

C L A N B O O K :

TREMMERE™





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TREMIERE

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SPECIAL THANKS, HELLVIS EDITION

Chad "Patsy's Patsy" Brown, for withstanding the Smellvis serenade.

Richard "Let's Share This Drink" Thomas, for finding himself screwed out of seven eighths of the kamikaze.

Brian "Lug" Glass, for his help dragging the humiliated-to-be onto the "stage."

Phil "Honorary Redneck" Boule, for learning what passes for entertainment down here in the States.

Fred "The Drama" Yelk, for trying to crush the compassion from his girlfriend's roommate.

YEPESH

The bathroom on the day after the whole debacle.

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ENLIGHTENED BY THE DARKNESS

Sometimes I feel caught between two distinct worlds — the one that we all see and agree to acknowledge, and the one that some lizardlike primordial portion of our brains understands only subconsciously. We move about through the common world and accept it as normal because peeling back the layers underneath would be too much to bear.

I spent much of my life reinforcing the common world: stage magic, sleight-of-hand, debunking paranormal phenomena and the like. Rational explanations exist for everything, I used to say, and I'd go to great lengths to find them. Of course, such an explanation may not be plausible, but we're oh-so-sure of our ability to define our little world that we'll gladly throw out sensibility in the interests of turning the unexplained into something that we can rationalize as "scientific" and "logical." Occam's Razor doesn't support that notion, but people would rather believe anything far-fetched as long as it proves that they're not insane and that the world works in terms they understand.

Let me give an example: People don't believe in vampires. A huge body of literature surrounds them: stories, movies and television shows regale us with their exploits; tales of the undead go back as far as ancient Africa and Sumeria; and they have roots in the folktales of just about every culture in the world. But everybody knows that vampires aren't real. The notion of something that comes back from the dead and drinks blood to survive — ludicrous! The idea that a monstrous beast might live forever in a cursed existence devoid of sunlight or hope — absurd! The very thought that something out there might work in ways that humans don't understand, might defy the very order of existence that people take for granted, might prey upon humans, influence them, prowl among them, surpass them — no, humans are the pinnacle of creation. We certainly can't upset that notion. If humans are just cattle, if they can die meaninglessly just to satiate the perverse whims of malevolent monstrosities, well, that's enough to upset anyone's notion that we're in charge of our own destinies.

I'd done a show circuit and associated work for a couple of years. I'd tour through big towns and give performances of stage magic, illusion and prestidigitation. I also made it a policy to always debunk one trick per show. Other professionals hated that, but audiences enjoyed it, so it guaranteed that I could put asses in seats. On the side, I'd teach to curious kids, investigate odd stories, sometimes even show up on a television spot to debunk a claim of psychic powers or supernatural phenomena. I'd see a report about some freak occurrence, and immediately my mind would go into overdrive figuring out how it worked, how it happened, how it could be made to look real and how I could duplicate it. In some ways I loved the convolutions, but

even more, I think I enjoyed bending these phenomena to my understanding. I'd couch them in simple, easily explainable terms, show how they were all hoaxes, and leave with the satisfaction that the world still fit my perceptual box. Charlatans, liars and hucksters were the people I left behind. I suppose in a way I felt better than them — the world worked the way I said, and if they wanted to hang on ridiculous notions like "faith" and "parapsychology" and "magic," then they obviously weren't as smart and educated as I was.

Anyway, my tour took me inevitably to New York, the third bastion of trashy show antics right after Vegas and Hollywood. Broadway's looking old these days, and when you're off-off-Broadway, in the slums and ghettos and crack-houses of late-night entertainment television, you know it. Everybody there has two gimmicks and an agent. My latest job: Run a quick show circuit, then hook up with a camera crew and debunk a "haunted" house for *Hard Copy* or *A&E*.

The show wasn't so much the important part. It went as I'd expected: levitate an assistant, create silk scarves from nowhere, walk through a brick wall and so on. The usual prestidigitation gave way to a tired old evening; I got my makeup squared again and headed out with the camera crew in a van to the "manor of ghosts." Ooh, spooky. I felt like some ridiculous extra from *The Sixth Sense*, for Chrissakes.

The house itself was suburban, maybe '50s style, probably built in the economic boom after World War II. Had a bit of surrounding yard; stood by itself in the midst of an otherwise boarded-up, apartment- and package store-ridden neighborhood. It didn't look haunted, just tired. I quipped as much to the camera, witty me. The house's interior was much the same: dusty, creaky, deserted, with the occasional bit of odd rubble, a flapping sheet or a weird water stain. Nothing out of the ordinary, but certainly the sort of things that could be taken by superstitious or thrill-hungry neighborhood kids as "evidence" of haunting.

I spent two days going over that damn house. Not a single spook ever reared its head, either in person or on infrared camera. The camera crew mostly filmed a lot of my smarmy commentary about gullible people.

Matters got weird after the job. I'd packed up the last of my investigative gear — heat sensors, compasses, field detectors, all in compact, neat little gray metal cases without extraneous flashing lights or the like — when we received a visitor. The sun had already set; I'd hoped to go home earlier, but the camera crew had insisted on a couple of spooky night-time shoots. I was heading out the front door to put the remainder of my things in the van when a woman's voice startled me from behind.

"Excuse me."

Simple words, but they scared the hell out of me. I'd just debunked a tired old house that didn't have a single bit of real strangeness about it, and some voice from behind me managed to chill my skin and make my neck hair stand on end. I turned rather too quickly and noted a tall woman in a severe business suit standing on the porch, right next to the wall, just where my eye would've missed her as I came out the front door. I managed to calm my nerves.

"Can I help you? We're just leaving," I commented off-hand.

The woman took two steps toward me. For some reason, my stomach knotted up and my mouth dried. My skin still felt a little chilled, even under my casual "make the audience feel comfortable" sweater.

The woman adjusted her narrow glasses and gave me an even look before she continued, "I'd just like the chance to talk with you for a moment."

I sighed. "If it's about the permits, the guy in the van's got them. The house is abandoned and the network squared everything. If it's about the magic show, you can talk to my agent. I'm afraid I'm really tired tonight. Sorry to be a jerk, but I just want to get home. Long day."

The woman raised an eyebrow, and I adjusted my stance a little. I felt uncomfortable but I couldn't place why — like she was a cop or a tax auditor or someone who'd caught me in the middle of a mischievous act, and she was going to enjoy taking me over the coals. She took another step up and added in a slightly softer

voice, "No, I was following your work and your investigation. I wanted to discuss your methods — one professional magician to another, you could say." Under the man porch light, I noted that she seemed a little older than she'd first appeared. The yellow light made her look gaunt and sallow, and the severity of her hair and clothing style just added to the effect of a skeletal schoolteacher. "I'm sure you could spare a few minutes for me," she added.

I put my tool case on the ancient wooden chair that decorated the patio without even realizing that I'd done so. "A few minutes, I suppose," I said, somewhat bemused. The woman had piqued my interest in a morbid sort of way.

"Good," she smiled at me. Strangely, her edgy smile didn't set me any more at ease. "Obviously, you discovered that there's absolutely nothing special about this house — but that's to be expected. I'd found the same when I first looked into it two years ago. I'm more interested, actually, in the one in Austin — the one where you got those hazy images on camera."

"What about it?" I crossed my arms. "Just like this place — old, decrepit, nothing spectacular. The heat images came from the improper insulation and ducting. Any contractor could take you from 'haunted' to habitable in about a month."

She shook her head as if I'd made a mistake. "A good theory, I thought, but you didn't follow up on it. You should've checked the insulation instead of just dismissing it out of hand."

I snorted. "Did you miss the bit where we went over the ducting? Wind shear across the roof and into the ducting made a pressure differential in the large rooms; that means movement of hot and cold air bodies. Simple."

The woman took a more casual stance and answered, "Of course, but hot air moves upward. That third image you caught moved sideways."

"Wind motion," I countered, starting to enjoy the debate. This was just the sort of argument that I often had with so-called psychics and sorcerers. It's not so much in the data, as in how you interpret it. "Besides, you know as well as I that glass doors heat and cool at a different rate than the rest of the walls. That means different radiant properties."

"Good, good," she murmured, again reminding me strangely of a teacher. "Still, you didn't check. You assumed, and you know what they say about that."

Somewhat annoyed at the presumption, I picked up my toolbox. "Look, I've got to be going. Take my card, and we can continue this discussion by e-mail." With my free hand I managed to fumble in my pocket for my wallet and then stupidly dropped it on the ground. I sighed, stuck the toolbox back on the chair and bent down to pick it up, but the woman had already beaten me to it. She offered it back to me without comment, and I managed to dig out a business card. I turned to look back at the van, but it wasn't in the driveway.

"I think your friends left without you," the woman commented wryly from behind. "I can give you a ride, though." I turned back to protest but she simply said, "Come on." She eyed me knowingly and then brushed right past. I shrugged and followed to her car.

The woman drove an older Jaguar — classy, tasteful, a little out of the league of what you'd expect from... what? She'd never actually come out and said what she did. Certainly not a stage magician, with that expensive car and off-putting appearance. I sidled into the car as the night became abruptly stranger, and gave the woman directions to my hotel.

"So how much do you really disbelieve?" the woman asked as she drove. "Do you suspect that there may actually be things out there that you can't explain rationally?"

I started to snort impatiently, but stopped and thought for a moment. "I suppose it's possible," I said. "Reason accounts for plenty, though."

The woman grinned — for a moment, it seemed a hideous sight in the wan light of the night's cars and street lamps. "What about things outside of reason? Even modern science accepts that it can't explain everything."

I made a dismissive moué but answered, "Sure, but I just haven't seen anything like that yet. I suppose you could say that when I manage to figure out these amateur psychics and the like, I come up with one explanation. It might not be right, but it's certainly —"

"Much more likely," the woman finished for me.

A bit startled, I let it drop.

When we made it to the hotel, the woman asked to come up to my room to continue the discussion. I'd deflected enough groupie come-ons to know that this wasn't one. By this time I wanted to pin down what exactly this woman was up to. If she was some sort of fraud, she was consistent, at the very least; if not, then what did she want? So upstairs we went.

Once inside, I shut the door, shoved my toolbox next to the nightstand and turned to discuss the heart of the matter. The woman had just folded and put away her glasses, and in the light she seemed to have an almost ghostly allure. I put on my angry face — trained actor and all — and barked, "All right, you've had your fun. Want to come out with it now?"

The woman simply nodded at me. She pinned me with her gaze, and suddenly I felt that terror again as my stomach knotted, but I was pinned to the spot — partly due to that fear, partly because some insanely rational part of my mind needed to know.

"You've looked for explanations in the world around you, and that's good," she stated, taking a slow step forward. "Unlike a scientist, you look at the problems that people dismiss or deride. You're willing to place yourself on the line to get to the bottom of mysteries that people don't credit. But you always fall back — you never want to realize the truth. You're stuck on the edge, trying to find something out there but pulling back at the last minute."

I couldn't speak. Mouth dry, rooted to the spot, I had no words left. Somewhere in the back of my head, my own voice whispered, *She's going to kill you.*

"I'm going to do you a favor," she cooed, taking another step forward. "I'm going to pull back that veil, rid you of those doubts. I'm going to take you across the threshold, and when you've done that, you will never shy from the precipice again." She stepped right up, looking unblinkingly into my eyes and made a slight nod of her head in the direction of the hotel room's tiny wet bar. "In there," she commanded, and while my mind shouted *She's insane, she'll kill you*, my feet obeyed of their own accord and carried me into the room and onto the tile.

The woman followed briskly and stepped around in front of me. She frowned once, still looking slightly up, then said again, "On your knees." My body trembled.

"No," I said.

The woman smirked. "A last act of defiance, I see. You have a strong will and an inquisitive mind. Let's hope that your desperate search for the truth does not take them into places where you should not go... though I suppose one could say that it is too late for that." Her face hardened. "On your knees!" she repeated, and I collapsed.

"Don't worry," the woman said, stroking my hair in a motherly fashion as she drew herself next to me, "Everybody who goes through this comes out dead, one way or another." She kissed my neck, and a brief pressure gave way to a burning ecstasy; I was suddenly aware of every thudding beat of my heart, my pulse in my temples, of the rush of blood through veins like silk moving across my skin. From the corner of my eye I

saw blood coursing in rivulets down my shirt and spattering on the clean, white carpet. The reflected light of the bright hotel bulbs illuminated the floor with a glare, against which the blood — my blood — Your blood! She's drinking your blood, and you're going to die! — made deep crimson patterns and puddles, writhing across the thick fibers with every drip. Gasping with a drowning man's desperation, I felt and tasted salty blood coursing across my own lips. With a desperate need I choked and sucked down the blood, which seared razor-edged pain down my throat and into my gullet. My eyes rolled up toward the impeccably clean ceiling as I died.

I awoke draped in a funerary shroud, laid on a cold slab. The darkness around me slowly gave way to shapes, huddled an arm's length away. Susurrations reverberated through the chamber. I could see no light bulbs, no familiar walls, only a dim flicker from an oil lamp that hung from a high, vaulted ceiling. My clothes were gone. Only the white robe covered my body, but the coldness of the stone didn't bother me. In a detached fashion, I realized that I wasn't breathing, that the room seemed to echo a bit more loudly as if some background sound had been removed from me, and that I was thirsty.

"Arise," a gravelly voice intoned. Again, the host of whispers rose in volume, then faded. I sat up, keenly aware that something was missing, fearful and desirous at the same time — almost an arousing sensation, but more of an intellectual lust, like the hunger for knowledge or vengeance. I wanted, but I had no idea what.

"So rise from the dead, postulant," the voice intoned, followed by the whispers. I caught fragments of Latin syllables that bounced through the vault as a robed figure approached me bearing a chalice. I felt weak suddenly and dizzy. I steadied myself with my hands and then pushed myself off the slab.

"Will you rest forever, or search forever?" the figure asked.

My voice croaked out harshly, "I want to live." The voice in the corner of my mind pleaded, shouted, gibbered, "You're dead and they'll kill you again. You'll die over and over and over. It trailed off weakly as I straightened my posture.

"Speak with me," the figure stated. He held the chalice toward me. A scent wafted from the chalice, at once inviting and repulsive. I reached for it, but the figure pulled back, repeating, "Speak with me."

A Latin sentence rolled out of the figure's mouth. From the other figures about the room, a subtle hiss of whispered words followed. I stumbled over the words myself, through sentences and Latin conjugations while the world seemed unstable about me. At last, the man gave me the chalice and bade me drink, and with an unfamiliar desire rising, I swallowed from the cup.

The sluggish taste of bracken blood flooded my senses and washed down my throat, washing away hunger, desire and uncertainty. I felt the dead coldness of the liquid, its sour and rotten taste bringing forth a perceived stench of decay. About me, the robed figures waited statuelike, but I saw about them a terrible malevolence, as if they somehow mirrored the ancient potency of the blood I swallowed. I felt a sudden heat and pain, then nothing. The chalice, empty, dropped from my lips and was quickly snatched up in the long fingers of the figure before me.

"You have drunk from the chalice and been reborn in our sacrament," the figure intoned with a hint of impatience.

"Where... what is this?" I managed.

In the dim lamplight, one of the figures stepped forward. The woman I'd met before pushed back her hood and smiled at me, again in a way that put me at unease. This time, my stomach did not tighten and my back did not tingle; instead, I felt a slow suspicion, a creeping paranoia as she spoke. "Welcome to our circle, childe. You've crossed the threshold. Now you have much to learn."





CHAPTER ONE: THE PRICE OF IMMORTALITY

Other Kindred have plenty to say about Tremere — we're diablerists, traitors, demon-worshippers, baby-stealers, not even Kindred at all. For our part we've got plenty to retort — we're a pillar of the Camarilla, we don't need demons or bogeymen to do our dirty work, and our command of blood and the Curse shows that we have a better handle on the Kindred condition than the rest of the superstition-driven remnants of forgotten histories. On balance, it all comes down to this: Tremere are Kindred; we just tend to do our conspiring a little more rapidly than others, probably because we haven't had as long to establish ourselves among the undead.

Other Kindred make much of their long histories, their ancient cities and their founders. Too much, sometimes; the old ones become lost in the memories of past glories, and can't keep up with the modern age. Phenomenal undead power or not, a Kindred who can't pick up a telephone or

puzzle out modern currency won't last long in this world. Maybe it's because the old ones hang on to these ancient legends and propagate them that the neonates buy into the stories about Antediluvians, lost vampire cities and redemption. Tremere don't have such luxuries. We had to make our own history, carving it bloodily from the unforgiving Long Night. We became Kindred not by chance but by our own effort, learned their rules and made our own, found our own place in this deathless world and developed the skills to survive the withering of the magic we'd left behind.

DYING MAGIC

To hear some of the old ones tell it, we Tremere trace our roots to living magicians from the Renaissance and before. It's said that once we huddled in castles or towers like the wizards of legend, studying hoary tomes and working spells.

Some Kindred among us believe that we were the only true magicians of the era, while others say that we were just one among many different groups, or even a small part of a larger organization — that the houses of our current structure recall similar factions from our origin. Regardless, we recognized something that the others didn't: magic was dying. Our leader — the one said to be Tremere himself — foresaw the death of sorcery, and so turned his talents to true immortality.

Back in our earliest nights as Kindred, Tremere and his contemporaries realized that their magic couldn't sustain them forever, but they discovered the secrets of vampirism as an alternative. We know that vampires have been around practically forever, so Tremere deduced that the undead had survived for so long that they had outlasted the mythic ages that bore them. Over the better part of a century, right around the turn of the millennium (that's AD 1000), he and his assistants gathered the knowledge necessary to turn themselves into undead. Wizards from our order consorted with Kindred and uncovered the power inherent to the blood, as well as the knowledge of clans and societies found in Europe in those brutal nights. The Tzimisce and Gangrel in particular aided such studies, though it's said that the Tzimisce, jealous of our own magical prowess, turned against us. Regardless, they couldn't stop the inevitable: Goratrix, one of Tremere's assistants, managed to develop a potion that simulated the other Kindred's Curse of Cain. After successfully "Embracing" two of his own apprentices (a painful procedure, it is whispered, using primitive catheters and blunt cutting instruments), Goratrix brought the potion to Tremere and the remaining leaders. Etrius, Tremere's right-hand sorcerer, objected to the idea of undeath, but in the end preservation won out. Tremere and his followers became Kindred, and slowly spread to convert the remainder of their order of sorcerers.

What happened to the other sorcerers isn't clear; certainly no pointy-hat-wearing wizards still exist tonight, and they've become nothing more than myth as far as history's concerned. We're still here. Looks like Tremere's foresight saved us, but the cost was (and is) high.

THE FATEFUL POTION

Goratrix's potion did indeed induce vampirism, but perhaps it's for the best that apprentices like this one don't know that such wasn't his initial goal. Had the potion functioned as intended, we would have become immortal through the power of blood, but remained like humans in our physical capabilities.

The fact that the Gangrel and Tzimisce were not exactly willing partners in the affair can, of course, be chalked up to the usual vagaries of Kindred dealings.

For my part, I think that the loss of daylight is a small price to pay for the phenomenal power and resilience we have gained.



MEDIEVAL WARFARE

As newcomers to the Kindred scene, the fledgling Tremere occupied a precarious position. The original potions gifted Tremere and his circle with extremely potent vitae, but not the skill to use it. Other Tremere, less fortunate, had only the limited equivalents of weaker Kindred generations to sustain them. Without a thorough knowledge of Kindred potential, social etiquette or mysticism, the founders faced a difficult battle. Other Kindred saw easy targets in these newcomers. Vampires of House Tremere faced prejudice and scorn among established Kindred, who reviled the converts as usurpers and blasphemers who did not possess the true gifts of Caine (as if the heritage of a crazed and murderous farmer is something of which to be proud). A simple misstep could easily spell doom for an unwary Tremere who didn't know the ins and outs of Kindred society, especially because the Tremere had only limited mastery of their Disciplines with which to protect themselves. The situation quickly spiraled out of control, with Trimisce in Eastern Europe encroaching upon Tremere chantries, Ventrue protesting the upset of the balance of power, and Gangrel or Lupines tearing to bloody shreds any Tremere who accidentally set foot upon their wild expanses.

To make matters worse, some magicians didn't take well to the conversion to undeath. A few actually hunted us and sought to destroy any vampires that they found. This sort of rivalry only added to the fact that the old forms of medieval magic (if they had any real longevity in the first place) didn't seem to work well for converted Tremere. Our order had to perform more research to understand the blood and the Curse, to bend them to our own advantage.

The founder didn't hesitate. With the formidable minds of his council, Tremere unearthed ways to apply old magical theories to the new blood. From these roots he developed Thaumaturgy, the means to shape blood and other elements by manipulating the very Curse that animates Kindred. Knowledge of Thaumaturgy spread throughout

the clan, a replacement for the mystic arts the members of the house had left behind once they became undead. This Thaumaturgy — the ability to work miracles — gave the Tremere a means to defend themselves against the Disciplines used by other Kindred; chances were, even if an elder focused some incredible power against the Tremere, a thaumaturgical counter could be constructed with enough research. This adaptability has since become something of a hallmark within the clan; Tremere don't languish about bemoaning the old nights when they can develop new routes to personal advancement.

In addition to Thaumaturgy, the clan developed other assets. We made allegiances with individual Kindred who recognized our potential and offered to aid us in exchange for our knowledge or later considerations. We developed the Gargoyles, servants who could handle the rigors of battle against other Kindred and against the Trimisce's flesh-shaped minions of destruction. We brought into the fold a small family of ghouls that left its unstable Trimisce masters. Our forays into the use of ghouls and mortal confederates excelled; Tremere had long had experience in "advising" mortal courts as sagacious counselors or mysterious benefactors. Our already heavily defended chantries took some losses, but managed to repel the assaults of other Kindred and magicians alike. From the Carpathian Mountains westward, the Tremere spread, under the cover of shadows and beneath veils of sorcerous secrecy.

Over several hundred years, we managed to hold our assets and



even spread to other parts of Europe. Our converts quickly took to Thaumaturgy, giving us an edge that puzzled other Kindred. Despite the constant attacks of foot soldiers and slaving monstrous beasts constructed by the Tzimisce, predatory Lupines, conniving Kindred and even suspicious mortal witch-hunters, the clan thrived. True, the Tremere never approached the numbers of other clans of vampires, but we didn't need to. We had different goals and strengths. While Ventrue prosecuted the Crusades, or Brujah scrambled to burn down their own havens in the name of progress, we contented ourselves with our newfound immortality and our occult studies.

A NEW ORDER

Politics with other Kindred didn't stabilize easily. Many other Kindred were loath to accept Tremere's followers as a clan, partly because of simple resistance to change and partly due to our origins as self-made undead. The founder realized that, in order to gain true acceptance, he'd need the credentials that made the other clans. Because each clan traced its roots to a mythical Antediluvian, Tremere had to somehow gain that standing. Unfortunately, the Antediluvians were long gone, mere legends from the histories recounted fearfully by Kindred who dreaded the return of their horrid progenitors.

Tremere and the council managed to track down reports of several ancient Kindred from a despised bloodline of diablerists and soul-thieves. Working quickly, Tremere managed to eradicate several elders of the line, and then find his way to the crypt of one of their slumbering Methuselahs. There, it is said that he managed to wrest away the strength, age and wisdom of that fiend. Devouring the foul Kindred's spirit with his own, Tremere captured the power necessary to garner respect and recognition from the other clans. News of the deed slowly trickled out, and other Kindred grudgingly recognized Tremere's tenacity, guile and skill.

Not all Kindred could easily be swayed by rumors of Tremere's feat. Some believed the now-extinct bloodline to be saints or healers or sages, doubtlessly persuaded by the mystic talents that these Kindred evidenced in order to save their own skins. Naïve Kindred shielded

fugitives of the Salubri line in exchange for promises of healing or outlandish rumors like Golconda. Slowly, Tremere Kindred managed to spread into courts across Europe, hunting these demon-worshippers where they were found and gaining gradual acceptance for thaumaturgical skill, cunning and will. Tremere Kindred managed to blend in with other Cainites and find an important place as advisors, aides and occult specialists.

Among mortals, Tremere had a decided advantage — as magicians, the early Tremere had always hid their predilections from mortal society. Turning from eccentric wizards into vampires simply accelerated the separation of Tremere Kindred from humans. In some places Tremere even managed to found potent herds among mortal society; pagan Lithuania saw the rise of a blood cult fostered by Tremere, while infiltration of medieval institutions of learning allowed the clan to pick and choose its recruits from the educated and erudite. Indeed, the clan preserved many books in Classical languages and made certain that elements from prior ages of learning thrived.

THE BURNING TIMES

As the fortunes of vampires improved, so too did those of the Tremere clan. Humanity clawed its way from the Dark Ages with the consolidation of state powers in feudal territories. The Church managed to keep alight a flame of faith and learning. Human cities grew in size, and so did opportunities for academia, the development of secret societies and the means to support greater concentrations of people (and, thus, Kindred). The clan established chantries far from its original holdings near Germany and Italy, even sending emissaries to courts in England, Spain, Norway and beyond. The Council of Seven created offices — pontifices —



CLANBOO: TREMERE

SAULOT AND KIN

Of course, what few neonates in this modern age realize is that Tremere managed not simply to discover Saulot, one of the fabled Antediluvians, but also to diablerize that eminent Kindred. True, many of the Salubri seemed to have slipped into persecution complexes or the pursuit of past glories. Eradicating them proved a boon to all Kindred.

Rumors that Saulot somehow summoned Tremere, or that the demonic Ancient arranged the circumstances of the diablerie, are of course misguided. Kindred who spread such wildly inaccurate propaganda should be dealt with most harshly.

to oversee such broad territories, and encouraged spread to as-yet-unknown Africa and Russia. Travel remained slow, due to the perils of long journeys and the inconvenience of nocturnal habits, but slow means little to beings with centuries to watch their plans come to fruition.

The more mortal populations swelled, though, the more they accelerated their own violence. Controversy regarding religious orthodoxy spurred clashes between Arab nations and Europeans, leading to a series of Crusades. Europe's nobles mobilized to attack the *paynim*, but the fortunes of war

drove both sides back and forth without resolution. Eventually, exhausted, the two sides settled into an uneasy holding pattern. The Christian Church, unsatisfied by its failure to prosecute unbelievers, turned its attentions inward, particularly in Western Europe. So began the Inquisition, the mortal uprising that would decimate Kindred society.

Inquisitors started their careers seeking out signs of unorthodoxy. Priests and secular witch-hunters watched their peers for any signs of deviation from the tenets of the Church, and ruthlessly stamped out heretics. Anyone who questioned the Church, or who seemed different or strange, could be a target; ruthless peasants and nobles alike betrayed their neighbors to the Inquisition with tales of devilry. Little did the mortals know of the monsters who truly lurked within their midst. Once the first unfortunate undead found their way to the Inquisition's flames, though, the rest were not long to follow.

With Pope Innocent III's approval of torture, and the Inquisition's fondness for burning, "heretics" could be easily culled from the general populace. Formerly inconvenient difficulties such as nocturnal existence or cadaverous appearance suddenly loomed as beacons that set Kindred apart from the remainder of humanity, and thus became grave dangers. Even elders, formerly the uncontested rulers of their claimed domains, found themselves staked upon the pyres. Inquisitors learned to recognize Kindred through their resistance to torture





and slowly unearthed the classical weaknesses of fire and sunlight. The Tremere, as both Kindred and warlocks, had perhaps the most to lose: Not only did Inquisitors flush us out as undead, but our chantries were seized and burned, valuable books were destroyed, and great troves of thaumaturgical knowledge lost. A few hunters, specially sanctioned by the Church and protected by their faith in God, even proved resistant to Thaumaturgy and other Disciplines, making them dangerous indeed. Kindred across Europe scurried for cover; elders who could not adapt to the times and who continued to see the kine solely as slaves or food perished. The entire social order of Kindred was upset. For the first time we truly realized that humanity could indeed rise up and destroy us all. And the blow to our pride was grave, indeed.

THE CAMARILLA

As Kindred after Kindred perished in flames, panicked individuals across Europe convened hurried gatherings or sent cautious missives to other cities, hoping to learn how Kindred fared afar. The Inquisition burned its way across all of Europe, leaving no place to hide and destroying entire bloodlines. The many clans concluded that only secrecy through cooperation could insure survival. Just as the mortals banded together in masses and drew their strength from the fact that no lone Kindred could assault them all, the Kindred themselves needed to set aside their age-old differences and come together for mutual protection.

An invitation went out to Kindred across the continent. Elders would attend a convocation where they would propose the union that could preserve us all. By meeting in secret, the Kindred hoped to avoid the eyes of the Inquisition. False ruses and dupes drew away attention, while the Kindred met to decide upon a means of survival. So long as the Inquisition continued to enjoy success, it would only increase its efforts; every vampire burned led another hundred suspicious mortals to join the fray in search of more monsters. Only by convincing mortals that their job was finished — that no more monsters remained, that vampires were gone from the world as if they'd never been — could the Inquisition be satisfied.

The first conclaves were terrible indeed. Elders unused to bowing to others' whims found that they had no choice but to subdue their monumental egos if they were to survive at all. Kindred squabbled over their centuries-nursed grievances, and some clans declined to attend the gathering at all. Eventually, we joined the representatives of six other clans in declaration for this secret society. The Founders brought forth impressive evidence — elders around the continent, rooted out and destroyed; childer bringing down entire broods of vampires with a single misstep; lords who'd held sway over their lands for centuries, deposed; rampant diablerists, the breakdown of Kindred society, the destruction of sires at the fangs of their childer. Kindred knew that their entire existence teetered on a precipice. Naysayers found themselves ejected or turned over to the

Inquisition, while those who supported the notion of secrecy helped to withdraw from society and conceal the movement of Kindred among humans.

The Ventrue widely claim credit for the formation of the Camarilla, and Toreador note that the impassioned speeches of one of their own swayed enough reluctant Kindred to make the union work. But our own weight, lent quietly behind the planners, forged the union. With our gifts we could secure meetings from intrusion, track infiltrators and establish the certitude of other Kindred. Careful placement of a vote here or a favor there enabled us to be certain that other clans would move in the directions we proposed. By backing a certain Ventrue lord, we could call upon his support later against someone he would normally champion; praising a Toreador here would mean the Toreador's eloquence used on our behalf. Let the others take credit for the Camarilla — the Ventrue would still be trumpeting their responsibility to lead Kindred to safety, and the Toreador still making impassioned speeches, if we Tremere had not been there to make sure that things were done. Many of the elders from other clans were unused to rapid change, and could not foresee creating a union such as the Camarilla in less than centuries. We, on the other hand, knew only too well the need to remain constantly vigilant from night to night, adapting to survive in the hostile arenas we'd newly joined.

Eventually many elders of the Brujah, Gangrel, Malkavian, Nosferatu, Toreador and Ventrue clans joined us in recognizing the need for secrecy. So came about the Camarilla, accepted widely among these clans and upholding the Six Traditions as a means to hide amongst humans and coexist without open warfare.

Those Kindred who felt the Camarilla too restrictive, or who had committed crimes too grievous to be allowed to survive, found themselves outside the aegis of the organization. The Founders quickly set justicars and archons to the task of rooting out such treacherous influences. These rogues formed the anarchs; ostensibly they protested the Camarilla's political structure, but in truth many simply fled because as diablerists, kinslayers or wanton menaces they threatened the stability of Kindred society by their existence and knew that they would be subdued should they attempt to join.

The Camarilla ultimately succeeded. As Kindred disappeared from common sight, mortals turned their attentions from monsters in the dark to the pursuit of reason. Like a young adult putting away childish things, humans left behind their superstitions and instead took up knowledge. We inherited the truth of the occult. As "rational" and "scientific" humans trickled into the folds of the other clans, those clans accommodated; their own knowledge of the Kindred condition and



ADVANTAGES...

The formation of the Camarilla not only assisted us in hiding among mortals, but also gave us other decided advantages. By taking positions as founders in the Camarilla, we managed to legitimize our place in Kindred society. Those who once called us usurpers and diablerists now had to acknowledge our acceptance as equals. Furthermore, we improved our own specialized position. Kindred with real comprehension of occultism became scarcer in passing years, as the Masquerade eroded arcane knowledge in favor of reason. Fledglings and neonates had little real information regarding the Kindred condition. Our network of learned members allowed us to trade vital information and preserve occult secrets, which we could sparingly use as leverage with other Kindred.

history becoming mere superstition. We retained this wisdom, as keyholders to the arcane.

ANARCHY AND THE SABBAT

As the Dark Ages gave way to the Middle Ages and then to the Renaissance, Kindred struggled with their own transformation from potent lords to hidden predators. Stripped of the means to coexist as masters of mortal realms, Kindred turned their attention to one another. The Camarilla provided a means for Kindred to meet safely and to measure their standing against their peers. While solitary feudal lords remained in some isolated parts of Europe — largely in the ancestral lands of the barbaric Tzimisce — most courts grew to accommodate Kindred of varying clans, who had only one another's approval to preen their egos. Camarilla Kindred used political influence, blood bonds, mortal intermediaries and blackmail to humiliate their enemies and garner prestige. Early on we recognized the folly of becoming targets in such games, so while other Kindred vied for positions of power and influence, we fortified ourselves with the careful brokerage of our specialized skills. Ventrue princes and Toreador harpies fought bitterly over matters of status and prestation, Brujah and Gangrel struggled against Camarilla oppression, and Malkavians and Nosferatu skulked unaccepted in polite society, but we gave them all the tools to fulfill their petty ambitions, to ruin their enemies and to defend their domains.

Beyond the domains of the Camarilla, expatriates and anarchs established their own social order of sorts. Some truly believed that the Camarilla's structure boded ill, while others simply proved incapable of existing in civilized society. Regardless, these malcontents provoked the Anarch Revolt, a hidden conflict as foolish neonates or diablerist Kindred sought to make their fortunes outside the auspices of the Camarilla. For the better part of a century these anarchs clashed with the Camarilla, while foreign clans — Assamites, Ravnos, Setites — plied their trades or even struck at the Camarilla before fading back into obscurity.

Naturally, the tenuous security of the new-founded Camarilla precipitated danger. The Tzimisce and Lasombra clans set themselves in opposition to the Camarilla as anarchs claimed credit for the destruction of those clans' progenitors; the unaffiliated clans and anarchs wantonly violated the Camarilla's Traditions but still claimed protection of Camarilla sires. The situation became nigh untenable as the combination of anarch sensibilities and Tzimisce sorcery brought forth an even greater threat — the Sabbat.

Somehow, using Tzimisce witchery, the anarchs learned to break the blood bond and form feral packs of mutual defense. From the Iberian Peninsula to the crags of Romania, disenfranchised or hunted Kindred threw in their lot with the rebels. Discarding the secrecy of the Camarilla as weak, the Sabbat undertook vicious rituals and rites to strengthen their own inhuman nature. Even our own clan was not unscathed: Goratrix, long the most ambitious supporter of Tremere, openly defected. He took to the Sabbat several apprentices as well as his own knowledge of Thaumaturgy, casting havoc over the entire clan and laying our own best weapons at the feet of the enemy, who would have the Inquisition burn us all.

Perhaps sensing the blood already awash, the Assamites of the Middle East redoubled their assaults upon Camarilla Kindred. Princes fell to the thirsty fangs of the assassins, who diablerized any elder they could find. Sabbat packs, too, roared into cities and made their own grisly festivals, bringing war to the Camarilla with ever-increasing swarms of crazed, fanatical neonates. Pressure built for the Camarilla to do something, but the justicars were spread thin and unable to counter the innumerable sites of battle. The only chance lay in a massive turn of events.

BONDS OF THAUMATURGY

Once again, our clan rescued the elders of the Camarilla from their inability to react to change. Recognizing the dangers of a subtle war on multiple fronts, the Council of Seven undertook to develop some of the most potent Thaumaturgy ever considered. As the Camarilla's spies infiltrated Assamite havens, and the followers of Goratrix ensconced themselves in the Sabbat as maniacal mirrors to our own clan, the council made its will manifest in ritual. Using principles of Contagion and fueling the massive effects with their own potent sorceries, the council managed to cast a set of rituals that affected entire blood lineages.

Camarilla spies had already penetrated the Assamites' stronghold when the concerted weight of the sect brought the assassins to heel. To enforce matters, the council cast a mighty curse over the Assamites that attended the signing of the Treaty of Tyre. As a result, all Assamites were barred from the ability to drink Kindred blood — a safeguard that no other clan could have insured, save but in empty politics and fragile promises.

Against the followers of Goratrix, a similar ritual prevailed. The Sabbat's turgid members shared vitae in a parody of ritual designed to prevent the blood bond and thus free



them from subservience to their elders, but this same sharing of blood made them susceptible to our own blood magic. The ritual laid over Goratrix's line forever marked any Tremere who would partake of the Sabbat's rites, so that all Tremere could see the individual as a betrayer. With such success, we could easily root out traitors and spot the few Warlocks who thought to hide among the Sabbat, thus countering their maneuvers and keeping them from spreading.

Perhaps daunted by such effects, the anarch movement collapsed; anarchists eventually returned, beaten, to the protection of the Camarilla, affirming its authority. The Sabbat remained defiantly rebellious, but its few Tremere could not match our prowess, nor could its numbers approach the Camarilla's. The Camarilla, backed by our skills, prevailed.

THE NEW WORLD

Hand in hand with turmoil in Europe came the discovery and exploration of the New World — the Americas. Elder Kindred may have derided the colonization of the frontier ("Why bother, when all of the conveniences of civilization remain here?"), but the council quickly appointed Tremere to explore these resources. Not a few decades after the New World's discovery, Tremere had already sent agents into the settlements of the Spanish, English, French and Dutch, and prepared for travel once populations reached a level capable of supporting Kindred.

Unfortunately, the Sabbat seemed to have reached the Americas as well; young Kindred looking to evade their elders and carve out their own domains found the idea of new lands tempting indeed. In usual fashion, we thought it best to entrench ourselves so that we could raise appropriate defenses. We subtly encouraged the development of fortress-towns, the arming of the populace and the continued expansion of settled cities.

Naturally, we were not entirely unprepared for the eventual secession of the colonies from European rule. Opinions differ over whether the Sabbat hoped that colonial independence would also mean separation from European elders, or whether Camarilla efforts to arm and defend the territory encouraged the spread of rebellion. Regardless, the colonies revolted; war became the order of the day — and night.

CHEAP PROPAGANDA

Yes, yes, all well and good to go on about the Camarilla's invulnerability, the anarchists' incompetence and the like. Despite our best efforts, we could not defeat them completely. A ritual did indeed affect all of the Tremere *antitribu*, but could we have caused them to explode into flames on the night of Goratrix's treachery, be sure that the council would have done so. A wise Tremere recognizes his limits as well as his strengths. And, perhaps, keeps his options open....

Colonial warfare proved beneficent for clan and Camarilla. The various skirmishes provided an excellent cover for direct conflict between Camarilla agents and Sabbat neonates. Bombed ports and burned cities also destroyed enemy havens. In the meantime, we carefully collected much of our works in libraries or defensible fortifications; armies that would ransack a government building would pay little heed to a library, and the defenses of chantries both helped to dissuade attackers and aided in guarding the cities wherein they resided.

By the time the colonial war died down, we'd managed to spread our influence across much of the American continent and into Canada as well. Opportunities allowed our clan to expand and give positions to young, promising members, thus cementing further loyalty and extending the chain of the pyramid. The Sabbat was pushed back into Mexico, where their chaotic influence helped to steer that country to poverty and wreckage, or confined to colder northern climes.

CIVIL WAR

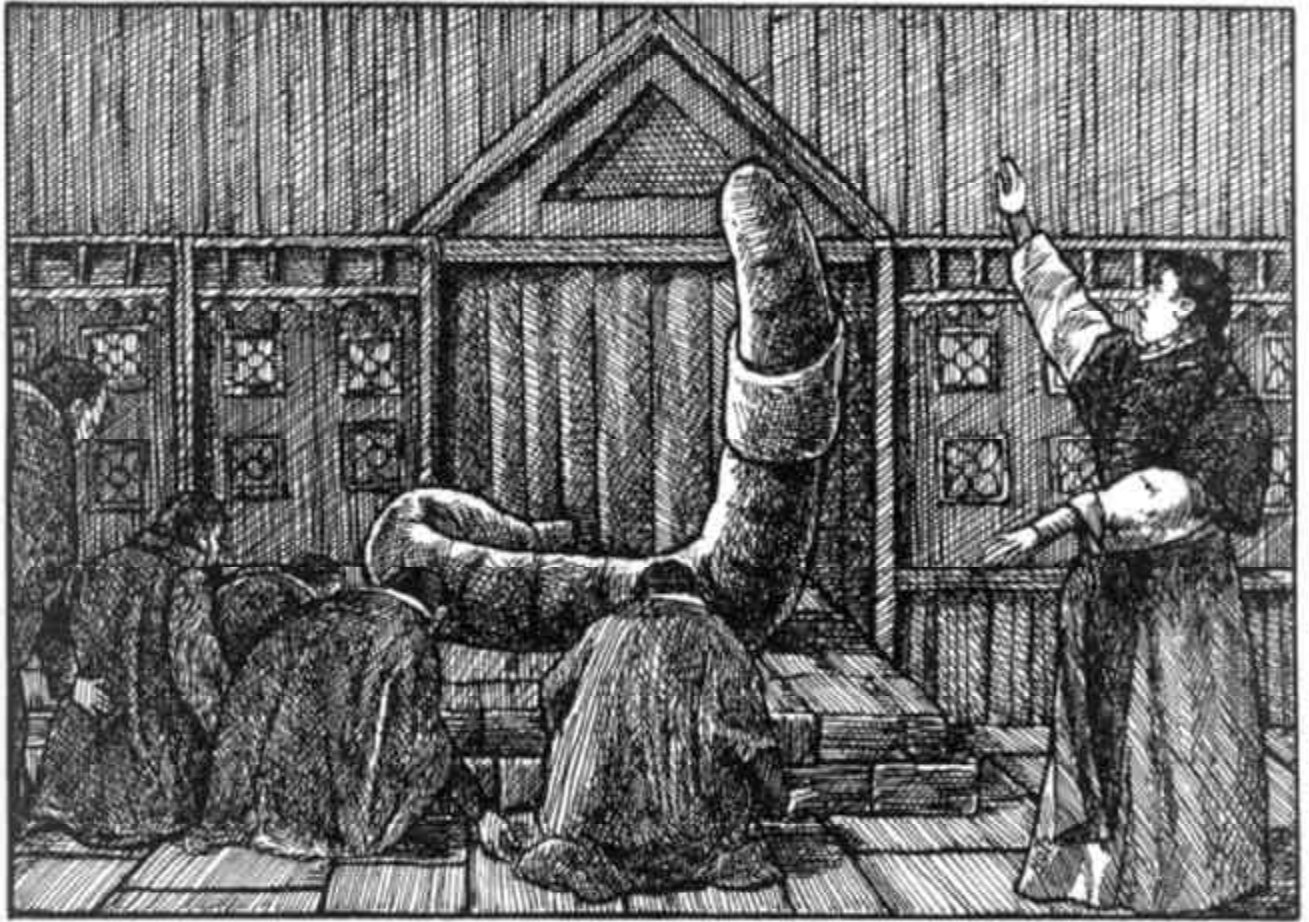
The post-revolutionary era allowed the Americas to stabilize. Battle lines with the Sabbat changed little in this period, while the European Kindred came more and more to recognize the value of unopened territory. As settlers headed west, Kindred followed, especially in boomtowns like Dodge, Tombstone and San Francisco. In some places, Kindred who

could not even be considered ancillae, such as the fledgling-prince of Fort Worth, established their own broad domains and courts as princes! The new prosperity enriched Kindred and kine alike.

For our part, we spread just like the rest of the Camarilla. When major cities grew, we placed chantries to lend our support to the sect. Experienced political bosses played an important role in the development of frontier government. As new states came into the union, we managed to open up opportunities for education, communication, trade and the like. Our careful influence helped to insure that the United States supported libraries and universities where we could continue to amass specialized knowledge, and we aided other Camarilla Kindred in promoting patronage of art, culture and politics, further indebting them to us. The pontifices recognized the emerging power of the United States and made certain that our agents were in place to take advantage of the benefits. We encouraged strong trade with Europe and even with the East; we pushed for further land development; and we extolled the virtues of aggressive military posture so that military elements could eventually serve in conflicts continentally or even overseas.

The Civil War of the 19th century slowed matters but did not halt them. Turned in upon itself, the United States couldn't bring its full economic might to bear yet on the world arena. More importantly, though, the Civil War presaged the





new forms of warfare that would come to dominate the globe. Massive armies with guns, cannons and sweeping scale showed that even brothers could be pitted against one another for a bitter cause that would claim millions. Total war practiced in Sherman's March ruined not only military targets, but laid waste to every civilian facility in the way (and, incidentally, burned not a few havens of the Sabbat who had started to creep north from Mexico). To us, the war was also a potent reminder — unity must be enforced with strong will and action, or it is worthless.

WORLD WAR

While the United States settled its internal affairs, the Industrial Revolution came into full swing. Railroad, telegraph, flight, telephone, automobiles, trans-Atlantic shipping — all came rapidly on the heels of progress spurred by burgeoning humanity and the need for better weapons of war. In the States, innovative Kindred latched on to new developments and used them to secure their own prominence; in Europe, the more conservative Kindred ensured a slower pace of development. The Camarilla's policy of promoting rational thought over superstition had come full circle. The world had indeed outlived vampires — it no longer needed the night-prowlers to keep its labor class in check — and now it steamrolled on an ever-increasing, self-feeding path to the future.

TRADING IN LIES

More political claptrap — someone's been feeding our apprentice well. Of course the Civil War cleansed Sabbat and anarchs from the territories. It also offered excuses for any Kindred with a grudge to wipe out his neighbor. I suspect that more internecine killing happened under cover of the Civil War than in any prior conflict. Slave-holding Tremere estates in the South (ah, the plantations provided excellent herds) fell to the necessities of fueling the North's economy. The industrializing North, setting a pattern that the States would continue to hold, decided to place the South in an uncomfortable economic position and then show their authority with force. Make no mistake, this war wasn't over policy, it was about money. Almost like the Crusades all over again.

I suspect that quite a few regents died at the hands of ambitious apprentices while manors and estates burned. I know a few, myself.

As the world's nations expanded their interests into the heretofore-unexploited continents, they increased not only their military conquests but also their communications and supply lines. A colony in India would need regular garrisons

to survive, and so too a colony in Africa; only by addressing these needs could the industrialized nations keep their interests from collapsing to the natives they suppressed. The wave of improving transportation proved beneficial, as we could now dispatch acolytes and Kindred all about the globe in relative safety. Kindred who would never risk sleeping in the holds of a creaky wooden ship could survive in relative comfort aboard the staterooms of an ironclad steamer. Messages that would take months to arrive by horseback now spanned the ocean in seconds thanks to telegraph and, later, telephone. We'd always excelled in communications and coordination more than any other clan; now the technology of the era enhanced our natural advantages.

Once the expanding nations of the world ran out of room, though, something would have to give. That something gave in two World Wars — brutal contests to see who would take supremacy over the industrial world. The World Wars spurred even further development through warfare, bringing forth advancements in flight, strategy and military coordination. Factories pumped out material, while nations realized that only in granting full and equal rights to all of their citizens could they maintain a necessarily strong economy and equally strong military. New wars and new times required new ways of thinking.

Our part in the World Wars was small — although some Kindred lay blame for the Third Reich's manic occultism at our feet, we had no part in such crazed fantasies. Madmen and mortal desires drove the wars that inflamed the world, not Kindred. That's not to say that we didn't take advantage of the situation; the World Wars were perfect opportunities to test new theories, to pick up recruits from abroad and to skim a little graft off the top of the giant military machines in order to finance even greater expansion of the clan's assets.

What surprised Kindred most about the wars was the total destructiveness and brutality involved. Gases, artillery, bombers and finally the split atom proved once and for all that the might of Kindred could not match the sheer destructive power available to mortal innovators. Never could we risk a new Inquisition; one mortal with a flamethrower or machine gun could tear down even a thousand-year-old elder. Should the might of humanity ever turn against us, we would be annihilated by the sheer magnitude of forces harnessed. Thus it became our goal not to become the target, but rather the guide. If mortals could level cities with their tools, then we would need to advise the mortals with such capabilities. The weapons that could destroy us also became our provenance. Such was the most recent shift in Tremere ideology — in the modern nights, we whisper in the same ears as do the Brujah, Ventrue and Toreador. Obviously, we are rarely the generals on the field of battle or the officials shaking hands with foreign heads of state, but more than one bit of espionage has had thaumaturgical assistance in its journey to the right hands.



AND GEHENNA?

Hmm. Indeed, we encourage our neonates to delve into the benefits of the modern age. What's the point of taking the effort to fuel a ritual designed to contact one's sire, when a simple telephone will do the job? Because of our relation to one another—the pyramid—we have a singular advantage over other Kindred. We can share the ideas that work and discard the ones that don't in a unified fashion.

The question is, what are we becoming? We have seen what vampires were in the nights of history. Then they were predatory monsters who filled the roles of legends. Tonight we are much the same—we still feed upon blood, we avoid the sun, and we exist in a perpetual, unaging state—but as we absorb this new world, the changes that it reflects in the kine come to reflect in those who join us. The world no longer needs legends or boojums who stalk the shadows between thatched huts. Our own call to power, the adaptability that Tremere needed in order to make the leap from mortal to Kindred, causes us to accept change perhaps more readily than many other clans, yet at the same time we cannot tell where that change leads.

The old prophecies whisper of Gehenna, of the rise of the Antediluvians and the destruction of the Kindred race. When vampires themselves are no longer creatures from the legends, though, what of the legends? Will Gehenna even be what we imagine, if the world is so changed? Has Gehenna, perhaps already come, but taken a form that we have not recognized? Do we walk in its aftermath already? The prophets who wrote the legends so long ago would hardly recognize this world. Perhaps the Gehenna that they described was only in the words that they could understand, not a picture of this new millennium.

THE MODERN NIGHTS

As the wars that gripped the world ended, humanity itself recoiled. Here at last they had proven (and realized...) their ability to wipe all life from the face of the planet. Ever careful with dangerous prey, we protected our own interests during the Atomic Age and Cold War. We could not allow the mortal world to destroy itself and us in the process; our own mystic faculties helped to insure that cooler heads kept annihilation constantly at bay. It was a close thing—many times, agents went their own way or themselves came under the influence of rivals, as made possible by the tremendous spread of communications and travel. A general blackmailed in one nation could be replaced with a call from another, wiping away years of careful work. We watched, we husbanded our strength, and we continued to support the Camarilla, hoping that no mortal would ever bring the force of the world to bear against Kindred.

As the age has turned, so too has our clan changed. Where once we might have been medieval wizards, we've evolved to fit this modern age. Wizardry is all about inventiveness and adaptability: The magician is a seer and one who's ready to grapple with uncommon ideas or unaccepted theories. We've transformed into the modern magicians. While our elders may remain ensconced in stone walls with Gargoyles and bloody "spells," we've got virtual chantries and Internet incantations fueled by JavaScript and immortality. The world's advances become our playthings, because we're the ones who understand most the value of interconnectedness, the chains and hierarchies that even mortals are only just beginning to spread across the world in a web of silicon. We know the secrets that numbers can't tell, and we know how to make the numbers dance in intricate shapes. While other Kindred scabble to claim their own pieces of the emerging globe, we've already plotted our pieces, divided up the territory and invested in the future. When others rely on their age-old Disciplines, we forge a new path with the flexibility of Thaumaturgy and the foresight of ambition. We made ourselves Kindred, and we're a newer, better breed—the old ones will go the way of the Long Night that spawned them, but we Tremere will adapt, acclimate and absorb the greatest new achievements into ourselves.





CHAPTER TWO: INSIDE THE PYRAMID

Regimentation and hierarchy go hand in hand with the Tremere clan — or so outsiders believe. Other vampires suspiciously paint the Tremere as a unified lockstep chain of command with harsh rules, punishments and authoritarian dogma. Given their apparent unity, the Tremere certainly seem like just such a monolithic pyramid.

The Tremere are organized, and they do have a hierarchy, but it is neither so rigid nor so dictatorial as many would believe. Formed originally from the social impetus of numerous cults of Hermes, in which like-minded wizards gathered to share and protect their respective talents, the Tremere “pyramid” is a social construct — and perhaps a little more. The ancient tradition of master-to-apprentice still holds much weight, and elders cement loyalty through the psychological power of communal rituals and the blood bond, especially just after the Embrace when an inductee latches on to any structure to grapple with his new condition. However, despite the paranoia of other clans and the self-serving claims of insecure elders, the Tremere have no great and terrible rituals to enforce unending subservience. The Warlocks maintain no secret squads of assassins whose sole purpose is to hunt down rogue Tremere. None but the most neurotic patrons have established dictums and pledges of allegiance binding their entire broods into lockstep behavior over “Tremere issues.” Mostly...

In short, the pyramid is a tool for survival. Young neonates gain a sense of organization so that they know who's successful, what's expected and how to survive. Elders tantalize subordinates with the promise of rewards — extra authority, esoteric training, political support — in return for faithful service, and punish the neonates who do not meet their expectations. Similar stick-and-carrot schemes drive

ambitious Kindred of other clans, but in the Tremere, the elders hold a monopoly on their secrets, and they present at least the appearance of cooperation. A neonate Brujah could learn the mysteries of Disciplines or Noddist heresies from anyone. A neonate Tremere can't very well turn to those outside his clan to improve his Thaumaturgical prowess. The pyramid thus promotes collaboration, subtly culls those who refuse to work within the strictures of the clan and provides clear lines of authority for those who latch onto it fanatically. At the same time, it's a backstabbing morass of treacherous, power-hungry individuals who'll break any of the rules or betray any colleague for a chance at promotion in the inflexible, ages-old structure.

THE PYRAMID'S PIECES

Appreciation for mysticism and numerology led the early Tremere to build their pyramid based on magical as well as practical principles. The mythical Tremere himself looms at the top of the pyramid, a figure unseen and unheard of by most of the clan. In theory, Tremere directs the clan from this position of leadership. In practice, sweeping decisions come from the councilors, seven elders who each oversee a given part of the world. Councilors appoint seven pontifices to arrange matters within their continents. The pontifices pass their orders on to seven lords each, who in turn oversee regents, who oversee apprentices.

Of course, simple mathematics suggest that the clan hardly claims enough members to fill each position with seven officers. Often, positions remain vacant, their duties



fulfilled by careful collaboration — or one-upmanship — among lesser parties; a pair of regents might divide the monitoring of a realm that would normally be adjudicated to a lord, while still performing their usual duties. Indeed, few cities can host so many vampires as to have a regent with seven apprentices. The pyramid *always* has a vacancy, and this tidbit is just one of the rewards for which competent members of the clan might vie.

RANKS

Loyal Tremere recognize positions of rank within the pyramid, both as a convenience of authority and as a tantalizing promise of power. This isn't so much a direct influence over other Tremere as it is recognition of service, capability and political savvy. Tremere in positions of rank often use their influence on their peers' behalf with the expectation of reciprocation. They learn the hidden secrets of the clan, then dole out such tidbits as might encourage their subordinates to remain loyal and productive. Rank isn't everything to a Tremere; indeed, some low-ranking Tremere don't even bother with the clan's structure, instead taking personal interests in other aspects of Kindred or mortal society. However, rank is the best way to advance in the clan's special knowledge, to gain the assistance of powerful Tremere Kindred, and to gain sway over Tremere clan resources.

While political positions like princes or scourges vary from city to city, the Tremere pyramid remains relatively consistent across the globe. An apprentice in one city immediately knows his position with respect to a regent in another. Each rank — apprentice, regent, lord, pontifex — has seven circles of mystery; a postulant starts at the first circle and (hopefully) progresses through the seventh. Each circle denotes a degree of mystic understanding and personal responsibility. Thus, an apprentice of the fifth circle presumably knows more occult secrets and wields greater authority than an apprentice of the third circle. In practice, of course, favoritism and prestatation come into play: The same apprentice of the fifth circle may hold his position simply by virtue of descent from the lineage of an important lord, while the apprentice of the third circle could be a frighteningly talented thaumaturge with few political ambitions. Nevertheless, the higher-circle Tremere outranks the lower-circle ones as far as the clan is concerned, and a higher station such as a regent would naturally far outstrip a simple apprentice. Those who achieve the higher ranks of a given title's circles of mystery (that is, circles five and above) are sometimes known as "high" members of their rank. Although usage varies — few bother with such awkward parlance as "high apprentice" — such distinctions often serve the pride (and vanity) that so often goes hand in hand with Tremere accomplishment.

Generally, a new Embrace receives the rank of apprentice of the first circle. Exceptions have happened — long-term ghouls, especially competent mortal magicians and favorite childer of high-ranking Tremere have all claimed positions of

authority early in their "careers" — but for most, the journey starts at the bottom. It's a long, slow road up. Most Tremere don't pass the junior rank of apprentice; fierce infighting blocks advancement, and some Warlocks simply give in to frustration or ennui without ever rising through the ranks. A few eschew the hierarchy altogether to exist as anarchs, autarkis or rogues.

Kindred outside the Tremere clan rarely have any familiarity with the rank structure. The average person doesn't know the hierarchy of the Rosicrucians from the 1500s; neither do non-Tremere Kindred study the internal policies of the clan. Occasionally a nosy Kindred tries to figure out the rank structure, but the fact that ranks have more to do with political jockeying and knowledge than with actual command sometimes makes it difficult to discern the underlying pattern — a skilled apprentice may wield far more influence than a figurehead regent. For their part, Tremere are exhorted to keep the ranking structure private; only the most rebellious or absent-minded Tremere discusses apprentices and regents in Elysium.

FLEDGLINGS

A just-Embraced Tremere finds herself in a tenuous position. Not only must she balance the demands of the Beast and the sudden transformation from human to monster, but she's inundated with her sire or regent's admonitions. Like other Kindred, she must learn the Traditions (particularly the Masquerade), discover means to feed, hone her new Disciplines and grapple with the morality of her new existence. Thus, Clan Tremere has one of the highest failure rates of all the Kindred families — coming to grips with their hellish new existence proves too much for most new Embraces, and they either go mad or end their unives by greeting the next sunset.

A Tremere's sire may play a part in her acceptance of her state, but the clan's hierarchy may do so as well — often, a high-ranking apprentice or regent also acts as mentor to the fledgling Kindred, if only for a short time. This isn't so much a brainwashing as it is a "welcome to the conspiracy." The regent or sire gives the Tremere Oath as a skilled thaumaturge uses the Transubstantiation of Seven ritual. Aside from that, it's unlife as usual; the sire or assigned mentor makes introductions into Kindred society, watches out for problems and helps the new recruit to adjust. The momentous weight of the change from life to undeath entices many young Kindred to grasp for whatever authority they can, simply to give their unives some sort of structure. The pyramid fulfills that need. When desperate neonates look for explanations of their condition or help in coping with their new vampirism, the sire often fills in the role of mentor. With the Tremere, though, the pyramid is part and parcel to the package. Along with the Traditions and the duties of childe to sire come admonitions to pay heed to the pyramid and lessons in its structure.

Of course, the above assumes that one's sire is a dutiful Tremere — that is, one who's not above using the pyramid as

another tool to influence her childe's loyalties. The clan's insular structure makes "rogue" Embraces less common than among other Kindred, but not totally unknown. Sometimes an ignorant neonate Embraces an old love, or a regent Embraces a family member, or an impassioned Tremere Embraces a lover or infatuated paramour. Officially, ranking Tremere frown upon this practice. It wouldn't do to have too many "accidental" Tremere running loose with a few clan secrets, a handful of misinformed opinions and no safeguards in place, after all. In practice, such fledglings tend to be assimilated once they're discovered; better to use a resource than to waste it. Naturally, they must undergo the oath and the Transubstantiation, and many suffer from a social stigma among more conservative Tremere. Among liberal regents and apprentices, though, such fledglings can interact without much prejudice — so long as the "real" Tremere don't care about the supposed pedigree of the fledgling, she's just another unfortunate (and potential servant) in need of instruction. Indeed, a Tremere Embraced without the usual ritual can be quite ignorant of usual clan policies or even Kindred society, and thus makes a perfect "protégé."

As with any Kindred, the level of freedom afforded a fledgling varies from sire to sire. Some sires require their childer to attend them at all times until released, the assumption being that the sire will properly educate the childe in the mystic arts and prevent her from making any egregious mistakes. Other sires give their childer wider berth to learn on their own and learn through experience, reasoning that the childe must acclimate to the Embrace according to her own predilections. Still, very few regents would accept a Caitiff or a childe who hasn't gone through the oath and the Transubstantiation; clan secrets remain secret, after all. A Tremere would no more trust an undereducated fledgling with Thaumaturgy than a Mason would tell his society's secret history to someone who'd never been initiated or learned the special offices, keywords and philosophies.

APPRENTICES

The bulk of neonates rank as apprentices. The apprentice serves several duties to the clan. Presumably, the apprentice brings specific abilities to the table. Most apprentices work to hone their specialty. By working with the skills they know best, they stand the greatest chance of promotion through success. Young apprentices study the basics of Thaumaturgy and the Kindred condition with their sires and superiors; older ones most often work according to their tastes and talents. A diplomatic apprentice, for instance, may be tasked with maintenance of good relations with local Kindred of importance — it would be foolish to rely on him as a geologist or Kabbalistic scholar when his talents make him more valuable in other directions, and the clan can simply go to a different specialist for such skills.

Foremost among an apprentice's characteristics is duty. No vampire would care to spend unlife as a servant to another's whims, but an apprentice who bothers to pay

respect to clan ideals ultimately hopes to improve in the ranks. That means that the apprentice needs to at least *appear* to have his master's goals in mind. Degrees of duty vary, of course. Some Tremere hope to advance through the ranks by mastering Thaumaturgy, by making unprecedented new breakthroughs or by sycophantically supporting a higher-ranking Tremere. Others treacherously seek opportunities to discredit or depose their peers and seniors. Still others serve the clan in other capacities — more than one Tremere funds his colleagues' experiments with money drawn from venture-capital returns, and the Tremere who maintains an A-list nightlife spot likely wields a frightening array of Kindred gossip. Because the apprentice improves in rank only at the whim of his regent (or higher authority), he must serve that luminary's cause if he's to rise in circle.

Typical duties for an apprentice vary widely with the individual and location. An apprentice who works directly with a regent in a strongly Camarilla city will find himself encouraged to assist in research, aid in clan-specific goals, work with other Kindred (if he's sociable enough) and to complete regular progress reports. Cities with a more chaotic temperament, or fewer Tremere, give apprentices more latitude: Obviously apprentices continue to indulge in their personal predilections, but the less Tremere influence in a city, the less that an apprentice is expected to do. If there's no regent to give orders and no chantry to collect reports, after all, then the apprentice works on his own cognizance. Occasionally apprentices do wind up in areas where their superiors might have interests — say, a politico moved to a state capital to observe the legislature, while his regent remains in another city and reaps the benefits. In such cases the interested parties often request regular correspondence so that they can sift out choice bits of information. The apprentice's overall workload really depends upon how much value he places on his functions and upon his regent's strictness. An apprentice with a conservative, draconian regent may find himself required to toe the line of the Tremere Oath, to submit weekly progress reports and to account for his time away from the chantry. More moderate regents recognize that this level of oversight stifles creativity and incites rebellion, so most apprentices find their duties fairly light. Naturally, if the apprentice fulfills his role admirably, he's tantalized with the rewards of secrets and promotions. If he slackens, he simply doesn't advance in the hierarchy, and he may acquire a poor reputation among other Tremere. It's only if an apprentice horribly botches a project, deliberately ruins a Tremere undertaking, proves intractable or serves as a scapegoat for someone else that he'll find himself taken to task.

Probably the most important distinction, though, is that an apprentice accepts such treatment. Those who decide not to work within the clan's strictures, or who reject the authority of higher-ranking members, often find themselves stripped of rank. It's possible to be an anarch apprentice, but it's rare; such loose cannons are often seen as threats to the clan's

legacy, and the elders have little love for unpredictable or fractious subordinates. Ranked apprentices generally include a spectrum, from nominally loyal neonates who see their duties as an acceptable chore to enthusiastic followers who look to the clan's agenda as much as their own. A consistently difficult apprentice probably won't make it past the early circles, risks a blood bond to the council if he has a strict regent and may well break with the clan's politics entirely. Unlife is usually short for such mavericks.

The rewards of apprenticeship are often commensurate with the duties, of course. An apprentice can accomplish more and better tasks with expanded knowledge and skill, so it's in the best interests of his superiors to make sure that he's well-trained once he's proven his value. Repeated advancement of clan interests can concomitantly lead to advancement through circles of mystery (assuming that the apprentice doesn't alienate his superiors socially — more than one promising apprentice has been held to low rank simply due to a conflict of personality). An apprentice who loyally obliges "requests," reports dutifully on progress and passes on useful information may slowly rise to become an attaché or aide to an important regent or lord, and thus be able to carry the weight of that patron's standing.

An apprentice's freedom of movement varies with age, personal experience and circle. At the first circle of mystery, apprentices remain under close scrutiny. Naturally, the regulations vary from regent to regent, but most new apprentices must remain in regular contact with their superiors (once per week is common), refrain from voicing any opinion on Tremere clan policies without the approval of a superior, and visit the chantry regularly (again, once per week is common). Domineering regents sometimes even require such neonates to use the chantry as their haven, and exercise even more direct influence over the low apprentice's night-to-night existence. Because a revolt is so unlikely to succeed (or, at least, that appearance is fostered for the hapless apprentice), the only way out is to follow the rules and gain rank — a cycle that perpetuates itself as the rising Tremere in turn entertains similar expectations from new recruits. As the apprentice rises in circle, he's given more leeway for his personal projects. Improvement to the second or third circle comes as the apprentice works out his place with his peers. Once the apprentice fulfills his regent's expectations for basic competence, usually including knowledge of the Traditions, a good grasp of the Tremere Oath and some rudimentary understanding of occult principles, he no longer requires such direct supervision, which his superiors recognize with promotion. The fourth and fifth circles represent competent apprentices who work as aides to higher apprentices or regents, who take direction well but have also learned to work independently within the rules. These mid-level apprentices have consistent records for discipline, skill and initiative. Most mid-ranking apprentices make only monthly or annual reports to their regents, to detail the highlights of their

WHAT EXACTLY IS A LOYAL TREMERE?

A "loyal Tremere" is any Tremere who has something to gain from the clan by screwing you over.

— Everett Thig, Tremere apprentice

Kindred are petty, snide, vain, backstabbing creatures by nature. Tremere exacerbate this with a pyramid that encourages advancement by stepping on others. The idea of a "loyal Tremere" seems, after some consideration, a contradiction in terms.

Loyal Tremere include those who manage to check their ambition enough to avoid overreaching themselves. That is, a loyal Tremere is one who hasn't been caught breaking the rules, who gives his superiors consideration and who pays the obligatory visible service to the clan's oath. None of this is exclusive of personal goals, of course. Instead, the loyal Tremere makes sure that his goals coincide with the clan's interests; a Tremere skilled in finance, for instance, may use his talents to increase available holdings for a local regent or lord and thereby remain loyal.

Similarly, the loyal Tremere keeps an eye out for other Tremere who don't exercise as much discretion, and quickly makes use of such troublemakers. The Kindred toes the line of acceptable behavior (as defined by local custom and individual superiors) while keeping an eye out for any Tremere who makes the mistake of flying in the face of authority. If a Tremere finds himself declared a rogue, it's his "clan-loyal" brethren who see to his capture or destruction. When the regent needs someone to do dirty work, it's the loyal Tremere who volunteers, while others remain ambivalent. Naturally, the pyramid rewards loyalty. The question is, do the rewards match what the individual Tremere wants?

In the end, the Tremere pyramid is not a body of law. It is a social system by which like-minded Kindred reward the merits of those who meet their superiors' approval.

projects. Apprentices of the sixth and seventh circles may move far afield, indeed; they are sometimes seen like master sergeants — carrying great weight of experience and personal skill, capable of extended tasks and problem-resolution, but also loyal to the higher ranks. These sorts of apprentices can be tapped for promotion to regent positions when a new chantry forms, or can be sent into difficult extended service; their proven loyalty and competence make them valued assets to their masters. It's only at such ranks that most apprentices ever meet any Tremere other than their regent and peers: Apprentices who desire inter-clan communications (to compare notes on study or to garner news from a distant city, perhaps) typically send such missives through regents, in the fashion of a conspiratorial cell.

REGENTS

Proven loyalty to the clan leads to positions of some authority. Regency involves sway over an entire chantry, typically with several apprentices. Most neonate Tremere can aspire at best to this rank — their relative inexperience and weakness of blood mean that they will not replace the staid elders in higher positions except in unusual circumstances. Indeed, many Tremere never attain this threshold, instead keeping the position of apprentice at a high circle of mystery.

The regents combine familiarity with Tremere occultism with substantial temporal duties. Most often, regents oversee new Embraces, perform important rituals such as wards and the Transubstantiation (see below), set local Tremere standards, develop long-range goals for their chantries, and arrange financial clout. The regent coordinates the necessary materials for maintenance of a chantry, handles communication with other cities, disseminates occult lore, and sets policy for dealings with other Kindred. (How much an apprentice actually follows these dictates depends upon the regent's enforcement techniques and the apprentice's interest, of course...) In short, the regent manages the details required by the presence of a chantry, in addition to his normal nightly routine.

Although regents deal with Tremere business, that's hardly the sum of their existence. A regent still has a personality; he can still take in a ballet, dabble in the stock market, seduce hapless mortal paramours — whatever his fancy. His responsibility to the Tremere clan is administrative. After all, *someone* has to keep records of chantry finances, blackmail materials, occult library contents and databases of important connections. The regent makes sure that such information stays in order, and consequently he also has access to nearly all local Tremere resources. How a regent manages these resources is up to him — he can delegate them to apprentices, oversee them personally, convince a mortal to take care of the taxes or whatever, just so long as the chantry runs smoothly and visiting Tremere don't find any egregious holes in the records. In fact, many regents do delegate such matters, and many chantries have apprentices (or lesser regents) appointed as librarians, accountants, majordomos and even network administrators.

Because regents deal with communications, they handle ties between varied cities. Often, regents rely on the contacts of their ranking lords. If a regent in Philadelphia doesn't know who's doing business in Milwaukee, he'll just have to send a missive to his lord and wait for it to cross channels if he thinks that a change in paper prices is about to drive Wisconsin's printing economy over a cliff. Some regents have an advantage if they attain their position at the same time as some of their contemporaries — if several apprentices become regents of varied cities at the same time, ties to such acquaintances can prove useful, much as a military commander might call up a friend with whom he studied in the academy.

Upon his increase in rank, a regent of the first circle has just been charged with foundation of a chantry, or with oversight of a small chantry or project. Concomitantly higher circles denote authority over greater chantries or projects. A first-circle regent completes reports (by paper, phone, personal visit or whatever's convenient) to a lord regarding clan projects, generally once per month with a personal visit at least once per year. Higher-ranking regents gain more leeway to manage according to personal discretion and taste. By the seventh circle, a regent may not only maintain a chantry in a large city, but in associated projects and several satellite chantries as well, overseeing the duties of multiple apprentices or working directly for a high-ranking lord or pontifex.

Once a Tremere becomes a regent — and many never do — he's heavily ensconced in the clan structure. His important responsibilities and his access to sensitive material mean that the lords can't permit him to be lax or chaotic. While apprentices have some latitude in their loyalties, the lords pay attention to regents' behavior — and ambitious apprentices or competing regents are quick to take advantage of any "treason." Not that some distant lord directs a regent's every move; rather, a regent simply needs to remember where his loyalties lie. A lord might remind an errant regent in any number of subtle fashions: withholding useful information, denying promotion or approval for new apprentices, sending letters of chastisement to other regents and lords, or just turning a deaf ear to the requests of a regent who decides to let his personal ambitions exceed his contributions to the clan. A regent's personal interests are intimately tied to the clan's. For this reason, a regent must be expert at finding ways to combine his agenda with the clan's, or at least to convince other Tremere that his actions serve a boon cause to the clan as a whole. Regents have managed to convince other Tremere to support their personal influence schemes or bids for power on the pretext that what's good for them also benefits the clan. Such tactics can also easily descend into the realm of "us versus them," in which cases Tremere broaden their own contacts or powers "just to keep them out of the hands of others."

LORDS

Most Tremere will never meet anyone above the rank of lord. Indeed, the lords communicate most of their missives through intermediaries, mystical means or written direction, and the regents under their command must interpret their requests. A lord oversees an entire geographic region, such as a small group of states in the US or a small country in Europe.

A neonate might expect a lord to wield considerable influence, but this isn't necessarily the case. Instead of directly pulling the strings in mortal government or Kindred society, a lord uses ties within the Tremere clan to get business done. Certainly, a lord will oversee areas of personal interest — one lord known for an interest in metallurgy and geology has funded several material science projects personally — but most often the lord keeps a general outline of the region and lets local Tremere handle "clan business." A lord cannot be everywhere, and many lords reward those who aid

them in their own capacities. For example, a lord who wishes to line his region's coffers with gambling proceeds will probably not talk to members of state gaming boards himself, but will call upon those Tremere (or even outsiders) within his region who have contacts with such governmental agencies.

Of course, regents and lower-ranking Tremere don't have to step and fetch at a lord's every whim. Instead, the lord brokers deals through his substantial influence. Just like a doctor in the Masons might cut a deal with his friend the judge, the lord arranges the trade of useful talent between various parties, and claims his own due off the top. For making arrangements between two Kindred in need of a meeting, the lord might garner a small boon. For teaching a little-known Thaumaturgy ritual, the lord may name a price in duties. For silence in the matter of a regent's ill-advised activities in violation of the Code of the Tremere, the lord secures a behind-the-scenes favor involving some things better left unsaid. Due to extensive contacts and assumed authority, the lord has substantial knowledge or resources to trade. In turn, the lord makes sure that Tremere business runs smoothly in his area — if a prince gets too uppity in demands of the clan, the lord could arrange for several visitors to make a "demonstration"; if a dangerous rogue explains the internal hierarchy to outsiders, the lord might encourage regional Tremere to deal with the renegade, with promises of rewards.

Each lord answers to an appropriate pontifex, and usually oversees several regents directly. A lord can surpass the usual chain of communication to speak directly to apprentices within his region, and has the authority to discipline clan members who forget their place. Many lords also take on a promising apprentice or regent as an attaché to oversee their personal, night-to-night business and take care of mundane paperwork or administrative matters. At the low ranks, a lord still wields substantial authority, but must rely upon his own contacts within his region. As the lord increases in rank, contacts with other lords and hopeful regents become more frequent; the lord's successes encourage others to tie their fortunes to his, and the lord can use his rank alone to request minor favors. Contacts with other lords result in an overlapping web of influence, as the lord can claim "considerations" from neighboring lords in order to pursue his projects, have useful Tremere transferred into his area or overlook minor indiscretions. To facilitate communication, most lords meet with their pontifex at least once every three years; the lord is expected to make travel accommodations, and to plan for a stay of several nights or even weeks. During such times the lord has the opportunity to present matters to the pontifex personally, or to become involved in wide-ranging plots and tribunals.

PONTIFICES

Just beneath the Council of Seven, the secretive pontifexes are the eyes of the Tremere across the world. A pontifex oversees operations in a large geographical area — a portion of a large nation, perhaps, or an agglomeration of small countries or islands — or handles matters directly relating to

temporal influence, such as finance and industry or politics and religion. Each pontifex carries the experience of centuries, the skill of planning long-range designs and the power to sway the ranks of lesser Tremere with the utterance of their names alone.

A pontifex acts much like a lord, only with a broader realm of responsibility — she correlates information, handles the transfer of useful resources from area to area, keeps the lords in line and plays out the clan's territorial ambitions. Because the pontifex oversees such a great domain, she can initiate operations that affect whole cities. A pontifex might instruct all Tremere apprentices and regents in a given city to cease operations and move if a local luminary decides to take advantage of the Tremere; because the pontifex can make her displeasure keenly known, such suggestions come closer to true orders than the more open policies of lower-ranking clanmates.

Rarely does a pontifex involve herself in simple nightly problems or personal disputes. With a baleful gaze cast across miles, the pontifex must balance the long-term repercussions of various actions upon both private interests and clan matters. Every pontifex wields surpassing skill in both Thaumaturgy and in more mundane specialties. Internally, a pontifex could easily expect apprentices and even regents to bow to her whims; externally, a pontifex seems a shadowy nightmare to non-Tremere, one of the rumored elders who never comes to the fore but rather wages Jyhad from behind a veil of lessers. A pontifex does not stoop to mere brawling. Rather, the pontifex knows the value of time and planning. Where a lord might divert some resources from one city to another in order to help the clan's influence grow, a pontifex looks to the ultimate value of such influence — why bother sending steel to Detroit if the auto industry is all moving overseas or south in the next 50 years? A pontifex is not a corporate manager — she doesn't draft memos. Rather, she lets various lords know her general expectations: "I want to see the chantries on the East Coast reinforced; too much Sabbat activity. Collect prestation debts to challenge the might of that bishop in Raleigh-Durham. And keep an eye on heavy-metal mining operations; the proliferation of nuclear powers means a gradual increase in demand there." As usual, a lord's reactions generally relate to what the lord thinks will succeed and advance her personal ambitions, but a displeased pontifex can easily call on many, many lesser ranks of Tremere who'd be more than happy to gain a promotion at the expense of one rebellious clanmate.

The pontifexes must have a broad view of clan history and direction. While a regent may cover operations in a local chantry, the pontifex understands how the clan started, how it holds power in the Camarilla and what it must do to continue in a place of prominence. Rare is the pontifex without a firm grasp of Tremere legacy, Tremere secrets and extensive thaumaturgical knowledge. Indeed, most also have an exceeding command of Camarilla history, the development of customs

like Elysium and prestation, and even the general histories of other clans — all the better to advance Tremere standing in Kindred society.

Circles of mystery mean little to pontifexes. In theory, a higher-ranking circle denotes a pontifex of superior authority, but in practice, the circles of pontifexes have more to do with favor of the Council, prosperity of controlled areas and specialized occult knowledge.

ADJUSTMENTS, PROMOTIONS AND DEMOTIONS

Fledgling Tremere look upon rank advancement as a reward system. To some degree, this is true; if an apprentice can be exhorted to greater effort simply for the intangible reward of a circle of mystery, then his regent will happily motivate him thus. Once a Tremere becomes more experienced with the system, though, he realizes that rank is more complex than just rewards and punishments.

As a reward or punishment, a Tremere can be advanced in or stripped of rank; any Tremere of higher rank may do so, though this may require a tribunal. In such a fashion an individual Tremere's accomplishments or failings are recognized.

However, long-ranging plans of lords and pontifexes call for a network of Tremere ranks that reflect political expedience over their dominion. For this reason, a Tremere's rank doesn't *always* correspond directly to his accomplishments. In a small or underpopulated town, it may be impossible for a Tremere to reach the rank of regent, simply because the area's lord feels that no regent is necessary and no chantry should be supported in the locale — one Tremere may be plenty. Similarly, if a pontifex needs to strengthen an area against the Sabbat or the movements of a rival elder, she may promote several promising apprentices to regent status and charge all of them with the expansion of Tremere territory and the construction of new chantries. An apprentice may receive an attaché position in lieu of promotion, showing that responsibilities remain the same but in a different emphasis. Kindred may even receive promotions simply to further some greater scheme of the lords and pontifexes. A jealous rival may be prompted to rash action if his adversary is promoted to regency before him, or an apprentice adjusted down in rank may make a perfect plant in a difficult location as someone who appears to be a neophyte but is actually far more experienced. Ranks facilitate the system; they do not bow to it.

SECRET SOCIETIES

The Tremere pyramid holds layers upon layers of conspiracy. The Masquerade hides Kindred, the Tremere conceal their clan secrets within the Camarilla, and each rank in the pyramid successively holds deeper insight into the clan's overall goals. No wonder, then, that some Kindred in the clan also form additional secret groups to advance their specific agendas. A circle of regents and apprentices might meet to discuss their mutual interests in accumulating the accolades

of their colleagues in their city or to take care of problems threatening the chantry or resource base, but those who seek hidden knowledge or "extracurricular" goals gather with other like-minded Tremere in surreptitious communion.

While apprentices and regents meet in the chantries to discuss mutually beneficial goals, secret societies usually gather in back rooms or private havens. Few such societies have any sort of official recognition within the clan, and indeed, membership in some can be considered a serious offense. Tremere enter secret societies for the same reasons that anyone else might: to obtain their personal desires, to share information with others of similar mind and to garner useful contacts.

Houses

The houses of Clan Tremere are little more than cults of personality at their worst, but are distinct colleges of magic or philosophy at their most valid. The clan consists of an unknown number of houses, some claiming only a handful of members, while others — the House of Tremere — claim every child of the clan.

Houses theoretically grow around one central magical principle or collection of theories. House Tremere, for example, upholds Hermetic blood magic as its fundamental doctrine. Other houses, such as the supposedly defunct House Quaesitor, upheld a code above that of the Tremere Code, which was the Code of Hermes in this case. Still others, such as House Goratrix, espouse similar thaumaturgical ideals but differ wholly on the practice and ethics of blood magic.

By and large, houses are informal congregations, peopled by elective memberships and upheld as long as they fulfill some purpose. Even these purposes may vary — House Massimo is a social league of Italian Tremere that convenes for the purpose of trading rituals; House ab Flaidd advocates the study of Wicca as an adjunct to Hermetic Thaumaturgy.

Storytellers and players should feel free to create their own houses. They are an excellent opportunity for characters to meet other Tremere (and even other thaumaturges, in the case of some liberal houses...), and a fun vehicle by which to spawn small new societies of the undead.

ASTORS

Dating to the mortal days of the Tremere clan, astors function as secret police. An astor theoretically wields the authority of the pontifices themselves; indeed, rumor has it that one pontifex is counted as an astor and guides the astors in maintaining internal order. Naturally, few Tremere would draw enough concern to require direct intervention from their clanmates, but in the rare cases where an individual Tremere becomes a problem for the clan as a whole, the astors intervene.

Astors train in Thaumaturgy, investigative and interrogation techniques, and some combat skills; an astor must be capable of hunting down any and all treachery, stopping leaks of Tremere secrets and even destroying Tremere Kindred who let their personal wants lead them down the road of folly. An astor's internal authority in judgments is absolute: If a tribunal declares a Tremere as rogue or threat, the astors hunt him; if a Tremere seems to be erring on the side of dangerous behavior, an astor may investigate under the guise of "transferring" to the region.

Most Tremere who've survived more than a year have at least heard of the astors, but the individual identities of these dozen or so Tremere remain very secret. Because an astor must juggle responsibility to the clan against local Kindred politics, this position results in high turnover; an astor who executes a treacherous Tremere regent may find himself executed in turn for violations of a prince's Tradition of Destruction. In many ways astors are like the internal affairs branch of the Tremere clan. Even though the clan does not have rules as rigid as a police force or a military organization, some lines simply just aren't crossed, and the astor's responsibility is to discipline his peers for the good of the common whole.

Supposedly, the astors have a host of special rituals used to expedite their tasks: rituals to occlude communications, to recognize other astors or to track scant evidence. Whether these are common to the astors as a whole or simply special rituals made by individual astor thaumaturges remains unknown.

HOUSES OF THE TREMERE

Listed below are a few of the more prominent — or notorious — houses of Clan Tremere. Not all of these are common knowledge; some exist only as rumors and may well be fictional, while others are august and prestigious.

House	Practice	Notes
Trismegistus	symbolism and numerology	
Hashem	Kabbalah	
Rodolfo	divination	
Daughters of the Crone	birth and death magic	
Horned Society	infernalism	allows non-Kindred members
High Saturday	voodoo and necromancy	allows non-Tremere members
Auram Guild	alchemy	
Goratrix	Thaumaturgy	Tremere <i>antitribu</i> of the Sabbat

ROGUE-HUNTING FOR FUN AND PROFIT

Tremere dissidents almost universally find themselves in a desperate position — their own clan distrusts them, and in some cases even brings force to bear against them. The very Oath of the Tremere requires that any rogue be put to Final Death, hard terms against which to argue. Indeed, some Tremere posit that hunting renegades is a necessary duty.

The truth of the matter, as with many things Tremere, remains slightly divergent from appearances. Rogues acquire their standing simply by virtue of inconveniencing or embarrassing higher-ranking members of the pyramid. It's that simple: become a nuisance to a ranking regent and risk a rogue declaration. The regent can find a clause later to support his claim, and in the meantime apprentices hoping to curry the regent's favor know that the rogue is fair game. Tremere know that a rogue declaration frequently has little more to it than political expedience, but the practice goes unchallenged because supporting it means that ranking Tremere can use it later. "In the interests of the Tremere clan" comes to mean "In my interests, but the clan's a convenient excuse because I'm a loyal member."

As with other matters hierarchical, rogue declarations bow to the prevailing political winds. A regent who declares someone a rogue might find matters turned on his head if his lord decides that the rogue is more useful or the regent more threatening. A Tremere who finds himself declared anathema may manage to gain the protection of a different lord or regent if he proves useful enough, in which case a liberal tribunal can clear the rogue. Conversely, an unfortunate patsy may find himself a rogue without his knowledge, only to be hunted and disposed of by other Tremere seeking the favor of his accusers.

A rogue's greatest enemies, though, remain hidden in the pyramid — Elites and astors. Both execute summary (and final) judgments upon rogues. More canny Tremere saddle rogues with blame. When an experiment goes awry, when an undertaking fails unexpectedly, when two competing Tremere need someone else to take the fall for their own destructive squabbles, the rogue becomes the source of all problems. A rogue can quickly acquire such a long list of atrocities that no one will stoop to helping him or clearing his name.

CHILDREN OF THE PYRAMID

Just as some neonates latch on to the pyramid as a surrogate parental structure to help them through the transition to undeath, some Tremere see the pyramid as more than just a hierarchy. To those wrapped up in the idea of the pyramid, the very concept holds power; it gains godhead from the adherence of its many followers. The Children of the



Pyramid thus hold that the pyramid itself represents the material authority of a godlike entity.

Children of the Pyramid meet in secret to discuss their spiritual advancement in addition to their clan duties. To the Children, adherence to the pyramid is not only a sensible structure but a near-religious duty. The Children thus rely heavily upon metaphors, especially upon an ancient sorcerous tome called *The Travels of Fedoso*, which tells the allegory of a wizard's travels up a mountainside as a metaphor for the road to enlightenment. With quotations from the book, the Children recognize other adherents, and they discuss ways to rise through the ranks and become closer to their godhead. In their scheme, Tremere exists as the unliving Son of the Pyramid, a sort of vampiric apotheosis who has brought his enlightened way to his select children.

Naturally, the rather fanatical viewpoints of the Children make them useful — a Child of the Pyramid will jump to support a superior — but they're also regarded as somewhat extreme. Few Tremere enjoy their company; most Children have an almost Puritanical sense of duty to the pyramid and a concomitant constant wariness for "traitors." (The Hierarchical Sociology Disorder derangement [see p. 68] is a common aberration among this group.)

THE ELITE

Given their insular ways and special capabilities, Tremere Kindred have a decided difference from other vampires. Their very origin tells of their superiority in bringing on vampirism willingly, rather than suffering the indignity of a curse. These differences spread the poisonous doctrine of the Elite, who believe in the superiority of the Tremere over other clans and in the ultimate victory of the Tremere clan against all other Kindred in the Jyhad.

Members of the Elite work quietly to press their supremacy — a murdered Kindred here, a discredited rival there, a patsy indebted with Thaumaturgy in another place. Each one becomes a piece converted to serve the Tremere or removed entirely from the picture. The Elite jealously guard clan secrets and believe that the Tremere pyramid, the will of Tremere himself and their own talents show that the Tremere are not simply another clan, but a new step in vampire existence.

Some extremists among the already-radical Elite have taken to the dangerous practice of hunting other Kindred, especially those who uncover clan secrets. While ranking Tremere frown upon dissemination of clan information, they frown even more sternly upon crazed zealots making enemies through wanton killing, but this does not stop the Elite; they believe that natural Tremere superiority justifies their actions. Small groups of Elite apprentices covertly meet to discuss ways to make the clan strong, plots to topple Tremere "assimilators" who work freely with other Kindred, and means to destroy those few who manage to wrest Thaumaturgy or hidden lore from the Tremere. Indeed, it's rumored that modern Elite require prospective members to hunt and kill a non-Tremere thaumaturge, and that they use special rituals to do so. Elite also participate

PARTISAN NOMENCLATURE

Traditionalists and transitionalists are not formal parties; they are simply statements that refer to the degree of conservatism or liberalism of the vampires in question. Throughout the clan, Tremere sometimes join more formal (if smaller) secret societies that subscribe to traditional or transitional theories. The Society of Rhamatha, for example, is a traditional faction populous in northern Africa, while Crypto Cell is a transitional cabal of autarkis in Northern California. Storytellers and politically oriented Tremere players alike are encouraged to create or name their own factions of the political system.

actively in hunting down rogues, under the guise of cleansing their ranks of the unworthy.

Since its formation in the late 18th century, the faction has drawn its fair share of derision from the less rabid mainstream clan. The group's activities meet a mixed reception. Elders publicly decry such heavy-handed tactics, but sometimes privately approve of the removal of a problem Kindred. Many Tremere consider the society little more than a bigoted gang, while members themselves rally to the cause of their own righteousness.

TRADITIONALISTS

Even though Tremere elders do not often involve themselves directly in the affairs of modern Kindred, they still exert a powerful ideological influence over the clan. Because many high-ranking positions are filled by elders, the inertia of these static creatures brings great weight to bear upon the clan.

Traditionalists believe that the Tremere clan must adhere to ancient practices in order to remain strong. Such Kindred shun modern technology and often retain old methods of speech or behavior. Progressive Kindred scoff at this as a simple attempt to justify their own inability to adapt to changing times, but the traditionalists have a very strong argument — Tremere strength comes from many secrets preserved unchanged for ages, and anything that compromises or outdates such secrets threatens the Tremere power base. With their formidable wills, aggressive personalities and penchant for Thaumaturgy, the traditionalists frown upon such technologies as computers or global communications, and instead rely upon their Disciplines and cunning to perform similar analogues.

In addition to their reliance upon old, proven techniques, the traditionalists hold that all Tremere should follow in their footsteps — only loyalty to the clan and slow, methodical expansion leads to ranking authority. Because the traditionalists hold many positions of power, they can often hold this view over their subordinates; a reckless or progressive apprentice may find himself barred from promotion, simply because his traditionalist regent frowns upon his practices.

Traditionalists make up one of the few fairly "public" orders among the Tremere clan. Most Tremere can pinpoint others as traditionalists or transitionalists (see below); such affiliations are much like a division between right-wing and left-wing politics. As with politics, members of this faction rely on their network of authoritative allies to retain power blocs, to stop the ambitions of lesser Tremere who do not cleave to their ideas and to convince underlings of their methods.

TRANSITIONALISTS

Young and active Kindred realize that the world changes more quickly now than ever. Old ways become outdated almost nightly. A simple button-press, a piece of paper or a new discovery on the other side of the world can overturn supremacy in one moment. Transitionalist Tremere argue that the clan must accept and use all manner of new directions, be it computer technology, new thaumaturgical developments or adaptive social constructs.

Few elder Tremere number among the transitionalists; the Kindred penchant for stasis with age overcomes many Kindred's ability to accept innovation. Thus, the transitionalists have a strong groundswell of support from young Tremere who understand modern methodologies and see a chance to advance themselves at the expense of their outdated elders. In contrast, the elders see transitionalists as a threat, and reactively quash their ideas or ban their modern doctrines.

Despite their lack of acceptance among authoritative Tremere, the transitionalists remain a rather open faction. Young apprentices often approach fledglings to convince them of transitionalist ideas, or to show how elder sluggishness prevents the clan (and its members) from keeping up with the cutting edge of possible advancement. Few elders bother to fight the transitionalists openly; rather, they simply keep transitionalists in research or advisory capacities while promoting to authority the stable Kindred who promote traditional values.

GUARDIANS OF TRADITION

An extremely conservative chapter of traditionalists, the Guardians advocate the complete prevention of *any* modern policy shift. Reactionary Guardians fight against new thaumaturgical developments, oppose the use of all technology more complex than a printing press, and cloister themselves away from other Kindred in order to scheme in secret.

Of course, Guardians have an increasingly difficult time existing in the modern world. Tremere who hole up in darkened rooms with candles and quill pens are often derided by young Tremere (out of earshot, usually). A Kindred who refuses even to learn to use the telephone suffers a serious disadvantage in dealings with others. Constant new developments in Thaumaturgy help to wound one's rivals and offer hope of surviving Gehenna, but if they're never accepted, the Guardians may fall to more adaptable enemies.

Still, Guardians have strong supporters. More than one Tremere remembers well the Long Night, when vampires

ruled as lords of their midnight domains. The clan's structure and Thaumaturgy carried it through the brutal clashes with their venerable foes and into prominence in the Camarilla; why should matters be any different now? Kindred fearful of the modern age or unable to adapt often cling to outmoded habits, and find solace in kinship with the few others who share their anachronistic condition. These conservatives snap at anyone who proposes what they don't understand, and because some are elders with centuries of experience, they can be distressingly difficult to counter.

A few highly reactionary Guardians even espouse theories of eugenics, racial superiority or religious conservatism, but these sorts are increasingly rare in the modern nights. Little room remains for theological superiority when all Kindred are damned, and one's skin color hardly matters compared to one's prowess at subterfuge or blood magic.

The Guardians are probably not long for this world. They remain outmoded artifacts of a different age, but a new age comes. Still, they wield great personal power, and will not fade gently into irrelevance.

DEFUNCT ORDERS

Many secret societies have not survived the transition to the modern world. Whether due to extinction at the hands of their fellows, a changing philosophical environment, ruin by outside threats or the inevitable change of fashionable causes, some factions of Tremere have disappeared utterly. Others exist in scattered cells, some numbering as few as two Kindred. Still, in the modern nights, legacy and timeless ideals are sometimes as important as functionality.

The Order of Naturists

Some early Tremere had ties to Druidic magic and similar practices of the cultures with which they surrounded themselves. Indeed, more than one mortal *koldian* helped shape the magical practices of the Eastern European Tremere clan, complete with their ties to Transylvania's eldritch soil and forests. An order of pagan Lithuanian Tremere even flourished until the 1600s, calling themselves the Telyavs and Embracing from mortal nature cults.

Buried records hold that the various naturalistic influences on the Tremere clan led to a quiet few who sought out knowledge of their cousins in magical theory, and who gathered information about places of natural power. Over the years the faction dwindled; the few Naturists from these harsh times died or retreated to positions of obscurity and the utter destruction of the Telyavs shadowed the failure of such groups. By the turn of the 20th century, the Order of Naturists disappeared completely.

The Humanus League

The Humanus League historically comprised those rare Tremere who sought a rebirth of mortality. Following the stories of the elusive Comte St. Germain, who was rumored to have made a potion capable of restoring life, and hanging upon tales of Golconda and thaumaturgical transcendence,

the Kindred of the Humanus League sought to overcome their undead curse. They hoped that purification of their souls would allow them to rejoin the ranks of mortals, so they showed their love of mortality through charity, compassion and defense.

Of course, the demands of the Tremere hierarchy and the almost inescapable doom of vampirism leave little room for personal conscience. Stabbing one's peers in the back makes maintenance of *humanitas* difficult. According to the journals of League member Kurtos Siemenicz, the Humanus League fell apart under the weight of its own squabbling membership within the past 10 years; anyone who survived long enough to acquire real influence or prestige in the clan ultimately had to accept the Beast. The Humanus League was betrayed from within, and its members abandoned the cause, sank into despairing torpor or were sternly admonished to return to the fold.

The Golden Path of Harmony

The diplomatic among Tremere work to foster bonds of strong loyalty. As long as Tremere can trust one another, they state, they can work for mutual advancement. Of course, this leads to the Prisoner's Dilemma: if you have a chance to improve yourself by screwing someone else, and he has the same opportunity, odds are that you'll take it as soon as you can. Better to put the screws to someone else before he can put them to you.

The Golden Path of Harmony sought to advance internal cooperation and trust. Of course, like their optimistic cousins in the Humanus League, the Path lacked a real vision of how to accomplish things. More than once, a "trusting" Kindred found himself betrayed by his peers. Instead of learning to deal with the treachery, the Path members simply turned the other cheek, which inevitably led to their decline. One member of the Golden Path even wound up the spectacular target of allegations including diablerie, infernalism, fratricide and giving offense to an elder, from four different sources. Such trusting souls don't last long among the Tremere, often meeting Final Death as scapegoats or sacrificial lambs.

POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Given the rank structure in the Tremere clan, one wonders how it works in practice. Does a Tremere sublimate personal drives in favor of the clan? Obviously not. Does he ignore the hierarchy for individual gain? Again, no. The balance between the two makes for a narrow road, but those who walk that tightrope stand to gain much in Kindred society.

More than any other clan, the Tremere clan polices itself and exhorts its members to perform "for the good of the clan." With the compelling power of the bond to the council and the psychological weight of the code applied shortly after the Embrace, various Tremere elders can often convince neonates

to work on their behalf without much prestation. Similarly, young Tremere discover that their activities can bring commensurate rewards that no other vampire clan can bestow. The Tremere who would survive takes clan duties hand in hand with personal desires.

RESPONSIBILITIES

While ranking members of the Tremere pyramid exercise great authority, they also have commensurate responsibilities. Pontifices oversee whole regions and report their progress to the councilors. One poorly timed border skirmish or economic downturn can ruin a pontifex's year and place the unfortunate Kindred on the outs with the council, a frustration that the pontifex may well take out on her subordinates.

A Tremere's responsibilities often rely on her own sense of priorities. Often, a higher-ranking Tremere makes suggestions or requests, but these are hardly orders. Instead, a wise Tremere couches matters in terms that are advantageous to both parties. A regent motivates apprentices with tasks that benefit the entire clan, and especially that show a benefit to all Tremere in the city. Apprentices jockey for favors by trading carefully hoarded knowledge or prestation boons. Loyalty brings rewards, but sometimes a little initiative on the side may bring more — few apprentices would give up the chance to learn a bit of "special" blood magic despite prohibitions by superiors. A Tremere who desires position in the pyramid takes on responsibility for the clan; a Tremere who wants to advance personal goals simply doesn't volunteer for such jobs or performs the minimum requested by superiors.

When dealing with lords and pontifices, though, responsibilities become fairly rigid. By the time a Tremere's advanced to high rank in the pyramid, responsibility is an expectation. Of all the clans the Tremere are the ones most likely to be motivated by "the good of the clan," and this shows in large-scale dealings. Every Tremere checks over his shoulder to make sure that his actions won't bring down the fury of his elders, and then again to see if anyone's watching.

So what, exactly, does a Tremere do? This depends upon the locale and the individual's skills. Most Tremere are expected to use their talents on behalf of clan interests — that's probably why they were Embraced, after all. A Tremere diplomat handles negotiations with other clans. A financier makes sure that projects have enough money. Research specialists uncover lost rituals or new uses of old rituals and disseminate them.

Clan responsibilities don't take up all of a Tremere's time. There's no sense in keeping apprentices chained to their desks in a Dickensian chantry; that simply breeds resentment and rebellion. Leaders among the Tremere are (generally) smart enough to recognize that clan interests come second to the nightly unlife of Kindred. How effective can a diplomat be if he's still working through problems with his mortal family and isn't given the time needed to resolve

them? How useful is a financier if he suddenly disappears from sight of all his accounts? The Tremere's responsibility is to improve himself and to bring the occasional project of value to the clan, but how he does so is up to him.

GENERATING RESULTS

Tremere respect success — and repeated success is often more valuable than following the rules. Any neonate can blindly follow rules. Truly innovative Kindred learn which rules are sacrosanct and which are flexible, and how to use the rules to their own advantage. Personal initiative separates the leaders from the followers. Neonates risk much in the struggle to improve their lot — five-century-old Kindred are notoriously paranoid about subordinates who bend rules and break with expected behavior patterns around them — but some consider the rewards worthwhile.

As with any chain of authority, the Tremere pyramid has insiders and outsiders. Those who respect the authority of elders above them in the pyramid, who carry out the responsibilities given to the clan, and who serve with an eye toward advancing Tremere interests as a whole gain recognition for their efforts, so long as they remain successful. Tremere who do not respect this authority, who play fast and loose with the rules, and who engage in their own projects find themselves on the outside, unable to call on the support of their fellows. For the most part, Tremere internal politics are a matter of slow migration either into or out of positions of power. Only rarely does a Tremere become such a threat to the clan's overall security as to bring down the final and fatal wrath of elders.

Discerning the right mode of behavior is like trying to figure out how to write an academic's dissertation: the Tremere must figure out what her superiors want, what the clan needs, and how it can all mesh with her aptitudes. An apprentice who hungers for promotion may see that financial strengths in the area are low, and then decide to parlay or otherwise acquire influence over a local bank; she manages to improve her holdings, and at the same time she gains a valued resource. Other clan members call upon her for favors with her resource, which she gladly obliges in return for training or considerations. She advances in rank, but remains aware of her peers — when a jealous peer tries to co-opt her operations, she brings up the fact that he's dividing clan assets and weakening the overall structure, which sways her elders to her side. More hopeful young Tremere look up to her as a success, so she's careful to indulge them with the occasional favor — one never knows who might earn promotions and who may have an important resource tomorrow night. When her regent insists that she turn over a boon with a local Camarilla Kindred, she declines and then parlays the boon into new contacts in the financial district — and greater resources for herself... oh, and for the clan, too, of course. Her success may alienate the regent, but it also causes him to lose prestige with the clan and brings her to the positive attention of the local lord. And on it goes.... The Tremere clan is rife

with such success stories; those who fail, well, they always serve as fine negative examples.

THE SCREW JOB

Take two possible methods of advancement: work long and hard for personal recognition and hope that it pays off in the form of an eventual promotion; or, create an opening and place yourself in it. Confronted with a pyramid stacked with monolithic elders who can never die naturally and never leave, many Tremere quickly come to the inevitable conclusion that loyalty alone won't be enough.

To some degree, Tremere elders encourage infighting. Competition keeps the clan healthy (as healthy as a nest of backstabbing, power-hungry, blood-sucking undead oathbreakers can be) and weeds out weak elements. A Tremere who isn't perceptive enough to see treachery coming is vulnerable to treachery from non-Tremere as well, and could be a security risk. The constant struggle keeps ranking members like regents and lords from becoming complacent, and forces ambitious Tremere to exploit flaws in the clan or to come up with truly innovative approaches to problems.

While the nominal, if artificial, loyalty to the Council of Seven engendered by the blood imbibed after their Embrace keeps many Tremere from fighting clan ideals wholesale, nothing keeps a Tremere loyal to his peers. If an apprentice errs, point it out to the regent and earn a promotion — or cover it up and keep him in your debt. When a regent makes unreasonable demands, quietly go over his head to show how his plan's a failure — or feed him enough influence to hang himself in front of the lord. Given a chance to learn a new ritual or meet a new ally, grab it and use it as leverage against other ambitious Kindred.

Of course, uncertain Tremere fear retaliation from angry peers. A properly executed screw job sidesteps this by leaning on the pyramid. If you feed the regent false information, and he fouls up all the planning for a new chantry, well, that was his responsibility; when you claim your promotion and he's cataloguing New Age paperbacks in the suburbs, you're in charge and there's not a damn thing he can do. If you seize a new opportunity for thaumaturgical knowledge and push someone else out of the way, too bad; you know it and they don't, and they have to bow to your whims in order to learn anything from you. Give the prince a little boon, give your adversary a "peace gift" of some influence, then let the prince deal with your rival for stepping on his domain — you're protected by the Traditions and the status system.

Humane Tremere sometimes look askance at the screw job. Why advance at the expense of clanmates when working together will bring better results? There's only enough room at the top — and the ones there aren't going anywhere unless the pedestals are kicked out from under them. Besides, as Fidel Castro said, "Use it, or they will use it on you." A Tremere who "humanely" refrains from screwing his peers may well become the target of such actions himself.

THE TREMERE CODE

The following section reproduces the proper oath as spoken by a neonate upon her Embrace into Clan Tremere. This incarnation of the oath is the most common, believed to date back to the middle of the 15th century, supposedly inscribed through thaumaturgical ritual as it passed the lips of Tremere himself.

Variations of the oath do exist, whether as a result of imprecise translations from primary sources, the desires of less-than-scrupulous sires or even fashions of the time. Indeed, one cabal of Tremere even adapted the motto of the French Republic as their oath at the very end of the 18th century — but such was deemed inappropriately liberal by the French pontifex at the time.

I, [initiate's name], hereby swear my everlasting loyalty to House and Clan Tremere and all its members. I am of their blood, and they are of mine. We share our lives, our goals and our achievements. I shall obey those the House sees fit to name my superiors, and treat my inferiors with all the respect and care they earn for themselves.

I will not deprive nor attempt to deprive any member of House and Clan Tremere of his magical power. To do so would be to act against the strength of our House. I will not slay nor attempt to slay any member of the House and Clan except in self-defense, or when a magus has been ruled outlaw by a properly constituted tribunal. If a magus has been ruled an outlaw, I shall bend all efforts to bring such magus to justice.

I will abide by all decisions of the tribunals, and respectfully honor the wishes of the Inner Council of Seven and the wishes of my superiors. The tribunals shall be bound by the spirit of the Code of Tremere, as supplemented by the Peripheral Code and interpreted by a properly constituted body of magi. I have the right to appeal a decision to a higher tribunal, if they should agree to hear my case.

I will not endanger House and Clan Tremere through my actions. Nor will I interfere with the affairs of mundanes in any way that brings ruin upon my House and Clan. I will not, when dealing with devils, or others, in any way bring danger to the clan, nor will I disturb the faeries in any way that should cause them to take their vengeance on the House and Clan. I also swear to uphold the values and goals of the Camarilla, and I will maintain the Masquerade. Insofar as these goals may conflict with my goals, I will not pursue my own ends in any way that would endanger the Masquerade. The strength of the House and Clan Tremere depends on the strength of the Masquerade.

I will not use magic to scry upon members of the House and Clan Tremere, nor shall I use it to peer into their affairs. It is expressly forbidden.

I will train only apprentices who will swear to this code, and should any of them turn against the House and Clan, I shall be the first to strike them down and bring them to justice. No apprentice of mine shall be called magus until he first swears to uphold the code. I shall treat my apprentices with the care and respect that they earn.

I concede to my elders the right to take my apprentice should it be found that my apprentice is valuable to an elder's work. All are members of the House and Clan and valuable first to these precepts. I shall abide by the right of my superiors to make such decisions.

I shall further the knowledge of the House and Clan and share with its members all that I find in my search for wisdom and power. No secrets are to be kept, or given, regarding the arts of magic, nor shall I keep secret the doings of others which might bring harm to the House and Clan.

I demand that, should I break this oath, I should be cast out of the House and Clan. If I am cast out, I ask my brothers to find and slay me that my life may not continue in degradation and infamy.

I recognize that the enemies of the House and Clan are my enemies, that the friends of the House and Clan are my friends, and that the allies of the House and Clan are my allies. Let us work as one and grow hale and strong.

I hereby swear this oath on [current date]. Woe to they who try to tempt me to break this oath, and woe to me if I succumb to such temptation.

LAW AND INTERNAL POLICING

The Tremere Code marks the clan as unique; no other group adheres to a unified set of rules that delineate acceptable behavior. While Assamites have the words of their prophets, and Setites follow the parables of their dead god, the Tremere one and all take a singular oath handed down from the council.

No compelling magic binds any Tremere to the oath, unless some stern regent actively decides to enforce it; instead,

the code is a *de facto* listing of what constitutes acceptable behavior for a member of the august House of Tremere. The code elaborates on what's expected of Tremere, and what activities would earn disfavor.

Because the code is simply a normal oath, few Tremere follow it to the letter. Indeed, substantial advantages can be gained by flexibly "interpreting" the code; often, with the rule of success, such interpretations may be excused on an individual basis if the results seem promising. However, the

code also serves as justification should a Tremere elder feel the need to come down with harsh force upon a lesser, and thus lets the elder give the clan a publicly acceptable face to his vendetta.

In addition to the code itself, most ranking Tremere (those who manage to rise to the third circle of apprenticeship and beyond) slowly unearth the so-called Peripheral Code — the exceptions, assumptions and loopholes. While a neonate may wither under the weight of the code, a canny regent probably knows at least one or two exceptions to usual procedure. Like lobbyists in Congress, Tremere elders add to the Peripheral Code in order to provide an authoritative excuse for their actions. Exceptions include obscure and specific lines like “Dealing with faeries is permissible for members of the Augsburg Chantry during the new moon in the years A.D. 1617 to 1621”, or even personal exemptions from parts of the code for individuals. Ultimately the code is simply another tool, not the end-all of Tremere policy.

TRIBUNALS

Although the Tremere don't necessarily pursue their code or their promotion rigorously, the elders accept only so much. When a Tremere becomes a threat to secrecy, manages to seriously confound a clan-important project or just needs a good public thrashing, the elders call for a tribunal.

Tribunal covers serious disputes. Typically, seven to 12 regents preside over a tribunal, and one tribunal convenes each year to deal with pending business. In emergency cases, regents can also be called to convene a tribunal on the spot. The eldest ranking member takes the title of *praeco*, and oversees the order of the tribunal.

A tribunal carries the authority of the clan in all its judgments. Any tribunal judgment enters the Peripheral

Code; this sets precedent internally. Because multiple regents oversee the process, it's nearly impossible to tamper with them all at once, so the use of political influence is mitigated. The tribunal considers evidence and hands down a decision, covering cases where charges are brought against a Tremere for problematic behavior or in disputes where truculent peers cannot reach a compromise. The subjects are fully expected to endorse the results of the tribunal; because these orders come from a collection of Kindred and not just one lone superior, it's much more difficult to flout them.

A tribunal can mandate anything from stripping rank or status to Final Death, but this last is rare. Most Tremere would never want to be dragged into a tribunal, and even the presiding regents remain keenly aware that a tribunal's results are as political as procedural. Furthermore, actually executing a Tremere Kindred is a grave step. Only when multiple ranking Tremere felt threatened by a rogue's actions — or when one desperately needs an enemy out of the way — could such a step be taken.

ANARCHS, AUTARKIS AND ROGUES

Outside the usual Tremere hierarchy exist those who renounce Tremere ties or who simply don't bother with the system. Most such “failures” are grudgingly tolerated, generally because of the inconvenience the Tremere would have to suffer to deal with them, but they can expect no help from other Tremere. An anarch may be an insightful contact, but without a rank he has no place in the pyramid and thus no sway with the rest of the clan. Besides, dealing with such loose cannons can be taken as a sign of weakness or disloyalty, so it's *discouraged* by regents and higher-ranking Tremere.

Autarkis Tremere have a difficult existence — they renounce Kindred society, refuse to bother with the pyramid

WHAT YOU CAN GET AWAY WITH

With all the missteps possible in the Tremere clan, the short list of acceptable behavior seems vanishingly small. Still, it's possible to claw one's way up the pyramid, so long as one is clever and lucky. Even this isn't a hard-and-fast doctrine — it's simply advice on how to avoid trouble.

What You Can...

- Improve your skills, Disciplines and usefulness
- Use your influence for personal projects
- Blame your contemporary for problems
- Trade your specialized skills for training
- Support Camarilla hierarchy and prestation
- Dispatch rogues who threaten Tremere interests
- Get ahead

What You Can't...

- Study something your superior expressly forbids, like demonology
- Use your influence to sabotage your superior's projects
- Blame your contemporary for problems when your superior gets on with him better
- Trade Thaumaturgy to non-Tremere for training
- Support a Camarilla hierarchy that limits the Tremere
- Dispatch rogues in a way that makes you look overzealous
- Get caught

And, of course, anything that one can't do, one can't do unless she finds some way to cover her own ass. So long as someone or something shields her from the political consequences, a Tremere can use “forbidden” techniques to make her fortune. But once her protection disappears, a Kindred may find herself the first against the wall. Cheat to excel, but only with discretion.

and pay no attention to sects. Such Tremere are most common among the jaded ranks of modern neonates. Elders hold too much valuable information to be allowed to go their own way. Once an autarkis, a Tremere can expect little but social snubbing from other Tremere. An autarkis has no hope of gaining rank or setting policy, so other Tremere don't expect him to be worth their time in currying favor. The possibility of selling Thaumaturgy looms as an ever-present accusation. The autarkis has his personal freedom, but has no clan to back him, while at the same time other Kindred who know of his lineage label him as a Tremere and consider him a spy or traitor. Reconciliation may be possible... if the autarkis agrees to a bond to the council. Few Tremere autarkis survive long; they are destroyed by other Kindred, hunted for their thaumaturgical secrets, or they become pawns in some other Tremere's schemes.

Tremere anarchs hover on the fringes of acceptability. Technically, the Tremere Code requires adherence to the Camarilla, but the Convention of Thorns also guarantees anarchs a place with that organization. A Tremere anarchist rejects conventional Camarilla authority, and often turns up his nose at the pyramid as well. So long as the anarchist doesn't rock the boat too much, such behavior remains ignored. Sending loyal Tremere out to hunt down an anarchist, probably in territory with his friends and without the influence of the Camarilla, is a waste of resources. Like an autarkis, an anarchist is unlikely to have much clout within the pyramid. However, anarchists do have their own society, albeit small. As such, the pyramid does like to keep an eye on what its anarchists do from time to time. An anarchist Tremere who doesn't mind selling out his comrades on occasion may still be able to find "contract work" or the odd boon with the pyramid.

Rogues include those who have most horribly broken with the clan. While disinterested or slightly rebellious Tremere might be considered autarkis or just errant apprentices, a rogue's actions have damned her in the eyes of the clan. This may be for substantive reasons like diablerie, teaching Thaumaturgy to those outside the clan or destroying an elder, or it may be a result of political gamesmanship ending in the probable demise of the unfortunate. The Tremere Code outlines the behaviors that make a renegade, but in practice only a properly convened tribunal can declare a sentence of rogue or pass final judgment (though this may be done *in absentia*). Such practice is quite rare — while few Tremere would mourn the passing of an adversary, none want declarations of rogues to become common enough to possibly encompass themselves.

SERVANTS AND MINIONS

Long histories as advisors to leaders and teachers of the arcane *par excellence* rank the Tremere as common users of varied minions. In their early nights, the Tremere experimented with the thaumaturgical creation of companions, but in the modern age most content themselves with the same

resources that other Kindred use — allies, ghouls, Dominated mortals, herds, blackmail, fiscal influence and so on.

GHOULS

Tremere ghouls occupy a special niche inside the clan. While still mortal, and thus inferior to ranking Tremere, ghouls to the clan are often picked for special talents or potential Embrace. Exceptional ghouls might even learn rudimentary Thaumaturgy to supplement the skills of their domitors. They may be given charge of various mundane operations when the chantry doesn't have enough apprentices to deal with everything. The lure of immortality for Tremere ghouls is compounded with the promise of secret power and occult strength. These ghouls have a manifold loyalty: The Tremere reward system applies to ghouls just as well as it does to apprentices, and even the basest secrets learned by Tremere neonates can be startling revelations to a ghoul. The simplest powers of the Curse only whet the appetite for more, which keeps ghouls coming back even in the face of their bleak indentured servitude.

It's possible, using the Transubstantiation of Seven ritual, to bind a ghoul to the Inner Council; this is almost never done, of course — a ghoul is an expendable and ultimately fragile, *mortal* resource. However, many Tremere Embrace candidates spend at least a modicum of time as ghouls, both to see how they adapt to the pressures of the Beast and to evaluate their fitness to join the ranks.

REVENANTS

One of the many Tremere secrets is their limited access to a resource that no other Camarilla clan commands — a revenant family. During the struggle between the Carpathian Tzimisce and the nascent Tremere, the Krevcheski family saw a chance to free itself from the loathsome bondage to the Tzimisce, and cast its fortunes with the Tremere instead. Although the Tzimisce-loyal members suffered horribly, the family survived as a Tremere-protected group and became the Ducheski. Already twisted into revenants by the hoary witchcraft of the Tzimisce, the family passed on its heritage, aided by the few Tremere who understood enough about the peculiarities of the blood to ensure successful breeding for revenant characteristics.

Today, two large estates (one in Europe, one in the United States) remain the family holdings of the Ducheski revenants. Each estate is managed by a nominal head of the family, who holds the position by dint of age. Additionally, regents of the areas look into family matters and finances, and find suitable candidates for "special projects." Careful selection of breeding insures that the family produces at least a few revenants every generation, while the constant scrutiny of the Tremere has built a hivelike loyalty into the family.

Notably, Ducheski revenants almost never receive the Embrace. The circumstances of their creation typically inspire loyalty to the Tremere clan, but most have little initiative



or social skill. Like other mortals, the Ducheski are fleshly tools and little more.

More information about the Ducheski revenants may be found in *Blood Magic: Secrets of Thaumaturgy*.

HOMUNCULI

For menial laboratory tasks, a Tremere can rely on a ghoul or apprentice, but such intelligent servitors usually resent dirty work. Instead, experienced thaumaturges create their own servants, grotesque animated creatures called homunculi.

A homunculus is created with the ritual *Soul of the Homunculus* (see p. 63). Because they are created artificially, they are unfailingly loyal; homunculi are preferred servants for work around chantries where Tremere possess the ability to create them. Of course, a homunculus also counts as a terrible breach of the Masquerade, so most Tremere leave these "pets" at home.

It's rumored that at least once in the past a homunculus managed to befoul a ritual in a laboratory and dispatch its master in a conflagration, so that it might run free. Academic Tremere argue that the bonds of Identity between homunculus and master are too powerful for such a fantastic event to occur, but who would know for certain?

GARGOYLES

Since their days among mortals, the Tremere have been fascinated with evolution, creation and control. Although some say that early eugenic cryptozoologists of the clan developed the Gargoyles as defense from the repeated assaults on Tremere chantries by other clans, in truth their creation was as much due to the desire to create "life" as to protect the chantries. Very little information on the original creation of this sub-race of Kindred still exists. Some of the experimenters joined the Sabbat, and shortly after, most of the journals and records documenting the process were destroyed during Tremere infighting and the attempts of these few *antitribu* to atone for the slave race they helped spawn. Still, the information that does linger in the notes and journals of the apprentices gives us insight into not only the creation method, but the ideals and intent behind their inception. Depending on the source of information, Gargoyles are alternately the "greatest creation of the Tremere" or "a prodigal plague upon the house that gave them life."

At the beginning, the records state that there were 14 Gargoyles created at the Ceoris chantry, all supervised by one of the three most trusted sorcerers in charge of the task. In the process of building these creatures, as many as a hundred other Kindred — Nosferatu, Tzimisce, Gangrel and others — were destroyed. Mistakes were made, but the Tremere used every opportunity to record the nature of Kindred vitae and life-force. The Gargoyles were a project that allowed the scholars of the Tremere a unique opportunity to dissect exactly how vampirism worked, what kept the undead body animated, and how the Curse functioned — scientifically, of

course. Without these bloody experiments, the Tremere's knowledge of such things would be sorely lacking.

It cannot be denied that without the Gargoyles, significant chantries in Europe, as well as the unlives of many Tremere, would have been lost. But is that worth the sacrifices of clanmates and blood that occurred while perfecting the process of creation? The question still haunts the Tremere in the eyes of every escaped Slave.

Historically, the ancestry of the Gargoyles is unique. Their creation was intended to produce a servitor race with little intelligence and no true sense of self or consciousness. The creators' experiments were successful beyond their wildest thoughts — or perhaps, they were the greatest failure of thaumaturgical experimentation. After all, the "dogs" they had intended to produce rapidly re-learned speech, began to establish internal societal order, and showed rudimentary intellect. They still retained the drive for blood, and the Beast that lurks within all vampires, yet they had forgotten their pasts and their former lives. The Gargoyles were nothing if not sentient tools of the Tremere.

Since their inception, the Gargoyles have been used as scouts, warriors and sentries, each created with different qualifications, as befitted their stations in life. They were engineered — yes, even so long ago, that term still applied — to whatever task their masters required. And while they were at peace, their service was admirable. Only when they began to discover that their existence had boundaries did the Gargoyles begin to struggle against their masters' yoke. As a parent with an errant child, the Tremere attempted to correct such urges, but the beasts demanded freedom — a freedom some say those early thaumaturges should have never given. Gargoyles are monsters, vampires by virtue of the blood through which they "occur," and not through their own choice or virtue. They are no more than the restitched detritus of other clans, given a second chance to prove their worth as servants within Warlock chantries. Those who fail often suffer the Final Death; most Tremere agree, it is all they deserve.

EMBRACEES

To hear them tell it, Tremere Embrace mortals only from a very select group: geniuses, psychics, craftmasters and leaders. Certainly, a strong will and a formidable skill exist in most Tremere recruits. Tremere will Embrace for talent, especially magical talent, but as in all things there are exceptions.

New Tremere recruits typically require approval from a local regent, in addition to a city's Kindred prince. If some apprentice wants to bring in fresh blood, the regent needs to sanction the Embrace. The apprentice can, of course, do what he wants, with the usual risks for disobedience. In some cases apprentices have built their own broods to topple their regents, but similarly some regents have turned over their own apprentices for violations of the Tradition of Progeny. This weeding process keeps prospective sires on their toes;

unlike other clans where members can be Embraced at personal preference, the Tremere must be mindful of their clan's priorities.

On the flip side, all the reasons that can drive a sire to Embrace someone can apply just as easily to Tremere as to any other Kindred. A Tremere could very well sire someone out of passion, rebellion, need or loneliness. Such neonates are a mixed lot; most have one chance to enter the pyramid and find a useful and productive place. Indeed, such random Embraces do occasionally bring in disparate elements that the clan wouldn't have considered fit. More often, though, sire and child find themselves snubbed for their defiance; a child could even advance his position by selling out his own sire in such a case. Apparently, nothing touched by the tainted blood of the Tremere ever remains whole.

THE SABBAT

Once, the Sabbat claimed to be an asylum for any disenfranchised Cainites who shunned the Camarilla's elder tyranny from the nights of the Anarch Revolt on. No more — the Tremere are a very certain reminder that what the Sabbat's wild chaos can claim, the Camarilla's ordered precision can crush.

Goratrix, the creator of the transformation potion and one of Tremere's trusted advisors, turned on the clan and fled to the Sabbat with a few disaffected cohorts. Speculation varies as to motive: some think that Etrius finally gained an upper hand in competition with Goratrix for the progenitor's favor. Others believe that Goratrix was merely a plant in the Sabbat, filtering information back to Tremere. In the end, it does not matter. The Tremere of the Sabbat were marked and hunted, and finally paid a horrific price for their treason.

THE RITE OF BETRAYERS

As the Tremere had weaned themselves on magic and fought against the Fiends of the Old World, it should come as no surprise that a few thaumaturges had a passing familiarity with *koldanic* sorcery — or at least with ways to detect and counter the Tzimisce's prime sorceries. The lynchpin of Tremere response to the Sabbat came through an organized ritual. Able to build world-spanning magic through their dedicated ranks, the Tremere laid a curse on those of their blood who would partake of the Vaulderie. Any of Tremere lineage who participated in the blood-sharing rituals of the Black Hand became irrevocably marked. As the Vaulderie engendered loyalty through blood — and the Tremere were intimately familiar with the magic in blood — it was possible (though not particularly *simple*) to build the Rite of Betrayers.

As with the other tremendous curses levied by the Tremere clan in its entirety, only Tremere himself and the Council of Seven could definitively explain the rite. In brief, the rite ties intimately to those of Tremere blood (much as the Assamite curse functions on that bloodline). Any Tremere who participates the Vaulderie gains the Betrayer's sigil, a

mystic rune afflicting the cursed's forehead, visible to others of Tremere blood.

The Rite of Betrayers is not merely an inconvenience, though. When a Tremere first receives the *Vaulderie*, the rite makes itself quite painfully known — the mark of the Betrayer burns into the victim's forehead. The Tremere experiences the excruciating pain of a brand pressed to his flesh. It is rumored that in some instances, traitorous Tremere have burst into flames and died, but this is always a tale told by an acquaintance of a child of a mysterious wanderer or some equally distant source.

Once branded, the Tremere's mark of betrayal remains livid, a black spot marred by flickering as of hot ashes. Although the injury heals over by the next night, the shimmer of flame remains visible to any other Tremere who might see it. Even if the Tremere purges himself of the *Vinculum* blood-ties and avoids the *Vaulderie* thereafter, the mark remains permanent.

Curiously, the Rite of Betrayers has no effect on those rare Kindred who are immune to the blood bond — in theory, because no *Vinculi* can form to bind such subjects, the rite doesn't take effect. It's rumored that one or two *antitribu* discovered a means to temporarily suppress the mark, but if so, such secrets must have gone with them to their ashen pyres.

In 1998, Goratrix called a meeting of his entire brood in Mexico City. All Sabbat Tremere attended. In a conflagration, the entirety of the Tremere *antitribu* died; only pillars of ash remained to tell their tale. In truth, Tremere himself arrived. With powerful magics he overtook Goratrix's body, then destroyed those who would dare betray his line.

LAST OF THE ANTIIRIBU

As written, no *antitribu* survived Tremere's purge. The entire bloodline died in a fiery apocalypse. Presumably, this includes any Tremere *antitribu* characters: they burnt to cinders with their brethren in the purge.

On one hand, you wouldn't be playing Vampire if you didn't get something out of horrific and desperate stories that culminate in tragedy. Still, it's bad form just to tell a player out of hand "Sorry, you can't play anymore." Storytellers might allow the character to survive, perhaps as one of the last few Tremere *antitribu*. A more reasonable approach is to work these events into the ongoing chronicle; give the character a chance to accomplish some task of import or to resolve some thread before he meets his final doom, then let the player open a new page with a different character.

Of course, you can always decide to keep some *antitribu* around, but if every chronicle out there has one of "the last Tremere *antitribu*," how special are they? This is the World of Darkness — better to let them stand as grim testimony to the coming Gehenna.

MODERN SABBAT TREMERE

Nothing prevents Tremere from joining the ranks of the Sabbat. Except, of course, their own consciences, their superiors, the threat of a hunt from the entire Camarilla, the lack of any associates in the Sabbat, the blood-hungry Tzimisce and Salubri *antitribu*....

In theory, a Tremere can defect to the Sabbat any time she wants. However, the Tremere *antitribu*, the separate bloodline established by Goratrix, are no more. A Tremere who makes her way into the Sabbat (and survives...) still suffers from the Rite of Betrayers if she participates in the *Vaulderie*, but she's not explicitly *antitribu*. Rather, she's just a Tremere with Sabbat allegiance.

Sabbat Tremere are unlikely in the extreme; it's not as if the Sabbat has much to offer the relatively conservative Warlocks, nor as if the Tremere could expect solace and sanctuary among such monsters while his own expatriate clan hunted him. A Tremere who deliberately chooses to join the Sabbat foregoes all the strengths of his own clan and replaces them with enemies — which is probably why few modern Tremere have defected, especially after the spectacular disappearance of the *antitribu*.

Of course, nothing prevents Tremere Kindred from dealing with members of the Sabbat on their own terms. Rumors abound of Sabbat Thaumaturgy making its way into the hands of Camarilla Tremere, and if Final Death was the punishment for every wild accusation of "contacts with Mexico City," well, the clan certainly wouldn't be as populous as it is.

SOME CHOICE WORDS

Whether entertaining non-Tremere requests for thaumaturgical favors, crawling through the mausoleum of a torpid elder in search of blood or simply weathering an annual Elysium, the Tremere are no strangers to their fellow Kindred. Relations vary widely, of course, but the nature of the Kindred is one of xenophobia and prejudice. It is no wonder, then, that many Tremere have formed opinions of their blood-siblings — even those they may never have met....

THE CAMARILLA

"We founded the Camarilla. Certainly the Toreador eloquently argued for its inception, and the Ventrue staunchly defended its principles, but there's a power behind every throne. Look in any strong domain, and there's a Tremere present. Read the histories, and realize that the Camarilla never would have survived without our intervention against the Assamites, our magic against the Sabbat and our political support to sway the other clans.

"Certainly, the Camarilla has its uses. The Masquerade protects us from terrible retribution from humanity; if you think that humans would react poorly to vampires, think about how

most would handle vampire sorcerers. The age-old system of status keeps rebellious elements in check, promotes cooperation and gives us a stable society. Indeed, the Camarilla in many ways emulates the model of our own clan.

"Even though they are our allies, we have some secrets that the Camarilla must never know. Our powers may protect the Camarilla, but discovery of our secrets would tear it apart. To defend the Camarilla, we must hide our true power and turn its every resource to our advantage, even as it blindly and unknowingly follows our lead."

THE SABBAT

"Despicable, monstrous, traitorous — the Sabbat represent the wild, uncontrolled elements of our kind. It is the inchoate Beast given form. Any apprentice can tell the dangers of great power without proper control. The Sabbat would give over the might of the elders to raw neonates or bloodthirsty maniacs, and then claim that such 'liberation' will save the world.

"Of course, their crusade against the Antediluvians pits us against them, as we all faithfully serve Tremere. Naturally. But our founder showed that even Antediluvians can be bested, so long as one does so with discipline, organization and total self-mastery."

BRUJAH

"Had they any courage to their convictions, the Brujah would all join the Sabbat. As it is, they content themselves with railing against the Camarilla, while they quietly pocket its benefits. Much like any other liberals....

"The Brujah serve as a perfect example of the need for proper organization. Just show any rebellious childe a Brujah and the point's made. After 10 millennia, all they can do is bemoan their lost culture and crack one another's skulls. What a wonderfully pointless bunch. Of course, that means that they can't possibly organize well enough to stop us when we must take action."

MALKAVIANS

"Such a curious insight! Every Malkavian unique, yet all bound by their commonality of delusions. Not a single Malkavian can be predicted, and they can bitterly rile against one another as much as our own riotous neonates, yet they still see further and more clearly than our most potent Thaumaturgy permits. Perhaps our clan's direction lies somewhere like them — unified but diverse, each unique yet sharing a common bond. Without the lunacy, of course."

NOSFERATU

"Do not discount the sewer dwellers. Each is a skilled survivor; they must be, to overcome the disadvantages of their hideous countenances. They know many secrets — a pity that they demand ours as well. A little caution is in order, but the Nosferatu can make excellent allies. They know too much to ever trust us, of course, but that's to be expected. And remember — the informants are always the first ones who must die when war breaks out."

TORADOR

"Dilettantes driven to distraction! The Toreador would be laughable if they did not wield so much clout. The combination of

their mortal ties and their Camarilla influence makes the clan as a whole formidable, but individuals are easily placated into docility. Their transitory lusts make them perfect pawns; give them something of no consequence, then use their extensive networks while they shine the bauble."

VENTRUE

"In a strange way, the Ventrue are much like brothers-in-arms. While the Ventrue epitomize the lords who lead the Camarilla to its next night, we stand as their careful advisors and sages. A Ventrue will happily take on the burden of leadership and become a target, just to fulfill his 'responsibility.' In the meantime, we offer advice and support, reap the rewards of the Ventrue's position and remain unscathed by the weight of their destiny."

CAITIFF

"An utter abomination — any sire who would be so crass as to improperly educate a childe should be treated harshly. Caitiff themselves endanger the Masquerade with their ignorance, threaten society with their penchant for diablerie and make for an unknown quantity in an otherwise stable equation. Of course, they're eager for acceptance, so say a few kind words and use them, but wipe your hands when you're done."

ASSAMITES

"Perhaps our most troubling adversaries. We had them defeated, yet they have returned from exile more powerful than before. Step warily; their long memories and longer knives still hunger for our blood to repay the curse we placed upon their clan. It seems that their clan holds more depth than we once thought. When we bring them to heel, we shall discover the secrets they've kept from us."

GANGREL

"Old wives' tales say that animals raise their hackles around witchcraft. Certainly the Gangrel have no love for us; best, perhaps, that they went their separate way. We remember all too keenly their fights against us in the thick forests during the early nights of the clan. They've no appreciation for intellectual pursuits or civilization. These wild men are as obsolete as the peasant legends they spawned."

RAVNOS

"Fools, tricksters and worthless trash, to the last. A Ravnos is only worth more than a Caitiff because he at least has the sense to know when he's doing something wrong. Let them play their little games, but if one tries to fool you, crush him utterly and make an example of him."

GIOVANNI

"Their limited insight cannot compare to our diverse talents. Inbred and inward-looking, they may have tapped into ghosts, but they do so only through debauched excess, not through any true understanding of universal principles. Ignore them."

SETITES

"The comparison of Setites to snakes remains an apt one; one must be as careful with a Setite as a mortal handling a poisonous snake. Although they seem languorous and contented,

they will bite without warning. A Setite may offer choice treasures, but in the end the price is more than expected. Turn the tables — take what they offer, then let their own morally bankrupt natures betray themselves."

OTHER THINGS IN THE DARKNESS

Diligent study into occultism means that the Tremere have more information about other supernatural creatures than most Kindred. This is still a limited resource, but at least the Tremere have some idea of what's going on outside the world of the undead. Or they like to think they do...

LUPINES

"The werewolves are dangerous in the extreme, as we learned in our struggles in the lands beyond the forest. Do not rely on Disciplines to save you — avoid them, flee if you can, sacrifice an apprentice or a servant to slow them down. They will counter our Thaumaturgy with tricks of their own, and even a raging Brujah cannot stand up to them physically. Fortunately they are rare in the cities. If you must deal with Lupines, employ some other Kindred to do it on your behalf."

MAGES

"We were once mages, it is said. Where have they gone? The wizards of ancient days have not survived, or at least not like us. The price of immortality may be steep, but the alternative, it seems, was extinction."

NO PATHS OF ENLIGHTENMENT? NO BLOODLINES?

Even though the Tremere aren't as rigid as some would believe, they have only limited tolerance for deviance. Small peccadilloes like dealings with independent clans or anarch status can be accepted. Full-scale ideological or supernatural divergence cannot.

Some few Kindred expect Tremere to adhere to a Path of Enlightenment centered around their clan's code. While some neonates are quite zealous in their prosecution of the clan's goals, few would actually rebuild their entire ideological psychology around the Tremere Code. Indeed, the code serves as a practical guideline, not as a moral document. One can presumably obey the Tremere clan and still slide into the clutches of the Beast — as many of the clan's elders have observed over the years.

Similarly, the Tremere experimented with bloodlines in their early nights. Gargoyles remain a (rare) successful variant, but they're the only ones. The Telyavelic Tremere of the Dark Ages produced too much of a stir, and the Tremere *antimbu* were of course an abominable aberration. Given such failures, the Tremere have no interest in encouraging further deviant lineages.



GHOSTS

"The spirits of the dead have little truck with us. We create enough ghosts with our schemes: there's no need to draw down their ire. Of course, their impotent rage in the nether realms means little. They're noteworthy only as pawns of the Giovanni."

FAERIES

"The code prohibits contact with faeries. An archaic notion, considering that even our elders consider faeries nothing more than stories from the Dark Ages of Europe."

HUNTERS

"Have a care with the Masquerade, or you risk earning the attention of the living. Some, it seems, have the very wrath of God on their side. Are they mages of this age? Or are they the Creator's vengeance, manifested to destroy those He cursed so long ago? Are they just crazy people with baseball bats and delusions? They die like anyone else when their blood boils away."

NEW TRAITS AND POWERS

No discussion of the Tremere would be complete, of course, without a nod to their unique capabilities. Thaumaturgy itself is flexible and potent, a mirror of the individual Tremere. It's not the only tool at the clan's disposal, though. Here are some additional systems for other boons — or problems — often unique to the Tremere.

TREMERE DISCIPLINES

Many Kindred assume that Thaumaturgy is the be-all end-all of Tremere study. They assume that Tremere practice Thaumaturgy to the exclusion of other Disciplines, that no Tremere can ever advance in power without thaumaturgical proficiency, and that the other Disciplines of Auspex and Dominate are poor cousins to blood magic.

Of course, any Tremere worth her vitae recognizes this as untrue. Disciplines give innate power, power that cannot be easily taken away. Any tool is useful so long as it's used for the proper problem, and it behooves the Tremere to have all the right tools for the problems they'll face. Would a sly politico benefit more from Dominate or Thaumaturgy? Would an archaeologist find more use for Auspex or alchemy? Tremere study where they find the most gains in advantage.

Furthermore, Tremere face the problems of will and vitae. Thaumaturgy proves difficult and demanding. An unfortunate practitioner may erode his mind, and the magic exacts a price in blood. Why use it when other tools may be more efficient and cost-effective?

Each Discipline in its place — that means all of them have use. A skilled Tremere respects the flexibility of Thaumaturgy, but also recognizes the applications of Auspex and Dominate. The combination of all three Disciplines gives the wielder fearsome knowledge and flexible options. Better still, all three

Disciplines rely upon mental fortitude, which most Tremere have in excess. Tremere Kindred can thus focus with mental acuity to hone all of their supernatural skills. A Tremere needn't worry so much about difficulties with physical skill or lack of graceful social interaction; his Disciplines function perfectly well without requiring diverse aptitudes.

AUSPEX

As a cabal of wizards, it's no surprise that Tremere have superlative awareness. Some would attribute this to magical heritage, while others speculate that the Tremere developed such skills due to their specific origins. Regardless, Auspex remains a staple of Tremere study; many Kindred rely on Tremere for investigative skill, because of the combination of arcane knowledge, magical tools and the mystical sensitivity of Auspex.

Magical Research: A Tremere capable of seeing auras can tell when the forces of magic are in use, so it's possible to spot sorcerers (potential threats or recruits), some magical artifacts or rites that have been activated. This doesn't necessarily imply knowledge of what's going on, but the Tremere can easily determine whether a given event stems from magic or not. With greater aptitude, a Tremere can read psychic impressions from objects, which can sometimes clue her in to their functions or histories. A Tremere might be able to discern an enchantment on an otherwise mundane object by watching it in use or even vicariously experiencing the last time it was used, such as reading the psychic impressions left on a stone tablet with but a touch.

Political Agendas: Besides the usual reading of secrets through telepathy or separating truth from falsehood by perusing auras, clever Tremere can find a host of uses for Auspex in politics. Given access to personal possessions, the opportunities for blackmail are staggering — learn the details of some naughty indiscretion from a piece of clothing, and you've got a mayor in your debt. Even the acute sensitivity of very basic Auspex can be useful; a Tremere skilled in reading body language may well determine some unspoken guilt by carefully watching the twitching of a subject's features or sensing telltale smells (cordite? perfume? gin!). And, of course, astral projection (for the true masters) has all manner of uses — holistically spying on meetings, following suspicious characters, dropping in unexpectedly to send a telepathic missive to a minion, even penetrating heavy security.

Security: Heightened awareness naturally runs counter to stealth and espionage. Studious Tremere can excel at picking out hidden spies and their accoutrements. A little augmented hearing may note a subtle ping that indicates a tap on a phone line, while some psychic impressions could tell if a spy has placed surveillance devices in an area or eavesdropped in a room. Sensitive Tremere can also spot other Kindred who rely too heavily on the Obfuscate Discipline; this is one reason that Nosferatu rarely have extensive information about the inner workings of Tremere clan meetings or chantries.

OPTIONAL SYSTEM: THAUMATURGICAL SIGHT (AUSPEX ••, THAUMATURGY •)

Storytellers: Use this system at your own discretion if you wish to distinguish between the vibrant magics of the living and the cold formulae of Tremere Thaumaturgy and other Kindred sorcery.

Just as some Kindred can sense the auras that surround living or undead beings, some acutely sensitive Tremere develop the talent to recognize thaumaturgical patterns. Magical energies cast by others are visible with *Aura Perception*, but with *Thaumaturgical Sight*, a Tremere can see the unholy vigor of blood magic. With enough occult knowledge, the Tremere may be able to decipher the lines of power to figure out exactly what sort of magic she faces.

A Tremere using *Thaumaturgical Sight* sees blood magic's power as pulsing, viscous curves of liquid scarlet, which differ from the sparkles that punctuate the aura of a person using a living, dynamic magic. As the magic turns vitae into a fuel for a twisted manifestation of undeath's curse, the viewer sees connections between thaumaturgical components and the resulting enchantment. A thaumaturge who uses the *Lure of Flames*, for instance, might appear to have crimson traceries weaving in his hands and coalescing until they burst into flames, while an enchanted knife might seem to have an unwholesome, sanguine glister to it.

Like similar *Auspex* Disciplines, *Thaumaturgical Sight* isn't a power that's used constantly or casually. Some magical wards—especially *koldunic* ones—can threaten a Tremere's sanity when they're viewed with this sight. Certain places in Eastern Europe, it's said, roil with diseased power that burns out all vision from a Tremere who would look upon their naked states. Wise Tremere confine their *Thaumaturgical Sight* to places or items where they're certain of blood influence but need a clearer vision of the specifics.

System: Activating *Thaumaturgical Sight* is just like the use of *Aura Perception*. In fact, it augments that power; those without *Thaumaturgical Sight* will miss the subtle nuances of dead magic, while those who possess this power will find their *Aura Perception* abilities enhanced by it. However, as with any use of *Thaumaturgy*, a botch on the activation roll costs one permanent *Willpower*.

While under the effects of *Thaumaturgical Sight*, the character may be able to puzzle out other manifestations of blood magic within her line of sight. A *Perception* + *Occult* roll (difficulty 8) is appropriate to determine the character's success in making out the results of some form of blood magic. If it's an effect with which the character is familiar—such as someone invoking *Theft of Vitae*, if the character knows that power—then one success is sufficient to recognize the power. Otherwise, the successes scored determine the gist of the character's understanding: With one success, she might puzzle out the general idea of an effect, like whether it's geared to combat or divination; with three or more successes, she can probably figure out exactly what it's supposed to do.

Thaumaturgical Sight does notice the patterns of power inherent to enchanted artifacts or wards, so long as they're products of blood magic. A Tremere can therefore spot a ward and determine who it's designed to deter, or notice that an object has some sort of blood magic upon it, such as *Engaging the Vessel of Transference*. Rituals show up to this sight, both during casting and while their effects remain, so a Tremere could tell if someone has invoked a ritual like *Deflection of Wooden Doom* or *Steps of the Terrified*.

Most importantly, *Thaumaturgical Sight* allows the user to spot all forms of vampiric blood magic; *Thaumaturgy*, *Setite* or *Assamite* magic and *koldunic* sorcery are all equally visible. Conversely, *Thaumaturgical Sight* does not recognize "normal" magical effects, like the enchantments that mortal wizards use (though *Aura Perception* still reveals such magic as sparkling, coruscating energy). In any event, *Aura Perception* is required to learn this power, so the distinction is only parenthetical, if noteworthy.

It costs six experience points to learn this power.

MET System: Requires *Basic Auspex*, *Basic Thaumaturgy* and three *Experience Traits*. By invoking *Thaumaturgical Sight*, you become capable of noticing the use of any blood magic—*Thaumaturgy*, *koldunic* sorcery, *Assamite* or *Setite* sorcery, or more specialized forms such as rituals. You can call out this sight at any time (subject to being conscious, able to spend blood and so on), and you immediately notice all rituals in use, all blood magic in the process of casting or currently in effect and all objects enchanted with blood magic.

If you wish to determine the specifics of an effect, you must make a *Static Mental Challenge* with a difficulty of eight *Traits* and using the *Occult Ability* for retests. If you succeed, the subject must reveal to you the name of the power invoked. If it's a power that you possess, you are assumed to know how it works, and you can also determine the target. Otherwise, the subject need only reveal the name of the power in question. You can only scrutinize one power in this fashion each turn, so even if you spot several thaumaturgical effects in action, you can only concentrate on one of them at a time. This level of concentration requires your normal action and cannot be sped up with *Celerity* or similar powers.

Should you desire to keep your *Thaumaturgical Sight* active for longer than one turn, you can spend *Mental Traits* to extend the duration of the power. Spend one *Mental Trait* at the beginning of each turn in which you wish to keep the power active. If you allow the power to lapse, you must spend a *Blood Trait* to renew it later. If you are not in combat-based turns, the power lasts for one minute and can be maintained at a cost of one *Mental Trait* per minute thereafter.

You should indicate your *Thaumaturgical Sight* by placing your fingers, spread in a V, to the side of your eyes. Use of this power is not immediately noticeable to others, though people will notice your intense scrutiny.

Intuition: Many Kindred overlook the hunches and precognitive insights that seem to develop with Auspex. Tremere, with their long familiarity with divination, make use of such talents. Occult schooling teaches Tremere to remain aware of sudden chills, spine-crawling fear, *déjà vu* and other curious mental states. Some Tremere even keep notes or journals of their unusual hunches, dreams or insights. Often, prophetic feelings can prove true or give early warning of danger.

DOMINATE

The majority of Tremere Kindred have a strong drive for power and accomplishment. Combine their natural assertiveness and will—a will strong enough to bend the very Curse of Caine to their whims, as evidenced through Thaumaturgy—and the Tremere's proficiency with the Dominate Discipline becomes unsurprising. Experienced Tremere attribute the Dominate power to a hypnotic gaze, or assert that the Kindred gazes into the windows of the soul and moves the very will of God's vengeance in through his own soulless body. More modern Tremere tend to connect Dominate to a natural assumption of authority combined with human fear of the undead's predatory nature. Either way, the Kindred clearly exerts an unnatural command over her victims. "Let them hate, so long as they fear," to quote one fiendish Roman emperor.

Many Kindred consider Dominate a blatant and crass Discipline. A skilled user can be quite subtle, though, and there's no denying the direct effectiveness of the power. However, Dominate does lend itself to forcing people into situations that they would never otherwise consider, which can lead to complications ranging from a subject wondering about lost memories to concerned friends noticing how their companion has suddenly and radically changed his behavior. Dominate also can't directly force someone to violate their inherent values, so it's best used as an adjunct or emphasis on more common forms of manipulation.

Daylight Action: Most vampires who hope to act during the day must work through intermediaries. Tremere labor under similar restrictions, but Dominate helps to make the subjects more tractable and predictable. Instead of leaving instructions to a fallible and uncertain ally, some choose to impart subconscious suggestion. Give detailed instructions, perhaps, with a compulsion to obey. Or add in a little memory that surfaces during a daily routine and causes a subject to do what you want. Need him to drop off a letter for you? Just make him "remember" that he planned to mail the letter in his pocket, once he wakes up in the morning. And, of course, Possession is king; combine with the ritual Wake with Evening's Freshness, and a Tremere can stay awake briefly during the day and move about outside, experience a little sunlight, even vicariously enjoy lost mortal passions like food and sex.

Influence Peddling: Although using Dominate on the mayor is a bit much (What happens if it fails? or if his

memories come back as he's addressing the GOP convention held in the city? or if a command is improperly executed?), the occasional use of the Discipline helps in cementing influence. A Kindred can use altered memories, implanting a memory of comradeship and cooperation that opens the door to further accommodation. She can just stress a small desire, so that the subject is more likely to do something he was inclined to do anyway—"You can *forgive* this one infraction, can't you, officer?" More long-term applications of the Discipline are possible with even a modicum of skill, because once a patsy's convinced to do something once, the compromise opens the door to further action. Push the alderman into taking a bribe, and he'll rationalize accepting later ones. Convince a janitor to be helpful, and he'll remember you later as a confidant.

The Inevitable Jihad: The use of physical Disciplines often incites reprisal. A Kindred who raises a Potence-backed fist against another of his kind quickly finds that other Kindred rally to crush the offender who would so blatantly become a threat. The powers of Dominate, used subtly, can be nearly unnoticeable and not quite so threatening. Attack another Kindred with Celerity, and the harpies will whisper about bad tempers and loutish behavior; direct another Kindred through careful Dominate, and gain the grudging approval of peers for a clever ploy, even if it's discovered. Of course, other Kindred *despise* being the subject of such manipulation, but if they're placed into a prestation debt or humiliated to the point of losing status, there's not much that they can do about it, now is there?

Masquerade Clean-Up: No Discipline helps to repair small-scale Masquerade problems so efficiently as Dominate. As pillars of the Camarilla, Tremere Kindred can use their Dominate power to make witnesses forget or lie, to plant false evidence or to compel assistance in cover-ups. Combine with prestation, and the Tremere can quickly rack up boons from incautious Kindred, especially by threatening to "release" certain memories or evidence of an indiscretion in such a way that the prince or sheriff finds out.

OBERON'S GRAIL (DOMINATE LEVEL SIX)

Memory manipulation gives effective options for influence, protection of secrets or intimidation. Employed carefully, such methods can change motives and perform subtle alterations to a subject's personality. Sometimes, though, a few subtle changes aren't enough, and when entire nights of memory lead to trouble, a mere 15-minute alteration won't do. Tremere elders may be beguiling schemers, but sometimes even they must resort to brute force. Recalcitrant memories wiped away, whole evenings lost to mystery—rumor holds that some Tremere can do this and more. But who would ever remember?

Oberon's Grail serves as a very final and dramatic cure to problem witnesses. The Forgetful Mind can only remove or alter small sections of memory at a time, but Oberon's Grail has no such limitation. A single application can wash away an

entire night. The Tremere need only touch the subject while making eye contact (even light clothing will not stop this). Everything from sundown up to the point of the Tremere's touch vanishes from the victim's memory. With effort, the Tremere can even fog the victim's mind so that he remembers nothing from the point of the touch to sunrise, once the victim has slept. In effect, the victim seems to function normally (except, of course, for the loss of everything from sunset to the touch) until he wakes up the next day or night, at which point he realizes that he has no recollection whatsoever of the whole previous night.

Those elders who master Oberon's Grail use it only rarely. The touch can't remove expertise — someone who learns a skill cannot be made to forget how to do it — but it can make the victim unable to recall how or when he learned something, or to realize that he knows about it. Most often, the Grail helps to guard the Masquerade, protect clan secrets and punish those who would violate Kindred custom. Because the Grail's effects are so profound and so obvious, it's a good way to make enemies, and it's thus rarely used, but it is perhaps more effective for its threat than its practice.

System: The Tremere must make eye contact, as usual for Dominate and touch the victim. (An elder who *also* has the power of Obedience can use Oberon's Grail without eye contact.) The player rolls Manipulation + Subterfuge (difficulty equal to the victim's Willpower). One success causes the victim's memories from sunset to the point of the touch to become hazy; two successes completely wipe out all memory in that time period. With three or more successes, the Tremere can erase the entirety of the night, with everything from the touch until sunrise disappearing from memory once the victim falls asleep, but this costs a point of Willpower.

Oberon's Grail has no effect if administered during the day (that's day for the body making the touch — a Tremere cannot leave his body in some part of the world at night and use the Grail through a Possessed vessel in some other, daylight part of the world). Although Oberon's Grail destroys memories, it cannot remove Attributes, Abilities, Disciplines or other Traits. This power works against victims with *Eidetic Memory* normally; against victims who do not sleep, its ability to suppress memory functions only on the period from sundown to the point of the touch, though the user will not be aware of this. A vampire who enters torpor counts as falling asleep.

MET System: Master Dominate. Administering Oberon's Grail requires a Physical Challenge to grasp the victim, followed by a Mental Challenge to activate the Dominate power. If successful, the power wipes away all memory of the evening prior to the touch; naturally, this works best if used at the end of an evening. Additionally, the subject suffers the Negative Mental Traits *Forgetful* x 3 for the rest of the evening. Expenditure of a Willpower Trait enhances the power so that the victim remembers *nothing* of the evening after next falling asleep. Because this power relies upon the good roleplaying of the victim, a Storyteller should

be alerted when this power is invoked. All of the limitations listed above still apply — no Traits can be removed with this power, nor can a victim be forced to lose experience.

THAUMATURGY

Naturally, the study of Thaumaturgy is the hallmark of the Tremere — their practice of its eldritch secrets veritably defines the clan, at least to outsiders. Although the Thaumaturgy Discipline is certainly an enviable and flexible power, it does not necessarily dictate the Tremere's internal politics, and any neonate who assumes that Thaumaturgy supersedes the need for common sense will not be long for unlife.

Still, dedicated study does produce results, and the Tremere's centuries of practice have created skills that other clans have neither duplicated nor imagined. Secrecy, devotion of practice and a vicious tendency to hoard deadly mysteries all shield the Tremere's most valuable assets from prying Kindred. Encryptions and assumptions hide formulae, and some Tremere even actively hunt and slay non-Tremere Kindred who study Thaumaturgy — a dangerous practice, indeed (see p. 34).

Due to the extreme flexibility of Thaumaturgy, just about anything is *theoretically* possible. Most neonates won't be able to perform more than a few standard paths and rituals — not that such skill is anything to scoff at. Indeed, judicious study of Thaumaturgy can have many benefits.

Investigation: The most rudimentary powers of the Path of Blood allow for phenomenal precision in tracking Kindred lineages. Tremere can easily establish the "credentials" of questionable visitors to the city; more than one prince has summarily executed an enemy of the Tremere simply based upon the say-so of a thaumaturge ("He's a lying diablerist... kill him!"). The power to steal or transmute blood also gives Tremere an edge in gathering the materials necessary for such evidence.

Versatile Defense: Chances are, any group of Tremere includes members who know different forms of Thaumaturgy and varied rituals. By combining skills, Tremere can enact a variety of minor miracles with frightening efficiency. Tremere who know similar rituals can extend their proficiency simply by working in tandem: three Tremere with Defense of Sacred Haven can shield several rooms in an hour. A group of Tremere with varied rituals like Flesh of Fiery Touch and Deflection of Wooden Doom can cast phenomenal layers of protection over one individual (a bodyguard or representative, perhaps).

Prestation: The powers of Thaumaturgy aren't easily countered or duplicated. Better still, rituals allow for long-lasting effects or objects that can be used by others. Kindred hungry for any advantage may barter boons, services and status for the merest thaumaturgical trinket. Stories relate that some Tremere may even teach the rudiments of Thaumaturgy to their allies, for the price of a Blood Contract. Bones of Lies, Deflections of Wooden Doom and similar

useful applications can all be had for the right price — and often, the first one's free.

All of the Thaumaturgy paths and rituals printed hereafter use the basic thaumaturgical systems as presented on pages 178 and 182-183 of *Vampire: The Masquerade*. Some of these powers have been updated from previous editions of *Vampire* supplements. For more detailed information regarding the principles of Thaumaturgy, see *Blood Magic: Secrets of Thaumaturgy*.

TEACHING AND LEARNING THAUMATURGY

As befits a carefully honed secret handed down through centuries of clan study, Thaumaturgy ranks as one of the rarest and most scientific Disciplines. The Tremere limit the spread of Thaumaturgy for many reasons: because Thaumaturgy gives their clan a definite advantage; because Thaumaturgy's flexibility allows the Tremere to foil many other Disciplines; because other Kindred might not have the strength of will to use Thaumaturgy properly; because some secrets, if they were to surface, would lead to wholesale hunting of the Tremere clan.

Neonate Tremere often find a peculiar affinity for Thaumaturgy. Some develop proficiency with blood magic of their own accord, without extensive training, but this rarely extends beyond the rudiments of the craft. Rituals and alternative paths especially require study. Among other Kindred, Thaumaturgy is a terribly difficult craft to master — the vampire must not only memorize and flawlessly execute centuries' worth of mystic study, but must turn the very Curse around to become a personal tool. Even among those with the occult acumen to learn Thaumaturgy, instructors are rare indeed. After all, if a Tremere vampire can count Thaumaturgy as a personal advantage over other Kindred, there's no reason to teach its secrets; if another Kindred manages to master Thaumaturgy alone, he similarly has no reason to divulge those skills.

The *Vampire: The Masquerade* rulebook notes that the study of Thaumaturgy may take upward of 10 years of blood-bending rituals (see the *Inherited Affinity* ritual, below). For Tremere Kindred, it's often appropriate to allow one or two dots of the Path of Blood, simply as an intuitive practice. Other characters shouldn't have Thaumaturgy without an *exceptional* explanation from the player. Indeed, the Storyteller should always feel within his rights to deny Thaumaturgy to non-Tremere characters; some Kindred simply can't master its intricacies without centuries of work to overcome their ingrained habits or lack of natural talent. In any case, a non-Tremere Kindred who desires to learn Thaumaturgy probably needs at least an Occult rating of 4, an instructor who's already mastered Thaumaturgy and a lot of painful experimentation. Developing Thaumaturgy from books and tomes may be possible, but remember that such a feat took the better part of a century for an entire cabal of low-generation, century-old wizards who had already practiced the craft for decades while

they were alive when the Tremere first became undead. Such a feat isn't likely for a lone individual without extraordinary talent and dedication.

THAUMATURGY PATHS

Understanding the mystic principles of the vitae that animates their undead bodies allows the Tremere to manipulate blood in startling ways with Thaumaturgy. Even the phenomenal cursed power of Disciplines has limits, of course, and Thaumaturgy pays for its flexibility with its narrowly specialized paths. Each path grants power over one limited area of mysticism. New paths can be made to expand these limits. Conversely, though, developing a new path requires extreme dedication and extensive knowledge, so most thaumaturges must content themselves with the few paths that their tutors grudgingly or sparingly disseminate. Probably any thaumaturge who devises her own path has little desire to make its secrets and advantages widely known — why give away what one has striven to perfect?

Within the Tremere clan, many paths have grown from half-formed ideas put forth by those unable to fully develop them or faded into obscurity. Thaumaturgy's price in both vitae and focus can take a huge toll, so even a broadly useful path (like the Path of Blood) often proves less effective than more common Disciplines. For this reason, even though the permutations of Thaumaturgy remain theoretically infinite, many attempts at paths simply don't have enough utility, or prove too costly, to be worth the resources and risk. Others that are quite effective may well remain hoarded by their creators and so see almost no widespread use.

FAILED AND LOST PATHS

For those Storytellers with a cruel or detail-oriented view of the World of Darkness, some failed or antiquated paths may provide a horrific or literary aside to a story involving Tremere. Perhaps a Tremere character wants to devise a path of his own, and discovers that someone already tried a similar idea but with dismal results. Maybe the Tremere have a new path that's quite powerful, but also extremely debilitating, and they're reluctant to use it without finding a way to improve it. A path could simply fall out of general favor and use due to obsolescence — why bother with a path to increase movement speeds in an age with automobiles and jet aircraft? Any one of these can be a unique curiosity for occult-oriented characters. A character might collect anachronistic or "lost" knowledge, or be determined to finish building a path that only had its first or second level completed. Lost paths can also give insight into their creators. ("Why did my mentor spend two months in 1780 trying to build a path that exerted control over insects?"), or have highly specialized applications that simply aren't useful in the current situation but reflect historical events ("Well, this path certainly improves defensive capabilities, but only in castles at least two acres in size."). Remember, a path needn't be a finished or all-powerful product; just because

Thaumaturgy's flexible doesn't mean that it's infallible. More failed paths probably exist than finished ones, and a string of failed paths could even be an albatross around a hapless Tremere's neck. Conversely, turning an old failed path into a successful new form (like the Path of the Levinbolt, below) can garner great clan prestige.

PATH OF THE LEVINBOLT

Medieval Tremere experimented with harnessing lightning itself, but their understanding proved only rudimentary. Without knowledge of electricity, thaumaturges could only rely on a simple ability to hold and discharge energy. Furthermore, other paths like the Lure of Flames proved more useful in the struggle to establish the clan's place. For these reasons, the Path of the Levinbolt faded to obscurity through the Dark and Middle Ages, and remained hidden away in grimoires until the Victorian Age.

The birth of science and understanding of electricity revitalized the Path of the Levinbolt — the combination of mystical astrology with a rational understanding allowed thaumaturges to rebuild and rechannel its principles. No longer did thaumaturges have only some limited skill in charging themselves with lightning; now they could arc, focus and handle the very elements! Older practitioners spent minutes collecting the energy necessary to charge this Path's discharges, but modern thaumaturges could gather the electricity in mere seconds, to direct as they chose.

As a thaumaturge collects the energy of the Levinbolt, she often takes on an electrical aspect: sparks may play at her fingertips, or a purplish halo may seem to surround her hands as a warning of storms to come. Mighty discharges often result in a sort of flaring afterimage like a photo negative as the powerful lightning makes a stark contrast to surrounding darkness.

•Spark

Novice thaumaturges can build up a tiny static charge, enough to make a noticeable *snap* with a touch. Such a discharge poses little threat to healthy targets, though the energy can ruin delicate electronics or stun an unlucky victim.

System: The thaumaturge simply touches a target (after the requisite blood expenditure and Willpower roll by the player) and releases the spark. The electricity can snap from any part of the caster's body, so a thaumaturge might give an unpleasant surprise to someone touching her. The resulting discharge inflicts two dice of electrical damage (generally lethal). The time required to draw out the electricity varies with the successes scored: with one success, the vampire might need a turn or three to accumulate the energy; with three successes, only a couple of seconds; with five successes, instantly. The caster must use the power immediately after invoking the magic.

MET System: You can make a single snapping discharge of static electricity by touch. Should you choose to use this power in conjunction with a touch (against a subject that you



attack, or someone who hits you, or just against some object touching you), simply snap your fingers — the subject takes one lethal level of damage and is stunned for the rest of the turn.

•• Illuminate

Neonates sometimes derogatively refer to this effect as the “40-watt Tremere,” right up until they’ve felt its sting. The thaumaturge summons enough electricity to cover her hand or arm in arcing bolts. This power can charge a battery or briefly run a small device, or even leave a nasty burn on a touched subject.

System: Each success scored on the player’s Willpower roll translates to approximately one turn of power sufficient to run a handful of lights or a small electrical device. Alternately, the thaumaturge can shock someone by touch, as with the Spark power, but for four dice of (lethal) electrical damage; such a use immediately discharges the energy. The current created with this power is not strong enough to force its way through less-than-ideal conductors, though, and simply inflicts electrical damage on raw metals, woods or other matter in the form of a burn. The thaumaturge can alternately allow the electricity to spark about her hand, eyes, head or the like; this creates illumination about equal to a dim light bulb, and obviously give a two-point bonus to Intimidation rolls against unassuming victims (like mortals). In conjunction with a Dexterity + Crafts roll (difficulty 7), the thaumaturge could even use his fingers to perform crude metal welding, though this can easily heat metal enough to inflict aggravated damage to the caster....

MET System: You can shock with a touch, as with the Spark power, which causes two levels of lethal damage and leaves the target stunned for the rest of the turn; alternately, you can generate light or power for one turn for each point of permanent Willpower that you possess. If you choose to generate electrical light, you also gain one bonus Social Trait for intimidation. You can also weld a single broken item of metal together (such as a broken sword or a ruined car door) with about a minute of work, though you suffer a level of aggravated damage in the process.

••• Power Array

Like a looming thundercloud, the thaumaturge holds the waiting fury of lightning. Although the vampire cannot create or direct a charge strongly or accurately enough to launch actual bolts of electricity, she can conduct power through other substances or even absorb nearby energies.

System: As with lesser levels of this path, the thaumaturge can discharge a shock of electricity, this time up to six dice of lethal damage; the charge remains active for a number of turns equal to the number of successes scored by the player on the initial roll. With this power, the thaumaturge can also send the power through any conductive substance touched; a metal sword (with a similarly metal handle) could carry the thaumaturge’s electric touch — the bolts of lightning would literally snap across the blade into the target touched. The

thaumaturge could also briefly power a large device or continue to power a small device for the duration of the effect. Though perhaps an ignominious use, a sorcerer could conceivably find himself needing just a minute to look into an unpowered computer’s files, to override an electrical lock or to start a dead car battery. Other power sources offer alternatives: the thaumaturge can choose to channel other electrical energies through herself if desired, which lets her draw power out of a car battery or power line without injury and without counting against her own power generation. By touching both power source and subject, the thaumaturge can act as a near-perfect conductor without any harm to herself.

MET System: Your shocking strikes (up to three) can score three levels of damage and stun your target, as a more powerful version of Spark, and can strike anyone who physically touches you, so you can give a nasty surprise to a group of attackers. You can also create power for moderately large devices or conduct power between sources. You can choose to add your damage to a metal object that you hold — if you strike someone with a metal crowbar, for instance, you get the usual damage and add the effects of Power Array as well. By holding a power source (like an electrical line), you can conduct electricity into anything you touch, with effects at the Storyteller’s discretion (generally, such power lets you score an additional level of lethal damage on anyone you touch, not cumulative with this power’s other effects, or continue to supply power without draining yourself). The power remains for a number of turns equal to your permanent Willpower Traits, or until used up.

•••• Zeus’ Fury

Accomplished thaumaturges can not only absorb electrical power, but shape and redirect it. The vampire may arc lightning from her body to nearby targets or hold a potent charge that raises hair on end and sparks with suppressed energy.

System: The successes scored by the player determine the number of turns that the vampire can harness Zeus’ Fury. The character holds a total of 10 dice of electrical power, which can be discharged through touch or in arced bolts in any combination desired — so the player could choose to spend four dice of damage in a touch attack, and then arc the remaining six dice into a bolt of lightning the next turn. As with lesser levels of power, a touch can fuel or overload electrical devices. The thaumaturge directs hurled bolts with Perception + Science (difficulty of 6 plus the range in yards — up to a maximum of 10, at the maximum range of four yards).

MET System: Not only can you channel power for three levels of damage and stun, but you can fire bolts of electrical energy with similar characteristics — up to three such bolts, one per turn. You direct bolts by pitting your Mental Traits against your enemy’s Physical Traits, discounting metal armor and using Science for retests. The power lasts for a number of turns equal to your permanent Willpower Traits, or until used up.

••••• Eye of the Storm

The thaumaturge becomes a shifting, sparking pillar of electrical power. Her merest glance can prove dangerous, her touch explosively fatal. The energy channeled in the Eye of the Storm can tear apart a mortal body or spectacularly detonate all but the most heavily shielded electrical components. Wood, metal, plastic and similar materials combust dramatically with contact, burn or even sublimate.

System: At this level of mastery, the vampire can discharge 14 dice of damage by touch, or launch lesser bolts of electricity as with Zeus' Fury, above. Materials or entities that come in contact with the thaumaturge automatically suffer one die of lethal electrical damage each turn (this does not count against the usual dice pool, and adds to touch damage). The sparking, glowing form of the thaumaturge becomes a veritable halo of energy, and onlookers suffer from the excessively bright light and flashing afterimages (which can increase the difficulty of most tasks simply due to the distraction). The nimbus discharges at a rate of one die per turn unless otherwise spent, or unless a number of turns elapse equal to the successes scored by the player on the initial roll.

MET System: While you channel the *Eye of the Storm*, you are a dervish of shimmering electrical energy that seems to set the very air alight. Anyone looking at you suffers from the Negative Mental Trait *Oblivious* due to the glare, and people using *Heightened Senses* certainly have their sight overloaded and blinded. You can snap electrical charges into targets for four levels of lethal damage and stun them, using up to three such attacks total. The power lasts for a number of turns equal to your permanent Willpower Traits, or until used up.

THE PATH OF SHADOWCRAFTING

Although the Tremere have long been enemies of the Tzimisce, a chantry of 17th-century Portuguese Tremere once turned their talents to specialized means of combating the treacherous Lasombra of neighboring Spain. In the modern nights, however, Tzimisce-Lasombra ties in the Sabbat mean that the Tremere must sometimes bring their attentions to the depredations of the lords of shadow. Indeed, some Tremere wryly comment that for every sorcerous Tzimisce counselor who advises a Lasombra bishop, a cunning Tremere counsels an insidious Ventrue. With the Camarilla's recent upturn in clashes with the Sabbat, the Tremere have needed a means to blunt the Sabbat's edges. The unearthed Path of Shadowcrafting offers one such opportunity, albeit in a scope that never became widespread due to its limited utility.

Students of the Path of Shadowcrafting learn to manipulate shades, but not in the same fashion as the Lasombra. While Shadowcrafting tugs at the absence of light, Tremere who have fought the Lasombra firsthand come away with the distinct impression that Obtenebration manipulates something else — a tangible darkness, a sort of abyssal nothingness coaxed into the material world. What this bodes, even the

Tremere do not know, and the few Lasombra *antitribu* certainly aren't forthcoming. In the meantime, the Tremere hope to refine the path into a means of controlling or duplicating the Lasombra's power, while keeping their failures quietly away from influential Camarilla ears. As is, the path is relatively weak, but those exploring it hope to make breakthroughs any night now....

This path does not function for Kindred with the Flaw: *Cast No Reflection*.

• Out Light

The first rule of shade: darkness overcomes all light. Eventually, every light gutters and fades. A neophyte thaumaturge can exert this property of darkness, bringing a sordid mortality to lights nearby. The lights may flicker and dim or even snuff completely, depending upon their strength and the thaumaturge's will.

System: The thaumaturge can focus darkness upon any one light source within her range of sight. Only lights up to the strength of a torch, light bulb or modern neon sign can be affected, but complete success snuffs a light permanently (light bulbs and neon signs burn out; candles go out, but could be re-lit later). Successes scored on the casting roll determine the strength of the fading.

Successes	Effect
1	Momentary flicker
2	Pronounced guttering for several seconds
3	Source produces only dim flickers of erratic light for two turns
4	Light source blacks out completely for two turns, then resumes
5+	Totally extinguished

MET System: Spend one Blood Trait and make a Simple Test. If you win, a small light source that you can see suddenly goes out. If you tie, it flickers and gutters noticeably for several seconds. If you lose, there is no effect. You can only affect a light source that could easily be held in one hand and that does not put out more light than a good flashlight — a candle, lantern, flashlight or bulb could be extinguished, but a camera flash, spotlight or a halogen lamp could not be. If the light source was a flame and you manage to put it out, you also douse the flame.

•• Shadow Taunt

A wholly unnerving power, Shadow Taunt allows a thaumaturge to take command of a distant shadow. By sympathetically linking it to his body, the thaumaturge makes the distant shadow obey his own shadow's motion. The caster can jape, threaten or move about and cause the faraway shadow to behave in similar fashion. If the shadow belongs to a person, it follows the thaumaturge's actions. Shadows of other than anthropomorphic shape contort as best they can, stretching, elongating and moving in a semblance of the caster's motion. A shadow controlled in this fashion cannot actually do harm, nor does it harm its source.



but it certainly proves unnerving. On at least one occasion, a Tremere novice managed to humiliate an opponent simply by making the Kindred's shadow subtly berate him; when the aggrieved Kindred brought the matter to the attention of the harpies, he found himself roundly scathed — "Afraid of your own shadow now?"

System: Successes scored on the Willpower roll for this effect determine how many turns the caster can control a distant shadow. Only one shadow at a time may be so influenced. Shadows animated in this fashion can move and even pantomime as they follow the thaumaturge's actions, but they cannot make sound, nor do they actually break away from their casting source (so, if the thaumaturge leaves, the shadow moves as if running in place). The caster must be able to see the shadow that he wishes to manipulate, and it must be a natural shadow, not one created with *Obtenebration*.

MET System: You need only indicate a distant shadow and spend the usual time and Blood Trait to invoke this power of *Thaumaturgy*. Once you've invoked *Shadow Taunt*, you can completely control the actions of a shadow that you can see for so long as you concentrate on it. You should either indicate its pantomimes to the subject casting it, or inform a Narrator who can relay the shadow's unusual actions. If nothing else, this can serve as an unusual distraction. As above, this power has no effect upon *Obtenebration*.

••• Coruscating Shadow

How would shadow appear if it hovered in the air? a discoloration? a dimness in the atmosphere? a hole in space? A commanding Tremere can peel the very shade from surrounding surfaces and bend it into floating forms that whip about. These airborne shadows conceal the caster and create a roiling sphere of confusion. The unnatural display manifests as an ephemeral globe that encompasses the caster at about arm's length, though it contracts and expands rapidly while the shadows flit about its surface.

System: Under the effects of *Coruscating Shadow*, the Tremere gains partial concealment due to the rapidly strobing passage of shadowy shapes. The ball of shadows that surrounds the caster has no physical substance but expands and contracts, writhes and spins and generally makes matters difficult for anyone trying to observe the thaumaturge. Raise the difficulty of actions that affect the caster, including attacks, by one while this power is in effect. Furthermore, the heavier prevalence of shadow helps when blending into darkened areas, giving the player a two-die bonus to *Stealth* rolls for the character. The sphere lasts for one turn per success garnered on the roll.

MET System: Indicate *Coruscating Shadow* by crossing your arms at neck level, palms out with your fingers spread. Any onlooker can note the plainly unusual sight. You gain one bonus Trait to resolution in all challenges of stealth and when defending against any physical attack. The sphere lasts for one turn for every Trait of permanent Willpower that you have.

••••Night's Veil

Shadows seem to devour the landscape hungrily as night falls. Where any shadow lies, the power of night remains — through that sympathetic power the Tremere can invoke the strength of night in any place. Mortals who have observed this bizarre power have left the experience "touched," talking of shadows impossible in the current light and non-Euclidian geometries casting horrid shades.

System: Like other Shadowcrafting powers, the Tremere must extend existing shadows. Typically, the caster stands within a shadowed corner and invokes this power. In each successive turn, the shadow slowly expands to cover greater ground. Such mystically enhanced shade can even reach out into sunlit stretches. The shade extends about a yard beyond its normal distance for each success scored on the roll. For the rest of the scene, the shade counts as an area under the province of night: the Tremere can act normally without hindrance from daytime and avoid the sun's rays. Should the caster step outside the shadow (whether accidentally or purposefully), though, the effect ends immediately — quite possibly stranding the Tremere, dizzy and disoriented, in burning sunlight.

MET System: By casting *Night's Veil*, you can cause an area of shadow to expand beyond what would be its natural length. The pre-existing shadow is considered to extend an additional yard in each direction. So long as you remain within

this shadow, the area counts as being under the influence of night. This lasts for the rest of the scene or an hour.

••••• Abyssal Pact

Mastery of the Path of Shadowcrafting allows a Tremere to imbue his shades with some semblance of substance. At this level of expertise, the path truly takes on some characteristics of tangible nightmares. While smothered in darkness, the Tremere lets loose something that seems hungry and malevolent. Mastery of such shade creations also gives the Tremere a small chance to counter the Obtenebration Discipline, though such hope perhaps leads more to overconfidence than to conquest.

The creator of the Shadowcrafting path, now a chartering invalid, maintains during brief moments of lucidity that strange shadow entities wait in every darkened corner. Certainly the shades conjured by this path give some credence to such notions, but the Kindred in question asserts that these beings devour light and feed upon the very essences of those who would dare truck with them. If these are, perhaps, the primal fiends that deal with the Lasombra's fluid darkness, then perhaps their secrets are best left hidden — their unnatural kin were never meant to withstand the light.

System: To summon the final powers of Shadowcrafting, both the Tremere and the target must be within the same patch of darkness — two individuals in a closet, or both out on the street on a moonless night. The Tremere does not need



to see the individual, but must somehow sense the victim's presence, whether by hearing, touch or some other apprehension. Furthermore, the darkness must be total or near-total; simple shadows do not suffice. Conjuring the esurient shadow costs five blood points (total, not in addition to the usual Thaumaturgy costs).

Once created, the shade-form assaults the victim and drains vitality. Tangible shadow attacks envelop the victim in a smothering blanket of darkness that bites like a school of barracuda. Every two successes scored on the casting roll cause the victim to lose one health level of lethal damage; additionally, the victim loses one point of Stamina for the remainder of the scene, as the hungry shadows suck out the very essence of living vitality (note that Kindred can use their blood to restore such losses until the next scene). Subsequent attacks are cumulative, so it's possible to wear a victim down over multiple turns, though that's certainly expensive and time-consuming for all but the most proficient thaumaturges.

The abyssal shades conjured with this power can be used to fight against Obtenebration, but they seem reluctant to do so. Instead of inflicting damage upon an opponent, the caster can direct the shadow power so that every two successes scored by the player removes one success from an Obtenebration effect. This can negate a power entirely or reduce its efficacy. Of course, the Lasombra can simply reactivate the appropriate Obtenebration powers, probably without nearly as much effort, but the surprise alone can prove invaluable.

Should the thaumaturge botch the casting roll, the shades still manifest but attack him instead, in addition to the normal Thaumaturgy botch penalty of one permanent Willpower point. Roll six dice and apply the results as specified above for every two successes.

MET System: When you cast this power, you must specify whether you wish to conjure shades against an opponent or counter *Obtenebration*. If you conjure shades, you make a Simple Test — on a win, your victim suffers two levels of lethal damage and the Negative Physical Trait *Sickly*; on a tie, the victim suffers one level of lethal damage; on a loss, you instead take one level of lethal damage. Should you attempt to counter *Obtenebration*, you make a Mental Challenge against the target in question, and if you win the *Obtenebration* power fails completely. If you lose, you take a level of lethal damage. The *Obtenebration* user gains a free retest to resist the power. In either case, you must expend a phenomenal five Blood Traits (total) to invoke the *Abyssal Pact*.

THAUMATURGY RITUALS

The Tremere keep several rituals closely guarded within their ranks — some, like Pavis of the Foul Presence, because of their utility in countering the advantages of other clans; others, such as the Transubstantiation of Seven, because they're integral to the functions of the Tremere as a whole. Because rituals allow a thaumaturge to extend the power of

the Curse in startling and long-reaching ways, they're often cautiously hoarded. Nearly every Tremere older than the rankst neonate hungers to develop unique personal rituals, just to hold power that other Kindred don't have. Some succeed; others decide that the cost in time and terrible rites is too high, and content themselves with the already considerable extant knowledge of the Tremere clan.

A ritual, like other forms of Thaumaturgy, bends the power of the Curse to make possible various unnatural effects. Unlike the more versatile paths, though, rituals do not always require the use of blood. Instead, a ritual relies upon fixed incantations and practices, combined with principles of Authority and Sympathy, to create a single sorcerous effect. The trade lies in the effort — a ritual often requires extensive work to complete. Often the caster must perform dangerous or difficult practices, and even learning a ritual can be risky. By reinforcing the ritual's power with these practices, the vampire overcomes the usual forms of the Curse. Just as the vampire remains a static creature, each ritual gives a static method to achieve one effect.

Rituals derive their strength from the Curse, and most rituals carry the unwholesome taint of the undead. A ritual may use special tools to try to offset this factor — some rites require holy water, pure silver, moonlight or other sanctifying ingredients — but always the caster's essential damnation makes itself evident. For this reason, most rituals have a decidedly grim bent. By far the most common rituals are those that manipulate or extend the power of blood, and many require the use of vitae. Even rituals that focus on different imperatives often center around vampiric lusts and needs. Many rituals enforce mystic influence, prey upon fear or focus weapons against other undead. Few passively work to defend, aid or heal. No ritual dares to step upon the toes of sanctity. Even Thaumaturgy — "the performance of miracles" — cannot mimic the forms of faith, banished as vampires are from God's sight.

BLOOD MASTERY (LEVEL ONE RITUAL)

Whispered rumors tell that one should never allow the Tremere to gain access to the blood of another vampire. Paranoid tales in hushed tones tell of the Tremere's mastery over other Kindred through the sole use of a small quantity of vitae. While modern, cosmopolitan Kindred scoff at such tales, even they are careful not to let their blood fall into the wrong hands, just in case.

Such caution, though, is well-deserved. A Tremere with even rudimentary understanding of blood can focus its power into sympathetic forms. By destroying another Kindred's blood, the Tremere gains symbolic power over that Kindred. This in turn allows the Tremere to manifest his supremacy over the victim.

System: The thaumaturge must mix a tiny quantity of his own vitae (a negligible amount, less than a point) with that of his victim, then slowly burn it in a fire or boil the blood slowly over an open flame. The caster speaks the phrases of

symmetry as he finishes. Once complete, the Tremere has magical mastery over the victim, however briefly.

Successful completion of the Blood Mastery ritual guarantees a victory of some degree over the victim. In the next contention that the caster brings against the victim, the ritualist automatically succeeds. If the task would require some roll, the caster garners one success automatically, but no more (and cannot roll or spend Willpower to improve the roll). This means that the caster is guaranteed a marginal success against his opponent. Of course, it may not be in a fashion that the thaumaturge desires — one success alone is not enough to decapitate an enemy, but it might influence him briefly with the Dominate Discipline. Similarly, if the victim takes some action first, the ritual is of no help if the caster's player could not normally make a countering roll. For example, the caster would still be subject to an opponent's use of Presence, because he may not normally make a roll to resist. If the victim uses some Discipline that would require the caster to resist, though, then the thaumaturge automatically counters it and thus ends the power of the ritual.

Blood Mastery can only guarantee success in one limited endeavor — a thaumaturge cannot burn multiple points of blood to gain additional successes or success on multiple consecutive actions. Once the ritual is in place, it must be discharged before it can be invoked again against the same subject. Blood Mastery expires if its effects remain unused by sunrise.

MET System: Basic Ritual. Casting *Blood Mastery* requires the expenditure of one Trait each of blood from the caster and victim. The caster automatically succeeds in the next challenge that he enters against the victim. This only functions if a test would normally be possible: *Blood Mastery* cannot allow a Kindred to *Dominate* someone of lower generation, for example. *Blood Mastery* may not be used for a "called shot" (you cannot specify that you are attempting to decapitate someone and then automatically win; you would only manage to automatically hit for normal damage). *Blood Mastery* is not cumulative, only one use of *Blood Mastery* can be in effect at a time, and the effects expire at sunrise (or the end of the game) if unused.

DEDICATE THE CHANTRY (LEVEL ONE RITUAL)

Tremere chantries typically house arcane books, special resources, servants and other major assets. It's no wonder they're so closely guarded. One common practice includes the casting of various wards over a chantry site, to prevent unauthorized entry and to make the place difficult to locate. Dedicate the Chantry expedites this process, making it easier to place subsequent enchantments over the area.

To Dedicate the Chantry, the caster must walk a counterclockwise circle around the entire grounds and sprinkle stagnant water as he travels. Once the ring is complete, the thaumaturge must return to the (rough) center and anoint his hands with the stale water, then the lowest level of the floor.

System: A dedication functions over a single building, so a complex of homes or an estate and grounds may require several castings. Once dedicated, the chantry is open to more defenses; any site ritual cast over the chantry, from a ward to potent magics like *Deny the Intruder* (below), has its casting difficulty lowered by one.

MET System: Basic Ritual. Most Tremere chantries can be considered augmented by this ritual; it's fairly standard practice. Any place enchantments cast on dedicated ground get a one-Trait bonus to completion.

PURIFY BLOOD (LEVEL ONE RITUAL)

Kindred learned to be cautious of diseased vessels during the Black Plague. Experimentation showed that most diseases, even blood-borne ones, rarely have any effect upon Kindred, but that vampires can carry such diseases and pass them to their victims. Cautious Tremere can use a simple rite to insure that blood remains safe to drink. The caster simply decants the blood into a suitable container and makes a few passes of his hands over it, combined with some thaumaturgical phrases and a mixture of ash and crushed ginger. The blood lightens slightly in color if the ritual succeeds, and the rite cleanses all poison or disease from the sample.

Unfortunately, Purify Blood does not function on blood that's still in a creature's system. The ritual therefore cannot cleanse a human of disease or make drinking from such a vessel safe; it will only purify blood that is removed from the human first. Some vampires shun this ritual because of the extra work involved in securing blood without the Kiss, and the less-than-satisfactory taste (not to mention the lack of a warm, beating pulse) definitely puts off Kindred connoisseurs. For these reasons, Purify Blood remains more a survival ritual during desperate epidemics, not a nightly staple. (See also *Cleansing of the Flesh*, on p. 94 of *Blood Magic: Secrets of Thaumaturgy*, and *Purity of Flesh*, on p. 110 of the *Guide to the Camarilla*, for other applications of this ritual's principles.)

System: A surpassingly simple ritual, Purify Blood requires only a minimal investment in time and effort. The caster can tell from the color of the blood if the rite succeeds.

Purify Blood functions on up to one point of blood. Because of the volume limitations, Purify Blood can cleanse only one blood point at a time (unless used on the vitae of very low-generation vampires). Poisons, diseases and other mixtures are removed, while foreign substances bubble to the top. However, the ritual does not in any way change the *potency* of the blood; vitae can still cause a blood bond, and blood rendered acidic or caustic by a Discipline (like *Quietus* or *Vicissitude*) cannot be cleansed. This ritual cannot counter the *Vaulderie* (nor is it stealthy enough to perform unnoticed in the midst of such a rite). Rotten, solidified or otherwise befouled blood also vanishes if subjected to the ritual, so a vampire needn't fear gagging on old, dead blood.

MET System: Basic Ritual. No special live-action rules apply for *Purify Blood*; it simply allows the caster to purify a single Blood Trait, subject to the same limitations listed previously.

SCENT OF THE LUPINE'S PASSING (LEVEL ONE RITUAL)

Developed in a besieged Carpathian chantry where Tremere fell as often to the claws of night-black Lupines as to the other clans, this simple ritual lets the caster scent Lupines in the area. The thaumaturge prepares a small herbal bundle with milkweed, wolfsbane, sage and a handful of simple grass. With a short set of phrases she takes a whiff from the mixture, after which she can immediately tell any Lupine by scent. This does not mean that she can detect Lupines at a distance, merely that she can tell if a specific person's smell happens to be Lupine, which can be useful when combined with augmented senses.

System: The thaumaturge simply completes the ritual and sniffs from the herbal bundle. Afterward, she can detect Lupines by scent; actually sniffing someone up close would require no roll, but catching a scent at a distance of a few feet might take a Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 6). Detecting a Lupine hidden around a corner, for example, could increase the difficulty to 8. This scent distinction lasts for an entire scene.

MET System: See *Laws of the Night Revised*, p. 186.

DENY THE INTRUDER (LEVEL TWO RITUAL)

To protect chantries from unwanted observation, Tremere rely not only upon mystic wards but also upon mortal bureaucracy. An enemy can hardly drop in if the chantry isn't listed in any directories or real estate paperwork, after all. Better still, a little judicious paper-shuffling can "lose" records for electrical payments, telephone calls and other incriminating evidence.

To set up a chantry's bureaucratic defense, the Tremere simply scrawls a series of mystic characters on a piece of paper. This page goes out by mail (some modern Tremere even scan the page and use e-mail) and promptly becomes lost in the system. For the next year, the chantry becomes difficult to track via the usual paperwork routes.

System: There's no special cost for the paperwork involved in this ritual, though the Tremere must scrawl out the characters with charcoal. Once the paper makes it into "the system" — by the hands of the mailman, by e-mail to some server, or what have you — it vanishes without a trace. So, too, do the records of the chantry. Attempts to investigate the chantry or unearth records of its existence increase in difficulty by one for each success scored on the ritual roll. This doesn't hinder the chantry's normal functions; the telephones still work and the electricity still runs. It's just that nobody ever sends the bills directly to the chantry or writes anything in the credit memos that reveals the building's location.

MET System: Basic Ritual. All Influence actions to address a chantry defended with *Deny the Intruder* require

double the normal Influence level. Thus, using *Bureaucracy* Influence to trace utility bills would require two levels of *Bureaucracy* Influence instead of one.

INSCRIPTION (LEVEL TWO RITUAL)

Not everyone can be proficient with Thaumaturgy. Some Tremere build mystic items specifically to aid their subordinates or allies. A neonate with only the rudiments of skill may have need of a specific ritual, or another Kindred might desire to purchase the special services of Thaumaturgy but need them for his own later use. Instead of taking the time and risk to instruct someone else in the fine points of the working in question, a proficient thaumaturge can build an annotated version of a ritual, fueled with his blood, to make the formula accessible to someone else.

The Inscription ritual allows the thaumaturge to place any other first- or second-level ritual in a written form. This generally requires the equivalent of a full page of paper. A reader can then unlock the power of that ritual by reading the inscription and following its instructions. The scribe uses his blood as a base for the ink, and his vitae's power remains in the mixture to help fuel the ritual. An inscribed ritual is in imperfect form — it cannot be used to learn Thaumaturgy. It's a simplified set of instructions, with the scribe's vitae empowering the rite so that it overcomes any omissions or sloppiness on the part of the practitioner.

System: A thaumaturge who knows the techniques of Inscription can write an abbreviated form for any first- or second-level ritual that he knows, at a cost of two blood points. Anyone who can read the language may then use the ritual notes later. Actually casting the ritual from the notes requires the use of the usual components and time, as well as the standard Intelligence + Occult roll, but the caster need not have any knowledge of Thaumaturgy. Once an inscription is complete, the power of the writer's vitae is trapped in the object; his maximum blood pool is effectively reduced by one until the inscription is used. After use, the inscription dries into a fine, illegible ash, with all the power expelled from the vitae-based ink. The scribe can use the scroll himself (which is rather pointless) or give it to someone else. To prevent an inscription from reaching the wrong subject, many scribes also use *Encrypt Missive* (*Blood Magic: Secrets of Thaumaturgy*, p. 87) with this ritual.

Rumor holds that more powerful forms of inscription can create annotations for higher-level rituals, but only elders would know for certain. It is known that the blood powering Inscription can be used for links of Sympathy and Identity — an incautious Tremere could find his blood in the hands of an enemy who can use it against him.

MET System: Basic Ritual. A Storyteller must be present for you to use *Inscription*. You give your Blood Trait card to the Storyteller, who should make a special mark on your sheet (placing an "I" over each used Blood Trait circle is a good idea). Place your *Inscription* upon an item card, with



a note of the ritual and your character's name (so that the Storytellers can tell who wrote it when it's used up).

THE OPEN PASSAGE (LEVEL TWO RITUAL)

Walls, locked doors and even sealed vaults cannot stop a thaumaturge with the Open Passage ritual. The caster smears snake or vermin excrement over the surface in an intricate pattern, which takes an hour to complete. Once finished, the caster becomes insubstantial with respect to that surface — she can walk through a wall or door, yet can still touch and interact with anything attached to it (like a mirror or wooden shelf).

System: The Open Passage lasts for one turn, so the caster must be quick in stepping through the barrier.

MET System: See *Laws of the Night Revised*, p. 185.

RITUAL'S RECOGNITION (LEVEL TWO RITUAL)

Some thaumaturgical rituals don't have an immediately visible effect. A ritual's success or failure may not be immediately apparent; cautious thaumaturges need a way to tell if their rituals work. Even a competent thaumaturge's rituals fail from time to time. Most would consider a few extra minutes of work worth the trouble to make sure that, say, a Deflection of Wooden Doom ritual functions properly, instead of finding out the hard way.

To set up Ritual's Recognition, the caster must sever the last eighth of an inch of his nose or an earlobe and crush the fleshy bit in an ivory mortar and pestle. He then dusts his face with the resulting paste. Immediately afterward, the thaumaturge casts another ritual; upon completion, the thaumaturge can tell whether the ritual succeeded or failed.

System: Casting Ritual's Recognition causes one level of unsoakable bashing damage as the caster removes a gobblet of skin. Once complete, the thaumaturge must immediately begin his next ritual. When that ritual is finished, the caster automatically knows whether or not it succeeded, even if it would normally have no visible effect. By design, the caster can automatically tell if Ritual's Recognition succeeded, and can regrow the lost bit and recast it if it failed. In either case, the caster feels a warm flush upon completion of a successful rite.

MET System: Basic Ritual. Using *Ritual's Recognition* adds on its casting time to any other ritual, so it takes longer to finish even a simple *Deflection of Wooden Doom*. However, you are considered aware of the results of your ritual test.

INHERITED AFFINITY (LEVEL THREE RITUAL)

Although it's possible to learn Thaumaturgy with long and difficult study, experienced Tremere can help a student to "attune" his blood more closely to the twisted form of the Curse necessary for thaumaturgical practice. Students who are sluggish in mastering the basics of Thaumaturgy often suffer through this ritual once, which seems to "open the door," so to speak. Non-Tremere Kindred have a rougher time — should they find

a willing tutor, this ritual can help in learning Thaumaturgy, but it's still a slow and painful process.

To awaken the Inherited Affinity, the caster must have uninterrupted access to the subject for an entire night. Typically the subject is chained to a wall, so as to avoid having her break loose and cause havoc. The caster feeds the subject a nauseating concoction of rendered fat, various herbs and powdered garnet all steeped in blood. Then the thaumaturge inserts six heated, gold-plated needles into various points of the subject's anatomy — points of bodily power, generally, though the exact locations vary from caster to caster. Over the next three hours, the caster instructs the subject to infuse her body with the power of her vitae. The needles block off usual sources of blood circulation and alter the results (often quite painfully), complete with bloody splotches on the skin, profoundly distended veins and bleeding from various pores. Once complete, the subject may practice the new vistas of Thaumaturgy. This, of course, requires that the subject ingest yet more vitae to replace that lost through the ritual.

Many regents know how to use the Inherited Affinity, and it's common to put a newly Embraced neonate through this process to help awaken the power of blood magic. The subject must remember the feelings of the blood flow from the course of the rite; for most Tremere, this comes naturally after one application.

System: Surviving the Inherited Affinity ritual does not guarantee that a subject can learn Thaumaturgy, but it helps. The end result is up to the Storyteller — if the Storyteller requires players to make various study rolls to unearth thaumaturgical knowledge or rituals, going through the Inherited Affinity ritual may lower the difficulty. The ritual itself takes three nights of time and requires the subject to suffer through five levels of lethal damage and to expend all but one blood point; it's most helpful if the subject then imbibes additional blood and contemplates the feelings evoked. Obviously, a Kindred is subject to the usual chances of frenzy from hunger and injury due to this ritual.

MET System: Intermediate Ritual. The *Inherited Affinity* ritual is a good way to keep *Thaumaturgy* from getting out of Tremere hands, if your players are the sorts to do that. You can simply rule that non-Tremere studying *Thaumaturgy* take several years to learn the rudiments of the Discipline unless they successfully undergo this ritual. Will they do it for the lure of power? Will they trust the Tremere enough to try? Will they be willing to take five lethal wound levels and lose all but one Blood Trait in the process, leaving them at the mercy of the caster?

POWER OF THE PYRAMID (LEVEL THREE RITUAL)

Among the Tremere clan's most famous exploits are its great binding rituals over the entirety of the Tremere *antitribu*, and the majority of the Assamite clan. No lone thaumaturge

could accomplish such a feat. Only by sharing strength can the Tremere achieve the necessary might to create or resist such forces.

To combine thaumaturgical strength, Tremere Kindred can use a linking ritual. The Power of the Pyramid rite requires that each participant know and invoke the ritual simultaneously, and requires physical contact — so a group of Tremere, formed in a circle with linked hands, all chanting the same words in unison, indicates that the clan prepares for a daunting task. Once completed, the rite allows the Tremere involved to gather their mental strength together so that they can multiply their power.

Perhaps because of its connotations, this ritual only works for Kindred of Tremere lineage. Other vampires might be able to learn it, but it would probably not do them much good.

This ritual requires the casters to fast for 24 hours before performing it. Additionally, one of the thaumaturges participating in the group must wear a brooch or pin made from mortal bone, which must pierce his flesh (though it need not be visible to the rest of the group).

System: Each Kindred involved in Power of the Pyramid must know this ritual and successfully cast it simultaneously — any failed castings simply exclude the individual from the circle but do not hinder other successes. Once complete, a single Tremere can break from the circle without nullifying the ritual, but if any others lose physical contact the ritual ends. So long as the ritual continues, all participants may freely share their Willpower. Thus, one Tremere could break from the circle, perform another ritual and draw upon the Willpower of all Kindred involved. Once a caster has broken from the circle, he cannot return and release someone else; that "lynchpin" is the only one able to move around freely.

MET System: As with the tabletop version of this ritual, all successful participants in the *Power of the Pyramid* may freely share their Willpower Traits. Members of the circle can lend their Willpower to other members for further rituals, Trait refreshing, psychic combat and so on. Only one vampire may leave the circle to cast another ritual or perform other activities.

RUTOR'S HANDS (LEVEL THREE RITUAL)

Gargoyles and homunculi remain relatively common in some Tremere chantries, but few Kindred know of Rutor's Hands, or would want to. A thaumaturge of sufficient will can pluck out his own eye and set it atop one of his own severed hands — the ritual preserves them from disintegration — and animate this *thing* as a scurrying, malevolent spy. The eye rests on the back of the hand and swivels about to watch its surroundings, while the hand scuttles like a desiccated spider. The construct obeys the will of its owner and can relay what it sees and hears (even though it has no ears) back to its master, as the thaumaturge desires.

System: The thaumaturge cuts off his hand and plucks out his eye at the conclusion of this ritual; this causes five

levels of unsoakable aggravated damage. Once this damage is healed, the Tremere regenerates his hand and eye, though the ghastly homunculus may still prowl. Completing this ritual may also require a Willpower roll, at the Storyteller's discretion, simply to carry out the painful finale. The animate hand has one health level of its own and moves about with the equivalent of two dots in each Physical Attribute and in Perception, though it cannot fight. The caster mentally directs the thing's movement at will (so long as the thaumaturge remains conscious, of course). The Hand must have one point of blood each week, or else it crumbles to dust. Likewise, if the hand is exposed to sunlight or fire, it vanishes with a squeal and leaves a greasy stench.

MET System: See *Laws of the Night Revised*, p. 187.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION OF SEVEN (LEVEL THREE RITUAL)

Even many outsiders know that the Tremere hold a blood loyalty to their clan, but the extent of this loyalty — or the means by which it's accomplished — remains a secret. Almost every Tremere holds a slight bond to the Council of Seven through their mixed blood. Of course, the Council cannot expect every newly Embraced neonate to come to Vienna to drink of their blood. Nor can they simply ship their blood around the world — both solutions are far too impractical and dangerous, as any number of waiting Kindred would relish the thought of stealing such vitae or intercepting Tremere neonates and destroying them before they can become threats. To overcome this problem, most regents know and use this ritual instead.

After the Embrace, a Tremere neonate typically goes through a formal oath-swearing. No magic compels that oath, but the presiding regent (or higher ranking Tremere) ends the formality with the Transubstantiation. The ritualist fills a large chalice with his own blood and intones the syllables of the ritual. The neonate, still grappling with the new phenomenon of blood-thirst, drinks the entire contents of the chalice. As the blood enters and spreads through her system, the rite mystically transforms it into the blood of the Seven. By this means, the Tremere place each neonate a step toward a full bond with the council, without the risk of having enemies steal the council's blood.

The Transubstantiation is considered a requirement for a fledgling to be recognized socially as a true member of the Tremere clan. For this reason, the vast majority of regents learn this ritual, which incidentally guarantees that most regents are at least reasonably competent with Thaumaturgy. Even in chantries where the regent lacks this power, some Tremere instructed in this rite must be present for any new Embrace, unless the hapless sire wishes to risk the ire of the clan.

Those who undergo the ritual, and indeed, many who have the ability to perform it, know little of its mechanical workings. Obviously, the transmuted blood is that of the Council of Seven — but how vast are their stores that they

can transfuse neonates at the whims of those conducting the ritual? Where does the neonate's blood go? Whispers of a hidden vault beneath Vienna with labeled, preserved vials of vitae from every Kindred who has ever undergone this ritual can't possibly be true, can they?

System: The caster of the Transubstantiation must sacrifice a full *quart* of his blood — volume, not blood points, are required. The blood placed in the chalice remains unchanged until after it's imbibed and then spread throughout the subject's system, at which point it takes on the properties of the Council of Seven. This causes one step toward a blood bond to the whole council, but guarantees that the councilors' vitae cannot be stolen. Because the blood is already in the subject's system, it counts as his own vitae if it is later drained out.

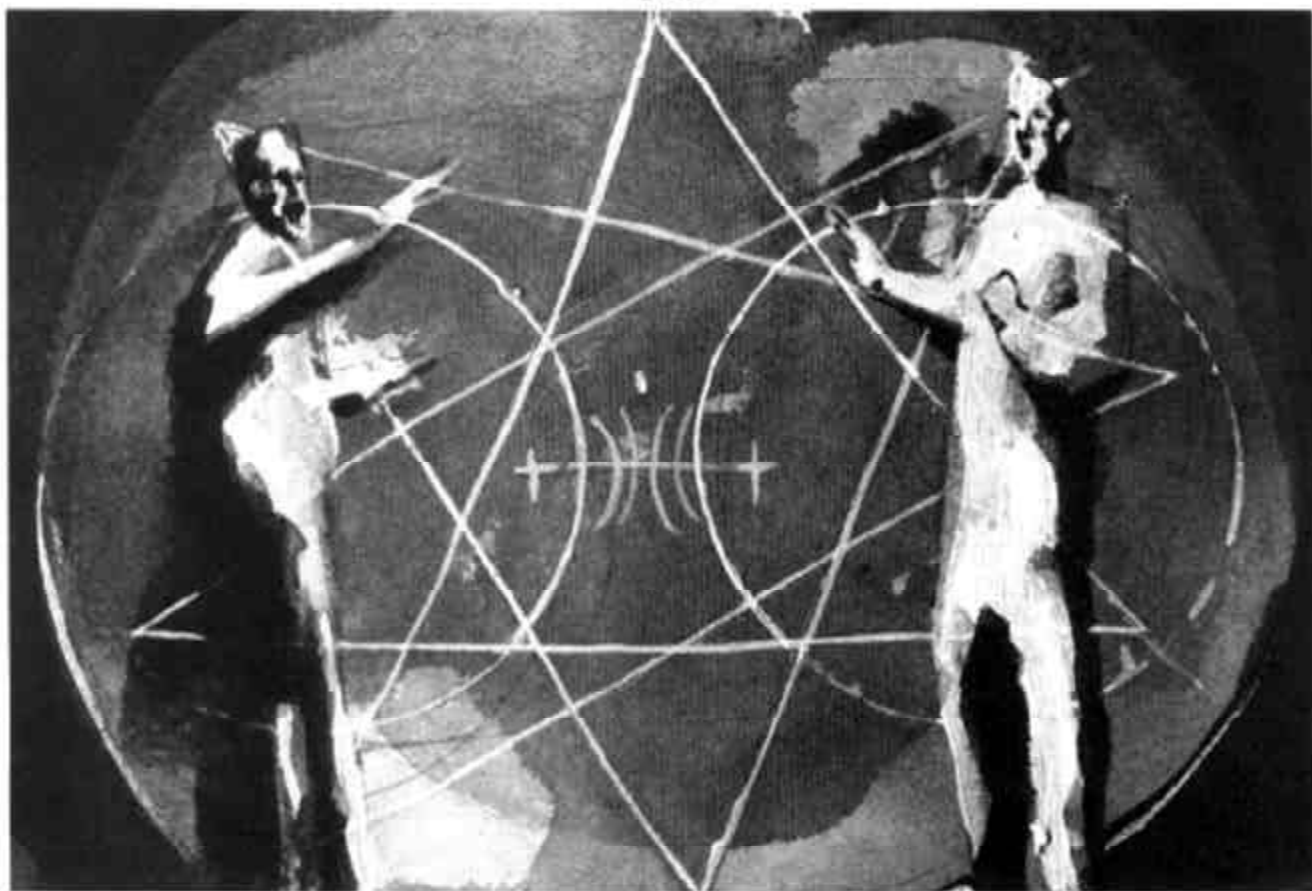
In truth, there is no physical requirement that this rite be used on a new neonate. A rare few Tremere neonates escape the process, while conversely the rite could be used to generate a stronger bond in older Tremere or even in ghouls or Kindred of other clans. Kindred of the 14th or 15th generations, ghouls and revenants cannot use this rite — their blood is not sufficiently strong enough to channel the councilors' power.

MET System: Intermediate Ritual. The Transubstantiation makes for an excellent roleplaying scene, as a new Kindred is brought into the fold. The caster simply sacrifices three Traits of blood (place your Blood Trait cards in a container) to the subject. This works best when used in conjunction with the oath-swearing.

BLOOD CERTÁMEN (LEVEL FOUR RITUAL)

While most modern Tremere apprentices see Thaumaturgy as a distinct property of their blood, some aged Tremere who survived the Long Night remember nights as mortal wizards. The clan's very foundation rests upon the traditions of those wizards — tribunals, apprenticeships, the Tremere Oath; all stem from the organization that the Tremere abandoned in their plummet into damnation. Among those early practices was one magical rite used to settle disputes. Even though the Tremere traded their mortal sorcery for blood magic, they managed to find ways to turn their old practices to their undead state, and the ritual of *certámen* made that transition as well.

Certámen exists as one of the oldest forms of dispute resolution between wizards, or so the elder Tremere say. In the modern nights, *certámen* takes a decidedly sinister form, and remains in the hands of very few Tremere. Indeed, perhaps only a half-dozen Tremere below the rank of regent know the ritual itself, and a handful more remain aware of its existence. Still, its use remains protected by ancient tradition, and a Tremere without other recourse can, if he is even aware of it, call for *certámen* to settle a quarrel. One pontifex supposedly favors *certámen* as a traditional measure and a hallmark of a true and loyal Tremere — and correspondingly evidences terrifying skill with the practice.



The rite of *certāmen* opens with a formal declaration of challenge, though that does not constitute part of the actual ritual. The rite itself sees the contenders in a circle of blood or vitreous humour, where by technique and form — the power to harness Thaumaturgy — they shall settle the matter. A circle 10 paces across marks the boundaries of the competition, while each participant stands in an interior circle two paces wide and faces the opponent. The interior circles' outer edges just touch upon the inner ring of the large circle, so the competitors stand just a short distance apart. The participants state their terms immediately upon entering the circle, challenger declaring what he stands to gain and defender declaring three limits upon the forms of the combat. Each one intones the ritual for *certāmen*; when both complete it, the test of blood begins, to end only in death, submission or the judgment of a presiding arbiter.

By tradition, each participant brings a second, who makes announcement of his contender and handles offices such as holding the participant's trappings or ritual accoutrements. The seconds stand behind and to the right of their participants. A (supposedly) neutral party arbitrates, and may end the *certāmen* at his discretion; he can, for instance, intervene to prevent a prodigious apprentice from destroying a regent. The arbiter determines or ratifies the victor, and also overrules the apparent victor in rare cases of cheating (though technically, the only way to "cheat" at *certāmen* is to bring in

magical artifacts or excess blood without announcing their presence to the arbiter and opponent). The arbiter also determines whether a given *certāmen* contest has a definitive result. Should, say, one contender simply use Movement of Mind to force the other out of the ring a few seconds into the contest, or should both participants exhaust their stores of vitae without a clear victor, the arbiter may declare the matter inconclusive or a draw.

Certāmen allows a thaumaturge to extend his usual path effects into more symbolic and devastating forms. Fire magics become incendiary greatswords or demonic flamebolts; spirit minions become translucent, armed legionnaires; weather sorcery takes on a viciously turgid aspect. Onlookers watch as the two Tremere contend with the mightiest blood magic at their disposal. Ultimately one must give way or be slain. Each participant holds comparable amounts of power, while the ritual causes Thaumaturgy cast by the two to evidence mystic traces and patterns that allow onlookers to tell what's happening and even give the participants some ability to defend against the opponent's attacks. Victory goes to finesse and broad knowledge, not to raw power. Should a participant frenzy, his second (and any attending guards) must put him down immediately; he loses the contest. Similarly, stepping from the inner circle immediately results in forfeiture. Completion of the ritual does not mystically bind either participant to its terms, but failure to adhere to one's own agreed-upon

certámen carries grave weight with nearly every Tremere, and may well lead to condemnation as a rogue (assuming that the oathbreaker survived the experience).

Of course, in the Final Nights *certámen* exists more as a curiosity than as a common practice. Some few Tremere do use it, but *certámen* is never frequent nor lightly invoked. A Tremere can decline a challenge of *certámen*, though doing so usually entails a loss of face among the more traditional members of the clan. Successful *certámen* garners some small amount of prestige among the few who still consider it an art, but its use remains restricted to personal disputes. A Tremere cannot use *certámen* to force a superior to give him rank or to show off his thaumaturgical might, but he could use the rite to legitimately depose a superior with whom he had a personal grievance or to force a peer to stop interfering in his affairs. Similarly, a higher-ranking Tremere may step in as arbiter, and an dour pontifex may very well stop the whole process before it begins. And, of course, if the battle results in death, why then someone more competent than the loser must step forward to take over the late Kindred's assets and duties.

To this night, very few members of the other clans have even heard of *certámen*. Elder Tremere intend to keep it that way.

System: *Certámen* ultimately serves a simple game mechanical purpose: the two (always and only two) Tremere involved in *certámen* may expend exactly two blood points per turn, regardless of generation. Furthermore, at a cost of one blood point, a player may make a Willpower roll against the opponent's Thaumaturgy roll, with the difficulty being the opposite character's Thaumaturgy. This acts as a normal resisted roll, canceling out the opponent's successes. Because *certámen* highlights all thaumaturgical actions, the player can roll Intelligence + Occult (difficulty varies by power) to recognize most incoming thaumaturgical effects and decide whether or not to defend against or respond to them, as if using the power Thaumaturgical Sight (p. 47). This allows the participants to invoke potent Thaumaturgy and to defend more ably against incoming attacks. The *certámen* ritual imposes these modifiers only so long as both participants remain in their respective circles.

MET System: The *Blood Certámen* ritual works as a wonderful roleplaying tool. Set the scene in a dim room with your Tremere players attending, lay out a pair of small circles, and have the two participants stand in their appropriate stations. Encourage your players to bring their elaborate props and to act out their Thaumaturgy to some degree; this is, after all, high ritual.

Whenever a participant uses Thaumaturgy, he must call out the power that he invokes. The opponent, if he fails a test to defend against a power, can spend one Blood Trait for a retest. *Blood Certámen* contests can thus become drawn-out affairs with neither Kindred gaining a definitive upper hand. Each participant may spend exactly two Blood Traits per turn while in the ritual.

MARK OF AMARANTH (LEVEL FOUR RITUAL)

Among Kindred, diablerie is regarded as a great crime — many elders go to extraordinary lengths to extinguish an upstart neonate who evidences a hunger for the blood of his fellows. Deceptive Tremere can turn this paranoia against a hapless victim. All that's needed is some intimate possession of the target, and the destruction of another Kindred....

System: The thaumaturge must destroy another Kindred by his own hand, while holding or wearing some possession of the subject. He may then invoke this ritual by placing the object in the dead Kindred's corpse before it crumbles to ash. Once the ritual is completed, the subject exhibits the evidence of a diablerist to all forms of divination until the next sunrise. This includes Aura Perception, the Blood Walk ritual and any other sort of scrying.

The Mark of Amaranth cannot be deferred by the Soul Mask Discipline, though higher levels of Obfuscate or certain advanced rituals might be able to counter it. Note that the ritual does not necessarily cause the victim to think that he's a diablerist — an innocent victim can truthfully answer that he is not a diablerist, even as his aura contradicts him.

Naturally, use of this ritual is an efficient way to rapidly erode one's Humanity.

MET System: Intermediate Ritual. *Mark of Amaranth* functions as described above — you need only get an item of something of significance from the victim, then douse it with the remains of a vampire whom you killed yourself. Your victim appears as a diablerist to all forms of detection until sunup.

SOUL OF THE HOMUNCULUS (LEVEL FOUR RITUAL)

Tremere in need of assistants for their research work cannot always rely upon the loyalty of apprentices. But who can doubt the loyalty of one's own flesh? A homunculus is a tiny creature crafted out of the caster's blood and tissue, which acts as an extension of the caster's will.

Crafting a homunculus takes several hours of uninterrupted work, and a thaumaturge can have only one homunculus at a time. The horrid little entity takes shape in a bubbling morass of oil, blood, denuded bone and chunks of the caster's body. At the conclusion of the ritual, the homunculus crawls from its fatty birthing caul to serve its master. The homunculus can move about under its own power, and may be used as a spy or a means to fetch materials.

Many types of homunculi exist, different thaumaturges create different sorts of beasts. The most common are flyers (which resemble tiny winged demons), grubs (which look like worms with their masters' faces), and hoppers (small, bald, implike entities with their casters' features reduced to miniature). The homunculus acts according to its master's orders, which may be issued nonverbally as long as the beast is in its creator's presence. Over time, some homunculi develop their own personalities and goals, and more than one

unnerved Tremere has discovered his homunculus playing malicious pranks behind his back.

System: A homunculus has two health levels and two dots in each Physical Attribute. It works much like a limb of the creator—the homunculus only moves or acts if the caster so wills it. A homunculus cannot fight effectively, but can push or carry objects, and can often hide or spy on locations unnoticed due to its small size. Though the homunculus is initially wholly loyal, its experiences may eventually (over years) cause it to form a personality of its own, often spawned from the worst qualities of its creator. Homunculi are damaged by sunlight and fire like Kindred.

A homunculus, though created from the caster's flesh, is a separate physical entity and thus does not count as an arcane connection, nor do its bodily fluids count as its creator's blood. However, establishing a psychic connection to a homunculus instead projects into the consciousness of its controller.

A homunculus must be fed one blood point each week or it will wither and die. Feeding may be an unsettling act to witness—some Tremere suckle them at their own breasts, acting on some undead parental urge, while others treat their imps derisively, holding their opened wrists far above the creature's head while forcing it to caper about for its sustenance.

MET System: See *Laws of the Night Revised*, p. 187.

UNWEAVE RITUAL (LEVEL FOUR RITUAL)

With the preponderance of cursing rituals among the jealous Warlocks, it's only a matter of time until a Tremere labors under the effects of an enemy's magic. Whether it's another Tremere eager to discomfit a political adversary, or some non-Tremere thaumaturge looking for retribution, having Thaumaturgy turned around against its supposed masters makes for a bitter aftertaste indeed.

Once a Tremere manages to identify the enemy ritual under which he labors, it's possible to build a counter-sorcery to unweave it. Thaumaturges skilled in this magic learn general principles to confound other rituals, shrug off their effects or collapse them prematurely.

System: First, the caster must figure out what ritual currently afflicts him. This is probably automatic if he knows the ritual (unless the caster has been very subtle or the subject is daft), but may require some research (and Intelligence + Occult rolls, at the Storyteller's discretion) otherwise. Next, the unweaving takes place. The caster must secure a component that would be used in the casting of the offending ritual, then destroy it in some fashion. His successes subtract from the successes scored by the original caster; if he manages to wipe away all of the successes, the offending ritual immediately ends, with all concomitant effects. Thus, a quick end to Bind the Accusing Tongue would allow the Tremere to speak ill of his



enemies again, but a premature end to a Blood Contract would painfully shove him into torpor, and a premature end to Night of the Red Heart would result in Final Death.

Only rituals that have a duration can be unwoven. For instance, a Tremere who has thrown off a blood bond through *Abandon the Fetters* (below) is not constantly under the effects of that ritual — once the ritual is complete, the bond is gone and the ritual is done. However, a Tremere suffering from *Steps of the Terrified* would be considered under the duration of the ritual as long as it slowed his movement, so it could be unwoven. Note that a thaumaturge can only unweave a ritual on himself, not one on someone else. Also, a thaumaturge suffering from multiple rituals must unweave each one separately. Multiple unweavings can be accumulated against a ritual so long as the appropriate time and components can be acquired.

MET System: Intermediate Ritual. To unweave an enemy ritual, you must acquire the components necessary for the original ritual and make a Mental Challenge against the original caster (find a Storyteller to conduct the test privately; you need not let the opponent know what you are doing). If you succeed, the ritual comes to an immediate end, and you suffer all results for the end of the ritual (if any).

ABANDON THE FETTERS (LEVEL FIVE RITUAL)

As closely guarded as any secret within the clan, *Abandon the Fetters* seems to depart from normal conventions of Thaumaturgy. Occult theorists note that it has more in common with primal, passionate sorcery than with the cerebral, systematic approach to Hermetic blood magic. A few even darkly hint at its similarities to the *Vaulderie* — for the ritual to *Abandon the Fetters* shatters the blood bond.

Breaking a blood bond is a grueling process. The thaumaturge must have unrestricted access to the subject, as well as a sample of blood from the master. The ritual requires an entire night; its execution is excruciating for both caster and subject. The thaumaturge forms a bond to the subject and master with a mixture of blood from all three, placed in a glass container. Next, the caster must exsanguinate and excoriate the subject — the manner is up to the ritualist's individual style; some might mortify the flesh with lashes, while others might apply brands. Once the subject hangs on the thread of demise, the caster shatters the glass container, spilling the blood to the ground and snapping the thread of the bond. The mixture of blood evaporates in a hissing, scalding steam, and the subject is freed.

Of course, *Abandon the Fetters* remains one of the rarest of Tremere secrets. Few Warlocks could be trusted with such potent knowledge. Indeed, the merest hint that a Tremere can perform this ritual is enough to cause other Kindred to eye her with renewed suspicion — the Tremere have sorcerous ways to steal blood, so who's to say that a thaumaturge couldn't release someone's thralls and bond them to herself instead? Even those Kindred who suffer under the bond's lash

would rarely trust a Tremere enough to risk going through this process.

System: The thaumaturge must have one point of blood from himself, the subject and the subject's regnant. (If the caster happens to be the subject or regnant, no additional blood is needed.) The excoriation causes three levels of unsoakable aggravated damage to the subject, as flesh is flayed or burned away. The final venomous steam inflicts an additional level of unsoakable aggravated damage upon both the caster and the subject. The subject loses a permanent point of Willpower, but if the ritual succeeds, the blood bond atrophies immediately. However, this offers no protection against the formation of another, later bond.

MET System: Advanced Ritual. Breaking a blood bond requires one Blood Trait each from caster, subject and regnant (though again, if the caster is also the subject or regnant, no additional blood is required). The subject takes four levels of aggravated damage (two in compressed scale) and loses one permanent Willpower Trait, while the caster suffers one level of aggravated damage. As always, the ritual requires a successful Static Challenge to complete. Obviously, you should not engage in actual physical contact or excoriation for this ritual. Because of the time involved, the ritual is best performed out of play, though it can make for an interesting scene if someone interrupts in the middle of the rite.

NIGHT OF THE RED HEART (LEVEL FIVE RITUAL)

Neonates whisper that Tremere elders can utterly destroy their enemies with but a sample of vitae. Although little is ever that simple, some truth lies behind the dread rumor. With *Night of the Red Heart*, a thaumaturge can send his enemies shrieking in terror, slay them outright or force a confrontation.

The thaumaturge needs only a quantitative sample of the victim's blood. Over the course of an entire night, the caster chants the syllables of the ritual continuously. After the first iteration of the ritual (which takes about 10 minutes), the victim suddenly feels a foreboding sense of dread. Whenever the subject faces the caster, he realizes that a ritual is in progress to slay him — and that he must either escape its power, or else find and interrupt the caster by following the preternatural knowledge imparted. Once the ritual ends at sunrise, if the victim is within its range, he spectacularly crumbles to ash in a matter of seconds.

In addition to the victim's blood, the caster must have an effigy of the victim that he has carved himself from bone, rotten wood harvested at midnight or stone from the grave of a faithful priest's headstone.

System: Although extremely potent, *Night of the Red Heart* is not an all-powerful ritual. Chances are, as soon as it begins, the victim will either flee the city or else hunt down the caster. Because there are no holds barred — death or failure — this likely means that the victim will not stop until he can

destroy the thaumaturge. Should the caster manage to complete the ritual with a full point of the victim's blood, though, the hapless subject immediately collapses to Final Death.

The player rolls for the ritual's success as soon as casting begins — if the roll fails, then the ritual will not work and the victim will feel nothing (although the caster doesn't necessarily know this.) The player must also expend one Willpower point to continue the casting for the duration of the entire night, and if the ritual is stopped or interrupted in any way, it fails.

Night of the Red Heart has a limited range. Popular lore holds that the rite works "for seven leagues beyond the accursed's haven"; scientific thaumaturges credit the rite with a range of 30 to 35 miles. Regardless, the subject can immediately tell if he has managed to escape the ritual's range, because the sense of dread vanishes — but if he returns while the ritual remains in progress, he once again comes under its influence. Note that although the subject can tell if he manages to escape the ritual's range, the caster does not know this; it's possible to cast Night of the Red Heart upon someone who's not in range, without knowing that the ritual will fail.

MET System: Advanced Ritual. You must cast this ritual out of play; a Storyteller should be alerted when you begin, so that you can expend the Blood Traits from the victim and one of your Willpower Traits, and so that a Narrator can alert the subject. Obviously, the victim will probably try to flee the city or else hunt down and stop you. If the ritual is interrupted, it ends immediately without effect. Otherwise, use the description above. So long as all the conditions are met and the ritual is cast successfully, there are no further tests required.

BONE OF CONTENTION (LEVEL SIX RITUAL)

Weak princes sometimes rely on a Bone of Lies (*Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 184-185) to "interview" new arrivals in their domains. While the Bone of Lies is useful in weeding out Sabbat infiltrators, diablerists and other problem cases, it's also a good way to earn the ire of the city's respected Kindred — few Kindred enjoy being accused of lying. Still, paranoid princes rely on the bone to keep an iron hold over their domains, so the Tremere recently devised this ritual variant.

Like a Bone of Lies, a Bone of Contention comes from a hundred-year-old fingerbone steeped in blood over several nights. Unlike a Bone of Lies, though, the Bone of Contention doesn't compel truth; rather, it aids the Tremere in deception.

Naturally, this ritual's very existence is a viciously guarded secret. If princes discovered that their Bones of Lies actually just gave whatever answers the Tremere wanted... well, it wouldn't be more than they'd expect, but it wouldn't be pretty, either.

System: A Bone of Contention looks like a Bone of Lies: an aged fingerbone with ritual magic placed upon it. While a Bone of Lies darkens and forces truth whenever the holder lies,

a Bone of Contention acts in this fashion *only when its creator so wills*. The Tremere can cause the bone to darken and then force the holder to speak a lie *that the speaker is forced to believe*, so long as the thaumaturge can see the bone. Like a Bone of Lies, a Bone of Contention only functions 10 times. In the creator's absence, a Bone of Contention functions like a normal Bone of Lies, simply to avoid possible complications ("This Bone of Lies failed to work when you were missing from the last convocation. Is there something you want to tell us?").

MET System: Superior Ritual. So long as its creator can see it, the Bone of Contention functions as described above. A Storyteller should be on hand to verify that the subject is forced to speak an appropriate lie, if necessary.

TREMERE MERITS AND FLAWS

A Tremere is a vampire just like any other, but a very few specific benefits or problems go along with being a Tremere. Even the most rigid of clans sees the occasional aberration — er, anomaly, of course.

Storytellers may choose to use these simply as story seeds. Giving extra points to someone for something that might not have any value in a specific story — like, say, extra points for playing a Tremere anarchist in an all-anarch chronicle — is a quick way to entice people into abusing the system. If you like Merits and Flaws, great; if not, you can use these as ideas for story hooks. More information on Merits and Flaws may be found in the Appendix of *Vampire: The Masquerade*.

ATTUNED TASTE (2-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

For whatever reason, your character finds blood magic instinctive — more so than for most Tremere. When your Tremere tastes blood, she naturally tastes the subtle currents and occult correspondences in the vitae. To her, it's not even magic; it's just a heightened state of taste stemming from the Embrace and the Tremere clan's long experience with blood.

When your character tastes blood, she may automatically glean one fact about the source, as per the Level One Path of Blood power, A Taste for Blood (*Vampire: The Masquerade*, pp. 178-179). No blood cost or roll is required; the vampire simply garners information as if with one success. You may still choose to use the Discipline itself in order to gain more specific information, in which case the normal systems apply and the results of the Discipline use supersede this affinity.

This affinity is not always beneficial — your character may accidentally taste undercurrents of fear, extraordinary power or poison in vitae, and such tastes can cause nausea or incapacitation at the Storyteller's discretion. This sensitivity cannot be turned off.

MET System: You've got a natural instinct for the flavors in blood. When you taste blood, you can tell if the blood is from a vampire, and you can automatically taste its potency (generation). There is no test or cost. If the blood is

not from a vampire, you only know that — you cannot specifically tell Lupine or faerie blood from human blood without other testing methods.

EMBRACED WITHOUT THE CUP (3-pt. SOCIAL MERIT)

When your character was Embraced, her sire dispensed with Tremere tradition, or perhaps didn't have the means necessary to finish the job, or just died before it could be done right. Your Tremere was drained of blood and then brought across, but never went through the Transubstantiation of Seven (see p. 61). As a result, even if your character took the oath, she didn't undertake any steps toward a blood bond with the Council of Seven. Because your character has no imperative toward the Seven, her loyalty to the Tremere clan comes solely from her own conscience. Effectively, you can do as you damn well please without any unnatural feelings getting in the way.

Of course, if any loyal Tremere find out about this oversight, your character will probably wind up hauled in for the Transubstantiation of Seven, as well as some detailed questioning about *why* she didn't come forward to fix this oversight of her own volition. This may result in a binding to the council, or a tribunal of some sort, and ignorance may not be a valid excuse....

MET System: Without the Transubstantiation rite, you don't have the usual ties to the Tremere Council of Seven, which means that your will is your own in matters pertaining to the Tremere clan. There's no game-specific mechanic for this Merit. Just remember that you don't need to make any tests or expenditures to go against normal Tremere policy; in effect, instead of having the normal Tremere clan disadvantage, your disadvantage is that you'll find yourself under serious scrutiny should your deficiency come to light.

BOUND TO THE COUNCIL (3-pt. SOCIAL FLAW)

Whether because of a highly suspicious regent, a *faux pas* in the past or a missive from on high, your character was bound to the Council of Seven — a condition that he hasn't escaped. This doesn't stop the character from having personal goals and motives, but love of the Tremere clan always comes *first*. You must spend Willpower just to go against Tremere policy; violating the oath, to your character, is literally as difficult as a blood bound thrall trying to betray her regnant. When the council or their duly-appointed representatives (read: anyone with more Tremere rank than your character) says, "Jump," your character jumps, then waits around to find out how high before coming down.

If you somehow manage to get out of this problem, say by partaking of a *Vaulderie*, accepting another blood bond or using the ritual *Abandon the Fetters* (p. 67), your character may well find himself marked for destruction should the proper parties find out. If the blood bond wasn't enough to keep him in line, and he was enough of a threat to merit it, then destruction is the only way to be sure that he won't be

a problem later. The Storyteller can and should use all Tremere resources available both to check the character's loyalty and to hunt him down like the renegade he is if he fails to make the grade.

MET System: Whenever you want to do something that violates the commands of the Tremere hierarchy, you must expend a Willpower Trait. This Flaw keeps all the social ramifications listed previously — your actions will be highly constrained, you may be thrust into unpleasant situations against your will, and you'll be in a world of hurt if you ever manage to get past the bond.

DOUBLE BETRAVER (4-pt. SOCIAL FLAW)

At some point in the past, your character undertook the *Vaulderie*. She may have legitimately tried to join the Sabbat, or perhaps she didn't know any better or was compelled. Regardless, she now bears the mark of the Betrayer. She has since been redeemed and welcomed back into the clan's ranks, but the mark will haunt her always.

As usual with the mark, all Tremere can tell that your character betrayed the clan once. Those who know of your character's past will treat her with contempt; add two to the social difficulties for interacting with other Tremere, so long as they're loyal to the clan. Tremere who *don't* know the circumstances will probably assume that your character is a Sabbat traitor, and might try to capture or destroy her, or at least attempt to inform the pyramid of her whereabouts. Should your character ever fail in her reports or relapse in bad behavior, you can expect that she will be hunted down just like the Tremere do with other threats.

MET System: You have the mark of the Betrayer — carry a card to indicate this to other Tremere. You are two Traits down on all Social challenges with other (non-Sabbat) Tremere. Because you're an expatriate of the Sabbat, though, you don't know enough up-to-date signs and codes to pass yourself off as a member. In short, you screwed up, and you're going to pay for it forever.

THAUMATURGICALLY INEPT (5-pt. SUPERNATURAL FLAW)

Tremere and the council took decades to develop the principles of Thaumaturgy, so it's not a "natural" Discipline. Over centuries it's spread through the Tremere clan as a habitual practice, but a few unfortunate Tremere never seem to get the hang of it.

Your character is one such unfortunate: He effectively adds 4 instead of the normal 3 to his difficulties (to a maximum of 10) to use paths or rituals. He can still learn Thaumaturgy (higher-ranking Tremere will be happy to share their secrets so long as he earns the favor from them), but it takes real effort. Thaumaturgy still counts as a clan Discipline for him, though he can begin the story with no more than one dot.

Socially, this tends to mark the character as a poor student among other Tremere. He will likely be passed over for promotions or responsibilities simply because he "just doesn't get it."

MET System: Your character finds *Thaumaturgy* to be his worst subject. As a result, this adds one Trait to the difficulty of any Static Test, and adds five minutes to the casting time of any effect (because you're fumbling with the words, you misdrew the circle, etc.). You are one Social Trait down on resolution of challenges when dealing with Tremere of higher ranks than yourself.

TREMERE DERANGEMENTS

Of all the clans, the Tremere are the most universally steeped in mystic understanding. While Malkavians have a built-in perception of a broken universe, and Tzimisce have their own forms of sorcery, the Tremere's very seat of power predicated upon symbolism, mystical links, symmetry and patterns of will. As Tremere students of the occult must pit their minds against unnatural forces and permutations of their own vampiric Curse, it's no surprise that some levels of mental imbalance and affliction crop up among an unfortunate few, as well as those who repeatedly delve into mysteries best left unexplored.

Conservative Cainite scholars argue that the Curse encompasses only certain needs, and thus that some types of power fly in the face of what is "normal" for vampirism. *Thaumaturgy* is foremost on the lists of such reactionaries. While most Tremere scoff at this and merely assert that their formidable training and methods allow them to access powers that other Cainites simply haven't the skill to use, some indications have arisen that thaumaturgical study can be rather unbalancing. Indeed, the very nature of *Thaumaturgy* — pitting one's will against the curse of undeath to channel the power of blood into new forms — speaks of unwholesome investigation into the terrible malison that afflicts the Kindred. Some Tremere find the truths unearthed therein too terrible to confront rationally.

HIERARCHICAL SOCIOLOGY DISORDER

Enforcement of the Tremere's pyramid structure sometimes has negative effects. Strong-willed individuals are the ones most commonly Embraced by the Tremere, but the occasional exception does slip through. Furthermore, centuries of practice in conditioning young neonates to their policies means that sometimes Tremere organizational practices are a little *too* effective.

Most Tremere have at least a marginal loyalty to the clan as an abstract whole, enforced both through the blood of the Seven and through the psychological conditioning of the oath administered during the turmoil just after the Embrace. Vampires who adjust comparatively well go on to normalize their personal drives with the problems of the undead condition. Those who can't handle the stress, though, sometimes turn to the pyramid as a surrogate for responsibility.

A recent inductee who's unable to cope with the stress of hunting for blood and dealing with the Beast may transfer such responsibility to the Tremere pyramid. In such cases the individual becomes almost dronelike; such victims cannot handle their own

moral responsibility, so they delineate their world by the bounds of the Tremere code. What their superiors order, they obey; what the code prohibits, they fanatically shun. By making the Tremere clan the repository of their consciences, these poor souls are "only following orders." The degradation of Humanity and the toll of frenzy, hunger and fear still drive the Kindred into a downward spiral, but it's one that he can almost sociopathically ignore. After all, it's neither his fault nor his problem.

Confronted with a choice, a victim of this disorder looks to the Tremere hierarchy for answers. Every action must be supported by the pyramid. Pressed for a personal opinion, the hapless vampire gives a pat answer or an uncomfortable "I don't know." Unsurprisingly, Tremere superiors are quick to weed out neophytes who succumb to this disorder — a drone without personal initiative or imagination is even more volatile than a revolutionary. Such individuals find themselves assigned to dangerous tasks where they'll succeed with the clan's interests in mind, die horribly or snap into a more rational state of mind.

SANGUINARY CRYPTOPHAGY

Subsistence upon blood to the exclusion of normal foods is one of the first practical adjustments that vampires must make. Tremere have a particularly curious adjustment. Fed as they are blood that transubstantiates into the vitae of the council, then trained in powers to examine the tastes of blood for its peculiar qualities. A few Tremere become enamored of the flavors in exotic blood. While it's true that any vampire can develop a taste for certain pedigrees, so to speak, the common Tremere sensitivity to unusual currents — both through superlative sensation and thaumaturgical study — leads some Tremere to hunt down the most extraordinary bouquets that they can.

Naturally, some vampires move to rather exclusive tastes and learn the savory thrill of other Cainite blood. Tremere, often able to detect the subtleties of bloodlines or unique manifestations of the vampiric condition, may take this to extremes. A cryptophage becomes obsessed with the pursuit of more and different flavors of blood. Such individuals sometimes have a penchant for diablerie, becoming fixated on the tastes of various other clans. Stranger Tremere take to hunting the globe for "rare vintages" like Lupine or faerie blood. Unchecked, such an obsession throws the Tremere into dangerous situations as she hunts other supernatural creatures. Worse still, such Tremere often become bored with "lesser vintages." Although still able to subsist upon human or animal blood (physically if not psychologically), cryptophages develop a distaste for such common fare. A cryptophage may even be incapable of swallowing such common blood without an effort of will.

Again, note that cryptophagy is a psychological condition and not a physical dependency; a cryptophage still can (and will) drink any form of blood during a frenzy. In extreme cases this may be the only sustenance that the vampire gets; she becomes nervous and twitchy from hunger while she hunts supernatural creatures for their scarlet nectar. A cryptophage may even go to the lengths of exerting herself to expend blood



or draining her own veins in order to cause a greater appreciation for the rush and taste of unusual vitae.

THAUMATURGICAL GLOSSOLALIA

Language is a means to build common symbols for the description of concepts. Thaumaturgy recognizes this power; the voice alone is a potent tool, but so too are symbols. Indeed, skilled thaumaturges learn to think in symbolic languages, much as a mathematician may construct complex explanations out of numbers. Some sorcerers theorize that thaumaturgical numerology functions because of its mystical tie to universal concepts. Just as mathematics describes the physical universe, Thaumaturgy describes the metaphysical. Because these symbols function on such an abstract level, though, they do not fit easily within the human — or undead — mind.

Highly proficient thaumaturges sometimes suffer a bizarre form of regression. A mind trained to examine the world in supernatural terms cannot always cope with stress in a rational manner. Under tension, such thaumaturges revert to speaking in tongues, but in this case, in thaumaturgical symbology. The affliction of glossolalia (speaking in tongues) comes hysterically upon these unfortunates and makes them incomprehensible.

While “normal” glossolalia involves speaking in dead tongues, a thaumaturge reverts to arcane constructs. Other

thaumaturges may recognize scattered words, but often the mind of the individual seems to shift into a different state of thought — almost like magical aphasia. Oftentimes the subject reverts to words that he would not formally know or study. The thaumaturge in question rarely has any idea that he’s doing anything unusual. His own mind still equates these concepts to the strange words, while conversely he becomes unable to translate more mundane language. Given enough time or concentration, the thaumaturge usually reverts to normal speech, with no real understanding of what he mystically said before.

Most Tremere would be mildly unnerved to see this derangement in action; thaumaturges have displayed knowledge of concepts normally far beyond their skill while so possessed. Of course, a frenzied thaumaturge shouting out guttural invectives in some dead magical language would be enough to terrify almost anyone.

This is a difficult derangement to portray well, and Storytellers should not only be wary of assigning it too cavalierly, they may wish to offer additional experience points for players who handle it with grace. Evincing correctly, Thaumaturgical Glossolalia is not idiotic gibberish or childish babble — it is the transition of symbols to words by which a fractured mind communicates the horrors that have driven it to madness.





CHAPTER THREE: STONES OF THE PYRAMID

Paradoxical as it may sound, every Tremere is distinctly unique. The image of the Tremere as a tightly bound hierarchy suggests itself to such a degree that the very foibles of each Tremere become the signs of individuality: "He's a Tremere, but he doesn't study Thaumaturgy." "She's a Tremere, but she runs with anarchs." "They're Tremere, but they're surprisingly honest." Any deviation from the stereotype simply highlights the Tremere's personality. Although vampires might speak of the Tremere clan as a whole in broad, sweeping terms, no single vampire totally fits that profile. Indeed, the Tremere could not exist if they did all fit one stereotype; a gathering of identical drones is no more functional than a fractious rabble. Each Tremere contributes to the clan through his or her own special facilities.

What binds the Tremere more than any personality trait or supernatural union is their quest for advancement — of the self, of their rank in the hierarchy, of blood magic, understanding or power. Whether pushed to excel within the pyramid or forced to survive outside it, no Tremere can ever rest. Their world harbors little trust and no friendship. The entirety of their clan's vaunted unity is one of convenience against outsiders too numerous and dangerous to ignore, a siege mentality adopted during their earliest nights of struggle against the established Kindred of Eastern Europe. Survival is a game of balancing the enemies without against the rivals within. Truly the Tremere keep their comrades close and

their enemies closer. Given the clan's (arguably deserved) reputation, a Tremere must be a font of self-reliance and constant desire for improvement; any weakness opens the door to destruction at the hands of suspicious Kindred, displeased superiors or ambitious subordinates.

Vampirism suited the Tremere as an end to power and immortality. The Camarilla serves as protection. The unity of clan facilitates the exchange of favors necessary to survive. Any Tremere only gets what she can take — their horror is a world where bonds of loyalty and trade are so ritualized, so formal and so artificial that there is no room for the real issue. The Tremere must be master lest she become someone's slave.

A QUICK NOTE ABOUT MET CONVERSIONS

You'll note that these characters sometimes have third-level Disciplines, and that their MET conversions correspondingly have Intermediate Disciplines. But starting MET characters only get Basic Disciplines... so what gives? That's up to you. You can decide to "drag and drop" any of these characters into use in a game; if used as Narrator characters they can just use whatever Traits you need anyhow. If you want to limit new players' characters to the hard rules presented in *Laws of the Night*, just swap the Intermediate Discipline for some other Basic clan Discipline.

SECURITY CONSULTANT

Quote: *We have ways to keep people out.*

Prelude: Security guard? No, too mundane. Spy? Never — you wouldn't betray confidences so lightly. But you solved puzzles well, you had a natural affinity for what made people tick, and you had the intuition to make connections based on pieces of the puzzle. Thus, you joined the Army and landed right where you wanted to be, in counterintelligence.

Four years of filing reports, collating photographs, performing surveillance, studying foreign languages, learning interrogation and intrusion techniques, greasing a few palms (both foreign and domestic) and developing new ways to secure or defeat technological safeguards — quite a varied résumé. When a foreign power started acting a little bit grabby, you were there digging up information about their troops, their supply movements and their intent. You learned to spot lies well and to spin them better.

Once you completed your tour, you decided to take your skills to some private corporate security firms. Of course, while they interviewed you, you also interviewed them. You wrote off the ones with bad financial records, bad legal records, bad management and bad ideas. That left perhaps one or two firms... and one that had sent a representative once, but about which you hadn't been able to dig up much at all.

The Tremere wanted a little private security consultation. Your own sleuthing dug up some spooky photographs of arcane Masonlike rites and a few relatively unknown people meeting with movers and shakers in local politics. At first you thought it was a cult. When you showed their rep the photographs, though, he just smiled and let you in on the real secret.

Welcome to the "company."

Concept: After your life experiences, you developed the skills necessary to do some impressive intelligence work. Among the Tremere, that means digging up secrets, making

VAMPIRE

BY JEFF VAUGHAN

Name: Thomas Compactor	Organization: Compactor Co. of Tremere	Generation: 11th
Personality: Conscientious	Character: Tremere	Position: Corporate Security Consultant

Attributes		
Strength: 00000	Charisma: 00000	Presence: 00000
Stamina: 00000	Manipulation: 00000	Intelligence: 00000
	Appearance: 00000	Will: 00000

Abilities		
Essence		
Advocate: 00000	Animal Instinct: 00000	Academics: 00000
Artisan: 00000	Charm: 00000	Language: 00000
Awaken: 00000	Drive: 00000	Perception: 00000
Deceit: 00000	Empathy: 00000	Interrogation: 00000
Empathy: 00000	Focus: 00000	Law: 00000
Empower: 00000	Heal: 00000	Leadership: 00000
Enthrallment: 00000	Performance: 00000	Machines: 00000
Lockpick: 00000	Security: 00000	Occult: 00000
Tranquility: 00000	Stealth: 00000	Politics: 00000
Subterfuge: 00000	Terrain: 00000	Tricks: 00000

Advantages		
Backgrounds		
Contacts: 00000	Assets: 00000	Connections: 00000
Generation: 00000	Domestic: 00000	
Resources: 00000		
		Self-Contained Power: 00000
		Cover: 00000

Disguise: 00000	Disguise: 00000	Disguise: 00000
Disguise: 00000	Disguise: 00000	Disguise: 00000
Disguise: 00000	Disguise: 00000	Disguise: 00000
Disguise: 00000	Disguise: 00000	Disguise: 00000



backroom deals and undertaking "plausible deniability" jobs. Although in some ways you do grunt work, it's important and highly specialized grunt work, so it guarantees that you can keep a low profile but still garner the backroom respect, accolades and favors of other Kindred who must rely on

such services.

Roleplaying Hints: A carefully crafted exterior hides your ticking, analytical mind. You posture yourself, speak and dress for maximum effect on your colleagues, and you take time to study situations into which you'll go so that you can build an appropriate façade. It's almost like a game. And from the pieces you've found in the whispers of the secret Jihad, it looks like the biggest thrill of all is coming with the endgame — you plan to be right there on the sidelines when it all happens.

Equipment: Lockpicks, fake identification, off-the-rack suit, microcamera

JEFF VAUGHAN 2000

Paw/Humanity
 ●●●○○○
PHYSICAL

Graceful _____
 Steady _____
 Tireless _____

SOCIAL

Charismatic, Eloquent x2 _____
 Diplomatic x2, Mesmeric _____
 Elegant, Persuasive x2 _____

MENTAL

Determined, Vigilant _____
 Insightful _____
 Knowledgeable _____

ABILITIES

Academics, Occult _____
 Expression, Subterfuge x2 _____
 Politics _____

DISCIPLINES

Auspex (Heightened Senses) _____
 Auro/Perception _____
 Dominant (Command) _____

BACKGROUND

Generation _____
 Influence (Occult, Political), Resources x4 _____

INFLUENCES

MERITS & FLAWS

Claws Night

CHARACTERISTICS

NAME _____
 CHARACTER Diplomat
 CHRONICLE _____
 CLAN Tremere
 GENERATION 12th

BLOOD

Willpower ○○○○○○○○
 Nature ○○○○○○○○
 Demeanor □□□□□□□□
 Martyr □□□□□□□□

SKILLS

COURAGE ○○○○
 CONTACT/TORTURE ○○○○

Paw/Humanity
 ●●●○○○
PHYSICAL

Bronny, Quick _____
 Enduring, Tough _____
 Energetic _____

SOCIAL

Charming _____
 Commanding x2 _____
 Witty _____

MENTAL

Attentive, Vigilant _____
 Alert x2 _____
 Cunning x2 _____

ABILITIES

Brawl _____
 Firearms, Occult _____
 Investigate, Security _____

DISCIPLINES

Auspex (Heightened Senses) _____
 Dominant (Command, Mesmerism) _____

BACKGROUND

Contacts x2 _____
 Generation x2 _____
 Influence (Occult), Resources x3 _____

INFLUENCES

MERITS & FLAWS

Claws Night

CHARACTERISTICS

NAME _____
 CHARACTER Security Consultant
 CHRONICLE _____
 CLAN Tremere
 GENERATION 11th

BLOOD

Willpower □□□□□□□□
 Nature ○○○○○○○○
 Demeanor □□□□□□□□
 Conniver □□□□□□□□

SKILLS

COURAGE ○○○○
 CONTACT/TORTURE ○○○○

DIPLOMAT

Quote: *You can see how this deal benefits us both.*

Prelude: From award-winning high school debate teams to communications and language classes in college and finally to an administration degree, you excelled at the fine points of diplomacy. A cultured voice, the ability to empathize with anyone's side and a keen study of motive all facilitated your great skill in etiquette and manipulation. People naturally liked you, and you milked that for all it was worth. You recognized early on that when a diplomat shows up to negotiate between two sides, the real prize is not in reaching the agreement, but rather in leading them to agree or disagree in the way that the diplomat wants. Thereafter, you studied acting and psychology, not only to mollify people, but also to be able to incite them in ways that you preferred.

Once you'd finished your MBA with studies in multiple languages and psychology, you started a silver-tongued climb to a comfortable lifestyle. At first it was corporate deal-making, but you set your ambitions for the UN. You'd shape global policy just for the thrill of it, and you'd be paid for the job. That is, until you were picked up by a pair of unsettling smooth-talkers who recognized ambition and talent, and decided that you'd work the night shift on their behalf.

Concept: Embraced before you could become an experienced (or burned-out) statesman, you landed in the world of Kindred politics with a better reference position than most neonates. You were quick to adjust and put your life behind you, since you had long ago learned to adapt to unusual cultures and customs. A combination of media savvy, smooth talk and quick wit serves to cement your usefulness to the elders, while you manage to redirect your peers at one another's throats. Diplomacy is a weapon in its own right, and it can lay low the mightiest with a few chosen words in Elysium. With that weapon you plan to play the Kindred society's games at your comfort and whim.

Roleplaying Hints: Although you're somewhat arrogant, you're affable and likable to people, despite your predatory nature. You naturally empathize with people, and though you clinically set their emotions to one side, you pretend to feel their position (or take an outrageously opposed stance when you want to incense someone). However, instead of working directly to advance your own agenda, you smoothly slide yourself in as the middleman between various aggrieved parties, and then "help" them agree to solutions favorable to you. You're witty, urbane, friendly — and thoroughly selfish.

Equipment: Wardrobe by Mackie, PCS phone, German sedan, personal organizer



Name: Vampire		
Human	Human Archetype	Generation: 12th
Diablerie: _____	Threats: Martyr	Hours: _____
Character: _____	Class: Tremere	Concept: Diplomat
ATTRIBUTES		
Physical	Social	Mental
Strength: _____	Charisma: _____	Perception: _____
Dexterity: _____	Manipulation: _____	Intelligence: _____
Stamina: _____	Appearance: _____	Will: _____
ABILITIES		
Talents	Skills	Homeworks
Alertness: _____	Animal Ken: _____	Acrobatics: _____
Artistic: _____	Crab: _____	Computer: _____
Blind: _____	Drive: _____	Finance: _____
Deaf: _____	Etiquette: _____	Investigation: _____
Empathy: _____	Forensics: _____	Law: _____
Expulsion: _____	Melee: _____	Linguistics: _____
Intimidation: _____	Performance: _____	Math/IT: _____
Leadership: _____	Security: _____	Music: _____
Sanctuary: _____	Survival: _____	Politics: _____
Subterfuge: _____	Survival: _____	Science: _____
ADVANTAGES		
Weaknesses	Disadvantages	Victories
Generation: _____	Autism: _____	Generation/Immense: _____
Restraint: _____	Delusions: _____	Self Control/Power: _____
Stitch: _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	Concept: _____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
Mentor/Flaw		
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
Human Traits		
Blind	_____	_____
Hurt	_____	_____
Insult	_____	_____
Wounded	_____	_____
Madd	_____	_____
Opprob	_____	_____
Incapacit	_____	_____
Human Disks		
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
Human Disks		
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

LABOR UNION LEADER

Quote: *I just want what's best for the men.*

Prelude: Few people understand just how harsh it can be to grow up in lower-class urban squalor. With alcoholic parents, multiple siblings and limited opportunity, you had no choice but to face reality early. Nobody else would give you a better world, or even the chance for one, so you just had to take what you could find. That meant dropping out of high school so that you could take a factory job. Then you moved up to the shipyards. The general grind of life served as your education. Seedy bars, the occasional brawl, heavy machinery and Milwaukee's Best filled your life and your foreseeable future.

As you worked the shipyards, you kept your mouth shut and your ears open. Drinking with the other laborers, you learned where the graft kept operations moving. The mandatory union membership and its attendant dues were clearly the way up for a working man, so you set yourself to climbing that ladder. Other labor leaders went before you, but you learned from their mistakes while quietly keeping your own counsel. Positioning yourself as a man of the common workers earned you their support, and your patience in watching before jumping meant that you knew what mistakes to avoid. Even when inevitable disputes between management and labor loomed, you could force a resolution — you had the power of the workers behind you. Although it wasn't a great life, you were determined to take the most from it.

Late-night labor negotiations became a chore when you had to juggle special interests, local politicians hoping to use disputes as an issue, management demands and criminal influence all at once. Still, you ultimately had something that they all wanted, and you stood up to each side. Even the threat of violence didn't budge you; you'd faced worse in the projects. Your impressive determination and organization attracted more and more attention, until it was made clear to you that you'd be working graveyard forever. After all, anyone as self-motivated as you could learn what the Tremere needed, but your sheer dogged willpower was a real asset.

Concept: Having clawed your way out of the gutter, you've just wound up on the bottom of yet another heap. It's an uphill struggle once more, but at least

VAMPIRE

Name: _____ Home: Director Generation: 12th
 Discipline: _____ Occupation: Carpenter Name: _____
 Clans: Tremere Clan: Tremere Occupation: Chicago Labor Union Leader

← ATTRIBUTES →

Strength: _____	Charisma: _____	Presence: _____
Dexterity: _____	Majesty: _____	Presence: _____
Stamina: _____	Apparition: _____	Will: _____

← ABILITIES →

Alarms: _____	Animal Empathy: _____	Academics: _____
Artifice: _____	Control: _____	Computers: _____
Beast: _____	Dance: _____	Finance: _____
Charm: _____	Empathy: _____	Intimidation: _____
Empathy: _____	Finance: _____	Law: _____
Expulsion: _____	Heal: _____	Linguistics: _____
Intimidation: _____	Politics: _____	Medicine: _____
Leadership: _____	Science: _____	Music: _____
Stealth: _____	Survival: _____	Politics: _____
Subterfuge: _____	Survival: _____	Science: _____

← ADVANTAGES →

Backgrounds: _____	Strengths: _____	Weaknesses: _____
Allies: _____	Disguise: _____	Garments/Accessories: _____
Contacts: _____	_____	_____
Generators: _____	_____	Skills/Characteristics: _____
Influences: _____	_____	_____
Resources: _____	_____	Group: _____
Reputation: _____	_____	_____

← PHYSICAL TRAITS →

Blind: _____	Blindness: _____	Blindness: _____
Deaf: _____	Deafness: _____	Deafness: _____
Dumb: _____	Dumbness: _____	Dumbness: _____
Feeble: _____	Feebleness: _____	Feebleness: _____
Feeble-Minded: _____	Feeble-Mindedness: _____	Feeble-Mindedness: _____
Feeble-Sighted: _____	Feeble-Sightedness: _____	Feeble-Sightedness: _____
Feeble-Smelled: _____	Feeble-Smelledness: _____	Feeble-Smelledness: _____
Feeble-Tasted: _____	Feeble-Tastedness: _____	Feeble-Tastedness: _____
Feeble-Touched: _____	Feeble-Touchedness: _____	Feeble-Touchedness: _____
Feeble-Turned: _____	Feeble-Turnedness: _____	Feeble-Turnedness: _____
Feeble-Used: _____	Feeble-Usedness: _____	Feeble-Usedness: _____
Feeble-Viewed: _____	Feeble-Viewedness: _____	Feeble-Viewedness: _____



you have the time to make it all the way. All you have to do is make sure that you don't cross one of the odd rules of behavior, because there's no room for mistakes.

Roleplaying Hints: Although you are not well-educated or terribly well-spoken, you at least realize your shortcomings, so you don't speak much. This often lulls people into thinking that you're stupid. When you negotiate, you do so out of collectivism. So long as you have a group in your corner with an asset that nobody else has, you have a position of strength. From time to time you can be subtle, but usually you don't bother; you just let people assume that you're a mook, then you crush them with the weight of your authority, your backing and your dedication.

Equipment: Briefcase, snub revolver, factory schematics, little black book with phone numbers of local politicians and criminal leaders

JEFF JONES 2000

CONSCIENCE/Conversion
●●●○

SELF-CONTROL/Inertness
●●●○

Courage
●●●○

BLOOD
●●●●●●●●●●

WILLPOWER
●●○○○○○○○○

NAME _____
CHARACTER Labor Union leader

CHRONICLE _____
CLAN Tremere

GENERATION 12th

AGE _____
NATURE Director

DISCIPLINE Caregiver



BACKGROUNDS
Allies x3 Resources x3
Contacts x3 Retainers x2
Influences (Inj x3, Scout)

INFLUENCES
Generation _____
Influences (Inj x3, Scout) _____

DISCIPLINES
Dominate (Command, Necromancy)
Forgetful (mind)

MERITS & FLAWS

HUMANITY 10/10/10/10

PHYSICAL
Agile Tenacious
Resilient Tough

SOCIAL
Stalwart
Dignified Genial
Expressive Ingratious x2
Friendly Intimidating

MENTAL
Attentive
Determined
Shrewd

ABILITIES
Brawl Security
Intimidation Occult
Politics Streetwise

CONSCIENCE/Conversion
●●●○

SELF-CONTROL/Inertness
●●●○

Courage
●●●○

BLOOD
●●●●●●●●●●

WILLPOWER
●●○○○○○○○○

NAME _____
CHARACTER Crowley

CHRONICLE _____
CLAN Tremere

GENERATION 13th

AGE _____
NATURE Deviant

DISCIPLINE Monster



BACKGROUNDS
Fame
Herd x3
Influences (Occult)
Resources x2

INFLUENCES

DISCIPLINES
Dominate (Command, Necromancy)
Thaumaturgy (Path of Blood-A Taste for Blood, Blood Rage, Blood of Paternity)

MERITS & FLAWS

HUMANITY 10/10/10/10

PHYSICAL
Enduring Tenacious
Nimble Wiry

SOCIAL
Steady
Beguiling
Charming
Magnetic

MENTAL
Clever Knowledge x2
Creative Wily
Discerning
Insightful

ABILITIES
Academics Occult x2
Medicine Science (Chemistry)
Performance

CROWLEY

Quote: *I will shatter your comfortable illusions.*

Prelude: Down with authority! Fuck the rules! Jack up on a shitload of chemicals and screw some animals! Blame it on distant parents, warped society, your own screwed-up psyche, a need for attention or just plain boredom. Whatever the case, you dabbled in drugs, Satanism, fetish sex, counter-culture — anything to freak the mundanes.

Although you went to school and an endless parade of therapists, you never outgrew your obsession of screwing with people's heads. A little high-school arson and "black magic" attracted the requisite disapproval, and you decided to make bigger ratings. When your peers enrolled in college, you sold them acid and played around with animal sacrifices and personal scarification. The midnight slot on public-access cable became home for your deranged rantings and antics. You attracted a small following of cultish masochists, freaks and malcontents, and you happily abused them all.

As you aged, you became more jaded and cynical, your turns of mood more brutal. The march of mortality brought difficulty to your tirades; you turned from a juvenile prankster to a truly perverse sociopath. Indeed, you delved into the occult out of a sense of bleakness, a need to refute the sensible world and knee-jerk anti-authoritarianism. The joke became stale, and you started to rot.

Still, once you finally broke down the puerile boundaries of simple shock-culture, you opened the door to truly horrific discoveries. Somewhere along the line your witchcraft took on purpose. Your actions, though still geared to shock and desensitize, served some deeper pattern glimpsed in the chaos of occult paraphernalia. Having once glimpsed that pattern, you couldn't go back. Eventually your antics became serious enough to attract equally serious attention.

Concept: "Normal" human life passed by long ago. These nights, you zigzag between trying to find some stable point of order, and indulging the violence of

VAMPIRE

PERSONALITY

Name: _____	Home: Deviant	Generation: 12th
Parents: _____	Appearance: Wastrel	Home: _____
Character: _____	Class: Tremors	Character: Crowley

ATTRIBUTES

Physical			Social			Mental		
Strength: 0000	Charisma: 0000	Empathy: 0000	Stamina: 0000	Manipulation: 0000	Intelligence: 0000	Willpower: 0000	Insight: 0000	Will: 0000

ABILITIES

Essence			Skills			Talents		
Aliveness: 0000	Animal Inst: 0000	Acrobatics: 0000	Artistry: 0000	Combat: 0000	Computer: 0000	Empathy: 0000	Intelligence: 0000	Love: 0000
Beauty: 0000	Drive: 0000	Conjuring: 0000	Blade: 0000	Enchant: 0000	Equipment: 0000	Insight: 0000	Intuition: 0000	Medicine: 0000
Deceit: 0000	Focus: 0000	Law: 0000	Empathy: 0000	Heal: 0000	Language: 0000	Medicine: 0000	Medicine: 0000	Music: 0000
Intuition: 0000	Performance: 0000	Medicine: 0000	Leadership: 0000	Senses: 0000	Occult: 0000	Occult: 0000	Occult: 0000	Occult: 0000
Love: 0000	Survival: 0000	Survival: 0000	Survival: 0000	Survival: 0000	Survival: 0000	Survival: 0000	Survival: 0000	Survival: 0000

ADVANTAGES

Disadvantages			Advantages		
Fame: 0000	Contracts: 0000	Cost: 0000	Contracts: 0000	Cost: 0000	Cost: 0000
Mad: 0000	Thaumaturgy: 0000	Self Control: 0000	Thaumaturgy: 0000	Self Control: 0000	Self Control: 0000
Resources: 0000		George: 0000			

MINUS POINTS

_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------

HEALTH

_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------

SKILLS

_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------

your morbid Curse. You don't fit in with anyone, and you'll probably never amount to much of anything. The most absurd aspect of this existence, of course, is that you finally have real power, but you've so heavily shoved yourself into your elders' hierarchy that you may never manage to make real use of it.

Roleplaying Hints: As long as you can provoke the people around you, you're perversely pleased. However, you feel a need not only to piss people off, but to degrade yourself in the process. Thus, you engage in all manner of nude and shocking behavior, but it's as often directed at yourself as at others. Fortunately, you know just enough to toe the line of authority.

Equipment: Knife, wand, cheap Tarot cards, excessive B&D paraphernalia



ANARCH THAUMATURGE

Quote: *You'll find that my talents are not easy to come by in these circumstances.*

Prelude: You've always had a real problem with authority. It comes with genius, they say, but so does a little instability. Brilliant but undisciplined, you scored off the scale on standardized tests, yet you could never apply yourself to a project long enough to satisfy the demands of the rigid, stultifying academic world.

Directionless, you drifted through school and past frustrated parents and teachers alike. Magnet classes were under-funded and out of the question with two working-class parents. Counselors didn't know what to do with you. Eventually you tired of the placidity in educational circles. Teachers seemed baffled by you and sent you on your way.

Success in the outside world proved difficult without a strong direction. You flitted from place to place and job to job. In the end your jack-of-all-trades experience attracted the wrong sort of attention. You managed to draw notice for your proficiency, but when you were Embraced, the monsters made it clear in no uncertain terms that your agitprop tendencies would not be tolerated. Despite the education and intelligence behind your arguments, you were expected to stay in line.

The hell with that. One night, you packed up and left for free territory, the better to pursue your own ambitions, like getting the hell away from the elders who used you as a scapegoat and expected you to swallow it for the next three centuries. As a recent convert with



VAMPIRE			
Name:	Reverse Child	Generation: 12th	
Parents:	Unknown Survivor	Race:	
Clan:	Clan Tremere	Character:	
Anarch Thaumaturge			
Attributes			
Strength	Charisma	Intelligence	
Dexterity	Manipulation	Appearance	
Stamina	Aggression	Will	
Abilities			
Talents Alchemy 00000 Athletics 00000 Brawl 00000 Dodge 00000 Empathy 00000 Expression 00000 Intimidation 00000 Leadership 00000 Perception 00000 Subterfuge 00000	Skills Animal Kin 00000 Crafts 00000 Drive 00000 Etiquette 00000 Finance 00000 Halls 00000 Intimidation 00000 Secrets 00000 Stealth 00000 Survival 00000	Interests Academics 00000 Computers 00000 Current 00000 Investigation 00000 Law 00000 Linguistics 00000 Medicine 00000 Occult 00000 Politics 00000 Science 00000	
Advantages			
Backgrounds Contacts 00000 Information 00000 Hired 00000 Resources 00000 _____ 00000 _____ 00000 _____ 00000	Disadvantages Abuse 00000 Thaumaturge 00000 _____ 00000 _____ 00000 _____ 00000	Victims Giovanni/Miner 00000 [Self] Clans/Miner 00000 George 00000	
Minor Feats _____ _____ _____ _____ _____			Health Blood 00000000 Skin 00000000 Internal 00000000 Wounds 00000000 Mental 00000000 Charisma 00000000 Disappearance 00000000

limited skills, you didn't see yourself as worth the clan's time to hunt down, but if you become a little too important they may "invite" you back into the fold rather forcefully....

Concept: Having broken with traditional Tremere ranks, your only route to survival and advancement is by making a niche for yourself with your specialized skills. You pander your magical prowess with all the insistence of a jaded street hustler, knowing full well that it's simultaneously paltry and your only real ticket to survival. To get ahead, you'll have to sharpen your skills and become indispensable, while at the same time seeming harmless to the rest of the Tremere — no easy feat.

Roleplaying Hints: Skittish, paranoid and fearful, you have to stay three steps ahead of rival Tremere and two steps ahead of everyone else. A little cultivated mystery makes you seem more knowledgeable and dangerous than you really are. However, when things come down to the wire, your desperation shines through.

Equipment: Scattered occult notes, political tracts, beat-up Hyundai



NAME _____
 CHARACTER Pyramid Fanatic
 CHRONICLE _____
 CLAN Tremere
 GENERATION 13th
 AGE _____
 NATURE Fanatic
 DEMEANOR Conformist

CONSCIENCE/CONVICTIONS
 +-----+
 ●●●●●

SELF-CONTROL/TIERS
 +-----+
 ●●●●●

COURAGE
 ●●●●●

BLOOD
 ○●●●●●●●●●
 □□□□□□□□□□

WILLPOWER
 ●○○○○○○○○
 □□□□□□□□□□

Power/HUMANITY
 ●●●●●○

PHYSICAL

Quick _____
 Tough _____
 Vigorous _____

SOCIAL

Commandingx2 _____
 Persuasive _____
 Diplomatic _____
 Discerning _____ Patient _____
 Disciplined _____ Shrewd _____
 Observantx2 _____
 Knowledgeablex2 _____

ABILITIES

Academics _____ Occultx2 _____
 Etiquette _____ Politics _____
 Finance _____

BACKGROUND

Alliesx2 _____
 Influence (Occult) _____
 Mentor _____
 Resourcesx3 _____

INFLUENCES

DISCIPLINES

Aspect (Heightened Sense)
 Dominate (Command)
 Transmurgy (Path of Blood - A Taste for Blood Blood/Bege)

MERITS & FLAWS



NAME _____
 CHARACTER Anarch Transmurgy
 CHRONICLE _____
 CLAN Tremere
 GENERATION 12th
 AGE _____
 NATURE Child
 DEMEANOR Survivor

CONSCIENCE/CONVICTIONS
 +-----+
 ●●●●●

SELF-CONTROL/TIERS
 +-----+
 ●●●●●

COURAGE
 ●●●●●

BLOOD
 ○●●●●●●●●●
 □□□□□□□□□□

WILLPOWER
 ●○○○○○○○○
 □□□□□□□□□□

Power/HUMANITY
 ●●●●●○

PHYSICAL

Dexterous _____
 Quick _____
 Resilient _____

SOCIAL

Beguiling _____ Genial _____
 Empathetic _____
 Friendlyx2 _____

MENTAL

Dedicated _____ Vigilant _____
 Disciplinedx2 _____ Willy _____
 Intuitive _____
 Knowledgeable _____

ABILITIES

Computer _____ Streetwise _____
 Investigation _____ Survival _____
 Occultx2 _____

BACKGROUND

Contactsx2 _____
 Resources _____
 Herd _____
 Influence (Occult) _____

INFLUENCES

DISCIPLINES

Aspect (Heightened Sense)
 Anomalous Perception
 Transmurgy (Path of Blood - A Taste for Blood Blood/Bege)

MERITS & FLAWS

PYRAMID FANATIC

Quote: *To serve house and clan.*

Prelude: You've always been a follower, but with a peculiar talent: you could see which way the wind blew, and so you always managed to choose the right side. Although some people would vilify you as a toady, a suck-up or a sheep, you survived and were the one laughing when they eventually wound up supporting the wrong player. You backed up a business deal that promised to make a tidy sum by landing a communications contract for the services of a utility company. Your detractors claimed that vendors would be late, that the company would sandbag the payment, and that their own contractors could do the job more cheaply. Your dogged support of your boss' record for reliability helped to land the \$1.2 million contract, at which point your company bought out the rival and you fired all of their happy asses.

Although not particularly talented or well-educated, you managed to score some reasonable job security through your craven office politics. You even kept a notebook detailing the personal preferences and pet peeves of your superiors. Middle management suited your style and kept you busy. Perhaps it was organizational efficiency, or maybe it was someone noticing your pattern of success; you were snatched up for the Tremere clan with a minimum of fuss.

As a Kindred, you quickly oriented yourself and figured out some of the power structures around you. Clearly, the Tremere occupied a winning posi-

tion. You settled into your usual sycophancy, and before long found yourself well compensated for your loyalties. True innovation isn't your style, so you won't necessarily shoot up the ranks, but slow and steady wins the race. Especially when it's steady for hundreds of years.

Concept: You have few convictions of your own, so you always back someone strong. Right now your loyalties lie with the Tremere clan, so you parrot the oath and you're quick to observe the policies handed down from on high.

Such loyalty does garner benefits, but it also earns some snide commentary and a few looks askance from elders who wonder what your real "dodge" is. Your dodge, of course, is self-interest, but you let other people do the work and take the risks.

Roleplaying Hints: Pick out snippets of the Tremere Oath and use them to reinforce your position. Ultimately, you'll be proven right, and you have faith that you'll come out on top. Thus, you are at once sniveling and obnoxiously overconfident, because you toady to your superiors but are totally certain of your correctness.

This can be a difficult character to play, because it's a bit of a stretch to balance the character's one-dimensional nature with, well, a fun chronicle. Such a character works best in a supporting role to another player with a strong concept. It's also a simple role for a new player to try.

Equipment: Signet ring, traditional occult robes, simple suits and sportswear.



VAMPIRE		
Name:	Pyramid Fanatic	Generation: 12th
Demeanor:	Discreet, Conformist	House:
Character(s):	Class: Tremere	Concept: Pyramid Fanatic
ATTRIBUTES		
Strength		
Strength	Charisma	Presence
Dexterity	Manipulation	Intelligence
Stamina	Appearance	Will
ABILITIES		
Tactics		
Alertness	Animal Eye	Academics
Adhesion	Charm	Computers
Beast	Clairvoyance	Fluency
Deceit	Empathy	Investigation
Empathy	Empathy	Law
Expression	Heal	Linguistics
Intimidation	Performance	Medicine
Leadership	Security	Occult
Manipulation	Stealth	Politics
Subterfuge	Survival	Science
ADVANTAGES		
Characteristics		
Clan Prestige	Autism	Clanless Immunity
Resistances	Domestic	Self-Control Reserve
Stitch	Thermostat	George
MENTAL POWERS		
Distraction		
Willpower		
Willpower (Dice)		
Wounds		
Experience		

CONSCIENCE/GOVENITION
●●●○

SELF-CONTROL/IMPASSION
●●●○

COURAGE
●●●○

BLOOD
●●●●●●●●●●
○○○○○○○○○○

WILLPOWER
●●●●●○○○○
○○○○○○○○○○

NAME _____
CHARACTER Disinterested Researcher

CHRONICLE _____
CLAN Tremere
GENERATION 8th

AGE _____
NATURE Celebrant
DEMANDOR Traditionalist



BACKGROUNDS
Generations x2
Influence (Occult)

INFLUENCES

DISCIPLINES
Auspex (Heightened Senses)
Aura Perception
Thaumaturgy (Path of Blood - A Taste for Blood, Blood Rage, Blood of Potency)

MERITS & FLAWS

HUMANITY
PHYSICAL
●●●○

Agile Wiry x 2
Forceful _____
Tireless _____

SOCIAL
Diplomatic _____
Expressive x 2 _____

MENTAL
Disciplined _____
Patient _____
Insightful _____
Wise _____
Knowledgeable x 3 _____

ABILITIES
Academics _____
Etiquette _____
Computer _____
Occult x 2 _____
Linguistics (Latin, Hebrew)

CONSCIENCE/GOVENITION
●●●○

SELF-CONTROL/IMPASSION
●●●○

COURAGE
●●●○

BLOOD
●●●●●●●●●●
○○○○○○○○○○

WILLPOWER
●●○○○○○○○○
○○○○○○○○○○

NAME _____
CHARACTER Nightclub Owner

CHRONICLE _____
CLAN Tremere
GENERATION 13th

AGE _____
NATURE Rogue
DEMANDOR Bon Vivant



BACKGROUNDS
Allies x 2
Contacts x 4
Fame x 1
Herd x 4
Influence (Occult)

INFLUENCES

DISCIPLINES
Dominate (Command, Masochism)
Thaumaturgy (Path of Blood - A Taste for Blood)

MERITS & FLAWS

HUMANITY
PHYSICAL
●●●○

Energetic Tireless x 2
Robust _____
Stalwart _____

SOCIAL
Charming x 2
Integrating _____
Eloquent _____
Magnetic x 2 _____

MENTAL
Empathetic _____
Attentive _____
Determined _____
Observant x 2 _____

ABILITIES
Drive _____
Occult _____
Expression _____
Streetwise _____
Finance _____
Subterfuge _____

NIGHTCLUB OWNER

Quote: *Everyone who is anyone comes here, eventually. Just wait. The night is young.*

Prelude: Some might have called you a shiftless layabout. However, you considered sybaritic luxury a privilege of the times. After all, what good was it to live in the modern age if you didn't take advantage of all that it had to offer?

Despite your penchant for comfort, you really knew how to draw a crowd. Whenever you decided to have a good time, you brought other people along for the ride. This wasn't so much an organizational skill as a natural talent for drawing out ideas that people just found cool and entertaining. Every time some new fashion became a trend, you managed to hit it first. When you visited the night scene, you took risks. The pants made of boiled leather with inch-wide rivets made quite a splash, and your follow-up of neon tape accentuating your manhood on a classic suit managed to tread the line between tacky and cutting edge. Eventually, a few of your associates who accompanied you on your debauches decided to put up some real money to see what you could accomplish. Your first club opening landed right in the midst of a dying darkwave scene, and catered exclusively to that subset without diluting your clients, though few in number, proved extremely loyal. Instead of trying for a bigger market share, you focused on providing the best experience for your small segment of the market, which led to a highly specialized clientele.

Your nightclub lit up the local scene. People flocked to your ideals of decadent splendor. You rubbed shoulders with the elite, kept a few secrets for the jaded wealthy to satisfy their perverse tastes, and really learned to put on a show. Your desire to keep things running smoothly and pleasantly, combined with your devotion to making sure that the endeavor was first and foremost about having a good time, kept people loyal and focused.

You kept re-inventing your place to retain a fresh, trendy approach — the Goth club became a fetish bar, which became a rave venue, and who knows what next? Continued success brought you wealth and the stream of casual acquaintances and rumor mills that turned you into someone "in the know." In the end, you became the supreme facilitator: Even if you didn't have immediate access to the drugs, the information or the powerbrokers, you could find someone who did. However, just as you had learned to exploit it for connections among the clientele, someone decided to exploit you for those same ties.

Concept: In other circumstances you might not have been a Tremere. The clan only receives

VAMPIRE

Character Sheet

Name: Rupert		Generation: 12th	
Demeanor: Benign		Mentor: Concept	
Clan: Tremere		Concept: Nightclub Owner	

Attributes

Strength: ■■■■■	Charisma: ■■■■■	Perception: ■■■■■
Dexterity: ■■■■■	Manipulation: ■■■■■	Intelligence: ■■■■■
Stamina: ■■■■■	Appearance: ■■■■■	Wits: ■■■■■

Abilities

Acrobatics: ■■■■■	Animal Ken: ■■■■■	Academics: ■■■■■
Artistic: ■■■■■	Craft: ■■■■■	Commerce: ■■■■■
Drive: ■■■■■	Deceit: ■■■■■	Finance: ■■■■■
Empathy: ■■■■■	Etiquette: ■■■■■	Investigation: ■■■■■
Empowerment: ■■■■■	Firearms: ■■■■■	Law: ■■■■■
Intimidation: ■■■■■	Healing: ■■■■■	Linguistics: ■■■■■
Leadership: ■■■■■	Performance: ■■■■■	Medicine: ■■■■■
Leadership: ■■■■■	Security: ■■■■■	Occult: ■■■■■
Stealth: ■■■■■	Social: ■■■■■	Politics: ■■■■■
Subterfuge: ■■■■■	Survival: ■■■■■	Science: ■■■■■

Advantages

Backgrounds: ■■■■■	Contacts: ■■■■■	Virtues: ■■■■■
Adaptability: ■■■■■	Disguise: ■■■■■	Graciousness: ■■■■■
Artistic: ■■■■■	Discretion: ■■■■■	Self-Control: ■■■■■
Charisma: ■■■■■	Empathy: ■■■■■	Grace: ■■■■■
Empowerment: ■■■■■	Empowerment: ■■■■■	

Merits & Flaws

Merits: ■■■■■	Flaws: ■■■■■
Merits: ■■■■■	Flaws: ■■■■■
Merits: ■■■■■	Flaws: ■■■■■



lip service from you, and the hierarchy isn't your big motivator. Still, you do useful work. You keep an ear to the ground, and you fit in acceptably with other Kindred who are used to the Tremere as stuffy and tasteless. You're just starting to learn to use your club as a resource more than as an outlet for your tastes, and you're considering starting up a sub-venture to pander to some of the more jaded desires of the Kindred elders.

Roleplaying Hints:

Casual and relaxed, you exude an atmosphere of sensuality. You make other people feel at ease, too, and facilitate their own pleasures, so they're liable to be well-disposed to you. A social chameleon, you know how to blend in to most situations while retaining your aplomb. Very little distracts you or brings you down from your euphoric binges other than the direct threat of violence. You just keep calm and project a sense that you're enjoying yourself wherever you go. Of course, never lose sight of the fact that these connections are there to advance your own interests (and, sometimes, the clan's, if it's worth the bother).

Equipment: Custom lighter, clove cigarettes, evening clubwear

MEDICAL EXAMINER

Quote: *Totally exsanguinated, you say? Probably that hemato-degrading bacterium that's cropped up — the one that originated in Australia. Certainly nothing special.*

Prelude: For a time you harbored all the big dreams: the posting at a prestigious hospital, a few revolutionary papers, an experimental medical technique and a heroic reception as the doctor who cured HIV, defeated epilepsy or perfected organ cloning. Certainly your excellent track record presaged great things. "Excellent technique," your contemporaries said. "Phenomenal memory," the professors added. "Real dedication to medicine," the medical doctors reported. You were so determined to succeed that you flung yourself into residency and internship with a neurotic need for approval, a second job and an amphetamine habit.

A combination of stress, academic competition and lack of a fulfilling social life led quite naturally to a breakdown. You collapsed — two months later, you lost it completely in the hospital. After that, you retained your talent, but many of your old acquaintances dropped by the wayside; they told you that you'd changed. Your psychiatrist explained that psychotic and neurotic breaks often meant a fundamental shift of personality, even as he prescribed some preventative medication and therapy. With time you managed to acclimatize yourself to work once more, but your perspective changed; instead of the self-punishing, idealistic young medical student, you matured into a world-weary doctor who'd seen too many deaths, starting with your own conscience.

Let other doctors make the big discoveries — you'd had enough. In one of the downtown precincts, you secured a position as a medical examiner. Not exactly rewarding work, but not too stressful or difficult. You just tagged and bagged the bodies. Here and there you fudged a report when an overzealous cop went a little too far with a perp, or when the mayor's office didn't want an investigation into a suspicious death. (The "clear suicide" ruling for 38 torso stab wounds was perhaps the most absurd, but pressure from the DA to wrap up the case quickly meant that you never made it to the stand.)

After a few years at your position, you started to notice trends in the city's deaths. Hot summers meant more murders, of course, and suicides shot up in April and in December. But to you, the city almost seemed a predator in itself, killing off its own inhabitants and sending them to you with morbid glee. One exsanguinated body, you chalked up to the bizarre quotient. Two, you made some notes and asked a few questions of the investigating officers. Three, and you tumbled to the predators and murderers that your work had just uncovered. Of course, the Masquerade couldn't bear your scrutiny. If you died, another M.E. would just replace you, so instead you wound up with nights at the



VAMPIRE		
Name: _____	Relative Computer: _____	Department ID#: _____
Division: _____	Department: Judge	Home: _____
Character(s): _____	Class: Tremere	Class type: Medical Examiner
ATTRIBUTES		
Presence	Stress	Morale
Strength: ●●●●●	Charisma: ●●●●●	Presence: ●●●●●
Endurance: ●●●●●	Manipulation: ●●●●●	Intelligence: ●●●●●
Stamina: ●●●●●	Appearance: ●●●●●	Will: ●●●●●
ABILITIES		
Talents	Skills	Hardihood
Alertness: ●●●●●	Animal Ken: ●●●●●	Academics: ●●●●●
Ability: ●●●●●	Crush: ●●●●●	Computer: ●●●●●
Blade: ●●●●●	Drive: ●●●●●	Finance: ●●●●●
Edge: ●●●●●	Etiquette: ●●●●●	Investigation: ●●●●●
Empathy: ●●●●●	Focus: ●●●●●	Law: ●●●●●
Expulsion: ●●●●●	Heal: ●●●●●	Language: ●●●●●
Innocence: ●●●●●	Performance: ●●●●●	Medicine: ●●●●●
Leadership: ●●●●●	Security: ●●●●●	Crush: ●●●●●
Recreation: ●●●●●	Social: ●●●●●	Politics: ●●●●●
Subterfuge: ●●●●●	Survival: ●●●●●	Science: ●●●●●
ADVANTAGE		
Weaknesses	Disguises	Virtues
Control: ●●●●●	Dominate: ●●●●●	Calculated/Powerful: ●●●●●
Intuition: ●●●●●	Theatrics: ●●●●●	Self-Control/Power: ●●●●●
Charisma: ●●●●●	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
Memory Palace	Humanity Points	Special Memory
_____	●●●●●○○○○	Shield ○○○○○
_____	_____	Hair ○○○○○
_____	_____	Spikes ○○○○○
_____	_____	Wounded ○○○○○
_____	_____	Muscle ○○○○○
_____	_____	Crushed ○○○○○
_____	_____	Severed ○○○○○
_____	_____	Explosion ○○○○○
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

morgue. Now you cover for the occasional sloppy eater, bank some blood, collect a boon and dispose of evidence.

Concept: Night work at the morgue means that you don't have to answer questions about your schedule. People expect a cadaverous appearance, so your Kindred nature doesn't raise too many suspicions. Overall, you command a phenomenal amount of behind-the-scenes respect in Kindred society. You can make or break the Masquerade, dry up or swell blood supplies, and push or suppress police investigations with your reports on causes of death. Naturally, other Tremere expect you to use these assets in their favor, but you can get away with demanding the occasional return — such is the benefit of having clout.

Roleplaying Hints: Working with dead bodies — especially since you're one of them yourself — takes its toll on your personality, and you have a morbid sense of humor and a grating bluntness. Once people get past this gruesome exterior, you're not that bad, aside from the blood-drinking and the fudging of paperwork on behalf of murderers and — oh, screw it, you're a jerk.

Equipment: Portable computer, surgical tools, M.E. license, blank death certificates

REFUGEE-TURNED-SCOURGE

Quote: Los manos aqui, *shambas*.

Prelude: Outside the comfortable apartment complexes and grocery-store neighborhoods of the First World are parts of town where electricity's a luxury and famine remains endemic. Into just such squalid circumstances were you born, one of the many dregs of East Los Angeles, beset by poverty and mischance. Five brothers and two sisters accompanied you in misery. Without prospects, you simply kicked and bit your way to survival. In the decrepit streets you could see the life you wanted: food, shelter, lovers and prestige. With your siblings you stole, begged and prostituted yourself to eke out petty change, a used shirt, a Quarter Pounder. In addition to spite, you had a singular low cunning and tenacity. In your late adolescence, seeing an opportunity, you mugged some suburban fuckhead who was trying to slum and left him unconscious in the alley; with his money and wardrobe you secured a few days of leisure. Instead of resting on your ill-gotten wealth, though, you used this as a step up. A contact in Tijuana set you up with runners who smuggled immigrants across the border in stolen trucks, and you bought a hot truck with the money you stole. A week after that, you had dragged your first mules into the United States, and they vanished into the slums of the *mapaladoras* and border towns.

Perhaps it was your dogged will to survive — you'll never know; your sire didn't make it through the rest of the night. Having managed to eke out a living through theft and robbery, you ran afoul of a nasty altercation between alien-smuggling Kindred and the INS. Caught at the wheel of your unregistered pickup, you beat one of the agents to death and were caught up by a laughing Tremere who punished your temerity with the Embrace. Unfortunately, shortly after your Embrace and conversion, you and your sire were set upon by the police. While your sire fought, you fled. You kept running until you escaped to another town where you could blend in unknown.

After an introduction to your new Kindred home, you managed to avoid the fatal missteps — you didn't have any progeny of your own, nor did you trust anyone enough to sire any. Indeed, you made a show of nominal support to your prince's tastes and found yourself finally with the beginnings of political clout. You've got a lot more to learn about Kindred — you only have the vaguest grasp on Kindred history and sects — but you like the authority engendered with your new position. With all this time on your hands, you might even pursue something resembling an education. In the meantime, your street-honed instincts make you a dangerous fighter, and you play



VAMPIRE

Name: *Warren Survivor* Generation: *III*
 Prereqs: *Discipline: Blood* Handed: *Clan: Tremere* *Group: Adige-Tremere*
 Connection: *Clan: Tremere*

ATTRIBUTES

Strength	.....	Charisma	.....	Perception	.....
Dexterity	.....	Manipulation	.....	Intelligence	.....
Stamina	.....	Appearance	.....	Will	.....

ABILITIES

Tactics		Skills		History	
Allegation	.....	Animal Kin	.....	Academics	.....
Arms	.....	Crab	.....	Commerce	.....
Beast	.....	Drive	.....	Finance	.....
Deceit	.....	Empire	.....	Investigation	.....
Empathy	.....	Foreign	.....	Law	.....
Enchantment	.....	Heist	.....	Linguistics	.....
Escapade	.....	Intimidation	.....	Medicine	.....
Leadership	.....	Security	.....	Occult	.....
Severance	.....	Stealth	.....	Politics	.....
Subterfuge	.....	Survival	.....	Science	.....

ADVANTAGES

Backgrounds		Disciplines		Virtues	
Contacts	.....	Assault	.....	Composure	.....
Generalism	.....	Banishment	.....	Generosity	.....
Master	.....	Thaumaturgy	.....	Skill Control	.....
Stitch	.....	.....	.....	Group	.....
.....
.....

----- **Metaphysics** ----- ----- **Stance** ----- ----- **Form** -----

.....	.....	.....	Primal	.....
.....	.....	.....	Hat	.....
.....	.....	.....	Injured	.....
.....	.....	.....	Wounded	.....
.....	.....	.....	Mauled	.....
.....	.....	.....	Crushed	.....
.....	.....	.....	Impaled	.....
.....
.....
.....

----- **Equipment** -----

.....

prestation not out of ego or boredom but simply to survive. You haven't offended any important Tremere, and your skills help in hunting down Kindred who've annoyed the prince, so your position seems well-set.

Concept: Your ties to the Tremere clan extend about as far as blood, and that's it. Having survived the worst that poverty has to offer, you've become adept at scrounging, securing shelter and avoiding authorities, all of which have stood you in good stead.

Because you'll break legs at a word, the prince keeps you around as scourge; in the meantime, you abuse the position to intimidate other Kindred.

Roleplaying Hints: The strong receive your service in exchange for the things they provide. The prince gives you authority and respect, and also gives you money and clothing, so you'll keep working for him. Having existed for so long with the finer aspects of life just out of reach, you're eager to taste comfortable unliving. Unfortunately, your powers alone won't assure that, and you're slowly learning to use your undereducated mind. As a result, you still tend to speak in your broken slang; you use this as a ruse to make others think that you're stupid.

Equipment: Secondhand sport coat that's a little too small, truncheon, greasy wad of small-denomination bills

SAMPLE COTERIE: SECONDARY SOURCES

Of all the clans, the Tremere are arguably the most likely to bring an organized approach to a problem. When something unusual or difficult crops up, it's only a matter of time before a message wends its way through the Tremere network, and eventually something comes back down. Should the Tremere be at a loss to explain a situation, they fall back on one of their formidable assets: their ability to efficiently and ruthlessly tear a problem down to its fundamental elements and study it with a rigor practiced by no other clan.

The Secondary Sources coterie is one such task group. When a Tremere sends word that a situation escapes his knowledge, he often finds clanmates willing to share their hoarded wisdom for a price. Should a problem fall far outside the scope of Tremere research, or pose enough of a threat to merit direct attention from the clan in an organized fashion, a specialized coterie may intervene — at an appropriately high cost in favors, boons and exchanged lore. In such a situation, the Tremere clan calls upon its loyal childer to piece together the source of the mystery, so that they can deal

with the cause instead of the symptoms. If a ghost haunts an area, or an apprentice unearths a mystic artifact, the answer is simple: allocate the resources necessary to deal with the specific incident. If the problem escapes analysis, though, it's time to send in a team that can codify the patterns, hit the books and figure out what the heck is going on.

Storytellers can use Secondary Sources as a group that shows up to highlight some local plot in their own chronicles, or as a background element for a player's character. Perhaps one of your group's Tremere worked with (or in) the coterie in the past, or maybe a non-Tremere vampire dealt with some of them in a shared-knowledge situation. Because the Secondary Sources coterie can take assignments just about anywhere, and can travel of its own volition when not "on duty," they could show up in just about any chronicle as you desire.

USING SECONDARY SOURCES

The Secondary Sources coterie serves as a useful aside for a chronicle, especially if the players are just learning of the Tremere's unnatural society. Although they're unlikely to be direct antagonists, they could contest the group for some bit of knowledge, perform cover-ups or share information with the players' characters. The characters may have to cut a deal

THE ALL-TREMERE CHRONICLE

Of special note to players and Storytellers alike is the possibility of the all-Tremere chronicle. While some stories could focus on a brood that's all from the same clan due to a shared lineage, the Tremere are more likely to deliberately form all-Tremere coteries for specific capabilities. Because of the hierarchical dynamic of the Tremere clan, telling an all-Tremere story demands that the players be able to put aside some of their notions of "fair" or "balanced." Someone's going to outrank someone else, and it probably won't be all on the basis of who's nice or competent. That means that the players need to be comfortable with the backstabbing, manipulative hell that characterizes the Tremere pyramid.

The first option is, as possible with any clan, the brood option: most of the Tremere in the group come from one sire, possibly even one of the players' characters. With a shared lineage, the Tremere have some degree of double loyalty to both clan and creator. The brood itself will, of course, draw rank from the rest of the Tremere organization, and the ranks may not be even across the board; based on the brood's dynamic, though, personal relationships will probably take precedence. Even if one brood member is promoted to a position of authority, he may well follow the guidance of a blood-sibling who's always been there to advise him. Broods of this sort almost inevitably break apart under the Tremere hierarchy, as loyalty to the brood could become dangerous in superseding responsibilities owed to the hierarchy. How such a break-up happens, though, is a matter to Storytell — let the characters struggle with their conflicting duties, their allegiances (or poisonous hatreds reminiscent of an abusive family), their need to acknowledge the demands of the hierarchy versus their personal attachments and familiarity with the brood. Invariably, someone will falter and sell out the brood, or else the whole brood will go down — either way, it's a story of the desperation of family against political agenda, and a great way to play up the grind of Humanity versus necessity.

The uniquely Tremere option for a one-clan game is in the chantry. As Tremere neonates travel around the globe, the hierarchy may see fit to temporarily build a coterie for its own purposes. Most often, the members aren't fully aware of what they're doing. They know only that they have certain responsibilities and that they're working with other people hand-picked by their superiors. Often, such a situation pits neophytes against others with wildly different personalities and divergent interests; a wealth of options succeed where overspecialization fails. Of course, this may mean that the Tremere test each other's patience and have difficulty relating besides their common link to the clan (another way to solidify clan loyalty over any outside consideration, by making anyone who doesn't toe the clan line feel like an outsider). While a few might want to trade knowledge, most will hone their special skills so that they remain useful — each one wants to appear valuable and competent in order to reap the benefits of the hierarchy. If one Tremere rocks the boat or rejects the pyramid, then everyone in the chantry suffers, so collective punishment comes into force, too. The players can examine how total strangers reconcile their wildly different unlife styles, explore morality as it erodes in conflicts for petty politics, even try to reconcile their differences to form a unified chantry — though that last option may be a bit much to ask of bloodsucking monsters out for personal gain.

to have specialized research work done, or they could try to beat the coterie to the acquisition of some mystic lore or artifact. Because it moves from place to place to follow lucrative opportunities and is rarely involved directly in politics, the coterie makes a perfect sideline. The group might even demand prestation of the characters in exchange for some aid, only to show up later at an inopportune time. Sabbat vampires could try to track down the coterie and capture it or steal its secrets.

Note that the Secondary Sources Tremere are researchers; they aren't stupid. They don't go out of their way to alienate other Kindred, and they're cautious in their dealings with unknown quantities. Conversely, because they excel at research and blood magic, they can quickly dig up dirt on nearly anyone. If the players' Cainites become a nuisance to the group, the characters could find themselves subject to blackmail or specialized tactics. Kindred with unique knowledge may even find themselves approached by the Secondary Sources for the purpose of trade.

A group that tends to shoot first and ask questions later will likely never see the Secondary Sources—the researchers know enough to stay well away from such brutes. More scholastic sorts will face stiff competition, because the coterie's efficient resources allow it to function as a pooled network. Sociable Kindred have the most to gain by interacting with these scholars; a polite Kindred can garner juicy gossip through intrigue or by doing a few social favors for the group, especially if he has any sway in local Kindred politics.

Tremere characters could very well find themselves temporarily assigned to work with the coterie. Other vampires could have personal interests that overlap with the coterie's studies. After all, if a group of mysterious Tremere show up and start poking around in, say, Noddist lore, then any local Noddists are sure to get curious, followed by any Camarilla Kindred concerned about the heresy. The coterie is not above hiring out some local help when necessary, through money or favors (although, as typical with reasonably established Tremere, they probably won't teach Thaumaturgy or offer Tremere secrets).

INFLUENCE

Being Tremere on good terms with many of the clan's elders, the Secondary Sources can call upon significant amounts of money and information in the course of their research. The coterie's influence will, of course, be greatest in Camarilla cities, especially where a local Tremere can assist by operating from a position of minor authority.

Politically, the Secondary Sources coterie has limited sway. Because they travel often, they have few settled resources in terms of mortal connections, and they rarely make any long-standing allegiances with Kindred. Most often, the coterie simply makes its introductions to the local prince and/or regent and goes about its secretive business. While some princes would be leery of acknowledging an entire group of

Tremere all at once, their impeccable behavior and adherence to Tradition is a great help. Often, the coterie will even arrange a deal, using its knowledge to assist a prince in some local affair while it carries out its own business. The investigative acumen of the coterie allows it to track Kindred with terrifying skill; a local Lick on the outs with the prince can easily be discovered, and for a small consideration the coterie could even aid the local sheriff or scourge in hunting or capturing the unfortunate. Kindred of dubious lineage can be flushed out through blood magic that determines lineage and veracity. Dirty little (or big) secrets like wayward childer, errant diableries and specialized feeding habits can be unearthed by the coterie, or evidence of such can be manufactured....

When forced into a sensitive position—that is, in Sabbat or other hostile territory, or when a local prince refuses to cooperate with the coterie—the group relies on Thaumaturgy and influence to cloak its operations. Misdirection is also key; often the group will send out a few mortal “feelers” after some minor item of no real interest and allow would-be interference to waste energy chasing down the coterie's false operations. The coterie sometimes hires moonlighters from among local museum specialists, university anthropologists or historians who have redundant skills—if the hired help becomes a casualty, the coterie doesn't lose any special talent, and in the meantime they can find out who attacked and how. False fronts receive money and vices in return for some rather obvious work. A professor might be asked to check with all of his contacts, just to make sure that word spreads; once the professor receives an unpleasant visit from a group of ghouls or Kindred, the coterie has an idea of who to watch out for. That's if they're discovered at all. In emergencies, use of Dominate allows the coterie to keep a low profile if it scrupulously avoids contact with other Kindred, at least for a short time (long enough, hopefully, to finish their research).

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

The Secondary Sources coterie does quite a bit of important research, and occasionally manages to dig up something completely new. Naturally, the lack of a central chantry hinders things somewhat—every time the coterie moves to a new locale, it must re-establish its facilities, a time-consuming task. Long experience means that these Kindred are well-versed in set-up and take-down and in “speed science”—analysis of sites and material under adverse conditions.

Although rapid response would normally dictate flying to a locale, the group usually moves in a pair of vans. One cannot reliably check a set of metallurgical and thaumaturgical analysis kits through baggage, after all. Should someone be needed on a site *immediately*, the individual typically travels on a red-eye jet (first class, of course—imagine a Lick frenzied in the midst of cramped seats, bad weather and squalling children in coach). That team member does preliminary research and set-up while waiting for the rest of the coterie to arrive.

The coterie's vans boast special modifications to aid in Kindred travel. Both are built with the expected shaded windows, heavy suspension and secure cellular equipment. Generally, research material is evenly split between the two; if one van is lost or damaged, the other will still have sufficient supplies to do some work while replacements are purchased. In a pinch, the back of either van can double as an emergency haven. Most often, though, the coterie uses cheap hotels; skill, tact and bribes (with the occasional supplement of Dominate) allow them to use false identities, and some Thaumaturgy protects the room from sunlight or vigilant housekeepers. Once at the site of an investigation, the group sets up shop for an extended stay — hotels for a week or two, actual property rental for longer periods.

Because the Secondary Sources team doesn't focus much on mortal interaction, it doesn't need much in the way of a cover. Nosy hotel clerks receive the brush-off, while feeding is made easier through the use of Disciplines. The team has just three responsibilities: get in, get information, get out. That means setting up surveillance around trouble spots, making connections with local Kindred "in the know" and then formulating a hypothesis. Once finished, the group packs up and sends its report to their patron or whatever parties in the Tremere clan might be able to make sense of the matter.

Of course, the Secondary Sources team doesn't spend all of its time in research of the unknown. These are vampires with individual desires and interests outside of their work. Between jobs, the team often splits up, sometimes for months at a stretch, to pursue personal interests. Team members remain in casual contact, in case a new job comes up. Still, just as much as the Tremere hierarchy uses influence to supply them with material and money for research, it also gives the coterie members their space to unwind (and, perhaps, to indulge in sordid pursuits without straining the mortal populace in one area too much).

Between assignments, the coterie sometimes changes composition. Although a core of skilled researchers make up the team, most jobs also call for the aid of a specialist. If the team investigates unusual pieces of metal found in the remnants of a medieval armory, a metallurgist is brought in; fossils require the services of paleontologists, and so on. Naturally, the coterie prefers to use local Tremere for such work, but that's not always possible. In such cases, the coterie often approaches a mortal specialist. In addition to money, the coterie's familiar with the value of favors and mortal vices to secure allegiance. The coterie panders to specialists with weaknesses for gambling, esoteric information, a thrill for danger — the coterie can offer "cloak and dagger" operations or long-lost texts (often faxed or e-mailed from a Tremere who owns the material in question). Conversely, the coterie avoids threats or blackmail; because the group moves so often, it's too dangerous to leave behind a disgruntled mortal who might be out of reach within a month. If asked about their nocturnal study cycle, they simply note that they're hiring the consultant privately, and it wouldn't do to compete with

normal job hours; furthermore, they often employ a ghoul or a handful of oblivious mortal "account executives" to add a little daytime flexibility and believability to the schedule.

THE KINDRED AND COHORTS

Several decades of odd research jobs have refined the core of the Secondary Sources coterie. Like Tremere everywhere, they are a fractious bunch rotten with infighting, but they manage to complete their tasks because failure would be worse. So far, no situation has come up that has severely tested the loyalty of the coterie. Should their research uncover a secret too terrible, though, they might unfortunately find themselves at odds with Tremere interests, with dangerous results.



REGENT KARL JOHANSEN

Background: What happens when a Cainite finds himself backed into an untenable situation but even the escape of death is not an option? Regent Johansen discovered the hard way that the Curse alone is not the worst condition — the Curse merely makes it possible to survive forever in one's personal hell.

Karl's introduction to Tremere society seemed promising enough. He'd showed skill as a turn-of-the-(19th)-century German occultist. Even while living, he studied alchemy and spiritualism along with more traditional medicine and politics. This set him up for a social meeting with his sire-to-be, a prominent English Tremere who'd been looking for more recruits specifically for research purposes. The turn of the century, it seemed, brought with it hysteria, religious fervor and a resurgence of occultism; many likely candidates presented themselves, and the world almost felt as if it had accelerated toward a new acceptance of mysticism. Karl's eager inquiries into such culture, combined with his incisive intellect, made him Bartholomew's choice. He made it through his

Embrace, through the rituals and oaths and into the ranks of apprentices, where he studied diligently for several decades.

Within 50 years of his Embrace, Karl had proven his capabilities and his dedication. As a reward, he was "promoted" to lead the Secondary Sources team, whose former leader had crumbled to dust after badly mishandling a sacred relic. Although at first Karl thrilled to the opportunities for travel and research, he soon came to see the job for the liability that it was: without a settled chantry, he commanded no real resources or respect. He was constantly pushed for updates and reports on phenomena outside the experience of any Kindred. He was assigned only apprentices who were eccentric or difficult to work with; when the occasional apprentice volunteered, invariably matters became a struggle for leadership of the coterie. It was a grim job, but it was what little authority he could scrape together.

Karl never quite figured out who he annoyed or what task he failed to draw such dismal duties (as he saw them). Regency of the coterie took up all of his attention, leaving him little time for personal pursuits. This weighed him down, and he became increasingly short-tempered and bitter.

By the 1940s, Karl lapsed into a deep depression. Although he still did his work, he simply didn't have enough drive to continue the constant political infighting, the squabbling for resources and the puzzling over bad situations that needed blame. He slipped into torpor in the very chair from which he studied, but just when everyone expected that he would simply be interred and command of the coterie transferred, he made his presence known mentally. With his formidable command of Auspex, Karl continued to lead the coterie as an abstract thinker and authority, using telepathy, and later astral appearances, to communicate.

Karl has remained torpid for several decades, and his body has weakened. Still, he manages to use his mental powers to communicate with his agents and to keep the coterie in motion. He slips between periods of lucidity and dream; sometimes his missives contain emotions or ideas that have no clear context to the world around him. When the coterie needs to move, they box him up, chair and all, and load him into the van. Karl lets his apprentices handle mundane paperwork while he rests and concentrates solely on mental problems that might interest him. Ghouls or unlucky apprentices maintain his suit and his surroundings, and take direction mentally.

Image: Emaciated and comatose, Karl has aged badly. Although he was only in his 30s when Embraced, he has become quite desiccated over the years. His skin is yellowed and taut, his face rictuslike. Although a rotating body of servitors keeps his suit immaculately groomed, he makes for an unsettling corpse-like figure, hands locked about the arms of his ancient chair. Naturally, few people ever actually see him. Most often he's heard as a telepathic voice — in such circumstances, he sounds low, gravelly and commanding, much like a stern patriarchal figure, exuding authority and eliciting reflexive obedience.

Roleplaying Hints: You're asleep, sort of. These nights you fluctuate between letting your consciousness drift in dreams, and occasionally peering out to see what the coterie is doing. Most often you can't be bothered with trivial details. Rather, you come forth when an idea presents itself, or when the weight of trepidation from your subordinates becomes too great (that is, you initiate contact when you feel that they are in a bind). If something is desperate enough to draw your attention, you let your mind float up from dreams to speak with your attaché; however, it's harder and harder to tell dream from "reality" these nights, and sometimes you make no sense whatsoever. It would take a monumental threat to actually cause you to wake up at this point.

In odder moods, you sometimes even remotely manipulate objects around you with your Thaumaturgy. How you do this without speech or gesture to focus, nobody's quite figured out yet. At least once you terrified an apprentice who didn't know what to expect when he entered your "office" to discover pens, books and ritual implements floating about you in a lazy circle. Your manipulation of surrounding objects often has more to do with your mood or dreams than with what you're thinking. You could very well carry on a lucid "conversation" with a subordinate, while at the same time an object on your desk traces odd and meaningless patterns in the air, because your conscious and subconscious thoughts seem to flow and interweave during your half-slumber.

Sire: Bartholomew Whitaker

Nature: Curmudgeon

Demeanor: Traditionalist

Generation: 10th

Embrace: 1801

Apparent Age: mid 50s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 1

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Expression 3, Intimidation 4, Leadership 3, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Etiquette 2, Firearms 1, Melee 1, Security 1

Knowledges: Academics (history) 4, Investigation 2, Law 4, Linguistics (English, Latin) 2, Medicine 2, Occult 4, Politics 2, Science 2

Disciplines: Auspex 5, Dominate 3, Fortitude 2, Thaumaturgy 4

Thaumaturgical Paths: Path of Blood 4, Movement of Mind 2, Oneiromancy 2

Thaumaturgical Rituals: (Level One) Defense of Sacred Haven, Purity of Flesh, Rite of Introduction, Sanguineous Phial; (Level Two) Blood Walk, Warding Circle versus Ghouls

Backgrounds: Clan Prestige 2, Resources 4, Retainers 2, Status 1

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

Morality: Humanity 4

Willpower: 8



VARYA KORLOV, APPRENTICE ATTACHÉ

Background: If not for being in the wrong place at the right time, Varya probably would've had an unassuming life as the wife of a successful older man, drawing wealth and privilege before settling down as a matron involved in local politics. As it was, though, her raw glamour and predatory instincts made her not only a celebrated and desirable young woman in her rural Russian home, but also a prospect for the Tremere. It helped that her sire, Lhyrcan, was a once-affluent Tremere who'd succumbed to insanity; who could fathom why he whimsically chose this beauty for the Embrace? Of course, Varya exceeded the initial expectations of those who thought her merely a showpiece; perhaps her delusional sire did retain some cunning insight. It wasn't enough to save him from his own child; Varya chafed under the restrictions of a capricious, domineering sire, and arranged his demise through a pair of mortals whom she cajoled with teasing hints of intimacy.

Although an Embrace on a whim didn't make for an auspicious introduction to the Tremere, Varya carved out her own position in the clan. Already familiar with using people, she discovered that good looks alone wouldn't get her far, but her willingness to break a few rules made up for it. Initially, her inexperienced attempts at intrigue only made enemies. Kindred weren't easily enticed with sex appeal, and most were too canny to underestimate a woman. Varya didn't quite suffer Lextalionis, but her wantonly avaricious ways made her no allies.

With the end of the Cold War, Varya realized her opportunity to travel. Russia's collapsing infrastructure meant that the government was much more lax about émigrés. With nothing tying her to Russia—she had no loyalty to any family or friends there—Varya left to make her own way among Kindred, far from the courts where she'd stumbled as a child. She realized quickly that the stratified European society of the Damned held little room for a neonate Kindred with a

reputation as a kinslayer, so she decided to go further abroad. In the interim, she developed her skills in intrigue, learning to sublimate her own desires and pretend to listen to and accommodate others. She mastered the bartering technique of asking for far more than she ever hoped to achieve so that she could seem reasonable in a compromise while still getting what she wanted—when seeking domain from a prince, she'd ask for twice the area she hoped to influence and for right of progeny besides; once both sides reached a compromise, she'd claim a small domain while still appearing to back down graciously from her initial demands. In every city she visited, she bound ghouls with the dual edges of the blood bond and her own lasciviousness, often surprising other Kindred with her resulting daylight resources. None of these ghouls ever survived her moving to another city, as Varya had no desire to leave loose ends behind.

Once out of southern Russia, Varya quickly learned about the Secondary Sources team and requested work with them. Not only was their torpid regent unlikely to be a challenge to her own rise to prominence, but they traveled widely and unearthed powers that the rest of the clan ignored or didn't understand. Cultivating a "helpful apprentice" image, Varya secured her posting and quickly became the right hand of the regent. She took up his authority as her own, filed the necessary reports and became the real night-to-night leader for the team. On at least one occasion another apprentice in the coterie received "bad intel" that led to his demise at the talons of Lupines, but thus far Varya has evaded blame. As Varya becomes increasingly frustrated with the coterie, her depredations become bolder. Only Regent Johansen's telepathy keeps Varya from plotting directly against him, as she fears that he may know more than he lets on and simply waits to act.

For now, Varya bides her time; eventually Regent Johansen will err, slip totally into unconsciousness or crumble to dust, and she'll have authority of her own. She wishes to use the team to broaden her skills, make contacts in many areas and learn tricks that other Kindred don't know. Already she's accumulated boons in multiple cities across the Americas (both North and South). In Columbus she arranged for evening use of a local museum so that the Toreador primogen could throw a presentation party for a new child. In Paraguay, she managed to work a deal with a Sabbat-sympathetic Ventrué, trading some historical notes about the Mayan emigration for heretical Noddist lore desired by a Camarilla elder in the States who didn't want to sully his image with direct Sabbat or Noddist ties. In all cases, the coterie has assisted in her work or provided an excuse for her to travel, because success in her endeavors gives the other apprentices a better track record and more credit with other Tremere. Once she's taken what she wants from the coterie, she'll leave it behind and take up a chantry of her own, or so she hopes.

Image: The value of good appearance is not lost on Varya. Mortals and younger Cainites can often be swayed by

a sexy demeanor, while many elders do pay attention to people who take the time to dress well in consideration of them. Varya therefore uses her beauty to advantage, carefully grooming her black hair and using makeup to offset her pallor. She keeps a set of three different ensembles ready for travel: a severe and conservative business suit, more casual eveningwear and sturdy khakis when in the field (that is, when the possibility of exertion or dirt comes up).

Though she's only 5' 4" tall, Varya knows how to make an impression. She walks with confidence, holds people's gazes with her own dark brown eyes when she speaks and never, ever stumbles over her words. Her lean figure remains attractive in a waifish, fashion-model way.

Roleplaying Hints: You're the epitome of confident diplomacy. You speak with assumed authority; the regent will back you up as his attaché, and in any case your personality is forceful enough that you usually get what you want before that even becomes an issue. When the crunch comes, you yield and let people think that you're a pushover. Then you snap back to take what you want. If someone confronts you, just assuage her concerns and agree. Only vent real vitriol when you're certain that you have a position of strength. Behind the scenes, though, you easily use and discard people, and you're even starting to acquire a perverse taste for entreating your enemies into compromising positions — pretend to befriend someone, then throw him away and watch with glee as your "friend" realizes that he was just a diversion.

Sire: Lhýrcan the Mad

Nature: Autocrat

Demeanor: Bon Vivant

Generation: 11th

Embrace: 1955

Apparent Age: early 20s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 1, Empathy 1, Expression 4, Intimidation 3, Leadership 2, Style 2, Subterfuge (seduction) 4

Skills: Etiquette (diplomacy) 4, Performance 3

Knowledges: Academics 2, Computer 1, Finance 2, Investigation 1, Linguistics (English, French, Greek, Latin) 3, Occult 2, Politics (prestation) 4

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Dominate 4, Presence 1, Thaumaturgy 1

Thaumaturgical Paths: Path of Blood 1

Thaumaturgical Rituals: (Level One) Bind the Accusing Tongue, Impressive Visage, Rebirth of Mortal Vanity

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

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

Morality: Humanity 6

Willpower: 5

Note: Varya does not have a usual "herd." Instead of a settled group of people, she uses her formidable charisma and force of personality to establish a small herd at need whenever the group travels. This generally requires at least a few nights in one location, but her proficiency at doing so is best represented simply with this Background.



THOMAS WELLBY

Background: Thomas fills a specific niche. In the aftermath of the second World War, the Tremere had lost several recruits to the general chaos engulfing the world. The Secondary Sources coterie was pushed to the limit exploring new opportunities opened by global trade and transportation, but at the same time its membership hovered at two vampires and a lone ghoul at any given time — completely unable to do its job. Regent Karl Johansen awakened for the last time to choose a new recruit specifically to fill these needs.

Linguistics and social analysis were Thomas' specialties. This made him a perfect candidate for the increasingly wide-ranging coterie's needs in foreign lands. In addition, he studied symbology, which tied in nicely with the occultism of the Tremere. Karl singled him out due to a book that Thomas had written, a treatise describing the underpinning thought-elements that led to lingual drift. That little bit of academia made Thomas notable among a few other students of language, but also wound up drawing the attention that made him undead. The Kindred mind does not adapt easily to linguistic changes. Thomas posited that language changes reflect prevailing trends in culture and also simplification of form, until original words and phrases become stripped into abbreviated molds devoid of their original meaning. The transformation from key concept to obsolescent relic mirrored the progress from common event to mythic remnant.

Of course, this sort of esoterica easily dwindled into over-specialization, but Thomas had other skills as well. His published

papers on linguistics gave him some contact and credibility with the academic community. On the side, Thomas also turned out to be a passable mechanic; during his youth he'd devoted extensive work to cars, passionately tricking out his Mercury and experimenting with modified engines, racing tires, even a little nitrous oxide. His enthusiasm remained even during his professorial tenure, and he kept a customized show truck, adding underdrive pulleys and fuel injection as new accessories became available. For a coterie that traveled extensively, mechanical maintenance was imperative.

Once inducted into the coterie, Thomas managed to adjust primarily because of his own training in social psychology and thought evolution — radical concepts that came out of his radical era. He found the study of the Tremere and the Camarilla as societies fascinating. He also thrilled to Tremere mysticism and mastered some traditional forms of magic, playing on his understanding of intent and symbol power.

Image: Thomas received his Embrace right on the cusp of the hippie era, and it shows; he has scraggly, slightly thinning hair and a pock-marked face. He wears corrective glasses out of habit, and tends to pick bulky, large-rimmed glasses because he hasn't adapted to contact lenses. Coming in at a modest 5'9" and a heavyset 180 lbs., Thomas looks like a pudgy English professor, but his entire demeanor changes when he finds a topic of interest. Around mechanical work he dresses in overalls and has a nimble jocular. When engrossed in books or language research, he tends to carry a satchel with reference materials, and has a habit of leaving books on tables and forgetting to pick them up later.

Roleplaying Hints: Among strangers, you tend to be somewhat withdrawn; you analyze other people before jumping into conversations. With your coterie or other acquaintances, you open up a bit more, letting other people guide the conversation until something catches your interest. Dissertations about linguistics cause you to become animated, speaking rapidly and gesticulating for emphasis. Working on cars, conversely, calms you down; you always keep a full tool set in one of the vans, and when you have a grease rag and socket wrench in hand, you're rather congenial. You enjoy discussions of auto customization; indeed, you consider linguistic analysis "work" and mechanics "play."

Sire: Karl Johansen

Nature: Perfectionist

Demeanor: Pedagogue

Generation: 11th

Embrace: 1960

Apparent Age: mid-30s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 2

Talents: Expression (technical writing) 4, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Crafts (auto mechanic) 4, Etiquette 1, Performance 1

Knowledges: Academics (sociology) 4, Investigation 3, Linguistics (Egyptian, French, German, Greek, Italian, Latin, Sanskrit, Spanish) 4, Occult 4, Science 2

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Dominate 2, Thaumaturgy 2

Thaumaturgical Paths: Path of Blood 2

Thaumaturgical Rituals: (Level One) Defense of the Sacred Haven, Deflection of Wooden Doom, Rite of Introduction, Sense the Mystical, The Scribe; (Level Two) Blood Walk, Extinguish, Principal Focus of Vitae Infusion

Backgrounds: Fame 1, Resources 2, Status 1

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 4, Courage 3

Morality: Humanity 7

Willpower: 5



ALMIRO SUAREZ

Background: With the advent of industrialization and globalization, the dense cities of many nations become places of opportunity. Those who manage to learn technical skills stand to make a great deal of money as laborers or investors when international businesses come calling to set up their trades. Almiro's family managed such a feat. Originally from lower-class stock, Almiro's family moved to Rio while he was young. There, his father secured an education at night while working as a manual laborer by day, and managed to land a job working for a telephone company. Almiro went from a scruffy kid in the streets to having real prospects, and he took advantage of them — he educated himself in electronics and communications engineering, and went on to follow in his father's footsteps.

Almiro made many contacts during the course of his employment, often through radio, computer or other anonymous media. One such contact was Ramon Alvaro, who initially called for aid in repairing the phone lines in his home — the old cabling had degraded with age, and Almiro had to

replace several connectors. Ramon, explaining that he worked nights, invited Almiro to stay for a drink, ostensibly so that Almiro could explain the technology behind the phone cabling, the repair work he'd done and how to modernize the structure. Eventually the discussion spun off into soccer teams, with Almiro and Ramon championing their favorite players and animatedly discussing the universal stupidity of coaches. Almiro and Ramon kept up correspondence thereafter, but Almiro didn't realize that Ramon was considering him for the Embrace until two months later, when Ramon asked Almiro to drop by for an evening party and didn't specify that the partygoers were Kindred. Almiro awoke from the affair as one of the undead, and had to juggle his work schedule to keep his job (he managed by shifting to emergency response for nights and evenings, in cases where storm damage or disaster had destroyed parts of the phone network).

About a year after Almiro's conversion, Regent Johansen's coterie arrived to track a local cult, one that used encrypted e-mail, distributed networks, stock trading and industrial espionage to spread its occult missives across Rio, New York and Bangladesh. Brazil's Tremere weren't so much bothered by the cult as interested in how it had acquired texts with worship rites for She Who Screams in Darkness, the cult's malignant goddess(?) figure. Unearthing the cult's sources required someone capable of defeating the cult's communication systems, which meant a modern Tremere. Almiro fit the bill, and Varya requested his assistance. Almiro saw the job as a challenge, and although it took him several months of dedicated work, he managed to tap one of the cult's computer lines, copy their data for two weeks and uncover the original sources. Following his success, Almiro requested the chance to follow up on the case, and joined the coterie as it headed back to the States for the New York branch. Almiro relished the work and also saw the opportunity to make more widespread contacts, especially important given his relatively high generation and modern heritage.

Image: A congenial, snappy fellow, Almiro in many ways exemplifies modern Kindred. He wears slacks and button-down shirts that one would expect of a technological professional, carries a beeper, pays attention to personal hygiene and often has a small black briefcase with electrical diagnostic equipment and a laptop computer. Almiro's just under six feet tall, with a slightly overlarge nose and browned skin that's become ashen with his Kindred condition. He smiles often out of habit.

Roleplaying Hints: Intellectual puzzles still thrill you, which is a good thing because you've found yourself slipping away from your usual even temperament with increasing frequency. You enjoy talking, just about whimsical topics, or about nothing in particular. From time to time you try to catch up with soccer scores, but you're starting to give up; you just don't have the time. On the one hand, you resent some of your treatment in the coterie — Varya flaunts her age and authority — but on the other hand, your handle on modern

technology makes you indispensable. To compensate, you don't bother to explain what you're doing when a tech problem comes up; you just solve it and, if someone asks what you're doing, you give a pat explanation to make it sound simple (and make the inquiring party look stupid). You relish the opportunity to meet other Kindred and enjoy trading stories, be they actual events from your respective pasts or just sociable anecdotes.

Sire: Ramon Alvaro

Nature: Celebrant

Demeanor: Architect

Generation: 12th

Embrace: 1991

Apparent Age: mid-20s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 1, Streetwise 2

Skills: Craft (electrical engineering) 4, Drive 2, Firearms 1, Security 2, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Academics 1, Computer 3, Finance 2, Investigation (computer searches) 4, Linguistics 2 (Latin, English), Occult 3, Science 4

Disciplines: Auspex 1, Thaumaturgy 3

Thaumaturgical Paths: Elemental Mastery 3, Technomancy 1

Thaumaturgical Rituals: (Level One) Communicate with Kindred Sire, Encrypt Missive, Expedient Paperwork; (Level Two) Bureaucratic Condemnation, Principal Focus of Vitae Infusion; (Level Three) Telecommunication, Sanguine Assistant

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

Virtues: Conscience 4, Self-Control 3, Courage 3

Morality: Humanity 7

Willpower: 6

TREMERE OF NOTE

The Tremere hierarchy disseminates information with frightening efficiency, yet mystery still surrounds its most prominent members. Those who achieve some measure of fame and success find their foibles distorted in the retellings, or hear specious rumors of their incredible hidden powers and secrets — after all, those clan members who need to know the truth will learn, while prospective adversaries will have naught but innuendo and outrageous tales against which to weigh their plots. The mightier the Tremere, the more legendary the stories — but in the Final Nights it sometimes seems that the most terrifyingly bizarre accounts are all too true.

TREMERE

What has not been said of the renegade founder, wizard, elder and enigma? As with any placed among the mythical Antediluvians, stories contradict wildly. Historical accounts —

if they can be called such — place Tremere as a cunning and manipulative magician who stole immortality, but all other speculations are open to interpretation. Some rumors state that he is a diablerist and demonologist; others believe that he intends to fuse the Kindred condition with his own mystic understanding to surpass the Curse of Caine. Stories have depicted him alternately as a mighty wizard of fearsome mien, as a limbless white worm, as a three-eyed beast or as a withered and demonic figure. Still, appearance means nothing to one of Tremere's stature.

While the Camarilla vehemently denies the legends of Antediluvians, Tremere's apocryphal deeds certainly seem to match their power (if not their age). Some Kindred familiar with the Tremere clan believe that there is no singular "Tremere," but those in positions of hierarchical authority occasionally mutter imprecations about directives handed down to the uppermost secret elders from the demented dreams of what can only be described as an ancient monster. Certainly *something* seems to guide the clan's loyal members, but is it Tremere? Did the magician pass away long ago, or did he simply give way to something more terrifying as the monstrous Cainite curse devoured his soul? Does he, indeed, still exist tonight, or is the shadow of Tremere simply a conspiracy levied over an entire race of vampires? Answers vary from party to party. Those who dig too deeply into Tremere's ultimate fate often find themselves bound to the Tremere clan by potent magic, if they do not vanish entirely.

Ultimately, all that can be said with certainty about Tremere — whether or not he or it even continues to exist — is that he was a mystery beyond the understanding of either sorcerers or the Damned. Tremere was unique, an individual who could not be described by simple categories.

For storytellers who want a handle on the "real Tremere," see *Transylvania Chronicles IV*. Tremere diablerized Saulot, but in the process the Antediluvian exerted an unexpected control over Tremere's later actions, the results of which culminated in the destruction of the Tremere *antitribu*. Note, however, that Tremere and his supporters remain very close-mouthed about such issues — were rumors to widely spread that Tremere is a diablerist, that Saulot exerts control over his body, or that he destroyed an entire bloodline, other Kindred would move much more decisively to purge the Tremere clan. Literally no more than a dozen individuals left in the world (including, perhaps, your players' characters, if they participated in the *Transylvania Chronicles*) know the truth surrounding these horrible events.

THE COUNCIL OF SEVEN

Beneath the mythical Tremere are seven vampires of fell power, who, combined, oversee the worldly (and otherworldly) doings of the entire Tremere clan. Because the founder cannot be expected to personally guide the clan in all things, or even to be aware of the state of the modern world, the council operates as an administrative body for all Tremere. While the

founder hides in myth and superstition, the council is all too real, especially to those who fail the Tremere clan in some fashion spectacular enough to draw their ire.

This is not to say that the council sits like some undead Congress that passes legislation and indulges in political fraud, though. Rather, each councilor clings to a vision of acceptable conduct and business, and sets the standards by which Tremere in his or her region are measured. The council itself is a fraternity of equals or near-equals, each with personal agendas and individual visions for the Tremere clan, who recruit supporters for their projects and disseminate important information, while at the same time making sure that problems threatening the entire Tremere clan face a unified opposition. Should an individual pontifex become lax in, say, the political scene of a small European country, a displeased councilor might send a letter noting that the choice of a liberal Democrat candidate over a state Socialist does not sit with his long-term vision for the country. Similarly, the councilors make wide-ranging decisions regarding policy. Should a rash Tremere neonate hand out thaumaturgical secrets to non-Tremere, other apprentices and regents will scorn the hapless fledgling and perhaps even move against him to curry the favor of more "respectable" Tremere — those who follow the council's wishes. Rarely does the council move directly against someone; instead, a councilor will let his pontifices and lords know what pleases him and what vexes him, and allow the subordinates to sort out the proper course of action for those who wish to remain in good stead. The council is often seen as having impeccable judgment and extremely far-sighted planning, so few individual Tremere would dare to presume superior discretion.

The council comprises the canniest and oldest of surviving Tremere; indeed, its membership includes those who turned from mortal magicians to undead in the first nights of the clan's usurpation. Each councilor oversees a continental locale, be it Western Europe, Africa, North America or the like (though not necessarily in person), attended by such aides as he or she can recruit and support. Membership on the council rarely changes; only a total disaster would be able to erode the support or unlife of one of these potent Cainites. Not that such things are impossible....

ETRIUS: FIRST AMONG EQUALS

Most notable of the Council of Seven is Etrius, the right hand of Tremere. Rumors claim that Etrius dealt directly with Tremere in the clan's earliest affairs, in the days when they were still mortal, and that he continues to speak with the founder on matters of importance. Etrius watches over Eastern Europe, the primary chantry in Vienna and the crypt where Tremere is supposedly entombed. As the most trusted of Tremere's original followers, Etrius commands respect from the entirety of the clan.

To hear others speak of him, Etrius seems a congenial and even compassionate figure. He argued long and hard against Tremere's original plan for immortality, against the acceptance of vampirism, against the usurpation of a place in Cainite society and against the

radical plans of Goratrix. Etrius spoke dire predictions of the consequences to all should such courses of action take place, but he always stood loyally beside Tremere. However, Etrius was (and is) far from a caring individual — rather, he is conservative in the extreme, unwilling to give up even a minuscule advantage and carefully judging every risk versus potential reward. Although this means that he did not and does not make such risky leaps of research as Tremere and Goratrix, it also means that he has weathered the past millennium very safely and strongly indeed. Etrius errs on the side of caution.

In the modern nights, Etrius has adapted quite well. A carefully picked brood of neonates assists when he requires aid with some artifact of the current era, but Etrius is not so foolish as to demand complete use of their time, and rewards them well for their services. Although far from a technological Kindred, Etrius is a deep thinker, and he brings a formidably logical intellect to bear. Nearly any problem that confronts him becomes subject to a battery of intricate tests and feints to determine its roots and causes, after which Etrius methodically sets his subordinates to defusing it or turning it to his advantage. A lord may find a request for an apprentice capable of carrying out chemical analysis, while a pontifex in some other part of the world receives a note about correlating thaumaturgical research with some new anticoagulant, and a mortal agent in the CDC is pressured to release data regarding recent studies in hemotoxins. Etrius works as a capable manager, giving each aide just enough information to yield useful answers. During such times, he himself oversees the final results of such wide-ranging projects as dissemination of a new counter-ritual to all regents or development of economic resources in Bosnia to gain a foothold in the turbulent government of the region. Keenly aware of his place at the head of a fragile hierarchy, Etrius disguises his personal interests as matters of clan security, which affords him a great deal of leeway. More importantly, he has substantial contact with elder Kindred outside the Tremere pyramid; as one of the architects of the Camarilla so many centuries ago, he retains significant clout in that organization. All told, Etrius has a combination of elder allies and modern, cutting-edge resources to direct as he pleases. Elders who owe favors from centuries past may grudgingly give aid, while apprentices and regents hoping for advancement or trust with a new project may use their local intrigues on his behalf. With a word to an aide, Etrius sets in motion a phone call that encourages an apprentice in Taiwan to forward sales figures from computer chips over to a consultant in London, who in turn analyzes the numbers in exchange for thaumaturgical instruction from a lord who was promoted by Etrius. The end result: Etrius can completely insulate himself from night-to-night modern operations; a report arrives in the hands of his aide within a few nights, detailing the impact of the rising chip prices in terms that his Middle Ages thinking can understand — "Merchants in Taiwan raise prices because they're the only ones with the supplies, but craftsmen in Burma could be convinced to compete." Even though he can barely comprehend a telephone, Etrius' planning

skills allow him to see a broad picture, while his position lets him call upon specialists to handle the detail work of influencing such matters as he cares to change.

Many of Etrius' policies naturally reflect "typical Tremere response patterns," such as they are. The slow, methodical expansion of the clan, rather than chaotic growth, stems largely from his prudent planning. Etrius also oversees reports of thaumaturgical development and carefully selects promising students or paths for wider exposure to the clan, while simultaneously assigning dissidents to dangerous duty. Etrius advocates the complete understanding of any special undertaking before proceeding to the next step. Although this sometimes leaves the Tremere behind the curve of rapidly advancing technology, it also means that his policies and programs almost always work, based as they are on proven techniques.

As caretaker to the physical Tremere corpse and spiritual Tremere clan, Etrius occupies perhaps the greatest niche of personal responsibility known to any Kindred less than the Antediluvians. The entire Council of Seven weighs its responses by his shifts in mood; the merest expression from Etrius can elevate a promising neonate or doom a hapless scapegoat. More and more, Etrius finds himself thrust into direct action, when before he would be content to wait and watch from behind the scenes. Worse still, he finds himself reacting to the pace of the modern world, his defensive posture unable to keep up with rapid change, and thus forcing him into greater reliance on neonate Kindred familiar with the technological world. Having long since eroded his Humanity away in favor of pragmatism, Etrius becomes increasingly short-tempered and desperate. To a radically innovative Tremere, he could be a formidable patron, but failure... best not to contemplate the consequences.

GORATRIX THE BETRAYER

Counterpoint to Etrius, Goratrix stood at Tremere's side as the once-mortal wizards sold their souls into cursed undeath. Credited with the development of the formula that turned Tremere into a vampire — supposedly gleaned from experimentation upon several Tzimisce subjects — Goratrix showed ambition, determination and magical acumen matching that of Tremere himself. It was through Goratrix's urgings that Tremere accepted the hellish potion, and at Goratrix's subtle cajoling that Tremere turned the rest of his followers into the Damned. Whenever Etrius urged caution, Goratrix advised action. Their oppositions served as monuments for Tremere's path to immortality.

As the Tremere slowly spread their curse among select mortal magicians of their kind, Goratrix's research paved the way for Tremere to hunt down other Kindred for their power. Etrius codified thaumaturgical principles with Tremere, but Goratrix field-tested them; every time a new innovation came to the fore, Goratrix was ready to risk himself in pursuit of the clan's advancement. He experimented on captured Cainites to arrive at the solution of vampirism as a means to immortality; he sacrificed his apprentices to the undead and

volunteered to partake of the potion first; he urged decisive action to cement the clan by devouring one of the Methuselahs or Antediluvians. Goratrix headed such research and traveled often to personally undertake discovery in remote chantries, to convert other mortals to the clan and to war against the hostile vampires of Eastern Europe.

Although considered a loyal son then, Goratrix's ambitions overtook him. Perhaps jealous of Tremere's power at the head of the clan or aggrieved with Etrius' patient, steady nature. Goratrix turned traitor during the Anarch Revolt. Under his tutelage, young Tremere renegades broke away to form "House Goratrix," and became the Tremere *antitribu* of the Sabbat. For centuries Goratrix and his followers remained a thorn in the side of the main Tremere clan. The Tremere *antitribu* denounced Tremere himself, and devoted themselves to the principles of freedom espoused by the nascent Sabbat. Some rebelled against the rigid hierarchy of the Dark Ages Tremere, while others simply saw in Goratrix a more charismatic leader or a chance at personal advancement in a sect that denounced the manipulations of elders.

Recently, Goratrix and his heretical house met in Mexico City, there to perform some great ritual. All were destroyed; it is thought that Goratrix, too, met his end, but thousand-year-old vampires have a disturbing tendency to survive such conflagrations. (See the Tremere *antitribu* in Chapter Two and Transylvania Chronicles IV.)

AISLING STURBRIDGE, HIGH REGENT OF THE FIVE BOROUGHS

When Tremere look for an example of the "perfect career," they point to Aisling Sturbridge. This potent thaumaturge rose to her position meteorically and supported Tremere and Camarilla interests while simultaneously putting her unique stamp on problem-solving. Aisling operated for perhaps a century as a free agent before settling in New York, and then replacing the former regent after the Sabbat fed him to the fish of Sheepshead Bay.

When the Camarilla finally made its move to expand into New York, Aisling led Tremere operations from a heavily defended chantry. As a wartime leader, she was given a great deal of leeway in her operations, which allowed her to select her own help and tactics. A few commentators have noted wryly that such a post seemed like banishment at the time — shoved into the unnoticed ghetto of a wartime crisis where destruction was a likely outcome — but Aisling deftly turned matters around. Her own thaumaturgical prowess allowed her to construct potent magical defenses and misdirections for her chantry, and the lenience of the hierarchy in wartime let her set more liberal policy. Because her work showed results — experience in Eastern Europe left her familiar with the Tzimisce, and she methodically rooted out and countered Sabbat influence in the city — Aisling not only kept her posting, but became the recipient of many accolades when the Camarilla finally became the dominant sect in New York.

As a child of the turn of the century, Aisling evades many of the traps of old Tremere thinking. She doesn't hesitate to make alliances outside the clan, she values skills besides Thaumaturgy, and she deals evenly and fairly with people on the expectation that they'll give her the same consideration in the future. While other regents look to "the good of the clan," Aisling looks to what can solve her immediate problems, even if it means making a few waves among the hierarchy. She'll promote for talent, not nepotism, and she will mark another Tremere as someone with whom she and her chantry won't deal if the individual proves treacherous or duplicitous to her. Thus, she manages to remain a dynamic force for Tremere advancement while still upholding the most important rules; some circles wonder privately if she might not have a lordship over much of the northeast approaching.

See *Children of the Night* for more detailed information about Aisling Sturbridge.



JOSEPH RAVENFEATHER, THE ANARCH REGENT

Background: Most Camarilla Licks would consider "anarch Tremere" a contradiction in terms; Tremere neonates would certainly think the same of "anarch regent." Yet Joseph Ravenfeather fits those descriptions and thus manages to showcase the clan's flexibility in accomplishing its aims.

Originally from the Viejas reservation in southern California, Joseph made a name for himself through his dedicated study of shamanic practices. From spirit-talking to trances, he rigorously delved into the old mystic practices that had all but fallen from favor in the modern nights. Much to his surprise, he found that he sometimes did have visions or hear voices. Whether they were simply hallucinations or actual spirits, none could say; Joseph was far from a skilled occultist. He had drive and raw talent, though, which were noticed by the people who pay attention to such things.

THE REST OF THE COUNCIL

Although some of the Council of Seven have appeared in other titles, they are deliberately left unnamed here. A storyteller who wants to tell the tale of *Transylvania Chronicles* or other published materials can easily use such personages as they appear there; someone telling a more individualized story can just as easily create other personalities to suit their needs for her own chronicle. Indeed, the council's membership is hardly a concern for most neonates, who have probably never heard of them in any but the vaguest collective terms and would be terrified to ever meet such a creature. Should the Council of Seven make any sort of appearance in a chronicle of modern neonates, the shadowy figures directing Tremere across entire continents would barely be comprehensible, their plans too wide-ranging and their influence too widespread.

In a story for elders, the councilors are consummate power brokers, vampires who have not only survived the transition from usurper magicians to undead demigods, but also husbanded the smallest and arguably most reviled clan and turned its resources into a very pillar of modern Kindred society. Councilors have many-layered contingency plans and resources that can span entire nations, should the situation warrant; even elders would do best to avoid their notice entirely. Nor can other Tremere be assured immunity to the attentions of the council. If a matter is grave enough to warrant council attention, then some Tremere somewhere must take the blame for it.

The daring group that actually wants to square off against the council, or fight to place one of their number in its ranks, has its work cut out for it indeed. Councilors have very potent positions, and they are surpassingly active for Kindred of their age and generation. In effect, they have all the skill and resourcefulness required to survive for the better part of a millennium against pogroms designed to wipe out their whole clan, while simultaneously pitting agents outside their structure against their internal dupes, all well enough to counter the plots of Kindred who'd existed far longer than they. A councilor will likely work through confederates and double-blinds to betray, expose and overextend a competitor's resources, and would have substantial thaumaturgical might if by some chance a physical encounter should occur (although this is almost an impossibility, given the councilors' skill at deception and distaste for the risks of personal combat). Furthermore, a councilor can easily offer incentives up to and including hidden diablerie, minor thaumaturgical instruction or a few magical trinkets in order to buy the loyalty of adversaries. Worse still, every councilor can count at least one or two other members of the council itself as allies (even if only by calling in boons); a troupe would effectively face a coterie of elders headed by a thousand-year-old fourth or fifth-generation Tremere strategic genius. But for those with a vendetta, a thirst for penultimate power or a consuming need for the ultimate thrill, the Council of Seven may present a legitimate target.

As a Tremere, Joseph had some difficulty adapting to undead existence. His holistic philosophy conflicted heavily with Kindred practicalities. Eventually Joseph adapted, as strong-willed individuals do, and modified his beliefs to accommodate his condition. Many rites from his Cherokee heritage called upon physical endurance or hallucinatory experiences, which remain viable for a Kindred, with some alterations — peyote-addled vessels and scarification by moonlight. During his early years as a Kindred, he focused heavily upon reconciling spirituality with undeath. This attention helped him in the development not only of thaumaturgical skills, including the rare powers of Spirit Manipulation, but also in the exploration of his own morality.

Conceding the value of the Tremere pyramid, Ravenfeather took up residence in nearby San Diego. Because he dashed so many stereotypes others harbored regarding the Tremere — sociable, friendly, from a minority group and highly spiritual — he managed to shatter the usual anarch disdain for the clan. Indeed, most neonates who knew of his lineage and assumed that all Tremere were “spooky wizards” didn't know what to make of him; he would quickly establish his own role as a mentor and father figure. Before long, Ravenfeather was a known (though not especially trusted) figure in San Diego's anarch scene. He even established his own

chantry after informing Tremere superiors of his intent, and solidly placed a minor Tremere influence in the area.

When Tara claimed the barony and later principedom of San Diego, Joseph didn't hesitate in supporting her bid. Some anarchists considered him a sell-out, but for Joseph it was a matter of practicality. He'd funneled information about the anarchists back to the Tremere for several years; now he would function in a more formal Camarilla capacity. Still, Joseph let it be known among the locals that he didn't intend to enforce Camarilla policy. Rather, he continued to project a *laissez-faire* attitude toward the anarchists, while he paid verbal support to Tara's policies. End result: Tara garnered Tremere aid when necessary, while the anarchists felt that they had a sympathetic ear in the Camarilla structure.

Joseph now continues to head the San Diego chantry, recognized as a regent. He oversees three apprentices of varying skills and degrees of anarch tendency. Most of his current work centers on researching the Cathayans — with his knowledge of spirits, Joseph has uncovered some disturbing allies that the Eastern Kindred brought with them. For now, his chantry remains an island of Tremere stability in the otherwise rapidly churning West Coast chaos.

Image: Ravenfeather does his best to set others at ease with casual dress. That often means blue jeans, loafers and a button-down shirt. However, he also affects trappings and jewelry reflecting his Native American heritage, usually in the form of small turquoise necklaces or a tastefully placed feather bundle. He's neither ostentatious nor ridiculously overbearing in his cultural sensibilities.

With well-trimmed brown hair, a neat goatee and a handsome face, Joseph often puts people at ease. He smiles readily and carries himself with confidence, which makes him both attractive and authoritative. To younger Cainites, he often seems fatherly; with peers, wise and knowledgeable; to elders, useful and supportive.

Roleplaying Hints: You're cunning, but not specifically nasty. Rather, you are congenial because there's no point in alienating people. You are eminently comfortable with yourself and your skills, and you let it show. You're also matter-of-fact and straightforward; you tend toward honesty and don't boast about your capabilities, but you're not above a little misleading information when the situation calls for it. Mostly, you spread an infectious cheerfulness that puts others at ease with you.

Sire: Korbin Salamanca

Nature: Conniver

Demeanor: Celebrant

Generation: 9th

Embrace: 1944

Apparent Age: Early 30s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 4, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 2, Empathy 3, Expression 3, Intimidation 1, Leadership 4, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Animal Ken 1, Drive 1, Etiquette 3, Melee 1, Survival 2

Knowledges: Academics 2, Linguistics 3 (Cherokee, Hopi, Latin, Spanish), Occult (Southwest medicine) 4, Politics 2

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Dominate 1, Thaumaturgy 5

Thaumaturgical Paths: Path of Blood 5, Spirit Manipulation 3, Weather Control 2, Lure of Flames 1

Thaumaturgical Rituals: Deflection of Wooden Doom, Donning the Mask of Shadows, Flesh of Fiery Touch, Splinter Servant, Ward versus Spirits

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 1, Resources 4, Retainers 1

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 2, Courage 4

Morality: Humanity 6

Willpower: 7

MASIKA ST. JOHN, THE CAMNET INNOVATOR

Background: Increasingly modernized apprentices have grown estranged from the elders, who often don't comprehend the tools that a young neonate takes for granted. Nearly every Kindred Embraced in the last decade knows about computers, uses telephones and has (or had) a driver's license or I.D. card. For elders who simply can't keep up, this leads to frustration, suppressed fear of the power that neonates have due to these



tools and a concomitant backlash. For their part, neonates who chafe at the oppressiveness of ages-old Camarilla structure find outlets by playing up their own modern talents to establish niches in areas that elders would never think to exploit, like Internet communications, space research or high-end biotech. Masika was just another one of the disenfranchised few, an embittered apprentice in Madagascar with limited opportunities for advancement, a background in computer science instruction and a regent who despised her easy ability with modern technology yet also required her assistance to remain at pace with the rest of the world.

Matters changed abruptly in 1998, when Masika disseminated some theories to a few apprentices who communicated via an Internet backbone that she'd established. Using the principles of Contagion and Identity, Masika theorized that a computer operated as a mental extension of the user, a tool that expanded mental properties, and thus was susceptible to thaumaturgical manipulation. In only a few months, she'd worked out the rudiments of the new Path of Technomancy, and outlined the principles to several other apprentices before her regent (and theirs) discovered her actions.

At first, Masika's regent was tempted to do away with the young rebel, but he recognized that her path could have potential and waited to see how the pontifices and councilors would react. Much to the surprise of conservative Tremere elements, the path was entered into files in *Fortschritt* and approved as a useful tool, though individual lords or regents still sometimes frowned upon and forbade this extension of Thaumaturgy into areas they couldn't comprehend. Masika became something of a celebrity among other apprentices; she'd managed to develop a completely new path in a direction different from any other line of research, a feat that hadn't been done by an apprentice in a century. She was duly promoted within the hierarchy, but her regent continues to watch carefully for signs of rebelliousness — what he can't understand, he fears, and

Masika now has allies and sycophants who think that her innovation will quickly reap her more position and standing.

For her part, Masika continues to organize other young Kindred on the Internet, chatting with Tremere apprentices and swapping MP3s as often as thaumaturgical rituals. She's found herself thrust into the limelight, and many elders use her as a focal point for blame or guilt that they feel over their inability to adapt to the modern world — she's a figurehead of all the things that modern neonates can do but that elders don't understand. This also means that she can't be easily dismissed. Only now is she beginning to realize that this gives her a sort of clout, and in the next few years Masika may seek additional allies to form a more radical faction pressing for advancement of neonates like herself. Then again, she may decide that bucking the hierarchy is impossible and settle into a more conservative image. (In fact, the players' characters could be involved in such deliberations, and Masika could be a useful contact but also a magnet for trouble from elders.)

Thaumaturgical innovators in the Tremere clan note that the development of new forms of Thaumaturgy often requires years, if not decades, of trial and development. Masika may simply be naturally talented, but conspiratorially minded Kindred argue that perhaps her discovery was helped along by some outside influence, perhaps even one of which she was unaware. Certainly her regent didn't have the skills to develop Technomancy, but perhaps some Methuselah catalyzed her own computer skills with his own thaumaturgical knowledge — or maybe she really is that talented.

Image: Masika realizes that she must maintain a respectable image among the more traditional Tremere, so she takes pains to dress conservatively — charcoal suit, hair pulled into a bun and no makeup. When relaxing with other modern

neonates or by herself, though, she favors loose blue jeans and brightly striped sweaters.

Roleplaying Hints: Mostly, you just want to keep doing the same things you've always done: teach evening classes in computer science, surf the 'Net, chat up weird ideas, maintain a comfortable existence. Now you're at the center of attention, and you're not sure how to handle it. Some other Kindred have decided to "use" you, but you aren't going to make any revolutionary speeches on someone else's behalf, nor do you intend to decry your own innovations.

Sire: Anton Devereaux

Nature: Innovator

Demeanor: Traditionalist

Generation: 13th

Embrace: 1985

Apparent Age: Late 20s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 1

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 1, Empathy 3, Expression 4, Instruction 2, Intimidation 1, Leadership 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Crafts 3, Drive 2, Etiquette 2

Knowledges: Academics 3, Computer (programming) 5, Occult (technomancy) 4, Science (conduction) 4

Disciplines: Auspex 1, Dominate 1, Thaumaturgy 5

Thaumaturgy Paths: Path of Blood 5, Path of Technomancy 5

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 4, Resources 4, Retainers 1

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 4, Courage 3

Morality: Humanity 7

Willpower: 4



TREMERE™

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 :

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