with our founder's curse. But there's a hard core to the Setites, and they've drifted free of their humanity. Them, you have to watch out for. The Malkavians have bought the lie that madness is wisdom; the most dangerous Setites

believe humanity is weakness. These few deal in pleasure not because they seek it themselves, but because they want to inflict it on others while hogging all the... what, evil? Baseness? "Corruption"?... for themselves.


GANGREL

Really, I used to think this clan was an object lesson in the dangers of losing one's human self to the Beast, but I have to say, they don't seem worth the trouble. Sure, they develop snaky eyes or cloven hooves or whatever. Sometimes it almost seems like they're turning their Beast selves outward so they can keep their human selves secure. Scratch the surface and sometimes you find someone fairly balanced, interesting and stable.

So they're not a consistent, terrible menace like the Malkavians or Giovanni. That doesn't mean they're good for much, unfortunately. They're uncivilized, which means they don't have a lot to offer us except maybe that nifty dirtnap trick.

They're uncultured and crude, but they're awful good at running things down and tearing them to pieces. It's not what you'd call a "Masquerade-friendly" skill package, but it's one with undeniable uses. Back when they were in the Camarilla, you could make some Gangrel contacts by





throwing them a bone now and again. To be blunt, hunting clean in the city was as hard for them as it is easy for us. In the time it took one of them to stalk, corner and ingest from some wayward sailor or scabby whore, one of us could generally get a dozen willing mortals lining up for the privilege. We were blood rich, they were blood poor. Many deals were made.

Now, however, they're no longer official members of the Camarilla. This means they gained the right to completely drain long-haul teamsters and truck-stop hookers, but lost the right to come into a city and not have some paranoid prince give them the third degree if he catches wind of them.

I'd love to know who talked them into *that* deal — someone mighty persuasive, I imagine. I bet he was a bridge salesman during his living days. I wish we could claim credit for it, but we can't. Nope. No sir. We had nothing to do with it. Not one thing.

So now they're less blood poor, perhaps. Instead, they're *politically* poor, with no justicar to look out for their interests and damn few favors owed by primogen.

As it happens, political influence is the one thing we've got more of than blood.

What a happy coincidence.

GIOVANNI

Your typical Giovanni likes banging his sister *so much* that he won't quit even after she's dead. Worse than that, they're up to something that makes necro-incest look like a Sunday church social. We haven't been able to pin down exactly what the clan's ultimate plan is, but it involves death. Lots of death. If our intelligence is good, Rwanda was just the prologue.

Lots of people think the Giovanni aren't a threat because there aren't too many of them. While that's true, keep in mind that it doesn't take many cancer cells to make a healthy body sick. Not all of them are named Giovanni, either. Keep an eye peeled for the Pisanob in South America and (the ones *no one* is supposed to know about) the Milliners in New England.

The good news is that no one's going to do a lot of boo-hooing if you kill one. The bad news is, sometimes that's not a solution. Giovanni have a nasty tendency to come back as ghosts. Not all of them, not even most of the time — but just often enough to keep you honest. Of course, the ghost Giovanni immediately hook up with the Lick Giovanni to form a happy little revenge squad.

Killing one isn't safe, then. They may just pull their beyond-death trick and finger you to their *goomba* cousins. If you get the drop on one, then, the wise move is to stake him but not kill him. Once he's in torpor, prop his arms

and legs up so that all the blood drains into his torso, then cut off the limbs and cauterize the stumps. Poke out the eyes while you're at it. That way, even if the stake comes out, he's in no condition to make trouble.

What do you do with this blind, sleeping Giovanni torso? If you want to play hardball, you can swap him back to his brothers like a baseball card, but I don't recommend it. Give him to your prince, if you feel like it. Or if you know someone with a taste for Amaranth, you can probably get a good price. Diablerie is the *other* way to make sure he doesn't come back across.

Still, staking and chopping a Kindred can be quite a chore, especially a Giovanni with all kinds of spooks looking out for him. The much, much easier way to mess with the Giovanni is to play against their big weakness: Cousin-fucking. Since these swine keep it all in the family, it doesn't take a lot of research to find likely candidates for unlife. Find them when they're mortal and blood bond them. If they get Embraced, the bond goes with, making the Giovanni neonate *so much* easier to deal with. (By "deal with" I mean betray, of course.) It's more likely that the Giovanni elders will sense your bond and refuse the Embrace, in which case you've *also* won by forcing them to go with their second choice.

We've been doing this so aggressively on the Riviera that the family branch there won't let their kids outside the compound to play. Fine by me: Their next generation don't be blood bound, they'll just be terminally naive and have no social skills. *There's* a recipe for success.

All kidding aside: The Giovanni are bad news. Their primary interest is in taking what little humanity they ever had, tossing it down the toilet and using the rest of the world to wipe their asses.

LASOMBRA

The leaders of the Sabbat are your old-school, medieval-Church-style, "ride through the moor under night's blackest cloak and drink the blood of any who cross our path" type of vampires. They regard their own humanity as, by and large, an irritant. Some actually consider themselves "tools of the Devil" — God's scourge upon a fallen world. Damned themselves, they serve to push others into or away from their own damnation.

At least, that's the theory. In practice, they're trying to keep a short leash on a big pack of blood-addled Sabbat nutjobs. Sometimes a Lasombra or two slip into a "Camarilla city" (whatever that's supposed to mean) and try to stir up some trouble. If one comes slithering your way, nod politely, act like you're thinking about it, crank up the Presence so they trust you, then go get the prince and maybe a nice sheriff who can bust heads. You don't want

to get stuck in the webs of these particular spiders. They're poisonous.

On the other hand, there's this nagging voice in the back of my mind saying "How great of a manipulator can you be if everyone thinks you're a great manipulator?"

NOSFERATU

If you want the prince to take something seriously, don't tell him. Let it slip to a Nosferatu "by accident" like you don't understand how important it is. Once it works its way through the Sewer Rats to the prince's ear, he'll hang on their every word.

These guys deserve a lot of credit: It's like they're the Malkavians turned inside-out. Where the Malkavians carry a hideous curse inside an acceptable exterior, the Nosferatu have all their ugliness on the outside. A surprising number have found a way to cope with their Beast while maintaining something dignified and worthwhile inside.

On the other hand, there are a lot more who are so discouraged and enraged that their outer ugliness is, if anything, less vile than what they're hiding inside. Those you have to watch out for, because they're jealous. It goes beyond the simple envy of the ugly for the fine: They can't tolerate the fact that we've stayed more human, and it makes them crazy.

RAVNOS

Ravnos? What Ravnos?

They were interesting while they were around, and I have to say it was pretty amusing watching them go to town on one another, but I think you could round up every tear that's been shed over their disappearance and comfortably fit them in an upended contact lens.

Too bad whatever drove them berserk didn't have time to curse the Tremere, the Giovanni and the Malkavians while he was at it.

TZIMISCE

Another group of Sabbat diehards that you'd be lucky to never encounter. In their own way, they're fighting the Beast too, but not by taking shelter in their humanity (like us and most Setites) or by trying to balance the two (like the Gangrel and the Nosferatu) but by denying both. They don't want to be people or animals. They want to be machines. Blood goes in, thought comes out. That's their ideal, their aesthetic. Pretty dry, huh? What's surprising is how many of them can create beauty, almost by accident. There is a certain thrilling *something* that can arise from perfect functionality, isn't there?

VENTRUE

Ventrue are all right. By and large they like things the way they are, which means they're quite good at keeping things from getting worse. Compare and contrast with the Tremere, who long to become "Big Brother," or the Giovanni, who want to turn everyone into their personal fuck-puppets, or the Malkavians, who want to upset the apple cart just to count the worms crawling out of the rotten ones.

There's a lot of talk about Ventrue "control," which is mostly smoke and mirrors. The Ventrue don't "control" a police force to the extent that they dictate who walks every beat in one of "their" cities. They may have a ghoul doing paperwork, and they may have a blood bond on one of the lieutenants, but their greatest talent lies in cleaning things up.

Think about that for a moment.

When some neonate slips the leash and runs amok in Planet Hollywood, the Ventrue are going to be on it within an hour, tweaking the memories of the cops and the witnesses to match up their Patent Bullshit Story of the moment. (They've got hundreds of bullshit stories prepared, for just about every situation. I've even seen an Internet archive — it's on a database, presumably so Ventrue all over the world can just type in the parameters of the problem and obtain a list of "plausible explanations.") They can sanitize that mess quickly, efficiently, and finally.

They're also good at plans. Once they realize who trashed the restaurant, they find him, and they have him dealt with. Note that I didn't say "take him out." A lazy Ventrue might do his own dirty work, but "lazy" isn't what the Ventrue look for in their childer. No, they prefer "sneaky" and "devious" and "cunning." Thus, your average Ventrue is more likely to let the neonate think he's gotten away with his little frenzy, until the Ventrue offers the option of either a blood hunt or a suitable ironic twist of fate. (They love suicide missions — generally they point 'em at the Sabbat, but they do their share of sniping at the Tremere, the Setites and other Ventrue, and us every now and then.) They may take generations, but they have a great track record of playing the "Let's you and him fight!" game.

They're great at "before" and they're great at "after." What they have trouble with is "during." They're so used to the long view that they're not so good at improvising. That's where we come in — especially since we're generally better at seeing people as individuals instead of feedbags or insignificant insects.

MAGES

There's all kinds of stories about "mages" and "mystics" who can bend reality to their will with little more than a thought. Personally, I ain't seen it. I ran into one guy once who could make slot machines pay out every time, if he felt like it. When he was working his "luck," his aura would get funny, like he was throwing off sparks. Curious, I decided to get a little closer and have a taste. His vitae was just like everyone else's. Didn't seem to be such a big friggin' deal.

On the other hand, the Tremere tried to put up a chantry on the outside of town once. Not only did it vanish without a trace, it took the Kindred who knew about it six months to realize it was gone. Everyone just fucking forgot a coterie of four Warlocks had gone up to see what was going on. People only remembered it when the clues became overwhelming. So what I'm thinking now is that the jackpot joker I swigged on was a neonate mage. Like you, he had some fun tricks and was pretty cool by mortal standards, but small potatoes overall. I think that out on the city limits, they've got the main course.

LUPINES

Picture an eight-foot-tall shag carpet soaked with blood: yours. Add in a self-enforcing Masquerade that makes every mortal who sees one start gibbering and hallucinating about chainsaw-toting maniacs, gangbangers, rogue cops or whatever other urban legend works best. Now make it so that every time you hurt one, it heals quicker than you can say "Oh shit, you're not going to tear me another new asshole, are you?"


Congratulations. Now you have some slight inkling of what Lupines are like. If you go out in the woods, you run the risk of having one of death's own guard dogs pounce on your ass and use you for a target practice. By "woods" I mean anywhere without streetlights. Lucky for us, the shapechangers are allergic to cities, by and large.

I remember the day Gene Wharton, a Gangrel from way back, got turned practically inside out and hung on the doors of Miami's Elysium. I took one look and thought "Now that's what the Masquerade is for. Fuck the mortals; I'm hiding from the werewolves!"

FAERIES

These things seem to be kind of like soul parasites on human beings. They hate all of our kind, which is a damn shame because they seem drawn to civilization like moths to fire. Sound like anyone you know? I heard a pretty amusing story about a cat fight between one of our clan and some fae noble back in the court of the Sun King. Both of





them wanted to be “girl with the most cake” for some painter who saw the vampire by night and the fae chick by day. It ended with a confrontation, like every good story. The faerie got drained dry as earth. The Toreador went absolutely bullshit crazy, forever. The artist never painted again.

That’s how things tend to work out with the fae. Pretty stories; ugly endings.

GHOSTS

Usually you don’t have to worry about ghosts. They can’t do too damn much. Once your sight develops a little more, you’ll probably start spotting them here and there, but after a couple decades, they’ll be like billboards; if you notice them at all, it’s only the really weird ones. I’ve heard stories of victims coming after some vampire who couldn’t keep the distinction between “feedbag” and “body bag” clear, but I’ve never experienced it myself.

Lately it seems like I’ve seen more of them around, though I can’t think of any massive disaster that would produce lots of spirits. Even that typhoon in India should have mostly made trouble over there. Still, the odds are good that ghosts are the least of your worries.

THE WALKING DEAD

Sometimes a ghost gets really fed up with its own impotence and finds a way to climb into its old body. Then it claws its way out of the grave and starts whaling away on whatever it was that bugged it so in life. Basically what you’re looking at here is a Brujah who doesn’t need blood and doesn’t care about sunlight. Scary stuff.

CATHAYANS

When Europeans went into China and Japan, a few curious Kindred tagged along. To the best of my knowledge, none of them made it back.

China has “vampires” it seems, but they’re not like us. They aren’t the Children of Caine. By all reports they’re more resistant to sunlight, tend to feed differently, and they’re not nearly as numerous. What they lack in numbers, though, they make up for in attitude. They hate us almost as much for being Western as the Lupines do for being... well actually, I don’t know anyone who’s survived being around a Lupine long enough to know why they hate us.

Now there’s a passel of these weirdoes in California, giving those poor bastards in the “Anarch Free State” something besides the Camarilla and the Sabbat to worry about. If we’re lucky, we can trick the anarchs into allying with the Sabbat so that the Cathayans will pick on them

as the “dominant vampire sect” in the Americas. Caine only knows they’re the most fucking obvious.

The one advantage we have over them is this: We’re contagious and they are not. They apparently don’t Embrace, so they don’t reproduce. This is good, because it gives us a numerical advantage. It’s bad because the Cathayans tend to have their acts together from the word go. They come back from the grave with powers that would take a Cainite decades to achieve.

HUNTERS

I’ve been getting some confused reports about a new, secretive and above all *powerful* organization of mortals. Various called hunters or “the modern Inquisition,” they’ve launched an undeclared war against anything that casts spells, sucks blood or changes shape.

At first, I wasn’t too concerned. I figured a few neonates had gotten themselves staked or burned out. It happens, but it’s not a tragedy.

Then I heard that these “hunters” had some sort of paranormal power backing them up. There were stories about them vanishing from sight, reading minds and setting things on fire with their bare hands. I wanted to think it was just mass hysteria, but the reports were too frequent and too coherent.

Annabelle out in Vancouver managed to capture one. She overwhelmed him with Presence, fucked his brains out, blood bound him — the whole nine yards. He should have been willing to kill or die for her pleasure, and it seemed like he was. She invited me out to take a look and talk to him myself. Unfortunately, before I could get there, all hell broke loose.

Here’s what I gathered from her one childe who survived: Annabelle was going to do some negotiating with a local anarch’s ghoul. She didn’t trust the ghoul, so she told her “pet hunter” to be alert and watch out for treachery. He nodded, and it seemed like he wanted nothing more than to serve and protect.

Now, Annabelle was old and cunning enough that no mortal ship-rigger could fool her with a simple lie, understand me? But as soon as the ghoul walked in, the hunter blinked, shook himself, and attacked *her*. He was armed with nothing but a candlestick, but (again, according to her childe) the candlestick set her clothes on fire when he hit her.

So in about thirty seconds, this blood bound human had shaken off the Presence of an eighth-generation Toreador and killed her with a single blow.

Scared yet? It gets better. The childe was watching with *Auspex*, and his aura was gold, like a halo. No hint

of how he broke the bond, got through her conditioning or turned a common chunk of metal into flaming death.

The icing on the cake? Whatever is making humans into supercharged killing machines is real generous with its gifts. Where you or I have to beg permission to Embrace a single mortal, whoever (or whatever) is creating hunters seems capable of imbuing dozens at a time. At this rate, they'll outnumber the combined Camarilla clans within five years, and all Kindred worldwide within eight.

NEW DISCIPLINE POWERS

The following powers are all unique Disciplines that have arisen from potent elder Toreador's mastery of the Blood. Characters who can learn and create new Discipline powers (at Levels Six and higher) might wish to acquire these or use them as a base from which to explore their own options. Likewise, certain Storyteller characters may have access to these powers.

CROCODILE'S TONGUE (AUSPER LEVEL SIX)

A character with this power instinctively understands what one other person in a conversation (living or undead) wants to hear. If he can find a way to phrase what he wants so that it sounds like what that person wants to hear, this may help him get his point across. This also gives him a way to ingratiate himself with people or accumulate favors. This differs from Telepathy in that the subject need not be actively thinking about what she wants to hear — a disinterested club patron may find out that this brash suitor offers her some secret desire, while a lonely student might have found his "soulmate" who shares his same dreams.

System: The character must spend at least a minute speaking with the subject, and the player must make a successful Perception + Empathy roll (difficulty 6). For the character to phrase his own idea in terms to which the target will respond favorably, assuming, for whatever reason that the Storyteller chooses not to roleplay such a situation, she may allow the player to roll Manipulation or Charisma + Expression (difficulty 6). Such reliance on mechanics should only be used as a last resort, however — the very nature of this power is social, and should rarely be dictated by dice instead of roleplaying.



CLANROO: TOREADOR

MET System: Crocodile's Tongue is a touchy power in live-action gaming, where the primary targets are other players' characters. When the player uses this power, the subject character's player should seriously consider what his character wants to hear and work with the user to better roleplay the power's use. It's difficult to model it exactly, but the subject player should assume that his character hears what he wants to hear.

Crocodile's Tongue is difficult to represent smoothly in MET. To sense how to phrase her idea in a manner the subject finds favorable, the character must spend at least a minute speaking with the subject and the player must make a Mental Challenge against the subject. If successful, both players should decide how to deal with the actual conversation from that point. If both decide to roleplay it out, then the subject character's player should react favorably and offer suggestions that would aid the other player. If the players decide to resort to mechanics, then the character with the power initiates a Social Challenge against the subject. For the purposes of this challenge only, the character with the power wins on ties.

ABSENT SWAY (PRESENCE LEVEL SIX)

Some Toreador have learned to leave a "residual" Presence in their wake. Artists of the clan can imbue their artwork with certain emotions; territorial Toreador may leave palpable claims to a domain wherein it "feels" as if they are a constant, looming threat. When this power is used, the Toreador can inspire those emotions in those who are not even within her presence. Art works its effect on those who view it and an area "marked by the Kindred" resonates with emotional undercurrents. The art or area must also be designed or appointed with the intent of inspiring that emotion in mind — in other words, an author is unlikely to be able to inspire hope in those who read his graphic account of World War I battlefield atrocities. Thus, the Kindred may produce a photograph of an emaciated child that makes viewers intensely sad or decorate his sanctum with such opulence that those within it doubt their own worth.

System: The character begins this process when he undertakes a work of art or decides to imbue a room with his essence. He must decide ahead of time which single emotion he wishes to inspire. The player then spends a blood point (which the character mixes into his paint or ink, or secretes in the general area) and rolls Manipulation + Expression (difficulty 7). Success indicates that whoever experiences the work or visits the area feels intensely the emotion the Toreador wished to inspire. Obviously, roleplaying is the best way to illustrate this; much of this power is left in the hands of the Storyteller, and its effects are best handled by the players. Storytellers may wish to

mechanically "assist" players whose characters do not react appropriately to the power's effect — not allowing belligerent characters to spend Willpower in the presence of a frieze that inspires dread, for example.

MET System: Like the previous power, this one depends entirely on roleplaying. Characters won't run in terror (unless the emotion in combination with the art pushes the right button) or be forced into actions they wouldn't normally undertake. That aside, the players should take care to portray the reaction appropriate to the Discipline in combination with the art or room.

As with the tabletop version of Absent Sway, the player must spend a blood point when beginning the process, and the character must create the work of art or secrete the blood into the affected area, then make a Static Social Challenge against a difficulty of seven Traits. If successful, any character who views the artwork or enters the affected area feels the emotion invested in the work. The player must write the following information on a card and place it prominently in the affected area: the name of the Storyteller who adjudicated the challenge, the emotion invested, and the object the power was used upon.

BLISS (DOMINATE ••, PRESENCE ••••)

Many Toreador assert that their "clan curse" is no curse at all, but a blessing. Those who learn the secret of Bliss are the loudest making this claim.

Any Toreador who regards a scene or work of great beauty is prone to fall into an aesthetic stupor. This trance is the antithesis of the ugly fury of the Beast. Those familiar with the power of Bliss can recall beauty almost as intimately as if it were before them and use this as a reservoir of inner strength. The recollection of past happiness serves as a bulwark when threatened with the irrational desires, frenzies and fears of the Beast. Further, the Kindred may project this sense of pleasure upon another, calming them from the throes of rage or frenzy.

System: To use this power, a Toreador needs to deliberately enter a trance while watching/listening to/looking at some work of art or embodiment of beauty. The duration of this trance is determined normally: The Toreador sits enthralled until the song ends, or the dance is finished, or until the piece of art is covered. (Few choose to use this power with paintings for that reason.)

Within one scene after the trance ends, the player makes an Intelligence + Survival roll. If the roll is successful, the vampire may temporarily increase her Self-Control, Conscience or Courage by a single dot. This increase lasts for the remainder of the scene. The difficulty of the roll is equal to double the Trait's current rating: A vampire with Self-Control 4 has to roll an 8 to gain another temporary point of Self-Control. Only one Virtue can be increased at

a time. Furthermore, the source of the trance has to be appropriate for the Virtue. Looking at David's "Oath of the Horatii" or listening to the first movement of Holst's "The Planets" could bolster one's Courage but not Self-Control.

When a Kindred uses Bliss to steel the resolve of another, the roll to activate the power is Wits + Expression. Additionally, difficulties for using Bliss on someone other than oneself increase by one.

Botching any Bliss roll results in the loss of a Willpower point (minimum 1). Bliss can be used only by vampires on the Path of Humanity.

This power costs 14 experience points.

MET System: The prerequisites are identical: The character must enter a trance while observing art. Within one hour or one scene after the trance ends, the player must make a Static Mental Challenge against a difficulty equal to double the desired Trait's permanent value. If successful, he may add one Trait to Self-Control, Conscience or Courage. This Trait remains for remainder of the hour or scene. Only one Virtue can be increased at a time.

When a Kindred uses Bliss to steel another's resolve, the player makes a Static Mental Challenge against a difficulty equal to double the target Virtue, plus one.

This power costs seven Experience Traits.

SOUL PAINTING (AUSPEX ●●●●, PRESENCE ●●)

The ancient Toreador art of "painting souls" flourished briefly in the early 1300s, but with the loss (and presumed Final Death) of Katherine of Montpellier, the technique was thought to be gone forever. In recent nights, Katherine has returned. Roused from an ages-long torpor, she has agreed to teach a few worthy students the knack of painting a portrait of a being's inner nature. A few enterprising Toreador have adapted her principles to other expressive media, including music, song and even acting.

(Convincing Katherine to take on a new pupil is no simple task, of course. A prospective student must impress the teacher with a work of his own, for only those with adequate craftsmanship and sufficient insight have even a chance of mastering this technique. Furthermore, the student must agree to obey Katherine in every particular — sometimes to the extent of taking two drinks toward a blood bond. Katherine has found few who are willing to even apply under those terms, and of those willing to take the risk, only a minority are judged skilled enough for instruction. Other instructors might not be so strict — or may be more so.)

Art has long been held to be a doorway into the soul. Usually it's the soul of the artist. In this case, the painting can expose the nature of the person portrayed. The message conveyed is powerful, subtle, and — when successful — undeniable. Falsehood cannot be portrayed through Soul Painting, for even the artist does not initially know what the image will reveal.

To create this type of portrait, the artist needs to study the subject for a full, uninterrupted hour. This can be done in a sitting, of course, but (due to the sensitive nature of the portrait) it's more often done from recalled observation. Looking not only at the minute details of appearance and carriage, but also at the subject's aura, the painter forms a conscious insight. This alone is not sufficient, however. The painter must give himself over to an enthralled creative tempest, setting aside his preconceptions completely, in order to make a soul portrait.

The portrait must be painted in a single setting and interrupting a soul painter while she works is as difficult as rousing a Toreador from a more mundane fit of artistic absorption. It generally takes 10-12 hours to create the picture, though more complex efforts may take longer — Katherine's portrait of the late Archbishop Monçada reputedly took over one thousand hours — but if successfully completed, it reveals a great deal indeed.


System: The player rolls Manipulation + Empathy (difficulty 9). If the roll yields even a single success, the painting (or other work) captures the subject's Nature in the work itself. For each additional success, the player may opt to illustrate any one of the following: a rough gauge of Humanity (or Path, which usually won't create a traditionally flattering work), Willpower, Self-Control, Conscience, Conviction, Instinct or Courage.

Anyone with the Soul Painting power can immediately recognize every insight portrayed in a portrait. Those who lack the power may (at the Storyteller's discretion) be required to make Perception, Perception + Empathy, or Perception + Craft rolls to "decode" the portrait. The difficulty for such attempts should be low, however; the whole point of the power is the expression of these abstract concepts.

Note that Soul Painting does not necessarily make the artist a skilled painter (or poet, actor, etc.) — it is quite possible to have a crudely executed portrait that nonetheless communicates the subject's personality. Such a ham-handed painter is unlikely to have learned this power from the mistress herself, though.

It costs 18 experience points to learn this power.

MET System: The player makes a Static Social Challenge (nine Trait difficulty). If successful, the painting



captures the subject's Nature in the work. The player may make spend up to three Social Traits to illustrate the following qualities (one per Trait spent): a rough gauge of Humanity (or Path, which usually won't create a traditionally flattering work), Willpower, Self-Control, Conscience, Conviction, Instinct or Courage.

Kindred with the Soul Painting power immediately recognize every insight portrayed. If a character lacks the power, the player may (at the Storyteller's discretion) need to make a Static Mental Challenge against a difficulty equal to the number of qualities imbued into the painting (ranging from one to four Traits).

This power costs nine Experience Traits.

DOUBLETALK
(AUSPER ••, CELERITY •, OBFUSCATE •)

Doubletalk is a trick that's been passed around among the Toreador for centuries if not millennia. As vampire powers go, it's not as impressive as calling upon unholy strength or turning into fog, but it has its uses. When a Toreador uses Doubletalk, she speaks a full sentence very quickly and softly, between words spoken normally. To most listeners, it can sound like a normal conversational placeholder, like "uh" or "er" or "hmm." Someone familiar with this power knows what to listen for can hear the spoken, hidden sentence. True masters of this power can compress entire soliloquies into a single grunt.

This is not one of the great, deep secrets of the clan: Some Tremere and Malkavians have also mastered the technique and can listen in or take part in the conversation themselves. Nonetheless, it is quite useful to be able to have a secret conversation that seems completely innocuous to outsiders.

System: When a character listens for dense speaking, the player rolls Perception + Subterfuge (difficulty 5). If the roll succeeds, the character may hear what was said. (This difficulty may be modified for circumstances — it's more difficult over the phone or in a noisy area.) A failure means the character heard nothing; a botch indicates she completely misinterpreted what was said.

When a character speaks, the player rolls Intelligence + Expression (difficulty 6). If the roll succeeds, the character can seamlessly insert a dense phrase into her conversation. A failure means the character can't be understood. A botch means the character accidentally spoke her phrase aloud and at normal speed.

This power costs 10 experience points.

MET System: When their characters use Doubletalk, the players involved should make a hand signal to clarify what is spoken normally and what is secretly communicated. Suggested is the left hand "tugging" the left earlobe, to signify that what is being said differs from what those skilled with Doubletalk hear.

When a character listens for Doubletalk in a conversation, the player makes a Static Mental Challenge (difficulty five Traits). If successful, the character hears what was said. A failure means she heard nothing.

When a character speaks Doubletalk in a conversation, the player makes a Static Mental Challenge (difficulty six Traits). If successful, the character can seamlessly insert Doubletalk into the conversation. A failure means he won't be understood.

In both cases, a single challenge is necessary for the entire conversation.

This power costs five Experience Traits.





CHAPTER THREE: THE REGISTRY

The thought went through my mind that he was telling the truth and maybe had gone good all of a sudden, but I at once put it aside; lies and intrigue were a habit with him.

— Italo Calvino, *The Cloven Viscount*

Some Kindred look down their noses at the Toreador, dismissing them as effete fops or self-absorbed buffoons.

Quite simply, those Kindred are fools.

From the Embrace onward, Toreador become part of a vicious, predatory family of Cainines who would just as soon banish their own childer into the realm of ignominy as look at them. To be Toreador is to balance grace, elocution, skill and the deadly ways of the Jihad. Ineffectual Toreador don't last long — the clan devours them itself or pushes them forward to meet the derision of other Kindred.

The following pages contain some of the survivors.

THE FOLK ARTIST

Quote: *I'm just a craftsman, and know little of such things.*

Prelude: Your life was simple. Your father made pots and furniture and paintings. Some were simple, for people to drink from or sit on or hang in their home shrines. Others were fancy, made for gods and temples. When your father died, you took over making these things.

The white world held little appeal for you. They seemed to be a people apart from the world, devoted to the pointless division of things. Instead of having their God with them all the time, they kept him imprisoned in a church, guarded by priests and mysteries. To you, surrounded all your life by spirits and ancestors, this seemed very contrary indeed.

The first walking dead man you met was black. He spoke enticingly. He promised you wisdom, secrets, power to scourge the white men from your country. When you asked your ancestors about the man, they said he was an agent of great evil, and that to protect your people, you had to become like him. You would exist suspended between life and dead, trapped in the white man's world. They told you their voices would become hard to hear in the white world, and that you would know great temptation. You said you would never lose faith.

They said to wait. They would bring you a vessel.

A week later, the walking dead man entered your village. He had somehow gotten one of the banners you made for a god. He called you a "great artist" and a "unique voice." He prattled on about the pleasures of the white world, but you could see he had the curse and gift of half-death life. The spirits of your ancestors told you he was the means by which you would be transformed and guard your people, so you accepted his Embrace.

Now you live within the white world, but separate. Your work is no

VAMPIRE		
Name:	Wesley Archibald	Generation: 20th
Clan:	Disciples, Traditionalist	Honor:
Character:	Class: Traveler	Clan: Folk Artist
ATTRIBUTES		
Strength: ●●●●●	Charisma: ●●●●●	Presence: ●●●●●
Stamina: ●●●●●	Mechanics: ●●●●●	Intelligence: ●●●●●
Reason: ●●●●●	Apperance: ●●●●●	Will: ●●●●●
ABILITIES		
Verbal Allure: ●●●●● Inspire: ●●●●● Read: ●●●●● Dodge: ●●●●● Embrace: ●●●●● Empathy: ●●●●● Expression: ●●●●● Intimidation: ●●●●● Leadership: ●●●●● Manipulation: ●●●●● Subterfuge: ●●●●●	Spells Animal Emp: ●●●●● Charm: ●●●●● Dom: ●●●●● Enchant: ●●●●● Fear: ●●●●● Hypnotic: ●●●●● Poltergeist: ●●●●● Senses: ●●●●● Soul: ●●●●● Summon: ●●●●●	Other Powers Auspice: ●●●●● Composure: ●●●●● Evasion: ●●●●● Invisibility: ●●●●● Lure: ●●●●● Linguistics: ●●●●● Medicine: ●●●●● Occult: ●●●●● Politics: ●●●●● Science: ●●●●●
ADVANTAGES		
Backgrounds: Fame: ●●●●● Generation: ●●●●● Wealth: ●●●●● Intimidation: ●●●●● Knowledge: ●●●●● Reputation: ●●●●●	Dispositions: Aspire: ●●●●● Charm: ●●●●● Dominate: ●●●●● Empathy: ●●●●● Inspire: ●●●●● Intimidation: ●●●●● Leadership: ●●●●● Manipulation: ●●●●● Read: ●●●●● Subterfuge: ●●●●●	Specialties: Classical/Modern: ●●●●● Folk/Gothic/Renaissance: ●●●●● Genre: ●●●●●
Miscellaneous: Languages: ●●●●● Religion: ●●●●● Skills: ●●●●● Talents: ●●●●●	Embrace Power: ●●●●●●●●●● ●●●●●●●●●● ●●●●●●●●●● ●●●●●●●●●● ●●●●●●●●●● ●●●●●●●●●● ●●●●●●●●●● ●●●●●●●●●● ●●●●●●●●●● ●●●●●●●●●●	Other: Blood: ●●●●● Hair: ●●●●● Intense: ●●●●● Masked: ●●●●● Muffled: ●●●●● Crippled: ●●●●● Suspended: ●●●●●



longer holy, crafted by dead hands, but its buyers do not care. It serves you, and you serve the ancestors, and they serve the world.

Concept: You don't understand many things about the modern world, but you don't care. Your job is to serve your people and your ancestors by protecting them. For now you can do this best as one of the Kindred.

Roleplaying Hints: It's not that you hate white people or envy them; you actually feel sorry for them, since they're so ignorant of what really matters. You tend to be the strong, silent type who prefers action to words.

Equipment: Winchester Model 1300 shotgun, tailored Parisian robes in an "African" style, pranga knife



Person/HUMANITY
 ●●●●○
PHYSICAL

Agile _____
 Dexterityx2 _____
 Robust _____

SOCIAL
 Charismatic _____ Friendly _____
 Charmingx2 _____ Persuasivex2 _____
 Expressive _____

MENTAL
 Creativex2 _____
 Insightful _____
 Observant _____
 Patient _____

ABILITIES
 Academicsx2 _____ Investigation _____
 Craftx2 _____ Occult _____
 Etiquette _____



NAME _____
 CHARACTER Folk Artist
 CHRONICLE _____
 CLAN Toreador
 GENERATION 10th

Age _____
 NATURE Architect
 Demeanor Traditionalist

BLOOD
 ●●●●●●●●●●
 Willpower ○○○○○○
 ○○○○○○
 ○○○○○○
 ○○○○○○
 ○○○○○○

COURAGE
 ○○○●●●

CONSCIENCE/CONVICTION
 ○○○●●●

SELF-CONTROL/TOLERANCE
 ○○○●●●

BACKGROUND
 Fomex1 _____
 Generationsx3 _____
 Mentorx1 _____
 Resourcesx2 _____
 Influences _____

DISCIPLINES
 Auspex (Heightened Senses)
 Ausp Perception, Spirit (Touch)

MERITS & FLAWS

Person/HUMANITY
 ●●●●○
PHYSICAL

Agile _____
 Sturdy _____
 Tireless _____

SOCIAL
 Charismaticx2 _____ Genial _____
 Expressivex2 _____ Witty _____
 Elegant _____

MENTAL
 Attentive _____ Patient _____
 Discerning _____
 Creative _____
 Knowledgeable _____

ABILITIES
 Academics _____ Performancesx3 _____
 Empathy _____ Politics _____
 Elocution _____



NAME _____
 CHARACTER Reclusive Author
 CHRONICLE _____
 CLAN Toreador
 GENERATION 10th

Age _____
 NATURE Celebrant
 Demeanor Perfectionist

BLOOD
 ●●●●●●●●●●
 Willpower ○○○○○○
 ○○○○○○
 ○○○○○○
 ○○○○○○
 ○○○○○○

COURAGE
 ○○○●●●

CONSCIENCE/CONVICTION
 ○○○●●●

SELF-CONTROL/TOLERANCE
 ○○○●●●

BACKGROUND
 Fomex3 _____ Resourcesx3 _____
 Generationsx3 _____ Patinex1 _____
 Herdx2 _____
 Influence (High Society)x2 _____
 Influences _____

DISCIPLINES
 Celesty (Alacrity)
 Presence (Law, Dress/Sense)

MERITS & FLAWS

THESPIAN SPY

Quote: Acting—like most art—is simply lying. Getting paid to do it is just icing on the cake.

Prelude: There were days you didn't eat. There were nights when you cruised the pubs for barfly hags in their 50s—not for the sex but for a place to sleep. You suffered for your art by peddling your ass, by scoring underage tail for directors and by ruthlessly cutting loose anyone who didn't have what you needed to succeed. People put you onstage because they owed you one, because they were tired of telling you no or because they were afraid of what you might tell their spouse.

Once you were onstage, they couldn't deny it. You had talent, you had energy, you had stage presence! A lean, appealing body didn't hurt anything either. You honestly intended to start back up in 1999—screwing for advantage, backbiting, and blackmailing the weak in order to break into movies—when you saw her.

You were onstage, she was out in the audience, but even in the dimness she drew your eyes like a magnet. You tried to shake her off your mind, but you saw her in the street outside your new apartment. You raced down the stairs to find her, but she was gone.

It was like that for weeks—a glimpse, then nothing. Just when you thought you were seriously off your nut, you opened your apartment door one night and there she was, wearing nothing but your new silk bathrobe. She didn't speak, and when she opened the robe, you couldn't.

The next night, she picked you up in a limousine. You reveled in the envy of your fellow actors, waving off their questions with a knowing smile. Inside the car, you asked her name, and she gave the name of one of the barflies you'd seduced. You asked again, and this time it was the name of an actor you'd

VAMPIRE

Role: **Arrogant Convector** Game: **Convector 11th**
 Duration: **Provisional** Faction: **Salient** Name: **Chicago**
 Category: **Class** Trait: **Threatful**

ATTRIBUTES

Strength	■■■■■	Charisma	■■■■■	Intelligence	■■■■■
Destiny	■■■■■	Manipulation	■■■■■	Insight	■■■■■
Stamina	■■■■■	Aggression	■■■■■	Will	■■■■■

ADVANTAGES

Deflects	■■■■■	Agiles	■■■■■	Conceals Presence	■■■■■
Generates	■■■■■	Coverts	■■■■■		
Harms	■■■■■	Prospects	■■■■■	Self Control/Power	■■■■■
Removes	■■■■■			Steals	■■■■■

<p>Ministry of Love</p> <p>■■■■■</p>	<p>Ministry of Truth</p> <p>■■■■■</p>	<p>Ministry of Peace</p> <p>■■■■■</p>
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<p>Ministry of Love</p> <p>■■■■■</p>	<p>Ministry of Truth</p> <p>■■■■■</p>	<p>Ministry of Peace</p> <p>■■■■■</p>
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<p>Ministry of Love</p> <p>■■■■■</p>	<p>Ministry of Truth</p> <p>■■■■■</p>	<p>Ministry of Peace</p> <p>■■■■■</p>
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gotten dosed with influenza to edge out of a part. A producer you'd blackmailed. A friend you robbed of \$200 and a cashmere sweater. Gradually you realized she was doing to you what you did to everyone else. You didn't care.

When she invited you to join her, you said yes.

Concept: You're the great pretender. You always used people in life, so you see no reason to get all angst-ridden about doing it in unlife. Similarly, keeping the Masquerade is no big deal to you. After all, you can just lie or call in a favor after the fact.

Roleplaying Hints: You're charming, outgoing, friendly, helpful and absolutely, utterly selfish. Young vampires are around to spy on and, once you know their secrets, blackmail. Old vampires are there to impress and ally with until you can supplant them. Mortals are playthings.

Equipment: Karmann Ghia convertible, lockpicks, Palm Pilot, tiny digital camera



VAMPIRE		
Power Deceit Charm Intimidation	Personality Bored Obsessive Voluntary Cruel Tormentor	Connections With None Concept: Beautiful Monster
ACTIVITIES		
Strength ●●●●● Dexterity ●●●●● Stamina ●●●●●	Charisma ●●●●● Manipulation ●●●●● Appearance ●●●●●	Perception ●●●●● Intelligence ●●●●● Will ●●●●●
ABILITIES		
Defense ●●●●● Agility ●●●●● Edge ●●●●● Speed ●●●●● Endurance ●●●●● Resilience ●●●●● Intelligence ●●●●●	Special Abilities ●●●●● Dark ●●●●● Evil ●●●●● Violence ●●●●● Male ●●●●● Paranoia ●●●●● Suspicion ●●●●● Dark ●●●●● Social ●●●●●	Relationships ●●●●● Control ●●●●● Intelligence ●●●●● Logic ●●●●● Law ●●●●● Language ●●●●● Medicine ●●●●● Death ●●●●● Politics ●●●●● Science ●●●●●
ADVANTAGES		
Appearance ●●●●● Charisma ●●●●● Resources ●●●●● ●●●●● ●●●●● ●●●●●	Appearance ●●●●● Ability ●●●●● Intelligence ●●●●● ●●●●● ●●●●● ●●●●●	Connections ●●●●● Control ●●●●● Intelligence ●●●●● Self-Control ●●●●● Control ●●●●●
Strength ●●●●● Dexterity ●●●●● Stamina ●●●●● Charisma ●●●●● Manipulation ●●●●● Appearance ●●●●●	Perception ●●●●● Intelligence ●●●●● Will ●●●●● Control ●●●●● Intelligence ●●●●●	Relationships ●●●●● Control ●●●●● Intelligence ●●●●● Self-Control ●●●●● Control ●●●●●

afterward. Attractive? Yes, but nothing you couldn't handle. Certainly not enough to tempt you away from your beloved, devoted husband.

Then you heard *him* play. After that, it was only a matter of time. Your husband suspected something, of course. You couldn't hide it from him — the paleness, the exhaustion, the distraction... most of all, the evening excursions. Your demon lover called — without words, just a feeling — and you went.

The night *he* brought you over, to be with *him* forever, was the night your husband followed. The timing was perfect. Your husband showed up just in time for your burning, maddening thirst. The memory is still a haze to you — just a crimson hunger, passion, need, and worst of all love. You loved him more as your first victim than you'd ever loved him as your husband.

When you realized what *he'd* done to you — what *he'd* had you do — you fell on *him*, taking blood from *him* once again, vomiting it out again to make room for more, more, until you'd taken *him* dry and drawn out *his* damned soul with it.

You know what you are, and what you've done. You have no idea what you'll do with the rest of eternity. And you haven't written a song or played a note since the night of your Embrace.

Concept: Even in life you were ruled by your passions. In unlife, they have all been magnified. You dread the rapture of feeding, even as you long to be overpowered by frenzy. You know the yourself for your crimes, even as you're intoxicated with your new power.

Roleplaying Hints: You're mercurial, temperamental and unpredictable. Even you don't understand your mood swings. One night, you feel like you're the world's greatest miracle. The next, you're racked with guilt over your crimes.

Equipment: Violin, season symphony tickets, formal evening gown

BEAUTIFUL MONSTER

Quote: *Nothing draws men faster than a woman who says, "You don't want to get close to me." Are you that type of man? Because you really don't want to get close to me.*

Prelude: You killed your husband.

You cheated on him first, and he probably suspected. But he forgave you. He always deserved better than you, and you sometimes wish you hadn't been so fucking pretty. Maybe then he would have married someone else, someone who would have helped him out, someone who would have made him happy. You! If you weren't having a screaming fit, you were locked in your room with the piano or the violin, "creating." Never mind that your compositions never got finished: He believed in you. He supported you. He loved you.

Then you met *him*. He heard you play with your quartet, and he approached you



LEIF
JOHN
2000

LIAISON TO THE ANARCHS

Quote: *Jesus, give me a break. I'm trying to help you people.*

Prelude: You harbor no illusions — your sire Embraced you because, let's face it, he was getting old and he felt himself losing touch. He intended you to act as his conduit to the modern world, to tell him what people watched on television, to watch the fads and fashions they wore and to let him in on the popular trends so he could throw his money into them. Well, that bullshit lasted for about a month after your release. One meeting with a fellow young Kindred and you walked away knowing that you were being used.

Every bit the agitated child, you went right back to your sire's haven and called him on it. Who the hell did he think he was? What right did he have to toy with your unlife, especially for his own sick pleasure? You had just met with one of the young Kindred — not one of the wretched, old ones like him, and she let you know how it truly was!

A smile crept across your sire's face. He was proud that you had learned so quickly. He admitted to using you — but what did you think this young Kindred wanted? Did you think she really cared about you? Or did she just want another undead soldier in the fight against the elders themselves? With a smirk, your sire brought it all home — in the world of the Kindred, no matter what you do, you're fulfilling someone else's plan.

LEIF JONES
2000



VAMPIRE		
Name: _____ Director: _____ Director: _____ Director: _____	Director: _____ Director: _____ Director: _____	Director: _____ Director: _____ Director: _____
ATTRIBUTES		
Strength: ●●●●● Dexterity: ●●●●● Stamina: ●●●●●	Charisma: ●●●●● Manipulation: ●●●●● Appearance: ●●●●●	Perception: ●●●●● Intelligence: ●●●●● Wits: ●●●●●
ABILITIES		
Athletics: ●●●●● Awareness: ●●●●● Brawl: ●●●●● Dodge: ●●●●● Empathy: ●●●●● Intimidation: ●●●●● Leadership: ●●●●● Lore: ●●●●● Subterfuge: ●●●●●	Animal Ken: ●●●●● Craft: ●●●●● Drive: ●●●●● Etiquette: ●●●●● Melee: ●●●●● Performance: ●●●●● Stealth: ●●●●● Survival: ●●●●●	Firearms: ●●●●● Computers: ●●●●● Research: ●●●●● Languages: ●●●●● Medicine: ●●●●● Occult: ●●●●● Politics: ●●●●● Science: ●●●●●
ADVANTAGES		
Contacts: ●●●●● Information: ●●●●● Resources: ●●●●● Status: ●●●●●	Assets: ●●●●● Equipment: ●●●●● Outfits: ●●●●●	Victory: ●●●●● Connections: ●●●●● Skill: ●●●●● Charisma: ●●●●●
Attributes: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	Attributes: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	Attributes: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Concept: You know you're a pawn. The thing is, you don't care. As a go-between for the anarchs and your Camarilla elders, the truth of the matter is that without you, they're going to have trouble relating. As such, you let the elders order you around and the anarchs call you names — but as long as you put the two in communication it allows you to hold a few cards of your own. One subtle word planted in the right ear, after all....

Roleplaying Hints: You are self-interested, seeing yourself as a sort of vampiric Hollywood producer. You make things happen for other people and collect your rewards for it. It doesn't matter that some think of you as a sellout while others consider you their puppet. You're as in control of your own destiny as you can be, because you choose to do this. Right?

Equipment: Club clothes and evening wear, sporty Japanese sedan, portable MP3 player, stake, PCS phone

PACK PRIEST

Quote: *Yeah, yeah, yeah; freedom and all that. Welcome to the family. Now let me see your fucking wrist.*

Prelude: It was always mostly for show, your nastiness in life. You made a big show out of laughing at other people's problems — you sent dead flowers when your stepmother had been diagnosed with emphysema, you put shotgun shells in your ex-girlfriend's muffler and you rarely tipped at restaurants. More than anything, you wanted to give the world the finger, and it was very important that other people saw you doing it.

So it was with your Embrace. You figured, what the hell, it's not like kissing a guy is the end of the world, but when the fag fucking bit you, you got pissed. Worked up into a rage, you hit the guy with all you had. At least, you tried to hit him. He moved too quickly, ducked out of the way at the last moment every time. Even when you managed to hit him, it was like you had punched a telephone pole. He let you wear yourself out and then finished the job, laughing, before bringing you over.

Since then, you've taken your Cainite nature as an opportunity. Now you can really mess with people, and if they get too upset about it, you can bring them home for dinner with the pack. Who knows — maybe they'll become a part of the family.

Concept: You lead your fellow Sabbat through the spiritual growth necessary to win the war on the hated Antediluvians. Oh yeah, and you pet bunnies and give

nickels to bums. The hell with that — you took over after beating the shit out of the pack's last priest in Monomacy, and did it so you could claim a bigger share of the pack's profits. Whatever it is — vitae, mortal herd, racket money — you're the priest, and you're damn well going to take your cut. Being the only one who can perform all the voodoo helps, too, and it keeps the slots below you from eyeing your position. At least, that's what you hope.

Roleplaying Hints: Nothing keeps the bitches in line like letting them know you're nastier than they could ever hope to be. Inspire fear, and if you can't pull that off, then make them hate you. After all, it's not like you're doing this for your health. Someone has to watch out for the young ones, and no one ever promised you a rose garden.

Equipment: Ball-peen hammer, ornate Vaulderie dagger, palmtop computer, PCS phone, handful of human knuckle bones



VAMPIRE																																
Name:	Wesley Regal	Generation: 12th																														
Discipline:	Horror, Majesty	Home:																														
Character:	Classic, Tormentor, Antisocial	Concept: Pack Priest																														
ATTRIBUTES																																
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GRAFFITI VANDAL

Quote: *I don't know who tagged your haven; that's not my style. If you want, I can cover it up for you, though.*

Prelude: You know you were Embraced on a whim. It's no big deal. People from your part of town don't normally get any breaks at all, so you tried to make the best of it. The problem, though, was your sire. He was one of those liberal-poser motherfuckers who went on and on about the only true art being "the voice of the people! The voice of the streets!" His own sire berated him for not being able to see past the "affections of some other torrid whore" or something. So you did your grandsire a favor and offed the guy. So much for his "lionization of the street culture." Whatever.

For you, being a vampire is about the worst possible thing that could have happened. At least with the neighborhood dopemen, being a parasite is a metaphor. For you, it's real. You take vitae off the crackheads and passed-out hookers and the rolled white boys who come downtown — anywhere you can get it and not have anyone remember afterward. All you really wanted to do was leave your mark on the world on your own terms, and now you have to deal with this "Kindred" noise on top of it all. Sometimes it hardly seems worth it.

Still, you do what you can with the tools you've been given. You can do a "mural" in half the time it used to take and even if the cops lean on you, you can usually talk your way out of the situation. Nothing that makes up for the sheer nastiness of being a vampire, though.

Concept: You still haven't let go of much of your mortal life, but it's becoming harder and harder to ignore the fact that you're one of the Damned. Many of your living acquaintances have become distant, while others seem old before their time. In almost every case, you seem to be leaving them behind or at least moving away from them emotionally. Perhaps it's that you're not moving at all.

Roleplaying Hints: It seems that your "art" is all you have left. You distrust most Kindred, as none of them have demonstrated that they're worth a damn to you. Nonetheless, as you find yourself increasingly alone in a world that feels like it's written you off, perhaps there's some comfort to be found with others of your kind.

Equipment: Portable CD player, baggy clothes in various states of cleanliness, j-hook shoulder bag full of spray-paint cans, ball cap, alphanumeric pager

VAMPIRE

Name: _____
 Player: _____
 Character: _____

Human Pendant: _____
 Features: Thrill-Seeker
 Class: Tumbler

Domination: 10th
 Name: _____
 Clasp: Griffin Vandal

AVAILABILITY

Strength: 00000	Charisma: 00001	Perception: 00000
Dexterity: 00000	Manipulation: 00000	Intelligence: 00000
Stamina: 00000	Apparatus: 00000	Will: 00000

ABILITIES

Alertness: 00000	Animal Sense: 00000	Appearance: 00000
Artistic: 00000	Charm: 00000	Catapult: 00000
Brawl: 00000	Drive: 00000	Control: 00000
Edge: 00000	Empathy: 00000	Discipline: 00000
Empathy: 00000	Focus: 00000	Lock: 00000
Escapes: 00000	Madness: 00000	Logistics: 00000
Insulation: 00000	Performance: 00000	Multitask: 00000
Leadership: 00000	Security: 00000	Search: 00000
Resource: 00000	Skills: 00000	Public: 00000
Subterfuge: 00000	Surreal: 00000	Stealth: 00000

ADVANTAGES

Backgrounds: _____	Disguise: _____	Variety: _____
Contacts: 00000	Augur: 00000	Control/Emotion: 00000
Fate: 00000	Gifts: 00000	Ball Control/Power: 00000
Generation: 00000	Intimidate: 00000	Change: 00000
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

MINOR/LEAD

Minor/Lead: _____	Minor/Lead: _____	Minor/Lead: _____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

WISDOM

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

LEIF
2000

QUEEN OF THE DAMNED

Quote: *Oh, this is quite the little fete you've put together for us! Everyone has come in all their mall-bought finery, with their sensible Japanese cars and quaint suburban hairstyles. Pray, may I take your guest list when I leave? I want to make sure none of these people accidentally make it past the door at the gallery opening I'm hosting next month.*

Prelude: "Thoroughly common" describes everyone who had the discourtesy of coming into your life. From the nouveau-riche families who had made their money through some "tech-stock boom" that populated your once-proud neighborhood to the coarse hives of salesmen, middle managers and others who should be living in the guest house instead of the house next door, no one met your approval. Your mortal parents despaired for your future; only six girls attended your coming-out party and no young men had come calling. But what did they know? They stood idly by and accepted the proletarians who seemed to be hell-bent on breeding the good families out of the community.

Naturally, you spent much of your time in lonely contemplation, as no one else was good enough to keep your company. Eventually, you're sure, your parents would have written you off, a spinster at only 20 years of age, if not for your stroke of luck — the visiting Old World Duke of Somewhere-Nicer-Than-This-Dump. He caught your eye immediately at the alderman's campaign party. The way he walked suggested a refined breeding; he held his head with noble hauteur, and he dismissed the waiters without so much as a wave of his hand. After meeting him, you knew you would never be the same.

You were right in a more literal sense than you imagined. While you believed yourself to be courted by an esteemed aristocrat, your sire was scouting the fiercest harpy his haven city's society



VAMPIRE		
Name: Queen of the Damned	Human Trait/Power: Perfectionist	Distinctions: Both
Character: Queen of the Damned	Class: Toreador	Weakness: Queen of the Damned
— ATTRIBUTES —		
Strength: 00000	Charisma: 00000	Presence: 00000
Dexterity: 00000	Manipulation: 00000	Subtlety: 00000
Stamina: 00000	Appearance: 00000	Will: 00000
— ABILITIES —		
Talents		
Aliveness: 00000	Animal Empathy: 00000	Awakened: 00000
Alertness: 00000	Charm: 00000	Compulsion: 00000
Awake: 00000	Discipline: 00000	Empathy: 00000
Clairvoyance: 00000	Empathy: 00000	Intelligence: 00000
Empathy: 00000	Force: 00000	Love: 00000
Empowerment: 00000	Healing: 00000	Imagination: 00000
Endurance: 00000	Intimidation: 00000	Insight: 00000
Intelligence: 00000	Intuition: 00000	Leadership: 00000
Intuition: 00000	Strength: 00000	Charm: 00000
Leadership: 00000	Survival: 00000	Publicity: 00000
Love: 00000		Science: 00000
— ADVANTAGES —		
Benefits		
Acceptance: 00000	Envy: 00000	Leadership: 00000
Art: 00000	Force: 00000	Manipulation: 00000
Charisma: 00000	Intelligence: 00000	Self Control/Power: 00000
Discipline: 00000	Intuition: 00000	
Empathy: 00000	Strength: 00000	Will: 00000
Force: 00000		
— MENTAL/PHYSICAL —		
Mental/Physical		
Willpower		
Strength		
Stamina		
Dexterity		
Alertness		
Awake		
Aliveness		
Empathy		
Intuition		
Intimidation		
Leadership		
Love		
Manipulation		
Presence		
Subtlety		
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Presence		
Subtlety		
Survival		
Will		
Awakened		
Compulsion		
Empathy		
Imagination		
Insight		
Intelligence		
Intuition		
Leadership		
Love		
Manipulation		
Presence		
Subtlety		
Survival		
Will		

had seen in decades, if not centuries. As the spark of creativity had died within him (for he had been a... poet? long ago), he would once again garner accolades, this time for fresh blood into his degenerating family. Your natural arrogance, if cultivated, could yield a bounty of brooding grandeur.

You refused to let him down.

Concept: The Kindred have a noble class, and you embody the best and worst aspects of it, from high-minded patronage to brutal social snubbing. For you, art lies not so much in the creation of pretty things as it does in the consideration of them — a caustic critique of a clumsy artist's shoddy magnum opus has more worth than the art itself. The same holds true for Kindred themselves; those who can be dismissed with a sniff of derision aren't worth the Blood, in your opinion, which is the case for most Cainites.

Roleplaying Hints: You are an insufferable bitch. You are every bit the stereotype that comes to most Kindreds' minds when they think of the Toreador. Of course, that's what the race of Cainite needs — an aristocracy to cull the unworthy — and you're not going to let anyone forget it.

Equipment: Designer evening wear, German sedan (chauffeured), king's ransom in jewelry, trust fund

PHYSICAL
 Agile
 Graceful
 Lithe
 Alertness
 Resilient
 Disciplined
 Determined
 Focused
 Organized
 Diligent
 Hardworking
 Industrious
 Diligent
 Hardworking
 Industrious
 Diligent
 Hardworking
 Industrious

PHYSICAL
 Agile
 Graceful
 Lithe
 Alertness
 Resilient
 Disciplined
 Determined
 Focused
 Organized
 Diligent
 Hardworking
 Industrious
 Diligent
 Hardworking
 Industrious

MENTAL
 Intelligent
 Knowledgeable
 Observant
 Patient
 Academic
 Etiquette
 Imagination

CHARACTER
 Queen of the Damned
 Chronicle
 Clan
 Generation
 Age
 Nature
 Demagogue

SKILLS
 Willpower
 Trickster
 Perfectionist

MENTAL
 Intelligent
 Knowledgeable
 Observant
 Patient
 Academic
 Etiquette
 Imagination

CHARACTER
 Head
 Chronicle
 Clan
 Generation
 Age
 Nature
 Demagogue

SKILLS
 Willpower
 Bon Vivant
 Deviant

HEAD

Quote: *Guess who just scored some primo brownstone? Come on; I'm buying. You just have to do it with me.*

Prelude: The poetic justice of it all hasn't gone over your head. Even when you walked among the living, you were a drug fiend. You took whatever anybody offered. At first you tried to remain in control — you drew the line at doing anything that wasn't organic, then you refused to snort anything, then you told yourself it was alright as long as you didn't shoot up. One by one, you broke all your rules and threw yourself into the chemical world that made the real one seem like a bad movie.

Then you met your sire. She said she was like you, and in a way she told the truth. She just couldn't say no to her vices either. The difference was that your addiction was substances. Hers was blood. If you had any sense left in your head at all, you would have left right then, moved back onto the dance floor and tried to score with someone who wasn't such a freak. But then she pulled out that little baggie and you couldn't turn away.

She Embraced you accidentally; all she really wanted to do was get you high and feed from you so she could feel it, too (that's a neat trick, and the one thing you learned from her). She was sloppy, though, losing herself in the ecstasy of the Kiss, drinking you dry and then allowing some of the spilled blood to trickle past your cooling lips. You knew you had to make a break for it then — as she slumped forward in a chemical haze, you bolted. Half an hour later, shitting blood over a corpse in an alley as your body continued to die, you knew what you had become.

Worst of all, you haven't just traded one addiction for another. Now you have two.

Concept: You rise each night for one reason: the rush. Your unlife is one of little worth — you maintain a herd of mortal drug users whom you ply with pharmaceuticals and then feed from to gain the surrogate high. It doesn't matter to you that you're using people;

VAMPIRE

Name	Richard Bon-Vuist	Generation	13th
Player	Richard Bon-Vuist	Master	
Character	Clan Toreador	Character	Chicago Head

Attributes

Strength	■■■■■	Charisma	■■■■■	Intuition	■■■■■
Dexterity	■■■■■	Manipulation	■■■■■	Reasoning	■■■■■
Stamina	■■■■■	Apperance	■■■■■	Will	■■■■■

Abilities

Acrobatics	■■■■■	Animal Ken	■■■■■	Appearance	■■■■■
Alibi	■■■■■	Club	■■■■■	Conversation	■■■■■
Ball	■■■■■	Close	■■■■■	Finance	■■■■■
Beast	■■■■■	Disguise	■■■■■	Intimidation	■■■■■
Deception	■■■■■	Etiquette	■■■■■	Law	■■■■■
Empathy	■■■■■	Forgery	■■■■■	Leadership	■■■■■
Escapism	■■■■■	History	■■■■■	Medicine	■■■■■
Investigation	■■■■■	Intimidation	■■■■■	Occult	■■■■■
Leadership	■■■■■	Intimidation	■■■■■	Politics	■■■■■
Lockpicking	■■■■■	Intimidation	■■■■■	Science	■■■■■
Manipulation	■■■■■	Intimidation	■■■■■	Social	■■■■■
Melee	■■■■■	Intimidation	■■■■■	Stealth	■■■■■
Occult	■■■■■	Intimidation	■■■■■	Survival	■■■■■

Advantages

Alibi	■■■■■	Amuse	■■■■■	Conversation	■■■■■
Beast	■■■■■	Charisma	■■■■■	Empathy	■■■■■
Beast	■■■■■	Disguise	■■■■■	Intimidation	■■■■■
Beast	■■■■■	Disguise	■■■■■	Intimidation	■■■■■
Beast	■■■■■	Disguise	■■■■■	Intimidation	■■■■■
Beast	■■■■■	Disguise	■■■■■	Intimidation	■■■■■
Beast	■■■■■	Disguise	■■■■■	Intimidation	■■■■■
Beast	■■■■■	Disguise	■■■■■	Intimidation	■■■■■

Flaws

Blame	■■■■■	Compulsion	■■■■■
Blame	■■■■■	Compulsion	■■■■■
Blame	■■■■■	Compulsion	■■■■■
Blame	■■■■■	Compulsion	■■■■■
Blame	■■■■■	Compulsion	■■■■■
Blame	■■■■■	Compulsion	■■■■■
Blame	■■■■■	Compulsion	■■■■■
Blame	■■■■■	Compulsion	■■■■■



you've met some of the unlikeliest, sexiest and even most prominent heads in the city, and you even provide some of them with junk. From high society to the slums, everybody knows you. All they have to give you in return for your stash is a quick Kiss.

Roleplaying Hints: Sit back, get high and watch your humanity slip away.

Equipment: Tasteless but expensive club wear, Bavarian roadster, wad of cash from God knows where, enough heroin to kill a horse, more cocaine than Keith Richards could snort in a week, 100 rolls

TOREADOR OF NOTE

Status, reputation, title and lineage — all of these contribute to the Toreador's ever-shifting scale of wit and wile, fame and infamy. About whom, though, in a clan of precarious celebrity, do the other Toreador gossip tonight?



VICTORIA ASH, PRIMOGEN AND PERFORMER

Background: Singer, dancer and one-woman spectacle, Victoria Ash managed to get a number-one hit ("The Unique Technique") for a week in 1997. For that week, it seemed like her song was everywhere — radio stations, supermarkets, clubs. David Letterman even made a joke about it being stuck in his head. But the song vanished from the charts as quickly as it had risen. Nonetheless, for one week, everyone in the world listened to Victoria Ash.

It took Victoria over three centuries to come that far, and she'll be damned if she's going to let something minuscule like Madonna or a swing dance revival get in her way again. For one week, she laid a perfectly formed finger right on the pulse of American music. Next time, she'll get an iron grasp.

For now Victoria bides her time in Atlanta and involves herself more heavily in Kindred politics. She's been around long enough to know that the average Cainite will stab you in the back if you turn it to her. Of course, she's also learned that the violent and hasty tend to end up dying painful deaths.

Miss Ash is reticent about her past. Every now and then she slips up and displays a mannerism more fitting for a 17th-century duchess than for an American pop

performer. Some credulous neonates believe the rumor that she is, in fact, the famed beauty Anne of Austria whose loveliness caused a war between France and England and inspired Dumas to write *The Three Musketeers*. She hears these rumors. She smiles. She says nothing.

In truth, Victoria is more courtesan than courtier. She has honed her courtly gestures and noble accent through decades of practice. Outside of actual slavery, it would be hard to find origins more common than those of Victoria Ash — or Victoria de Perpignan, as she was known when she was alive. Victoria was born an alewife's bastard daughter in 1624, and she ran away with a soldier when she was only 13. He abandoned her. Hungry, and with little other recourse, she became a camp follower.

Almost any time you maintain an army, you attract a group of women following it to sell sex to soldiers. Victoria was little different at first, but she distinguished herself in several ways. First, she was modestly pretty. Second, she had a nice singing voice. Third, she was undeniably good at her work.

It was her singing voice that attracted the attention of Maximilian, a darkly handsome man publicly involved in the procurement of fine horses. Privately, Maximilian was known as a pimp. Secretly, he was undead as well. Unwittingly entrancing Maximilian with her peasant songs, Victoria fell in with him when she was eighteen. Within five years she was the campaign concubine of Louis II, Prince de Condé.

Victoria had no illusions about her status as "mistress." Her function to Louis was clear, but she made the best of it and was amply rewarded for her diligent effort. As for Maximilian, his protégé continued to impress him. He made her his ghoul in order to preserve her looks (not to mention her loyalty).

Things went well until 1649, when rebellion hung thick in the air. While the English drove their own king out of the country to the Hague, Louis Condé led a group of angry nobles against King Louis XIV's minister Cardinal Mazarin. The rebellion was known as the Fronde, and it failed. Condé came out of it fairly well, as losers go, but Maximilian did not. After all, there was more to the Fronde than mortal history records: Under the cover of a conflict of king and nobles, two rival Toreador guilds clashed as well, and Maximilian's royalist rivals nearly killed him in the fray. Victoria saved him with her quick wits — and once again with her singing voice. Even with her life in danger, she was able to entrance her attacker with a song long enough to get a stake in his heart.

Victoria fled with her injured domitor into the Netherlands, keeping him sustained with her own vitae. When he recovered, he paid back the favor with his own blood, Embracing her in 1650.

The pair stayed in the Netherlands until 1660, when the English monarchy was restored. Maximilian decided that this time he was going to choose the right side and ally himself with a monarch. They traveled across the channel and spent a decade insinuating themselves within the English nobility. Maximilian (on Victoria's advice) mended his fences with the French Toreador, and both sides encouraged their friendly nobles to work together. Unfortunately, Maximilian's gambit to get the French Toreador to work with the English was a bit too successful. When the Catholic James II took the throne of England, Maximilian found that his onetime rivals and sometime friends had more influence than he — and that they were consequently more prone to remember rivalry than friendship. This time Victoria couldn't save her sire. Indeed, she saved herself only by taking a desperate risk and stowing away on a ship to the New World — to a savage town called New Amsterdam.

As one of the first Cainites on the continent, Victoria had the luxuries of time and easy hunting. She's now spent three centuries getting to know America. She enjoys its wealth, its selfishness, its hypocrisy and its honesty in equal measures.

Many Kindred underestimate Victoria Ash. They consider her a pillow-headed slattern or a bitchy nitwit, but she doesn't mind. They're all mired in the past, trapped by their own greed. In a world of global communication and overpopulation, Victoria has no fear of hunger or want. Her acts of "foolish generosity" are nothing of the sort because she never gives away anything precious to her. Her greatest skill lies in giving people what they want until their desires run totally parallel to her own. Her masterpieces are imperceptible to anyone but herself.

Image: Victoria is an extraordinarily beautiful woman, though her version of beauty is more classical (and perhaps therefore more timeless) than the emaciated waifs adored in the waning years of the 20th century. She generally wears clothing that reveals a suggestive portion of her perfectly rounded body, though her choices are always tasteful, like red silk dresses and smoothly lined sportswear. Her eyes are green, her hair short and (usually) brown, and her cheeks are typically flushed red — a look Victoria knows male Kindred often prefer. Victoria's bearing is one of great confidence, though those with uncanny perception see slight hesitations when she makes important decisions.

Roleplaying Hints: You are beautiful and you know it — so beautiful, in fact, that you even turn the heads of male Kindred who have long forgotten the passions of the flesh. You are haughty and dismissive of those beneath you — fans, sycophants, etc. — unless they might serve some purpose, in which case you simply turn on your charm.

Sire: Maximilian

Nature: Rogue

Demeanor: Bon Vivant

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 1650

Apparent Age: early 30s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 5, Appearance 5

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 1, Dodge 5, Empathy 2, Expression 4, Grace 3, Intimidation 3, Intuition 1, Leadership 3, Style 4, Subterfuge 5

Skills: Drive 3, Etiquette 5, Performance 4, Stealth 2, Vamp 3

Knowledges: Academics 1, Camarilla Lore 3, Computer 2, Finance 4, Investigation 4, Linguistics 3, Occult 4, Politics 4

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Celerity 4, Dominate 3, Fortitude 1, Presence 5

Backgrounds: Clan Prestige 2, Fame 3, Herd 5, Resources 4, Retainers 3, Status 3

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 5, Courage 3

Morality: Humanity 7

Willpower: 7

ENVER FRASHERI, THE WILD CARD

Background: In 1950, Enver Frasherri cut off a woman's lips with a pair of tin snips. He wedged her head between his knees so that he could hold her jaws steady as he worked. He wasn't even mad at her: He did it to get even with her brother, Lennart. Later that night, he gave Lennart the lips.

Outside the Camarilla, Frasherri's reputation is equally daunting. Sabbat vampires tend to give him respect to his face and a wide berth behind his back. It is known — not rumored, known as a fact — that Frasherri has not only survived battles with Lupines, but has murdered two. He owns a strange silver dagger that he claimed from one of his kills but rarely carries it with him: He believes that Lupines can sense its presence and that knowing it's in his hands drives them into frenzy.



(In 1903, Frasheri sent a telegraph from Mexico City to Los Angeles. It was addressed to Samuel Salazar, a man known to Frasheri as a werewolf. The telegraph read, "I WAS IMPRESSED BY YOUR HUMAN MOTHER STOP SHE KEPT HER DIGNITY UNTIL THE END STOP I HOPE YOUR HUMAN BROTHER IS STILL AROUND HERE TOO STOP HE HAS SUCH SWEET EYES STOP." Salazar and three of his close companions died in Mexico City, but not before taking two packs of Sabbath vampires with them. By that point, of course, Frasheri was far away.)

Frasheri was Embraced in Albania in the late 1700s by a vampire who was eager to profit from the young man's musical talents. Though Frasheri never lived up to his potential as a composer (perhaps because he stopped truly "living" in his 20s) he has become an acknowledged asset to his clan and to the Camarilla at large. Few neonates know exactly why Frasheri is so valued by the catty Toreador, but it's easy to assume that he's a great musician or painter or architect.

The truth of the matter is that, since his Embrace, Frasheri has killed dozens of superb young composers in order to steal their works and claim them as his own. In his haven in Amsterdam, he keeps a lock of hair from each of them. He has 42 so far. He's also killed five vampires in order to keep his plagiarism secret. From them, he keeps nothing.

In 1939, Frasheri comforted a fellow Toreador who had seen two of his favorite musicians seized and thrown into Auschwitz. Within a week, Frasheri had killed an *Einsatzgruppenführer*. Dressed in the officer's uniform, he liberated the two prisoners and ferried them to the relative safety of Switzerland. Frasheri's grateful friend

promised to never forget Frasheri's courage, even though one of the two musicians soon succumbed to the numerous diseases he'd contracted in the camp.

In 1948, Enver killed over 20 people as a wolf in Colorado. He ran them down, killed them and pulled their bodies to streams and riverbanks. He positioned them so that the blood loss seemed natural, as if it had flowed into the stream. An FBI agent named Claude Driscoll thought it was the work of a psychopath who'd had dentures made in the shape of wolf fangs. Frasheri was so amused by the thought that he framed a mortal and set him up to be found by Driscoll. Driscoll had the satisfaction of bringing down a psychopath, and smiled when the man was executed, still protesting his innocence. Driscoll was proud until the night Frasheri chased him through the woods and showed him the truth about his most celebrated case. Now Driscoll's grandson has graduated from Quantico and is following the family tradition.

Even in the modern nights, Enver hunts as a wolf. He loves to get his face dirty.

It is only within his own clan that doubts about Frasheri linger. Among the neonates and ancillae, there are stories, rumors, legends. They say Frasheri is an artistic failure, one who vents his anger by killing the most promising artists and composers he can find.

The elders waste no time with these rumors: They know them to be true. Frasheri's perversion is tolerated because of his value to the clan. For everyone that Frasheri personally destroys—be they mortal, Lupine, Kindred or otherwise—there are many others who can be dealt with simply by the threat of him.

Frasheri is a revenge artist, and his instrument is the human soul. He never kills his targets. He kills their dear mortal ties, their husbands and lovers and children. He kills their allies and associates. Frasheri has even killed their rivals just to deny his target the satisfaction. He's patient, taking years and decades with each project. Eventually, the target has no one to turn to, nowhere to go for shelter.

He likes it best when they go mad and is always a little disappointed by suicide.

Image: Enver Frasheri appears to be a man of exquisite courtesy and taste. His dress is impeccable, his nails trimmed and buffed to a gloss, his complexion ruddy and healthy. He is quick with a sincere compliment. He plays both clarinet and piano with skill.

Roleplaying Hints: You are reserved and genteel, extending everyone hospitality and consideration. Except, that is, when it comes time to do "business." At times you have literally no idea of the horrors you inflict

on others. You only appreciate your handiwork after the fact, which must have made it a dispassionate act while you committed it....

Sire: Owl

Nature: Monster

Demeanor: Bon Vivant

Generation: 10th

Embrace: 1789

Apparent Age: late 20s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Intuition 2, Streetwise 2, Style 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Drive 2, Firearms 3, Melee 4, Performance 3, Security 2, Stealth 3, Survival 2, Vamp 4

Knowledges: Academics 2, Investigation 3, Linguistics 3 (English, Hungarian, Polish, Spanish), Occult 2, Politics 1

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Contacts 3, Resources 3, Status 3

Disciplines: Auspex 1, Celerity 4, Potence 1, Presence 2, Protean 4

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self Control 4, Courage 4

Morality: Humanity 3

Derangements: Bulimia, Sanguinary Animism

Willpower: 9



KATHERINE OF MONTPELLIER, THE MUSE

Background: Katherine's mortal life began in the year of our Lord 1116. Her father Henry, a French

nobleman whose greatness lay more in property and wealth than in his martial prowess, was as indulgent with his daughter as he was exceedingly strict with her older brothers. From sideboard and banquet table he pushed Katherine's older brother Abelard toward warcraft and Fulbert toward the Church — despite the piety of the elder and the shiftlessness of the younger.

Abelard's faith led him to join the Crusades. He fell fighting the Moors. Fulbert left the priesthood and returned home; he prepared to take over his father's estate.


While all this occurred, Katherine occupied herself with needlepoint, house management, and something of a secret apprenticeship with a young priest and painter named Father Bernard. Bernard didn't take her interest in painting very seriously, considering it mostly a pretext for seducing him (The truth was rather the opposite). Bernard was not her only lover, but he was her favorite, which made it all the more frustrating when her father began to speak of marrying her off to a neighbor of his own age. However, her feelings changed when she met Olivier, the man her father intended her to wed. He was clearly soft-headed and foolish — easy to manipulate.

Before the wedding could take place, however, her father died. He supposedly got drunk and fell down the stairs, but his heir Fulbert was the only witness. Katherine's plans of marrying doddering old Olivier and continuing her apprenticeship with Father Bernard quickly vanished.

In unseemly haste, Fulbert married his sister to a creditor of his named Hubert. Hubert was young enough that he might actually be interesting, but he was merely a knight of lesser station. Furthermore, he revealed a jealous and possessive streak almost immediately, but that was least of his villainy. Katherine's father Henry had not, it turned out, died accidentally. Katherine suspected that someone had pushed the old man down the steps. She thought Hubert had tricked Fulbert into saying something that he could interpret as a request to kill the old man, a "request" he was only too happy to fulfill. On the other hand, Hubert maintained to his dying day that Fulbert was the murderer. Hubert admitted only to blackmailing his debtor for Katherine's hand and a considerable dowry.

Once Hubert had married into the family, it didn't take him long to arrange a full investigation of Henry's death. Fulbert was hanged for the crime of patricide, leaving no male heir to Henry's lands and title — only Katherine. Hubert took it all.

Then things took a very bad turn for Katherine. Hubert had little patience for her outspoken ways and



expressed his displeasure with slaps, kicks and (when sufficiently angered) a blow from a mailed fist that cracked three of Katherine's ribs.

Katherine tried to make peace with her situation. Unable to see any of her old friends (for Hubert gave her little freedom) she comforted herself with her arts. Hubert was pleased with her embroidery, but when he discovered her secret cache of paintings, he was enraged. He refused to believe that they were her works and insisted that she must have been hiding a lover. He burned the paintings, then beat her unconscious and did not stop striking her until both her eyes swelled completely shut.

When she awoke from the beating, she felt in her heart a cold certainty: Cowardice had earned her only more of the same.

She found her vengeance with the help of the nun Hubert sent to tend her after her "injury." The woman was sympathetic, and gave Katherine a dram of poison sufficient to end her life instantly. Katherine swore she would take it before suffering another beating. From the nun, she also learned of a plant that was slower but just as deadly: belladonna.

Appearing subservient, Katherine waited a full year to take her revenge. She spoke meekly, kept her gaze lowered, and submitted to her husband's odious lechery. All through her pregnancy, she plotted his downfall.

It was a simple plan. She poisoned him with belladonna, but only in small amounts. She didn't mean to kill him: She knew that with her husband's death, she would lose her lands — to the Church, if not to her neighbors.

She gave him the first dose at the banquet celebrating the birth of his son Jean.

Katherine didn't kill her husband, but she kept him sick for months, vomiting out the meals that only she was permitted to bring him. Every day, he lost a little more weight, grew a little weaker, a little more afraid. Every day, she walked a bit taller, smiled a bit more, spoke with a little more authority and pride.

After six months, Hubert was too weak to resist when she pulled him from his bed and shoved his head into a bucket of water. Three times she plunged his head below the surface, until he had pissed himself for fear of drowning.

The next day she announced that her lord was so ill that he could no longer leave his chamber, and that all his orders would be passed through her.

Hubert tried to resist only once, by slipping a message out the window to a henchman he hoped was loyal. But Katherine's charm had returned with her

confidence, and she was the first to know of his desperate plea. She punished her husband by slitting his tongue.

With her husband confined, Katherine was the uncontested master of the estate. Her shrewd management (both of her estates and her neighbors) made her lands prosperous. Eight years after her trembling hand first put poison on her husband's plate, she was wealthy enough to entice painters, sculptors and minstrels to her home. She resumed her painting. Her first new work was a flattering portrait of her husband with his son.

For a decade, Katherine lived in this fashion. She was quite happy; her husband went mad after about four years, but that really gave him greater freedom. Once his servants recognized that "only Katherine's love could understand his mangled speech," Katherine felt it was safe to release him from confinement and let him walk the grounds. She made sure he always had a few men loyal to her about to ensure he didn't do anything dangerous, and eventually he settled into a routine of spending most of his time hunched on a bench in the garden.

Then a new guest came to her court, a beardless youth who arrived by night, attracted by word of a gracious patroness. This artist, Theobald by name, had skills beyond any Katherine had seen, and his talent for music and dance was even greater. Most remarkable of all, Theobald seemed more interested in her own urge to paint. He offered to become her teacher.

Theobald resided in her home for a month before Katherine discovered one secret: Theobald was a woman disguising herself as a man. In her pride, Katherine assumed that was the greatest secret Theobald had to hide, and that it explained why the painter was seen only by night, when the dim lights made discovery less likely.

Rumors soon began circulating about a spirit haunting the countryside — a spirit in the shape of a woman, so bewitchingly beautiful that any man who saw her was struck mute with admiration, senses overwhelmed, willing to do anything for her favor. Katherine paid little attention. She was more concerned with an illness that seemed to be striking her serfs, a disease that left men weak, pale and puzzled.

Katherine suspected nothing about her guest's true nature until Theobald — or Theophano, as she was originally known over a thousand years earlier — decided that Katherine was worthy to be Embraced. Worthy, in fact, to paint forever.

Her new state made things much easier for Katherine. Any possibility that Hubert might again rebel vanished with the blood bond.

Her marital experience had already done an admirable job of preparing Katherine for unlife among the Damned, and she took to it with gusto. Under her stewardship, her ancestral home became a haven for many traveling Cainites.

The next phase of her unlife began when her son Jean was old enough to take control of the lands. Very much his mother's son, Jean was a wise seneschal. This freed Katherine and Theophano to set out on "a pilgrimage." She was not gone a month before Jean received word that she was dead. The message was true, for that matter, but it didn't stop Katherine and her mentor from traveling to Paris. Once there, Theophano departed for Portugal, leaving her child to her own devices.

Katherine spent many contented years in Paris. To hear her tell it, she oversaw the construction of Notre Dame and was the mistress of Dante Alighieri (though even she never went so far as to claim to be the "Beatrice" of his poems). Eventually, however, she was driven from her beloved city by the English invasion. Resettling briefly in Cologne, she dabbled in German politics but mainly became interested in the new technologies of the Renaissance. She assumed that the stories of the Inquisition's excesses were exaggerated, and with this confidence she traveled to see the prodigy Leonardo da Vinci. Overtaken by suspiciously well-armed churchmen, she was staked and left for the sun. But she did not suffer Final Death. She was placed in a protected place by a ghoul who meant to restore her when he found a suitable victim for her anticipated hunger. Instead of finding a vessel, however, the ghoul found death at the hands of treacherous Inquisitors, who had no idea that the Cainite he guarded slumbered beneath their feet.

In 1999, Kindred archaeologists Carmelita Neillson and Guillaume Giovanni, under the direction of the ubiquitous Beckett, uncovered her resting place. Giovanni fell under Katherine's fangs, sating the hunger of centuries, as did the ghouls who had accompanied the two explorers.

Image: Katherine appears much as she did in mortal life; she is much shorter than the average woman in the modern world. She carries herself with the air of the ruling class, ruthlessly disparaging anyone who treats her as an inferior for any reason. Her skin has lightened after the Embrace, making her look like a beautiful ivory statue — an analogy true of her personality as well as her countenance.

Roleplaying Hints: Now you are in the odd position of being both teacher and student, both experienced elder and naive newcomer. Your centuries of existence have taught you nothing but contempt for those beneath your station, and yet you find yourself surrounded by them. You are trapped in a world you do not understand, menaced by bizarre devices that your inferiors take for granted. These same whelps understand a great deal of information that you need to survive. No matter how much you learn, you cannot learn fast enough; this has made you short-tempered and tyrannical with those who hope to profit by association with you. Nonetheless, your knowledge of nights long past has already been of great value to your patroness-protégé Carmelita and to the Toreador as a whole.

Sire: Theophano

Nature: Architect

Dememeanor: alternates between Caregiver and Pedagogue

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1142

Apparent Age: late 20s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 1, Athletics 1, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 4, Leadership 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Crafts 4, Etiquette 1, Melee 2, Performance 3, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Academics 3 (0 for anything past A.D. 1300, though she can read), Linguistics 3 (English, German, Italian, Romanian), Occult 1, Politics 3

Backgrounds: Herd 3, Mentor 2, Resources 2, Retainers 1

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Celerity 2, Dominate 3, Presence 5, Serpents 2

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 3, Courage 3

Morality: Humanity 6

Willpower: 6

LUCY CANNON

In the mortal world, Lucy Cannon (real name: Mona Gingertt) is probably most famous for her guest spot on the HBO special *Comedy of Terrors*. That, or for being the only funny part of the otherwise execrable B-movie *Grab Bag Grandma*.

Within the Camarilla, she's famous for provoking the head of a notable Tremere chantry into frenzy. In

front of the prince. At Elysium. And she did it with nothing more than five minutes of perfectly timed banter.

Enraging a normally icy Tremere into a bloodlust so severe that he was unable to marshal his sorcerous wits and attacked her with bared fangs — a fury so overwhelming that he had to be put down like a mad dog — earned her the eternal enmity of the Cincinnati Warlocks. It has also gained her the admiration of her fellow Toreador.

She spends her nights on tour, traveling from city to city, performing standup for increasingly packed houses. Wherever she goes she's respected, almost feared, by her fellow Kindred. After all, when you're potentially undying, a really nasty comeback like the much-quoted line about "tea-bagging that tampon" (the witticism that sent the Tremere over the edge) can literally haunt you forever, even if the speaker is long dead by your hand. Some phrases you just don't want associated with your name.

Lucy hasn't unleashed her killer wit since the incident in Cincinnati, but the Kindred all know and take care not to give her a straight line. In addition, she has enlisted the aid of other Tremere to provide her with local bodyguards and charms to protect her from Thaumaturgical vengeance — and to satisfy appetites that are rumored to be increasingly demanding and bizarre.

JEREMJE SRCE

Jeremije Srce goes by "Jeremy Certs" in English-speaking companies, even though the Serbian pronunciation of his name is closer to "Jerry-my-jah Sert-sah." He has 52 identities and a driver's license for each (each bearing his picture and corresponding to a playing card in a deck). He knows the life stories of each name, and can lie in character for all of them. It is just as likely that he originally came from Napoli or Brazil or Greece as it is (in the Srce persona) that he came from Yugoslavia — his Italian, Portuguese and Greek are as flawless as his Serbo-Croatian.

Some say Srce was Embraced in the Old West, when he worked poker games and blackjack tables in the heyday of riverboat gambling. Others say he was brought over earlier, running a gambling hall that might have once hosted Prince Henry V. The Malkavian known as Liz Stych stridently claims that Srce is far older than he appears, that he was one of the centurions who gambled for the clothes of Christ, but even Srce laughs at that suggestion. If asked for his personal

history, he gladly gives it, complete and coherent and without a moment's hesitation. Of course, if you catch him on another night, when he's drawn another card, his faultless tale is completely different.

Is he crazy as Malkav, or simply playing a sophisticated game? No one can say for sure, but there can be no doubt that whether he calls himself Juan Corazon or Kralj Dijamant or Rex Spade, he's endlessly charming, always entertaining, and nearly unbeatable at any game involving cards or dice. (That's just when he's playing for fun. It's said that since his Embrace, whenever it was, he's never lost a game while cheating.)

Srce prefers to ride the rails all through Europe and the Americas, but he could turn up anywhere. The only things that are certain about his itinerary is that there is a casino nearby (legal or otherwise) and that he's carrying an antique derringer somewhere on his person. He claims it's always brought him luck.


ESMERELDA MONTRESSOR

The Toreador, as a clan, are obsessed with beauty. Some of them find their potential immortality adds a certain piquancy to transitory forms of art — dance, theater or live music. Others, more practical perhaps, concentrate on static objects of beauty that can (like them) withstand the ravages of time. These Toreador collect paintings, jewelry, books or fine sculpture. Over the course of years, they may amass the fortune needed to acquire the works they crave legitimately... but there are always some collectors unwilling to part with a certain work, no matter what price is offered.

Enter Esmerelda Montessor.

During the Reign of Terror, "Countess Esme" helped dozens of nobles escape Mme. Guillotine and flee to safety in Germany or England. One of the lords she saved was a prominent ghoul, and his domitor "rewarded" his rescuer with the Embrace. It was not lost on Esmerelda's sire that it could be very, very useful to have a childe skilled at escaping from pogroms. He'd survived one Inquisition and feared a second, with good reason — his childe did, indeed, prove very useful when it came time to get him out of Nazi Germany.

Esmerelda's formidable skills at disguise, escape and stealth were also prized during times of peace. Her talents were useful not only for the smuggling of fugitives, but for the acquisition and transport of fine art as well. Sadly for her, her tendency to become enraptured by fine jewels served her poorly when she was "repatriating" an ancient menorah that had found its way to South America in the hands of a fair-weather Nazi. She



first ignored the sound of a Luger being chambered and then fled, wounded, into the gray before the dawn. She had no time to feed before sunrise and barely sheltered herself as the first deadly ray struck. Her injuries were great enough to cast her into torpor for three decades.

She insists that the world changed more between the 1950s and the 1980s than between the French Revolution and the First World War. Nonetheless, she's resumed her old habits and brought her intrusion skills into the modern nights. She can often be found

doing "freelance artifact recovery" for her fellow Toreador. Rumor indicates that she'll work for anyone if the price is right. A Tremere chantry was recently robbed of a rare copy of *Monas Hieroglyphica* said to contain marginalia by Aleister Crowley himself. An aged Toreador lost a faience head believed to represent Anat, one of the wives of the Egyptian god Set. Montessor's involvement is suspected in each case, but so far no one has openly accused her.



TOREADOR™

NAME:

NATURE:

GENERATION:

PLAYER:

DEMEANOR:

SIRE:

CHRONICLE:

CONCEPT:

HAVEN:

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL		SOCIAL		MENTAL	
Strength	●0000	Charisma	●0000	Perception	●0000
Dexterity	●0000	Manipulation	●0000	Intelligence	●0000
Stamina	●0000	Appearance	●0000	Wits	●0000

ABILITIES

TALENTS		SKILLS		KNOWLEDGES	
Alertness	00000	Animal Ken	00000	Academics	00000
Athletics	00000	Crafts	00000	Computer	00000
Brawl	00000	Drive	00000	Finance	00000
Dodge	00000	Etiquette	00000	Investigation	00000
Empathy	00000	Firearms	00000	Law	00000
Expression	00000	Melee	00000	Linguistics	00000
Intimidation	00000	Performance	00000	Medicine	00000
Leadership	00000	Security	00000	Occult	00000
Streetwise	00000	Stealth	00000	Politics	00000
Subterfuge	00000	Survival	00000	Science	00000

ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS		DISCIPLINES		VIRTUES	
_____	00000	_____	00000	Conscience/Conviction	●00000
_____	00000	_____	00000		
_____	00000	_____	00000	Self-Control/Instinct	●00000
_____	00000	_____	00000		
_____	00000	_____	00000	Courage	●00000
_____	00000	_____	00000		

MERITS/FLAWS

HUMANITY/PATH

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

WILLPOWER

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

BLOOD POOL

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HEALTH

Bruised

Hurt -1

Injured -1

Wounded -2

Mauled -2

Crippled -5

Incapacitated

WEARINESS

Enraptured by beauty: Self-Control roll (difficulty 6) to remain active



TOREADOR™

EXPANDED BACKGROUND

ALLIES

MENTOR

CONTACTS

RESOURCES

FAME

RETAINERS

HERD

STATUS

INFLUENCE

OTHER

POSSESSIONS

GEAR (CARRIED)

EQUIPMENT (OWNED)

FEEDING GROUNDS

VEHICLES

HAVENS

LOCATION

DESCRIPTION

C L A N B O O K :

TOREADOR

Cold Passions Inflamm

More than just a simple clan of artists, the Toreador helped found the Camarilla and have perhaps the most extensive dealings with the mortal world. More than any other Kindred, they feel the damnation of the Embrace as it extinguishes the flame of creativity for which they long. What other passions inspire the Toreador in the twilight before Gehenna?

Clanbook: Toreador Includes:

- An all-new look at the clan that proposed the Camarilla's foundation — as well as their antitribu
- An exploration of the Toreador's role in undead society, bringing them to vibrant unlife in the Final Nights
- New secrets, Discipline powers and scions of the clan

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