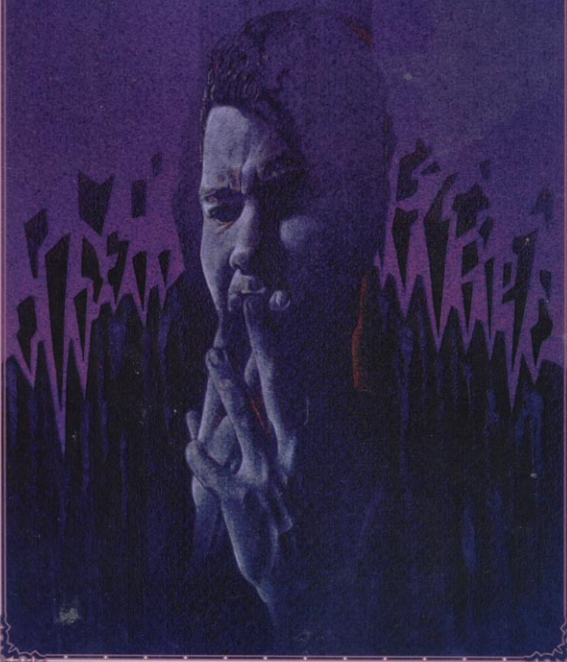


# ELYSIUM



A Story Supplement for **VAMPIRE: The Masquerade™**



# ELYSIUM

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... and as the nights stretch on into weeks and the weeks to years and the years to decades and the decades to centuries, a bitterness of the soul steals over me — a bitterness so vast in size and moving at so glacial a pace that I cannot ever see it in the present. Only in moments of reflection on my past can I see the damage done — the glacier's monstrous wake, where it has hollowed out my once-indomitable spirit. Only in moments of contemplation upon my future can I see the remaining fragments of the shimmering jewel that was once my soul. I see the little humanity left to me, and await the day when it too shall be ground down by the millstone of the passage of time.

I did not request this Existence Never-Ending. I know of none who did, save the fabled Romanian Prince Vlad, Son of the Dragon, Lord of the Inconnu. I did not ask for an existence that makes a mockery of all I once loved and all I once dreamed of achieving. I did not ask to see all that I loved perish in the smoldering embers of inevitability. I did not ask to see the tides of time wash away even the greatest accomplishments of my day. I did not ask to see my world plunged into the furnace of scalding change, in which all I knew was rendered down into nothing and replaced with people so strange and devices so odd and customs so queer I must forever struggle to understand the eccentric new manners, miraculous new machinery and impenetrable new modes of speech. I can scarcely believe this is the same Earth on which I was born. I cannot go to my old haunts, see my old comrades and woo my old loves. They are no more. I cannot rove over the countryside for days and never see another soul. I did not ask for all this, and yet, here it is. I did not ask for an eternity of enlarging decay and contracting joy. And here I am, a puzzled old, tired old, empty old man, wondering where his world went, where his loves went, where his life went.

The challenges before me seem insurmountable. The resources at my command seem scant. The hope and zeal that blazed in my youth are cold ash in my age, and I now fear their flame. I am locked in a constricted role, in which I have few choices. So I act as I deem fit, within the confines of my station, knowing few of my enemies and critics would or could do differently in my stead. And yet with each new act, with each new punishment of an anarchy, with each new repelling of Sabbat incursion, with each new predation on mortal society and vice, I die by an iota. But all other options — the compromise of the Camarilla, the breach of the Masquerade — are invitations to chaos. The only other choice is death by degrees, death from a life I neither want nor want to lose.

As my aged blood curdles, less and less stirs it to passion. I could administer my holdings as dispassionately as an automaton. Where once the minutest perceived slight would inflame my passions, now only the gravest assault stirs a reaction; I must force myself to respond to any less. I often know the indignation of wounded

pride, but seldom pure anger over injustices done. Though my mind is often clouded by the ravages of the Curse of Caine, I can see clearly one part of my innermost self: my clotted blood stirs only when confronted by a direct challenge to my vanity. Incursions upon my holdings do not provoke me the way a contemptuous anarch does. Loss of a dozen ghouls to lupine savagery stirs in me all the passion of a clerk summing his books; replacements must be made. But should a ghoul question my orders, I know the fury of the lion. In moments of reflection afterward, I savor the agreeable aftereffects of my outrage. And should I thoroughly humiliate a worthy opponent in a manner that does not create a cycle of destructive reprisal, and should I surge in glory before the court, then and only then do I know rapture. The thrill is akin to the that of the first time I knew the engorgement of fresh blood, perhaps surpassing it. Though I despise and dread the endless skirmishes of words fought in the prince's court, in the halls of Elysium, and on the streets of the city, I savor them with a perversity known only to the powerful and the damned.

I am lonely, but I am mighty. I will do all I can to stir this wicked mockery of my once-perfect human body, this carcass of dead flesh, this unhappy blood-sponge prison. If that requires that I fire a volley of hateful, hurtful, damaging words upon my enemies in court, so be it. If that requires that I arbitrarily crush the ambitions of a clever and resourceful anarch, so be it. If that requires that I capriciously divert the course of joyful mortal aspiration, so be it. So the anarchists think I live to make their lives miserable. Would they not be surprised beyond measure to learn that they are right!

Simply writing these words fills me with a quaking terror, the passing of which leaves me strangely indigorated. Though I would never speak with such painful, dangerous candor, it entidens me to see it in the darkling mirror of my soul, and to admit it to myself in the full light of day—the light that all my Kind shun. If you succeed in raising my anger, you will forgive me if I do not convey my secret thanks while I skin you alive. And if you succeed in arousing my awesome **KAREED**, know, in your final moments of unendurable agony, that I love you with all my soul.

—Redondo de Vasquez,

Childe of Ishaq ibn Ibrahim,  
Grandchilde of Fontius,  
Great-Grandchilde of Arikel,  
Great-Great-Grandchilde of Enosh,  
Great-Great-Great-Grandchilde of Caine



# Introduction

*Power is the great aphrodisiac.*

— Henry Kissinger, January 19, 1971

**Elysium:** *The Elder Wars* brings you into the cloying, rarefied air inhabited only by the elders of the Camarilla. The secrets of these mysterious, frightening, volatile creatures are here for Storytellers to use to spice up their games and for players to use in chronicles where their characters are the elders.

This book brings you the opportunity for some advanced storytelling. Playing an elder is far more challenging than playing an anarch or ancilla. It requires a strong knowledge of the World of Darkness and a good deal of preparation, but the rewards are great. The might of the most powerful vampires is in your hands.

## How to Use this Book

This book is designed for use by both players and Storytellers. It penetrates the cloistered chambers of the elders and provides useful hooks for fleshing out those characters and making them more menacing. Creating conflicts between elders gives the players more to do and gives them more points of connection to the world. The rules given here will also make it easier to keep track of the details in administering an elder's holdings.

### Imagery

Elders embody massive contradictions. Though they are among the oldest sentient creatures on the planet, they often look younger than the anarchs they fight, sometimes appearing no older than children. The mortal world, in which old men hold the bulk of temporal power, gets turned on its head. This creates an incongruous image when a gang of 30- or 40-year-old Caitiff or anarchs are called before a prince who appears 20-something but is actually 400 years old. Some elders look old and wizened, but they are an exception.

However, vampires can start to look "older" over time. Though Kindred do not age, some begin to weaken and slow down under the great weight of years and thickening blood. A slowness of movement and speech and a dullness of eye or mind creates an aura of age in the body of the youth.

### Theme

The theme is tainted authority and spoiled love. While human elders stand for continuity of leadership and the transmission of community values to a new generation, vampire elders seek to pervert that equation. Since they seldom step down and cannot lose power through a natural death, they stand as an undying obstruction to the ascent of new generations. To continue their unholy grasp on the levers of control, they must eternally frustrate the ambitions of their progeny.

Kindred elders hold onto power for power's sake, even when their communities begin to decay as a result. This reflects the very worst in human political systems, which are often loath to allow new generations a place at the table. Whenever an entrenched ruling class uses its influence to cling to power, political rot sets in.

For example, the autocratic regime of the People's Republic of China is composed exclusively of aged men who thwart any attempts at power-sharing with new generations of leaders. This gerontocracy has little connection to the needs of the nation. They resist much-needed reforms and are reduced to keeping order by slaughtering dissenters. It is an instructive lesson for Storytellers, since the Beijing regime is a fine example of the paranoia, isolation, arrogance and desparation that mark vampire elders.

Even democracies are not immune to fears of passing authority to a new generation. Politicians who came of age during World War II kept a lock on the U.S. presidency for an unprecedented two generations because many voters were loath to allow younger leaders to take over the White House from World War II era leaders. This generational imbalance created a tilt toward autocratic, imperial administrations that were remote from those they governed.

A society that does not routinely refresh its leadership is a society doomed to stagnation and repression. This is made especially clear in the vampire Elysium.

Worse than political decay is the inner damage done when the old withhold the birthright of the young. Parents who fear their own aging often subvert the attempts of their children to fly free, poisoning the love and trust between generations. The young become either weak-willed or wildly rebellious, while reducing the elders to stingy, fearful wrecks, prisoners of the very power to which they desperately cling.

Human parents have an overwhelming impulse to give their lives for their children. Many act without hesitation, abandoning caution and self-protection to protect their young at the first sign of danger. But elder Kindred are very different. The selfless, all-encompassing love of a mortal parent for a child is lost on the immortal vampires. Like congressmen assured of reelection, they paradoxically become more cautious, not more courageous. Elders take fewer chances, and not many would risk their immortal necks to save the skin of their progeny.

When the flow of life and love ceases to move forward through time and through generations, decay sets in. The elders are rotting in their own accumulated power, but are terrified of letting go or doing anything else. They suffer from overaccumulation. The ancillae suffer from lack. And so it goes.

By pouring vast amounts of energy into its internecine struggle, the vampiric family has little left for the larger battle against outside enemies. To break this soul-decaying deadlock, elders attempt to betray their ambitious young before the young can topple them through betrayal. Treachery is the tragic condition of the Kindred community, and anarchs only see it getting worse.

## Mood

The mood in the elegant marble halls of Elysium is dignified desperation and stifled paranoia. The elders have had centuries to master the art of insincerity, and they have reached levels of perfection rarely glimpsed among mortals. They are smiling on the outside, but inside they are screaming, and Elysium reverberates with the piercing, silent echoes. The elders have compromised their own integrity to such a profound degree that many of them have lost their inner stability and have fragmented their sense of self. This profound disconnection from the core of existence is a painful experience for sentient beings. Dangerously unbalanced, the elders lash out from a lonely anger only briefly seen by the rest of us in our most desperate moments. When confronted by their own contradictions and transgressions, their first impulse is to destroy.

## References

Anything by George Bernard Shaw (*Man and Superman*, *The Devil's Disciple*, *Major Barbara*), anything by Voltaire (*Candide*), Shakespeare's tragedies (*Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar*, *King Lear*), classics like George Eliot's *Silas Marner* and movies from *Wall Street* to *Scenes from the Class Struggle in Beverly Hills*.

## Mood Music

Music has great power to stir the emotions during a game. It can add excitement, tension and a real sense of creeping dread. It is hard to use other art forms to convey age and mood in a game, but music works wonders. The elitist elders keep Elysium stocked with great art of the centuries, which they hold with a miser's grasp, seeking to possess rather than enjoy it. Thus, haunting melodies often sound through the halls, played by Dominated mortal musicians. If you do not currently use music, experiment with adding it to the background for added dimensions of play.

Elders are partial to music that neonates consider stuffy, pompous and old. Operas and symphonies by Handel, Wagner and Elgar predominate, though Mozart and Bach are also well represented. Try Orf's *Carmine Burana* for wild power and grandeur. Moody, mysterious themes by Debussy, Ravel, Mussorgsky and Mahler play when the elders are feeling grim and self-pitying. Try Samuel Barber's *Adagio for Strings*. Storytellers can play almost any classical music to set a mood, but these examples will yield special results.

Many elders are romantics at heart, superstitious refugees from a Byronic era who are forced to live in an age of cold science. As a result, many turn to exquisitely beautiful, passionate music for comfort and solace. It should come as a shock to enter the inner sanctum a venomous, corrupt old vampire and hear the haunting music of Beethoven or Brahms. Syrupy tunes like Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini* or Pachelbel's "Canon" will sound unnerving in a Ventrue boardroom and frightening in a Nosferatu sewer. The only music to avoid is selections that are light, airy



and sprightly in nature. Only Malkavians and some Toreador are attracted to such styles. The rest of the elders find it unbearable to be so reminded of the lightness of being that is forever denied to their undying spirits.

Storytellers can also assign special "theme songs" to key elders. For example, a certain elder may always have Grieg's "Hall of the Mountain King" playing whenever the characters visit. Once the players have linked the music and the elder, playing that tune when he's not around can unnerve them by making his invisible presence felt.

Many elders only enjoy music that was popular during their lifetime. One subtle way to show differences in age is to play themes specifically keyed to the elder's birth era. Western civilization has very little surviving music from before the Middle Ages, so the oldest vampires may prefer Asian or Indian compositions, which significantly predate those of the West.

Elders born in pre-Christian Europe may favor neopagan artists like Loreena McKennitt. European vampires born during the early Christian era and the Middle Ages may favor medieval music, like plainsong and Gregorian chants. These have become very popular recently and are quite easy to find. They instantly create an eerie, otherworldly mood. Minstrel ballads can also give the impression of antiquity.

Elders born in Europe between 1450 and 1600 favor Renaissance music, like that of des Prez and Palestrina. Protestants may favor Luther's chorales, while Catholics may prefer hymns. To evoke the ornate quality of the 1600-1750 Baroque

era, try Handel, Monteverdi, harpsichord music by Scarlatti and anything by the Baroque master, Bach. Those who date from between 1750 and 1820 will favor Classical music by Haydn and Mozart, as well as Beethoven's early works. Many of the vampires born in the Romantic era of 1820 to 1910 are unabashed in their love of the explosion of music created by Brahms, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Liszt, Wagner, Verdi and Beethoven. This is the last musical period in which true elders were born. Most born after that time are Pretenders (see Chapter Four) who deliberately surround themselves with the air of antiquity.

Some elders make a point of changing with the times. Brujah are intent on staying not only current in contemporary tastes, but ahead of the curve. They will always try to play cutting-edge music that is cacophonous and popular with disaffected youth. However, many of them also get stuck in the past, favoring revolutionary music of earlier eras. A Brujah elder who remained active in the early 20th century may secretly favor atonal compositions by Schoenberg or Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, which caused riots during its premiere but which to many modern ears is indistinguishable from much older classical works.

Gangrel often disdain "snob" music, and prefer more rustic melodies played on acoustic instruments, or jazz and blues. Tremere like clean, technical precision and embrace electronic music. Malkavians' musical tastes are at best eclectic and at worst disorienting. Their elders are likely to play old favorites by Frank Zappa, high-speed Schubert and sea chanteys, often at the same time.

# Chapter One: Power Structures

*The first time a man hurled a curse instead of a stone  
was the start of civilization.*

— Sigmund Freud, *Collected Works*

Though elders are a jaded, world-weary lot, they are impressed by one thing: the unholy power that courses through their aged veins. They are always mindful of the fact that if the laws that hold together the fragile truce of the Camarilla were to shatter, they would be plunged into chaos that could destroy them all.

## The Deadly Game

*Power, like a desolating pestilence,  
Pollutes whate'er it touches; and obedience,  
Bane of all genius, virtue, freedom, truth,  
Makes slaves of men, and of the human frame  
A mechanized automaton.*

— Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Queen Mab*

This vision of “mutually assured destruction” haunts all elders and drives them to find solutions to their problems. That often reduces violence. However, they are not looking for answers that are violence-free so much as reprisal-free. Direct attacks usually breed direct responses, so elders plot, scheme and maneuver within the restrictive framework of the Masquerade. They focus on thwarting plans and crushing pawns while always maintaining a thin crust of civility over the seething hatred.

This gives the impression that elders are absorbed with playing capricious games. And in many ways, they are. But the games are deadly serious, and have lethal consequences. Many younger Kindred, who bear their brunt, believe that the elders extract perverse enjoyment from their suffering and from the suffering of humans. And there is truth in this as well. But it is a simplistic explanation of a complex and frightfully misunderstood problem.

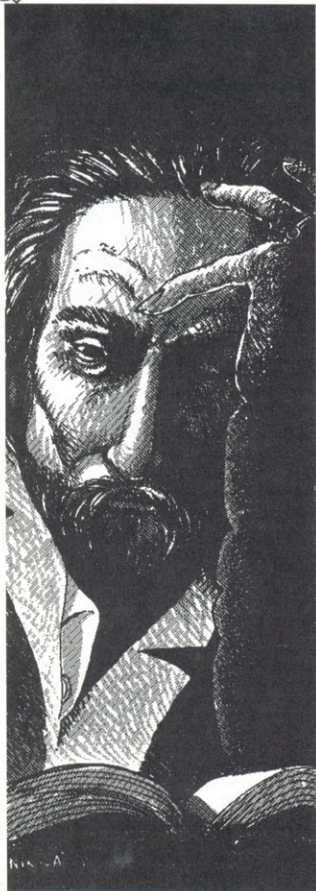
The real explanation is a combination of sadism, fear and political survival.

### Sadism: Relishing Suffering

To be an elder is to be strapped onto a roller coaster that never stops and continues to accelerate for all eternity. The living world seems to speed by in bursts of frenzied passions. Looking long on the exuberance of life brings only a precipitous slide into regret and dangerous self-pity. Through a peculiar combination of bitter ennui and undead malaise, elders detach from the world by imperceptible degrees.

The biological world has a built-in, organic connection to itself that manifests in higher creatures as empathy. The undead lack this connection, and must rely on intellectual sympathy to make compassionate connections. Inflicting suffering stirs the aged blood of elders only because they have,





in self-defense, grown detached from the reality of the pain felt by others. They care less, trust less and allow less of the world to be important to them. This is the beginning of the end of their Humanity, and an invitation to the Beast.

### **Fear: Clinging to the Status Quo**

This detachment also creates openings for younger vampires to take over from elders who become less interested in everyday affairs. Ambitious ancillae try to turn stewardship chores into leadership powers. The elders see this and fear their own growing irrelevancy, but usually do not wish to take on the work that would put them back in a position of direct, day-to-day importance. That would require re-engagement with the living world and its painful memories. Instead, they resort to the politics of personal destruction.

If a young, energetic Kindred embarks on a plan to reform the stale, perverse, claustrophobic, incestuous world of vampiric society, the elders conspire to bring him down. They use any and all weaponry at their disposal, and even violate their most sacred laws in the fight, so invested in the sick status quo they have preserved for centuries. They ridicule much-needed reforms in their early stages, secretly maneuver against them in advanced stages and openly oppose them in the rare case when they start to succeed. And this, too, is an opening for the Beast.

### **Political Survival: How the Dead Live On**

Elders fight change because it reveals their irrelevancy, causing them to lose power and prestige. Their greatest fear is not loss of unlife (though that also consumes them) but loss of power. Once elders have tasted true control over Kindred and kine, few can bring themselves to willingly give up even a small amount. It is very difficult for them to pass power on to their young and let them act freely. Instead, the elders try to hang on for all of their immortal years. As a result, the younger vampires are caught in a deadly vise, unable to move up and forbidden to move out.

The bitter irony is that many would prefer to rid themselves of the difficult chores and conflicts that come with power, but they are addicted to the tremendous status it confers. The absolute deference of peers and the powerless alike is a darkly seductive force that cannot be fully appreciated by one who has not felt it. Acclaim, veneration and obedience are more important than immortality to the unloved. These are pathetic, artificial substitutes for love, but in the joyless halls of Elysium, they are all most elders have.

Though not all elders are aware of their addiction to the perquisites of power, they are all acutely conscious of the humiliation that accompanies a loss of it. The more power an elder accumulates, the farther the fall and the more enemies who wish to see it. So this power becomes a prison. Elders must acquire more to preserve their station, leading to greater resistance from the young and perpetuating the cycle.

Many older humans suffer from this affliction as well, but even the most extreme cases are inevitably betrayed by their own mortality. This potent psychological clock impels all mortals to resolve crises in their lifetime. Ultimately, if the debilitation of age does not force a power shift to a new generation, the finality of death will.

But the inner voice of aged Kindred screams that they must never cut the strings — even when the relationship becomes poisonous. This partially explains the generational slaughter that bedevils the vampire community. Those most wicked of crimes mean yet more lost Humanity.

These three forces rule Elysium and create a vortex that drags elders down. They have the wolf by the ears. They cannot win and they cannot get out of the game. The only possible solution is Golconda, though many consider that enlightened state a fool's paradise and see the only end to the game in Gehenna. A significant minority of elders reject the Camarilla party line that holds Gehenna as a myth, and form secret cults (see Chapter Two).

In the meantime, elders continue an inexorable slide toward the Beast, tempered only by any good works they can possibly carry out.

## Elder Relations to Childer

*For everyone that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death.*

— King James Bible, Leviticus 20:9

The greatest war waged by the elders of the Camarilla is not with the Lupines, the anarchists or even the Sabbat. The bloodiest strife is the perpetual state of covert warfare the elders wage against their own progeny — all the Kindred who comprise the Camarilla. The elders receive the brunt of the Jihad from the Methuselahs and pass the misery on to their descendants.

Ancillæ and elders alike know that among humans, the young will replace the old, and for the old to cling to power is to injure everyone alike. But the old among the immortals need never give way to their offspring. This creates a state of eternal frustration in the young and eternal fear in the old, as the elder vampire is threatened by any sign of ambition in her childer, and the young vampire is thwarted at every turn by his sire.

To keep the young in check, the elders resort to five time-honored stratagems, set out by the 12th-century Toreador Redondo de Vasquez.



# The Five Pillars of Power

## Reward

To prevent thy Childe from gaining the Sound Footing and Reliable Resources he needs to challenge thy rule, he must be kept off balance. Confuse him.

Progeny who serve their elders with distinction must be often rewarded. Often, but not always. The Superior Elder is unpredictable in his affection and fickle in his rewards. Ever mindful of the need to dole out prizes, only intermittently, the Superior Elder ensures that his progeny never feels he actually deserves the reward. The reward must always be seen as a blessing; an example of the elder's Great Beneficence. Thus the Childe is sufficiently grateful.

But give away rewards too often, and the wretches, in their ingratitude, come to expect rewards. These Spoilt Childe believe that rewards are earned and not bestowed. They grow to control the elder through their actions. If they always know what to expect, because the elder always rewards them evenly, they can conspire to build their own empire. They gain courage to plot and scheme against their fellows, because they can rely on their elder's response. And then let an elder fail to provide the expected reward; the Spoilt Childe throws a tantrum. He is hurt, angered, and betrayed, and will strike back accordingly.

A Childe who justly feels wronged is a far more dangerous creature than one who must always seek to find new ways to

please a capricious master. Yet thou must not always withhold reward when such increase is truly deserved, for Impoverished Childer with nothing to lose and nothing to gain are more dangerous still than Spoilt Childer scorned.

But by withholding rewards betimes, and bestowing rewards betimes, the elder keeps his Childer in rein. As with his steed, the giving of the reward is the sweet Apple from the Rider's Orchard, and the withholding of the reward is the sting of the Lash of Control. The pain of it is but momentary, and when the pain has passed, the Childe is again eager to please. As long as the Apple is given betimes, she will spend her nights in constant contemplation of the manner and actions most pleasing to her master.

Between the path of the Miserly Elder and the path of the Generous Elder lies the path of the Superior Elder. It is the most difficult path, since the Miserly Elder has the joy of his undispersed wealth, and the Generous Elder has the joy of unrestrained flattery. Of these two, flattery is the more seductive.

The Superior Elder must be aloof to the flattery of his Childe. The unctuous praise of a Childe who has just partaken of a rich reward is a seductive brew. The taste of it has set the heads of many elders afloat. Beware. A head that floats is a head that sinks.

## Rivalry

A Childe is a restless, ambitious, energetic creature. If his drives are not channeled by thee, they will be channeled against thee. Harry him.

The Superior Elder does not wait for his Childe to eye his station enviously, but sets her to eye the station of her brethren. If thy favorite offend thee, reverse her station. Favor a junior for a time. The senior will seek to please thee, to return to your graces. If she has struck a secret blow against thee, she will fear thou know of it, and be chastened. The junior will seek to preserve his good fortune, and continue to please thee.

The senior will despise the junior, and seek to bring him low, while the junior works to consolidate his position against the senior. So long as thou forbid them from murder or bringing harm to thee or thy holdings, their rivalry will divert them from choosing thee as a target, and blunt their daggers. It will consume their energies and burn their surplus resources.

Be mindful of preventing this in time of Jihad. Indulge their rivalry during peace and smite one who commits an Act of Feuding in war.

## Danger

The truly ambitious Childe, who carefully conserves the rewards doled out, and squanders them not in Rivalry with his siblings, or worse, makes peace with them, is always a danger. No matter that thou believe him to be the most loyal of all Caine's progeny. He is the greatest of threats. Wound him.

Place him in the way of danger. Send him into the haven of the enemy. Send him to spy in the lair of the Lupines. The energies he is not expending in inner rivalries will be consumed in his new assignment. If he wins, his tasks grow in risk. If he fails, he cannot bring thee low.

This Childe is a chess piece of rare perfection. Do not conserve him for fear of losing a valuable knight. If he is taken from the board, thou are safer, not less safe.

## Blood Bond

A Childe who survives grave danger is the greatest of all threats. He is clever enough to flourish with capricious and intermittent reward. He is wise enough to make peace with his brethren. He is strong enough to survive the enemy. He is greater than thee. Smite him.

Take his will from him. Bind him to thee in the ritual of blood, but beware the anger of other elders, who rightly fear an army of such controlled Childer. When the need arises ensure, in full wrath born of jealousy, that he never use his greatness against thee.

## Death

If the Childe resists the bonds of blood, there is but one path open to thee. Destroy her.

If thou destroy her not, out of foolish pity or foolish pride, she will destroy thee. And if thou cannot destroy her, she deserves your blood. Surrender it, and yield to the new Superior Elder.



## Elder Relations to Other Groups

*The best Party is but a kind of Conspiracy against the rest of the Nation.*

— Lord Halifax, *Political Thoughts and Reflections*

Elders are always on strained relations with other groups inside the Camarilla and out. They work against their own as often as they work against non-Kindred. This is an explanation of those often complex relationships.

### Neonates

*Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.*

— King James Bible, Proverbs 23:13-14

The elders have limited control over the great pool of neonates, since they must work through the sires to affect them, but they have a deep interest in all childer. As more and more new vampires become anarchs, or break their ties to the Camarilla and join the Sabbat, elders fear the unraveling of their centuries-old society. Without a fresh supply of obedient, humble young to act as foot soldiers in the endless Jyhah, the elders will have to face their foes directly. After centuries of indirect conflict, open warfare is not an attractive option.

Some elders want to change the laws, allowing the creation of many new childer. They see strength of numbers as their only salvation. Cooler heads point out that as childer go over to the anarchs and Sabbat in increasing numbers, creating more vampires will make the enemy stronger.

Most elders agree on the rearing of neonates. They believe the young should be disciplined harshly and instilled with fear of anarchic violence and revulsion for Sabbat practices. This approach cuts across clan lines, and finds as many adherents in Gangrel wastelands as Ventrue boardrooms. A prominent minority of elders reject this position, believing that strict control will only give progeny more cause to rebel. They advocate improved treatment of neonates.

Most Malkavians and Nosferatu do not directly support the majority position, though other elders point to the frightening torments these clans sometimes inflict on their young as evidence of agreement. The Tremere refuse to accept any "childe-rearing" decrees from the Camarilla. They believe that their rigid hierarchical structure prevents neonates from escaping. Other clans insist that reality frequently proves this conviction wrong.

## Ancillae

*If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: Then shall his father and mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place, and they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die.*

— King James Bible, Deuteronomy 21:18-21

As the rank and file of the Camarilla, ancillae wield little power individually but more than they know when they act in concert. Clan rivalries, petty jealousies and personal tensions make any sort of ancilla organization difficult and unity very unlikely. Nevertheless, the elders intensely fear any steps in that direction with a passion, since most came to power over their own sires through secret pacts with other ancillae, and they obsessively watch for similar signs in their own progeny. Some elders have ordered their powerful progeny into battles against one another just to promote mutual hatred and head off any possible alliances.

Overall, the ancillae are loyal and reasonably straightforward. Their minimal participation in the spoils of the Kindred world and hopes of future increase keep them toeing a very narrow line. They know their conduct will determine their reward, and those who elect not to rebel are eager to please their fickle masters. However, controlling the ancillae through reward is a double-edged sword. The better the an ancilla becomes at pleasing his masters, the more rewards he gets. The more rewards he gets, the more powerful he grows. As an ancilla learns to play the Elysium game created by his sires, he becomes an ever-greater threat to individual elders.

The elders therefore make advancement within the ranks of the Camarilla torturously difficult and slow. But this builds friction, and many ancillae smolder with resentment. To prevent the situation from flaring up, some elders argue in favor of increasing every ancilla's share of Camarilla assets. They propose an end, or at least a decrease, in the rampant hoarding of vast resources. This is not a popular notion, but it gains support as the anarchs and the Sabbat attract more members.

## Anarchs

*Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat well of the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured.*

— King James Bible, Isaiah 1: 18 - 20

To the anarchs, the elders' vise-like grip on power is a monstrous perversion of the natural order, and they conduct a running guerrilla. This has cost both camps dearly but has not shaken the elders' control. Still, fear of anarch incursions has caused them to tighten their grasp and resort to abuses





that they once rejected. This could hand the anarchs the victory that has eluded their tacticians: in cracking down with excessive force, the elders risk losing the hearts and minds of all Kindred except the most tightly Blood Bound.

The tactic that works best against the anarchs is demonization and propaganda. When the elders make themselves out to be victims of anarchy, they gain an odd measure of sympathy within the Camarilla. Blaming Sabbat horrors and other unexplained World of Darkness atrocities on anarchs also weakens the appeal of the rebellious Kindred.

Surprisingly, the elders often reserve a greater personal hatred for anarchs than for the truly dangerous foes like the Sabbat. This is because the elders see the Sabbat as an enemy to be crushed, and proceed with straightforward, open warfare. They have no conflicting feelings about the servitors of the Black Hand. But the anarchs are still Camarilla, after a fashion.

To face constant attacks from their own young makes the elders feel bitter and betrayed. Some progressive thinkers want the anarchs back in the Camarilla camp and have toyed with amnesty plans and even limited power sharing, though these ideas are continually shouted down in conclave. With Sabbat advances, however, even some of the more ancient elders are beginning to consider the unthinkable: détente with the anarchs.

## The Sabbat

*Thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies.*

— King James Bible, Deuteronomy 20: 13-14

Hatred for the Sabbat is rampant within the halls of Elysium. The gains made by the Black Hand and the losses felt by the Camarilla are eternally galling. The Sabbat's great success in breaking Blood Bonds has cost the elders supporters, territory, control and, worst of all, prestige.

Some elders take pride in nothing but lording it over other Kindred. All their military victories and political stratagems are only tools to gain the reverence of the Camarilla. When the Sabbat break blood Bonds, or take over whole cities, these elders feel excruciating humiliation: to them, the resulting loss of face is nothing less than a symbolic stake in the heart. They react by hurling their resources into wave after wave of combat with the Sabbat. This lack of planning has cost the Camarilla dearly. The Sabbat have capitalized on many of these mistakes: were they better organized, they could have made even greater incursions on Camarilla territory.

Many Justicars try to take this wild overreaction into account when planning strikes against the Sabbat. They must improve on the general strategy of the Conclaves but cannot deviate too far. They take great risks in countermanding direct orders, even when they create powerfully effective strategies.

The Camarilla wants each "stolen" city back and will not hear arguments in favor of compromise or truce with their implacable foe. However, some elders have secretly begun to give up hope that they can stop the rising tide of Sabbat strength and believe that the Camarilla will end in the coming century. Though this prediction may simply be the result of an elder's morbidly obsessive imagination, more signs of its truth appear all the time.

## Lupines

*For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.*

— King James Bible, Acts: 20:29

Elders have gained significant control over younger vampires by insisting that the Lupines are a grave threat to all Kindred, and that only strong leadership can keep the werewolves from overrunning them. This is an easy case to make, since Lupine-Kindred warfare has raged for centuries.

In truth, the werewolves often adopt a live-and-let-live attitude towards vampires who successfully maintain their Humanity. But since many elders fear that age will inevitably erode their Humanity, they have reason to fear the werewolves. Though younger vampires are less at risk, they are more vulnerable to Lupine claws than the closeted elders. This is added incentive for elders to instill fear of the Lupines in their charges and claim special powers in fighting the shapechangers.

However, the elders have little defense against the greatest Lupine weapon: the spirit world. Vampires do not understand this potent resource, and many are completely unaware of it. But it frightens the elders who have been studying the ease with which Garou move into and out of physical reality. They like to keep a constant eye on Garou who enter their cities, and exploit divisions within werewolf society wherever possible. Knowledge is strength, and some elders specialize in Lupine lore.

## Mages

*Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.*

— King James Bible, Exodus 22:18

Elders are very wary of the perplexingly modern mages and their often invisible presence in Camarilla cities. Elders comprehend Thaumaturgy and trafficking with spirits, but Ascension and Spheres of magick are as alien to them as a steam engine to a medieval king.

They fear what they do not understand and would very much like to see all mages destroyed. This is a very dangerous undertaking, since mages have obliterated even old and powerful Cainites, so elders usually opt to maintain a healthy distance. They keep close tabs on mage activities and make deals where they can. As long as the practitioners of magick steer clear of an elder's interests and pay proper deference, she is content to avoid open warfare. But when she finds a mage's throat beneath her heel, she is likely to swiftly crush it.







## The Inconnu

*With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding. With him is wisdom and strength, he hath counsel and understanding ... He pouereth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty. He discovereth deep things out of the darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death. He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them.*

— King James Bible, Job 12:12-23

The elders bitterly loathe yet deeply respect the Inconnu. At the heart of their paradoxical reaction is an abiding fear of the mysterious Methuselahs. Most elders would be content to never hear from the Inconnu, but they know that is unlikely.

When the Inconnu choose to involve themselves in the affairs of the Camarilla, those rare visits are always viewed with trepidation, but great interest, by all the elders. Some go in person and some send spies, but all powerful Kindred try to monitor the situation.

Often Inconnu involvement adds measurably to peace and stability, defusing potentially explosive situations. But other times the Inconnu stir up trouble where a tense neutrality once existed. They have completely shaken up entire city structures and toppled princes. Some elders maintain that the change was necessary, but many are not convinced.

Most elders know a way to contact the Inconnu, but few take the chance. Still, some are drawn to the hidden wisdom of the progeny of the Antediluvians. They seek out the secret counsel of the Inconnu against the will of their clan and even the Inner Circle. Those who have regular contact with the Inconnu are not trusted by the elder community, even though they are accorded great status within Elysium.

Within the elders' hollow unives is the flickering need for answers to the riddles wrapped in their undying skin. Though elders seldom speak to one another of the quiet voice that calls out across that gulf of emptiness, many try to follow its dictates and learn. The Inconnu have that knowledge, or are closer than anyone to determining it, for they have found Golconda. Even the staunchest defender of the Masquerade, in her darkest moments, craves sweet release.

Many elders exhort against trafficking with the Inconnu and hold forth at great length during Conclaves about the grave dangers that follow such a visit. They claim that Golconda is a trap to ensnare idealistic Kindred who foolishly maintain hope of growth beyond vampirism and is really nothing more than a sophisticated form of the Blood Bond. The Tremere are especially vocal in this regard, but some elders maintain that the clan's leaders are actually in constant contact with the Inconnu and selfishly want to keep others from gaining their secrets.

Some virulent attacks on the Inconnu hold that the Methuselahs are thoroughly corrupted by demons and creatures from beyond the veil of death. Vampirism may be a great burden, they opine, but the curse of the demon kin is far, far worse.

## Vampire Hunters

*They hunt our steps, that we cannot go into the streets: our end is near, our days are fulfilled; for our end is come. Our persecutors are swifter than the eagles of the heaven: they pursued us upon the mountains, they laid wait for us in the wilderness.*

— King James Bible, Lamentations, 4:18-19

Elders bear a long-standing grudge against the vampire hunters. They eternally pick at the scabs of wounds inflicted on their clans by hunters of old, and brood on new revenge. Some elders who yet remember the time when they ruled over a frightened humanity resent the Masquerade and the swelling human population that made it necessary.

Forbidden by the Masquerade to punish unsuspecting humanity for past insults, many Kindred seek revenge on the only human targets available to them: the hunters. When they have turned the tables and cornered their pursuers, elders take singular delight in inflicting as much suffering as their captives can endure (or as much as the elders' diminishing Humanity can stand).

Many elders believe that they have won the fight against the hunters, and the only humans who still seek them out are considered insane by the rest of the mortal world. Still, some prudently point to the growing ranks of the Arcanum as evidence of a coming assault.

Vengeance-seeking elders want to take the fight right to the Arcanum, and sever the head while the body slumbers. But other elders refuse to sanction such a plan, saying that it could inadvertently lead these hunters straight to the halls of Elysium. Time, they reason, is on the side of the immortals, not the moribund ranks of humans. The longer short-lived mortals take to carry out their plans, the less chance they have of success.

But the vengeance-seekers insist that time only gives the hunters time to learn new skills, like magick. Elysium is filled with shadowy rumors of new computers that can vaporize opponents at a distance and give access to the innermost chamber of an elder's haven through any technological device he owns. Most of these tales are laughed off, but more and more elders take them very seriously.

For now the battles consist of low-lying skirmishes: while some elders toy with hunters for pleasure and some hunters make lucky assaults on Kindred, other humans are building their power.



NIKOLAI ILYIN

# Chapter Two: The Status Quo

*Not necessity, not desire — no, the love of power is the demon of men. Let them have everything — health, food, a place to live, entertainment — they are and remain unhappy and low-spirited: for the demon waits and waits and will be satisfied.*

— Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak*

The world of the elders is a dark and dismal place, with suspicion, betrayal and fear around every corner. Though the younger vampires envy them, many elders find their perch more precarious, their role more thankless and their world more dangerous the more power they gain. Defending their position looks easy from the outside, and compared to effecting change, it is. But it is seldom enjoyable or ennobling. The elders know this, and curse their younger kin for the luxury of their powerless idealism.

## Doom Looms: The Pathology of the Elder Psyche

By Anna Magdalena, one-time Nosferatu Justicar

*The man who never alters his opinion is like standing water, and breeds reptiles of the mind.*

— William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

We elders suffer a sleeping sickness of the soul. Our minds, which should be keen from centuries of study and contemplative reflection, are in truth pain-

fully flaccid. Mental decay has set in, fragmenting our psyches. We cannot reason as well as a neonate university student, and our vaunted intellectual powers are a whisper of what they once were. This accounts for much of our policy-making for the last few thousand years.

This wasting disease is far more than the lassitude of the ages, I fear, and cannot be accounted for by mere boredom. The few times we acknowledge such failings of our faculties, we blame this conventional scapegoat. No, I fear that our powerful crisis of the soul comes from one source: the lack of small crises of the soul. I call this syndrome Afflotoxis.

### Afflotoxis

Mortals evidence this same wasting away of the spirit. They too, show a marked tendency to cultivate closed minds and hermetically sealed souls. But they are betrayed by their own very living natures. As soon as they believe they have come to understand all there is to understand, their mortal existence proves them very wrong. A loved one dies, they fall in love, they marry, they fall out of love, they divorce, they fall in love again, they lose their employment, they gain a new position, they develop an illness, they nearly die, they

heal. All the vexations of mortal life allow, nay, demand a change in thought, attitude and belief. In short, an earthquake, flood or fire devastates the inner landscape and forces the mortal to rebuild it in a new pattern.

We Kindred are so relieved to be free of the "thousand natural shocks the flesh is heir to" that we cannot see the inestimable value in them. Painful as this process is, it keeps mortals fresh and vibrant in mind and spirit. But we are beyond such concerns. We sometimes do suffer the deaths of those we rely upon, but what Kindred can honestly say he loves another? We do not love as we once loved as mortals, though I pity those who never did love in life before the Embrace. The pain of having loved and lost the capacity for love is painful, but to never have known love before losing the capacity for it? Ah, now that is true desolation.

When those we care about leave us, we seldom feel any deep, inner loss. We feel anger over a setback, or exasperation over having to find another source for their services. But grief for the deceased? We reserve any grief we feel for ourselves, as we reexamine the chessboard to see how the loss of a valued piece affects our holdings and impacts on our master plan.

Humans who ignore all the shocks of life, and refuse to adjust their course due to an outside change, are subverted by their bodies and changed internally. After 20 years of self-deception and compromised integrity, human beings collapse under the weight of their own insupportable illusions. These "mid-life crises" are supposed to be rather beneficial to those who are not destroyed by them, as mortals rebuild their world out of far more meaningful stuff.

But vampires are immune to this evidently biological phenomenon. One cannot have a mid-life crisis when one lacks the requisite end to life. Even after 200 years of self-contradiction, we do not suffer the same internal collapse as a mortal. And so our psyches never readjust. We persist in error where humans are forced to reexamine an old hobgoblin of the mind.

Compounding Afflotaxis is our even greater fear: the fear of falling.

## Fear of Falling: The Paralysis of Power

Logic would dictate that immortals would become the greatest risk-takers of all time. With endless life and eternal physical repair virtually guaranteed, Kindred could institute great projects and sweeping reforms. But we don't. In fact, we are pathologically conservative in our undertakings, running from danger and embracing sameness like a rock in a storm.

This fear of falling comes from the paradoxical belief that having more to lose (immortality) makes risk less worthwhile, not more valuable. The stakes for just about anything become too high and so, in order to

preserve their existence, Kindred do not "live." This self-defeating circle paralyzes us, and limits risk-takers among us to the young Kindred: the ones with nothing to lose. As a result, anarchists make great gains, and the Sabbat takes our cities. They are willing to lose immortality to make change. And that courage is rewarded more than it is punished. Elders are notoriously easy to manipulate along these lines by those who know how. The anarchists do this every day when they tweak our noses without fear of reprisal.

Ironically, this pathology is not unique among vampires. It is found in mortal politicians as well. Those insured of reelection (political immortals) become less daring, less willing to take on big issues or make needed but messy changes.

## Age Torpor

As Kindred age, many spend time in torpor even when not wounded. I assert that this is entirely psychosomatic. Torpor is rooted in an emotional disconnection that becomes a physical disconnection. We lose our intangible ties to the world, and it becomes more difficult for us to maintain tangible ones. Preliminary research supports this, showing that Inconnu are often immune to age torpor. The Inconnu are also very active with the world, despite all their protestations otherwise. It is possible, however, that their lack of age torpor is entirely related to some unholy pact (if such rumors are not just good public relations).

Like any population of the aging, elders who remain focused on crucial tasks remain alert. Those who give up any sense of mission tend to degenerate psychologically and physically. Though this process takes far longer in immortal vampires, the depression and ennui can be infinitely deeper and more debilitating.

## Static Reproduction

One extension of the paralysis of power in these frightfully misunderstood elders is their fear of growing irrelevant. Just as they are in "mortal" fear of the loss of power once they have tasted it, they fear the loss of their young. They never want to cut the strings and never let go. And why not? They are immortal. They do not have to groom their young to replace them as mortals must. They rear their progeny to remain servants.

Why should they let go? Patricide. Our kind are more afflicted with it than any beings in Heaven and Earth. To avoid patricide, elders must kill their young at the height of their usefulness or let them go. Yet childer who are released become dangerous again, because they become rivals. Again, the elders are damned either way they turn.

Is anyone surprised that they breed serpents of the mind? I am not.

## Voluntary Torpor

While most vampires despise such inactivity and long only to act once more, others desire nothing more. Either they seek to defeat some enemy by escaping into sleep, or they have tired of the constant pressure of hunting or else their night-to-night existence has just become too much. These vampires can voluntarily enter torpor or extend one they were forced into.

A vampire enters this form of torpor by making a Willpower roll (difficulty of the number of Blood Points the character has + 2; maximum difficulty of 10). Once she succeeds, she finds herself in a dream-like state where she experiences both the real world and that of her dreams, all while she lies immobile.

Each night that passes costs a Blood Point, and when the vampire has no vitae left she completely enters torpor. Vampires who have no blood in them when they begin this process find it very easy to enter torpor, though they cannot do so if they have blood applied to Physical Attributes.

Waking from this state either requires a supreme exertion of will as represented by a Willpower roll (difficulty of 10) or a point of blood. In any case, the character awakes ravenously hungry and will care about nothing except for feeding until she is sated. Those who use Earth Meld before going into such a torpor will often feed first on the creatures of the earth before rising from the grave.

## History

*Age and treachery will overcome youth and skill.*

— Elder proverb

Elders have gained their great advantages due principally to one factor: time. They literally have history on their sides. Their mortal enemies age and die. Causes lose momentum as passionate leaders fade and disappear. New generations are easily seduced by cheap trinkets and minor concessions.

But wealth creates wealth; control creates more opportunities for control; and large concentrations of Thaumaturgical power breed yet larger ones. And so the elders have all the time in the world to take what their skill, cunning and merit cannot attain.

## Human Resistance

From the earliest days, when the Childer of Caine took over the first mortal cities, humans were a restless, vibrant people churning with new ideas. They burned brightly and then burned out. A charismatic leader could rally the people to utterly depose the vampires, and even the most powerful Kindred were forced to flee for their lives.

Maintaining that level of cohesiveness proved a greater task than even the greatest leader could manage. Some saw their effectiveness fade as their health waned, and they cried



bitter tears and cursed the cruel fates when the same monsters they once deposed crept back into power. Many did not live to see the change, but their heirs despaired as the vampires mocked the accomplishments of the leaders, saying that all human endeavor is destined for dust, and only evil lives forever.

But humanity had special assistance against this seemingly unstoppable blight. Special helpers abounded in the world, from mages to lupines to spirits to faeries. Supernatural creatures set their sights on the rising and advancing of mankind's collective being.

## Mage Resistance

Mages fight to Awaken humanity, trying to help it throw off shackles imposed by the reality-fixing Technocracy. This has helped keep humans from falling too far under the sway of the vampires. For all their power, Kindred elders are but bit players in this war. However, their pathological obsession with maintaining the status quo and preventing a shift in any balance of power causes them to do the work of the Technocracy. In freeing humans to prepare them for Awakening, mages often disrupt the carefully laid plans of the elders and find themselves up against immortal anger.

## Lupine Resistance

More potent and direct challenges to elder authority come from Lupines. The nature-worshipping shapechangers loathe the vampires, whom they consider agents of the most infernal pits. They do not accept the vampires' denial that

they serve the Wyrms. Elders claim they are being unfairly singled out because the Lupines' true enemies are subterranean and almost impossible to find, whereas Kindred can be found in any city. The berserker werewolves have dealt devastating blows to vampire society, and many elders fear them more than any other foe.

However, the real damage has been at the hands of a fanatic sect of werewolf pacifists called the Children of Gaia. These paradoxically warlike activists are charismatic figures who try to protect human leaders from Kindred subversion. They have shown a frightening ability to make a concentrated push into an area, spread hope and joy like a virus, and cause an entire city to throw off elder-backed dictators.

So fast does this happen that the pathologically cautious elders often have no time to formulate a strategy before they are completely out of power.

This pattern has repeated itself from the nights of the Second City, and the vampires have suffered huge losses. Yet despite the clear evidence of monumental danger from this sect, most elders fear physical attacks more than Lupine hope-mongering. By thinking in terms of short-term survival, elders compromise their long-term effectiveness against the Children of Gaia.

Some elders, though, have developed remarkably successful strategies against these foes. Discovering and killing human relatives of werewolves has worked well; not only is it cathartic, it also severely curtails the Lupines' influence. Other effective actions include bulldozing the holy sites,



condemning the buildings they have turned into homeless shelters and leaving false trails which lead the Lupines to other enemies.

## Supernatural Resistance

Fairies have been rare since the earliest nights, but they have caused elders difficulty in controlling humanity. They are always unpredictable and seldom do favors for elders, though they have often aided humans. They have unraveled Kindred enchantments and rendered some mortals immune to vampiric Disciplines.

Spirits have also shown an unexplained interest in humanity throughout history. Working around these invisible meddlers has often been a bother for elders, who have sometimes had to abandon their plans when a powerful spirit has placed a claim on a human pawn.

## The World

*How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable  
Seems to me are all the uses of this world ...*

*Things rank and gross in nature possess it merely.*

— William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

The modern world has become an unfriendly, inhospitable place for supernatural creatures of all kinds, but elders have managed to hang on to more than most. By being tied to man's ascent, they prosper as mankind prospers.

## Elysium Throughout the World

The Camarilla has extended its control throughout virtually all of the world. The only area free from its grasp is non-western Asia, where the mysterious and deadly Eastern vampires keep their Western cousins far from their hunting grounds.

Eastern and Western Europe, North and South America, Africa and Australia have long suffered under the corrosive and corrupting influence of the elder vampires. However, in recent decades the Sabbat has taken advantage of great upheavals in mortal society to gain more and more power. Camarilla elders who had ruled uncontested found themselves fleeing the "old neighborhood" for safer quarters. These wealthy refugees maintain that they are not running from a fight they lost, but are simply moving to "quarantine" the Sabbat for more efficient extermination.

Nonetheless, this has caused a substantial lessening of Status among elders accused of "losing" cities like New York. Princes who have lost their cities but survived are deeply shamed — some to the point that they flee Camarilla society entirely. Ancillae and even anarchs have made names for themselves and garnered high Status among the grudging elders by contesting the Sabbat and recovering stolen territory.





## Walled Cities

Elders think of their territories as "walled cities." By zealously controlling the airports and other main avenues of entrance, they comfort themselves with the belief of having a measure of safety. From the Camarilla-controlled Europe and Midwestern United States to contested areas like Canada and the Eastern United States, elders prize their fortifications and seldom feel safe outside their borders.

## Quarantine Zones

Most elders insist that the Sabbat and the anarchs will never be a threat to the superior Camarilla individual, even if they take over every mortal. However, exterminating all opponents will take longer than anticipated due, no doubt, to a few Camarilla traitors who have sabotaged operations that would have destroyed both movements. So those "groups that can never defeat the Camarilla" must be quarantined until they can be properly wiped out.

These elders will not admit that they have lost places like Mexico and New York City. It is not an admission of defeat to let the enemy keep these cities, but merely good policy. After all, were they not occupied with the daily administrative tasks of running vast metropolises, the Camarilla's opponents would be inside the walled cities, making trouble. The elders site the Anarch Free States in the Western United States as a perfect example of this theory — land with no history and no culture that is almost better off overrun by anarchs.

Other elders aver that the Camarilla suffers from abandonment the pleasant self-delusion that it has "allowed" the anarchs and the Sabbat their gains. They say that until it begins to devise real strategies of containment and destruction, its enemies will continue to make gains.

## Contested Areas

Some cities are battlegrounds. Washington D.C. is a nexus for Camarilla, Sabbat and anarch legions. The proximity to power means that the Camarilla will not willingly allow the city to become a "quarantine zone," and the prolonged struggle has only made the Sabbat stronger there. Miami has remained contested due to the efforts of remarkable vampires on both sides.

## Global Alliances

Clans that develop in different parts of the world often come to have less and less in common with one another. For example, the Brujah elders who ruled Russia constantly questioned their brethren in Europe and America. They became more like Camarilla princes than Brujah anarchs. Nonetheless, most clans try to maintain power across the globe through "family" gatherings. Some elders hate the once-a-century (or so) affairs, but others look forward to them.



Many powerful elders openly defy the Inner Circle's decrees, believing that the global Camarilla has become more and more a toothless organization. Some say that the weakness is a pose to flush out enemies who think that the Camarilla is ripe for attack. They have a history of deliberately tricking opponents (like the Lasombra) into underestimating it. But many say a council of pre-medieval minds is just not daring enough to meet the demands of the light-speed information age. A power struggle is brewing in Venice and all over the world.

## Creating Elysium

*All, or the greatest part of men that have aspired to riches or power, have attained thereunto either by force or fraud, and what they have by craft or cruelty gained, to cover the foulness of their fact, they call purchase, as a name more honest. Howsoever, he that for want of will or wit useth not those means, must rest in servitude and poverty.*

— Sir Walter Raleigh, "A Collection of Political Observations"

Usually it is the prince who names a few important areas as Elysium. These usually include the concert hall or opera house where he wishes to hold Camarilla meetings. Still, a wise prince selects very few areas as Elysium, for if she assigns too many, she cannot always enforce her dictates, and her Status suffers accordingly.

Once the basic areas of Elysium are set, the prince then hears petitions for new areas to be added. When she so honors clans' favored areas, she gains a benefit she would not otherwise enjoy had she assigned the area without being asked. For example, it may coincide with the prince's plans to make the Museum of Ancient History part of Elysium, but she gains extra clout with the Toreador if she condescends to do so only after they implore.

There are three kinds of Elysium: permanent, temporary and emergency.

Permanent Elysium areas include the main Camarilla meeting places, as well as the theaters, museums, galleries, posh hotels, restaurants and social clubs designed as a cover for vampiric activity. These areas host most of the Camarilla gatherings.

The sites of special events requiring the presence of elders are granted temporary Elysium status for their duration. These can include individual havens, nightclubs, sewer areas, parks, graveyards and old warehouses.

During times of trouble, the prince may decree certain areas to be emergency Elysium areas. If important pawns are on the run or hiding out, this can comprise many city blocks. This can give the situation a chance to resolve itself without spilling blood.





Each Kindred is responsible for knowing which areas are declared emergency Elysium. Ignorance of the law is no excuse for its violation, even if a violation takes place moments after the declaration. Such a decree is always controversial, since it is usually directed against a specific elder or group of elders, who inevitably see it as an intrusion into private affairs. As a result, princes use emergency Elysium sparingly, if at all.

### **The Social Circle**

Vampire society is a very formal, pretentious affair designed to leave little room for creativity except as it conforms to established norms. Elders are more interested in consistency than innovation. The main form of social interaction is the salon — usually a kind of formal party. Salons make up the cornerstone of the elders' social schedules. While often dry and uninspired, these are where elders form the temporary cabals and uneasy alliances to give rise to greater and more exciting parties.

The central power broker for these parties is usually the prince. She sets the schedule of essential Camarilla salons by her attendance, and those events she snubs are usually rejected by all other right-thinking Cainites.

Affecting the social schedule confers great control in addition to a great Status boost. It allows the vampire to dictate the agenda and the time that will be taken on various issues. This subtle political manipulation can effectively weaken rivals in court, while allowing them few options for retaliation.

The prince often becomes less involved in the process after a long time, and most prefer it that way. However, in times of instability, when a prince is deposed, the entire social structure is at risk. Some elders may try to follow the preexisting schedules, but others deliberately do not attend the gatherings, forcing change.

Just as several Kindred may contest the principedom, elders may compete to institute a new social schedule in place of the disrupted one. The victor of this struggle often gains power that exceeds even that of the prince, who might be threatened and even deposed if enough influential elders decide to shake up the social schedule.

### **Invitations**

Even though many formal Camarilla functions occur regularly, the hosts of each event must extend formal invitations. Sometimes they are made in person at another event, while in some cases they are delivered by messenger. They must be written and must be RSVP'ed after delivery. Elders, who are resentful of mortal technology (and often a little daunted by it), do not consider a telephone call to be proper for a formal invitation.

Imaginative invitations confer some standing on the elder responsible for the salon, as does an engaging theme and a clever design. Some elders have broken into the homes of their rivals and written the invitations in blood on their walls. The more eccentric have sent threatening invitations written in human entrails, sometimes those of one of the invitee's ghouls, tacked to a man-sized board.

One elder delivered a formal, written invitation to his rival staked to the body of the Settite assassin that rival had sent against him. These methods are frowned upon and are sometimes considered violations of the Masquerade, but technically they meet the requirements of etiquette.

Not to send an invitation to a member of society is a major *faux pas*, and a cause for immediate loss of standing until restitution is made. An apology is just a starting point. Ceding territory or humiliating groveling are more appropriate. However, some elders have used *panache* to snub a rival by pointedly not inviting her and just as pointedly refusing to apologize. This can easily backfire but, if done with style, can actually humiliate the snubbed one. It helps if the insulted vampire was already disdained by a sizable population of Kindred society. It is easier to pick on the weak than the influential.

It is very difficult to deliver messages to certain elders: Gangrel often have no fixed address, while some Nosferatu exist in deep pits beyond the reach of normal messengers. Some Brujah can only be found through allies. A number of elders believe that Malkavians are capable of completely leaving the planet for extended periods. Hosts have even resorted to using Psychic Projection to find missing invitees.

## Salons

*Fame is the sun of the dead.*

— Honoré de Balzac, *La Recherche de l'Absolu*

The elders are the true social elite of the Camarilla. Although younger, less powerful Kindred may feel they understand the tangled web that is vampiric society, such infants only understand the most obvious patterns at best. Comprehension of its true intricacies can only come from being deeply connected to the inside, well beyond the velvet ribbon that divides the haves from the have-nots. Although even the youngest vampires are aware of Elysium and walk in certain hallowed halls, most are unaware of the private corridors, soires and clubs that make up its inner circle.

Salons are the basic social units of elder society. Although they may take a number of different forms, all such gatherings are by invitation only. The first invitation to such an event betokens a vampire's official reception into the elite of Kindred culture. No mortal debutante could face a harsher audience than the icy sea of ages-old eyes that greets one's first sweeping entrance into true vampiric culture. Kindred are often referred to as "debutantes" for up to a decade after their initial appearance in elder, or "true," society.





Since only elders are allowed into the salons, they are one of the few places where such creatures can be certain to find others as jaded and cynical as themselves without having to concern themselves with the self-important preening of the infant multitude. Here elders conduct both business and pleasure with no distractions from the lesser players in the small world that is Kindred society.

More importantly, however, the salons provide a place in which the ancient, and often desperately bored, Kindred can indulge themselves in the few, often vicious, amusements that still stir their clotted blood. Only others of their power, position and age can truly understand the utter isolation, boredom and bitterness that is immortality.

## Types of Salons

*The need to exert power, when thwarted in the open fields of life, is the more likely to assert itself in trifles.*

— Charles Horton Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order*

There are many types of salons, and they can take place at virtually any part of Elysium. The point of them all is to see, be seen, gossip and be entertained. At the same time, one can size up rivals, insult enemies, probe weaknesses and plot the downfall of the other guests.

## Policy Salons

The Policy Salon is the most common and can also be the most boring. Elders call these meetings to fret over anarchs, Lupine incursion, misbehaving elders or rebellious neonates. They may plot strategy against the Sabbat or discuss dark rumors of the Inconnu. They complain for extended periods of time before they actually settle on a course of action (or refuse to take action, as is often the case).

The air of disdainful indifference at such gatherings thinly masks a pulsing miasma of tension, uncertainty and fear. Though they often take place at the opera or some art gallery, their purpose is not enjoyment. The format of the evening is purely secondary to the grave matters at hand. Those whose attention wanders or who try to deviate from the formal agenda are humiliated back into line.

## Patronage Salons

The elders use the Patronage Salons to present their new progeny or introduce a change in standing for a child following an internal shakeup or death. The elders, use the opportunity to make the young feel ill-at-ease. They are very little fun for all but the most accomplished childer.

## Culture Salons

Culture Salons are called to show off new works of art or music. These should not differ overmuch from the old styles, for novelty will alienate the assembled. The Toreador excel at these, but many other elders often get bored and behave rudely.

The more enjoyable Culture Salons are those in which there is more to do than appreciate someone else's art. Even the Toreador can be bored with pieces they did not create or inspire. Masked balls, formal dances and party games are far more enlivening than non-interactive evenings. In this respect the ancient vampire elders do not behave better than spoiled children.

These gatherings are supposed to be free of policy, but it is discussed here more than any other subject. Since they are not constantly being brought back to the main agenda as they are during a Policy Salon (and since the cultural event is often boring), invitees often wind up having spirited, off-the-record policy debates.

Those seeking high-level control over the Camarilla's agenda try to discourage this activity by keeping the elders occupied with some sort of interactive and diverting entertainment. For this reason, they created a spin-off of the Culture Salon: the Divertissement Salon.

## Divertissement Salons

Elders need entertainment like any other sentient being, but their tastes run from the crude to the very loathsome. Unlike the Culture Salons, the Divertissement Salon showcases the lowest of low art, such as *tableaux vivants*, sordid acts performed by Dominated human and Kindred thralls. Torturing a captive Lupine to death is considered the height of comedy in some corners, though the Gangrel tend to frown on it.

While the Culture Salons encourage cultivated behavior, the Divertissement Salons bring out a wild sadism usually unseen in the formal, reserved elders. It terrifies more than a few bodyguards and progeny to see their usually staid masters on the verge of frenzy.

Some caution that these evenings compromise hard-won Humanity on a huge scale. A few even suggest that they are a plot to weaken the Camarilla. Despite the warnings, entertainment becomes more base as times grow increasingly uncertain and the jaded palates of the elite seek darker and darker kicks.

## Scavenger Hunt Salon

Few events cause more excitement than a good Scavenger Hunt. Cities have been turned upside down and more important issues ignored for weeks at a time as elders follow clues to some prize. Hunts cause alliances to shift, new feuds to erupt and Status to change permanently.



A hunt begins when an elder announces that he will be giving away something of great value. The item must be impressive, like prime hunting ground, a powerful artifact or some ancient and rare item. The actual value of the prize is usually less important than the excitement it can generate in the elder community.

Elysium becomes a hive of activity. The elders mobilize their forces of childer, ghouls and Dominated mortals to acquire the prize by any means necessary. Each elder is supposed to cover his own tracks, but since the servitors of many often tear apart an area in search of clues, they all usually cooperate in cleaning up. The prince, who seldom participates but sometimes moderates, watches the activity carefully and makes sure that the Masquerade is not broken.

Some participants are less concerned with finding the item than in hurting their rivals. They follow their rival and use the Scavenger Hunt as an opportunity to cheat the rival out of valuable clues. They may even use the Hunt as a chance to attack an opponent while she is distracted with the search. This sort of power play has happened so often that some elders fear to commit enough forces to actually have a chance of winning.

When the dust settles, whoever found the item is the new hero of the hour. Ironically, the real, enduring glory almost always goes not to the finder, but to the elder who gives the item away. The vampire who puts on a popular Scavenger Hunt ensures that he will be talked about for a long time to come, and will be thought of as a very capable manipulator.

Sometimes Scavenger Hunts fail. Out-of-touch elders offer worthless prizes that are rejected by the community, or schedule Hunts during a period when the Camarilla is taken up with some pressing business. These vampires lose considerable prestige and suffer the merciless derision of elders who make big claims and fall short of their goals. Fear of this loss of face and vicious gossip keeps many elders from trying new things.

## The Hunt of Living Prey Salon

The elders sometimes like to play "the most dangerous game." They gorge themselves on fresh blood, unleash a frightened mortal, and sally forth to slay him. It is not considered "sporting" to use Disciplines, but there is no law against it. Others may call out "bad form" to try to rein in offenders, but most elders just laugh it off. The game is one of overkill, so no one really cares too much about etiquette. The important thing is that the kill be made with style and flair. Slaughter is not the point. The fun of the drunken hunt is its own reward. Of course, things change when the prey is a Lupine, mage or changeling.

## The Chess Game

Some elders set up long-standing *Divertissement* Salons in the form of living chess games. They challenge a rival, assigning their progeny and ghouls to the chess pieces and unaligned mortals to the pawns. Every time they take a piece in the game, the corresponding person is killed.

## Enemies List

*The wretched have no compassion.*

— Samuel Johnson, Letter, 1781

Notes from the diaries of Mme. d'Excavallier, Ventrue elder.

*These meetings of the Council are intolerable. The Prince is an insufferable buffoon. The Brujah are uncouth louts who should have been exterminated when their city fell millennia ago. If they could not hold onto one Bronze Age city, they have no place at the table with us. The Toreador are preening popinjays who spend too much time grooming, and not enough time planning. The Gangrel behave like rustic swineherds — when they bother to show up. The Tremere are traitorous tricksters who seek to gull us into trusting them. Even my fellow Ventrue cannot keep their minds on the business at hand. The Malkavians have not sufficient gravitas to sit with us and contemplate the important work of Elders. And the Nosferatu — well!*

*Sometimes it seems that the only ones who take the Camarilla seriously are the antitribu. And half the time I suspect that they are only here to betray us to the Sabbat.*

*Too many of us fight too openly. We must remember to fight through our pawns only. Some of these idiots have even hinted at violating Stygium! We must make certain that vengeance for such is immediate and sure.*

*The rebellion of our youths is a deadly serious business. We have wasted too much time the last few centuries and they have utterly gone to seed. We must reward them sparingly, and punish them often. Only through our decisive action will they behave themselves. They must come to associate a smarting backside with proper behavior.*

*Mortals gain too much control of their own lives through their clever little engines and fabrications. If they can't be made to stop, then our progeny must do a better job of explaining it all to us. I do not yet know how a highway can be made of information.*

*We invented the Masquerade, but we did not know what it would bring. Sometimes I think that the best thing would be to depopulate the planet down to about ten million mortals and keep them enslaved. That would be a utopia! No more foolish war!*

If the piece taken represents a Kindred, the Kindred is ceremonially staked. If the owning player manages to bring a pawn into the opponent's back row, he may have one of his progeny back. The progeny is unstaked, and allowed to return to the board in the place of the pawn, who is often killed.

These games are usually started in fun, but they often get taken to extremes as the two sides start losing valuable Allies. Quitting the game causes such a huge loss of face that defeat is actually preferable. Some elders have even been known to kidnap and Dominate great chess masters into playing the game for them.

Some elders vary the chess game by making it less lethal but more involving. They tie their moves on the chess board to activities in the real world, and instruct their minions to carry out related tasks. When pieces are taken, the people they represent are told to stop further action. Sometimes the agents are literally captured by the opponent but released unharmed after the game is finished. Vampires who are not involved in the game can form an idea of an elder's power and general real-world strategy by getting a look at the chess board.

Storytellers who want to try this can set up a chess board as a prop and run the game by tying board moves to elder tactics.

### **Optional Rule: Couture**

*Age in a virtuous person, of either sex, carries in it an authority which makes it preferable to all the pleasures of youth.*

— Sir Richard Steele, *The Spectator*

Couture is a measure of the current social position of an elder in regards to any other elder at a particular place — usually a salon or other type of gathering in Elysium. It is a difficult concept for vampires new to the intricate rules of elder society. It generally refers to a combination of factors, most important of which are: a Kindred's age, experience, and relative Status. When determining the Couture of individuals from the same clan, their Clan Prestige may also become relevant.

Although one's Status is more important when dealing with vampire society as a whole, Couture rises to the fore in one-on-one dealings on a more social level. When two Kindred come together for even the briefest of discussions at a salon there are inevitably many pairs of ears and eyes analyzing their every word and motion.

The call to battle is sounded by a raised eyebrow and a sneering "Do you really think so?" in response to an offhand comment on any of a number of topics both political and social. If the first elder does not hastily back away from his staked position, he must attempt to rise to the challenge. The winner of any such duel of wits may be rewarded by the grudging esteem of his peers, while the loser immediately becomes the subject of disparaging gossip. The effect on the Couture of the two individuals depends on many factors, most importantly how interesting elder society considers the combatants and the topic of discussion.

Couture is an optional element that players and Storytellers can add to an elder story or chronicle. Initial Couture equals a character's dots in Age + Elder Status (see Chapter Four). A character's Couture can rise and fall with the opinions of the Harpies (if the character makes a large impression, either positive or negative), or with a change in either Background.

Couture is also affected by Prestation. A character may not attempt to utilize her Couture against a vampire to whom she owes a boon, and vice versa. Prestation always comes before Couture in such matters.

The Storyteller can determine Couture's effect on the actions and reactions of vampires in a story, by treating dots in Couture as automatic successes whenever characters attempt to use Social Skills against other elder Kindred. Should the Storyteller decide a vampire accepts a character's challenge, she simply compares the two Couture ratings to determine who has the advantage.

# Chapter Three: Tools of Control

*I reject the cynical view that politics is inevitably, or even usually, a dirty business.*

— President Richard Nixon, August 1973

If you had potent magical powers, followers you could compel to do your every bidding and an effectively infinite lifetime, how much could you accomplish?

Surprisingly, despite their almost unimaginable advantages, the elders of the Camarilla have not assumed control of the world. They are not even close. Nor are the far older, more powerful Methuselahs. (Whether the Antediluvians have managed to accomplish such a feat is a matter of some debate among Kindred.) There are many forces that stand in the way of the elders using their formidable abilities to rule everything in existence.

The Sabbat fights them every step of the way, and gains more with every passing year. Their Paths of Enlightenment are a major source of power for them, and the Camarilla's lack of effective intelligence on its rivals weakens its response. For example, many elders believe that the Sabbat and the Black Hand are the same.

The rise of the anarchists is an endless source of vexation to the Camarilla as keeper of the Kindred status quo. Many elders complain about their presumptuous childer, saying that if Caine himself had to grapple with such a contentious rabble, he never could have, nor would he have, established his race. Nevertheless, a minority of elders insist that rebellious youth is nothing new, and only shows initiative.

The werewolves have made it a point of honor to stop vampire schemes. Glass Walker Lupines are clever at following the careers of prominent elders, and reporting weaknesses to the other tribes. But the greatest stumbling block to total elder domination is the elders themselves. Unable to fully trust or even empathize with one another, the elders cannot form the bonds and coalitions necessary to move ahead. Even clans cannot fully unify. To see their greatest enemy, elders need only look in the mirror.

However, they compensate for the intense opposition by using their enemies as tools. Every one of their great opponents is fair game for manipulation. They are all assets. They are all tools of political control.



# How to Build a Vampiric Empire

The powers of the elders are monstrously helpful in establishing a great empire that secures their safety and comforts their egos. The need for safety is obvious, yet the elders frequently place their pride above it in importance.

Ego is of consuming concern to elders, for eternal life without the esteem of their peers is a cold matter indeed. All the treasures of the world are as dross when one has earned the contempt of one's fellows, or worse, their derision, or worst of all, their indifference. Far better to attack them and gain their hate.

Elders are self-centered in the extreme. Humans are consumed with their own mortality and can never forget that they will one day die. Hence their lives are filled with anxiety about what they will leave behind, often expressed as a passion to create something of lasting value — to improve the world. Some are concerned with leaving children who are more secure, more wise and more capable than they were. Others want to leave a rich legacy of thought, art or commerce. Still others want to change the laws and governing systems to help all people.

Mortality keeps many humans honest, and for some is their sole source of conscience. But vampires are, for the most part, only concerned with their own enrichment and with laws that benefit only themselves. Bereft of mortality, they are free of the last remaining call of conscience. As a result, they are driven to do anything to further their own control and their own ego.

## The Power Base

*I hope our wisdom will grow with our power, and teach us, that the less we use our power the greater it will be.*

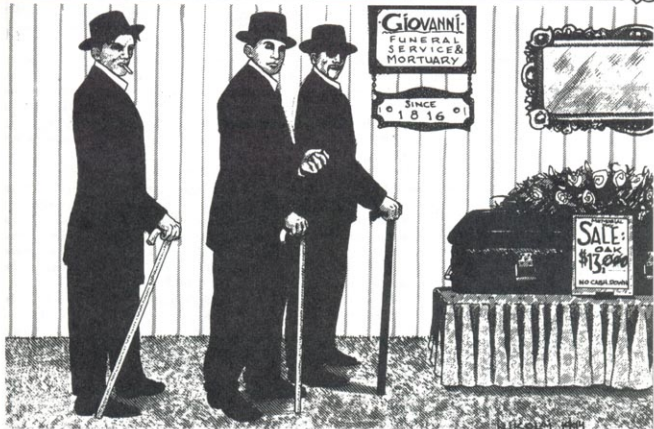
— Thomas Jefferson, Letter, 1815.

Elders break power down into seven discreet components: Resources, Status, Disciplines, Influence, Contacts, Allies and Military Force. Of these seven, all but Disciplines are Backgrounds. Military Force is described in Chapter Four.

Any of these can be traded to attain another, and each increases itself if judiciously managed and used sparingly. However, if they are simply amassed and not exercised, they can all stagnate and rot.

Each of the seven Camarilla clans excels at utilizing one of these components of power. The Ventrue are masters of Resources, the Toreador are leaders in Status, the Tremere excel in Disciplines, the Malkavians are champions in Influence, the Brujah exert the most Military Force, the Nosferatu acquire the most and best Contacts, and Gangrel are top dog in finding Allies.





## Resources

*Capital is dead labor, that, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labor, and lives the more, the more labor that it sucks.*

— Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*

Resources are described first, since the uses and pitfalls of wealth are the most familiar to the Storyteller and players. Most of us are more familiar with the power, potential, problems and perils of money management than the other six tools of power.

Money has great value to the kine and can be spent to acquire any tangible item or service that originates in the mortal world. It is less useful for obtaining supernatural services, though ancient texts can be purchased and some mages are for sale. Stagnant money loses power because it is not making more; choking off the flow of wealth to slow its loss usually reduces the supply as well. Most elders make use of Resources in one form or another, even if just as a tool of their pawns.

### Clan Attitudes to Resources

- **Brujah:** The Brujah talk a good show about rejecting ties to money, but they collect as much of it as they can. They prefer cold, hard cash to conservative investments, but many elders have portfolios that they do not discuss with the younger and more idealistic Brujah.

When word of Brujah wealth spreads, or lavish spending causes the more anarchic Brujah ancillae to complain, their elders explain that financing a revolution is expensive. Most elder Brujah keep their positions of high Prestige among the younger clan members by strength and great charisma, so such questions seldom come up.

Besides, many of the Brujah rank and file see the power of wealth as the fuel that keeps their enemies strong. As long as the clan's leaders avoid conspicuous consumption, the rest are more than glad to overlook stockpiled money and aggressive portfolio management.

- **Gangrel:** The Gangrel elders are not consumed with money as are the Ventru, but they do like to build estates. They often invest sizable sums in large tracts of rural land which often fall within a prince's official domain but outside his practical zone of control. This gives the Gangrel a degree of autonomy unknown to the other clans, who would never pay the price in isolation to attain that freedom.

Gangrel roam widely, and do not like to be tied down. However, many Gangrel elders have tempered this wanderlust with fiscally sensible policy, buying holdings in the places they visit. This gives them a home base wherever they go, and keeps them safer than their younger kin.

- **Malkavian:** Surprisingly enough, many Malkavian elders maintain investment portfolios. Even those who do not make traditional investments can often put their hands on vast amounts of money, seemingly out of nowhere. It is

not uncommon for a Malkavian elder to buy failing businesses or sucker swampland developments right before they beat the odds and become massive money-makers.

This irrational good fortune prompts some Kindred to give credence to rumors of a deep insight that comes with madness, and others to doubt the Malkavians' insanity entirely. The former suspect that the lunatic elders can pluck future trading secrets from the ether through the Malkavian Madness Network or Melange, while the latter simply think the Malkavians are crazy like a fox, feigning madness so their enemies will underestimate them. Regardless of the truth, Malkavian elders usually come up with a lot of cash when they need it.

- **Nosferatu:** The Nosferatu are the only elders who actually shun money, preferring information as a commodity. There are some very wealthy Nosferatu, but they are notable exceptions. Most prefer bartering information and boons for goods and services in one-on-one transactions. They see money as false and ultimately unreliable, since the dimensions of power they covet, like lore and wisdom, seldom derive from wealth.

Other Kindred say that the Nosferatu disdain for money is utterly genouous, and that they only put on a show to keep from being manipulated by the Ventrue. Others say that the Nosferatu would never jump through Ventrue hoops in the first place, and maintain that the Nosferatu rejection of material success reflects their rejection of the body and all worldly things. Privation and squalor is endemic to them, and they hold themselves as fundamentally unworthy of the finer things in life.

The Nosferatu's great success in controlling powerful humans belies this argument, at least in part. If they wanted to raid the coffers of mortals they could. Ultimately, the Nosferatu and their ghouls are removed from society, and controlling money is a very social pastime, so it makes sense that they have as little to do with it as possible.

- **Toreador:** The Toreador prefer to keep their money in art and collectibles. Since their elders exert great pressure to move the art market and manipulate prices, they have a virtual license to print (and sculpt and lithograph and photocopy and photograph and batik and paint) money. This has made some of them fabulously wealthy, even by Ventrue standards, and has bought the Toreador clout in the larger game of economic control.

The Ventrue disdain these *nouveaux-riches* Toreador for their untraditional behavior and reprehensible disdain for money. They often try to swindle rich yet fiscally naive Toreador whenever possible. It is a source of tension between two clans that often vote in common.

Ironically, attaining wealth has cost some elders considerable Status. The quest for money is seen as an anti-aesthetic pursuit by many of the younger Toreador, who are often enamored with the myth of the starving artist.

There is a fine line between being respected as a generous and patron of the arts, and being disdained as a vulgar, money-grubbing poseur.

If having money is a sign of selling out, poverty (or the image of poverty) is viewed as proof of artistic integrity. Toreador, however, also must be able to give lavish parties and possess great works of art. The practical upshot of this is that the Toreador must have money, and cultivate more, but can't be seen to want to. It is a fine line that many never successfully walk.

- **Tremere:** Of all the clans that concentrate on amassing wealth, the Tremere are the most dispassionate, regarding it as a means to an end, no more valuable than any other source of power. Since their Thaumaturgy gives them a much more immediate control over their Herd, rivals and enemies, money has less of a luster. The question among elder Tremere gossips is never "How much money does he have?" but "What did she do with it?"

Within the tightly controlled clan hierarchy, individual money hoarding accrues little Prestige, so elders do not acquire wealth for its own sake. In this regard they are somewhat like the Nosferatu, who shun the money chase for "higher" pursuits. Of all the clans, the Tremere are the most conscious of the negative consequences of stagnant money, and are openly disdainful of cash that is not put into play.

- **Ventrue:** The Ventrue are masters at financial matters and have huge holdings, which they manage with a zeal that they seldom display in their otherwise dispassionate existences. The Ventrue have the most direct and obvious relationship with money, and love it as an end in itself. They are used to managing wealth and understand not only the extensive control it brings but its limitations as well.

Money is their birthright, and they instill their obsession and tight-money policies in their progeny. Many Ventrue do not like to spend lavishly on entertaining and feel they should be recognized for amassing riches, not for spending. Still, they understand the Status that comes with putting on salons and Elysium events and budget accordingly, though they are just as likely to Dominate the caterer and skimp on tips.

## Status

*If the egotist is weak, his egotism is worthless. If the egotist is strong, acute, full of distinctive character, his egotism is precious, and remains a possession of the race.*

— Alexander Smith, "On the Writing of Essays"

For eternal creatures with all the time in the world on their hands, Kindred are not apathetic about Status or slow to adjust it. It is arguably the most important part of undead existence, as important as unlife itself. Vampires will violate any promise, betray any friend, pay any price in lesser commodities if it will guarantee them higher Status.



Status is expended much like money. The vampire puts his political "capital" on the line every time he tries to exert clout. An elder can achieve great goals by sheer force of acquired standing in Camarilla society, since lesser-Status vampires wish to curry favor with their superiors and will respond favorably. Status rises and falls rapidly in the halls of Elysium, and will change countless times in the existence of an elder. Overall it is a volatile commodity, while Resources and Influence often endure.

Status cannot be squandered thoughtlessly. An elder who cries wolf often in rallying the Kindred to carry out tasks he wants accomplished risks spending all his Status capital and will face a difficult time gaining it back. If a vampire does nothing with his Status, however, it will begin to fade somewhat. Refusal to use clout will first inspire awe, but that awe can turn to dissatisfaction and a lessening of respect as time passes and opportunities are missed.

### Clan Attitudes Toward Status

- **Brujah:** The Brujah like to see themselves as above the petty power games of court, but in the end they play as much as anyone. They usually rely on a swaggering charisma and brash, bold action to gain Status. Unfortunately, this behavior has limited effectiveness in a group dedicated to sophistication. Nonetheless, it can make an refreshing antidote to the stuffy, rarefied air of court, and can increase Status by stark contrast. Successfully challenging a Tradition causes even their foes to admire and respect them.

- **Gangrel:** The Gangrel spend the least time in the courts of the Camarilla and are openly contemptuous of the Status process (as are most vampires), but on the rare occasions when they need to unify the rest of the clans behind them, they are eager to use their standing. They also like to play the tie-breaker, courted by both sides and plied with favors to support one or the other in a crucial vote.

Gangrel can afford to play the spoiler game because they genuinely care little for politics, yet still have full "voting" privileges. The more they get drawn into Camarilla politics, though, the more they lose this "outsider" position, and the more they become compromised. Gangrel Methuselahs constantly implore Gangrel elders to inject themselves into politics sparingly, as continuing interest greatly dilutes their individual clout. By remaining focused on specific issues, like protection of virgin wilderness from non-Gangrel vampiric expansion, they remain powerful.

- **Malkavian:** The Malkavians are uninterested Status, and thus have very little of it—except when they paradoxically have a lot. It is almost as if their genuine lack of concern for Status brings them more, whereas the pose of disdain for Status only brings less. They are such curiosities in court that they sometimes gain Status just by being talked about. The pranks which earn them the wrath of important elders also bring them a measure of grudging respect. Malkavian elders will sometimes cash in their clout to make the clans take some important action, but often lose interest partway through execution.

• **Nosferatu:** The Nosferatu try to act as if they care nothing for Status, and they clearly are above trying to gain it through outward manifestations of beauty or charm. But what they lack in grace, they make up for in zeal. They prefer to see Status based on lore accumulation, subtlety and devious cleverness. Since they know that that will never happen, they instead occupy themselves with manipulating those who have the most Status. After all, if you can't have power, why not gain the fear and respect of those who do?

In terms of schoolyard politics, this is the equivalent of the ugly, unpopular kid zooming to the top of the pecking order by outsmarting the attractive, popular kids, or making himself useful to them. Ironically, Nosferatu garner Status by appearing aloof from the daily parry and thrust of the Status-seeking court. When a Nosferatu tries to accumulate Status like the members of other clans, he often suffers a drop in Status and enters a milieu where his looks count against him, even if no one will admit it.

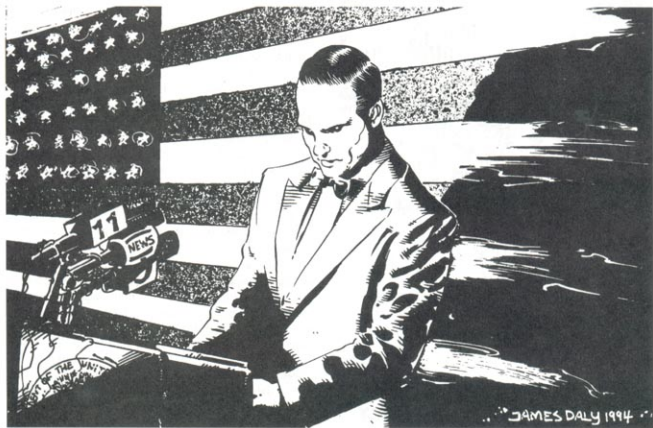
• **Toreador:** Of all the clans, the Toreador are the most concerned with acquiring, maintaining and zealously accounting for Status, and they are unquestioned masters at it. They are consumed with the daily ups and downs in the standing of the prince, the elders and each clan, as well as the anarch movement, prominent mortals, associated members of the "supernatural community" and any other group or creature that comes within their sight.

Image is everything to the Toreador. Money, information and all the other sources of power add into the equation, but in the end the final appraisal rests in large part on indefinable impressions and interpretations of accomplishments. The Toreador are the acutest judges of such indefinable qualities, and that makes them uniquely qualified to judge Status.

Though the Harpies of each clan decide status, the elder Toreador Harpies wield the most clout. A brief, acid-tongued epigram or a couplet of admiration from a creative Toreador goes much farther in influencing the thinking of the court than all the long-winded sermons of the other clans combined. The power of their clever constructions can bring down princes and elevate the obscure but accomplished neonate to great heights.

Were their clan not rent with bitter hatreds and murderous rivalries, the Toreador could easily parlay this incredible influence into rulership over the Camarilla. Some members of other clans are acutely aware of the clan's potential and guard against Toreador unification.

• **Tremere:** The Tremere are very Status-conscious and try to keep the younger members of their own clan from surpassing the elders. They exert a lot of control on intraclan Status, but outside the clan they have much less clout. They gain a large measure of their Status because of their extensive research into Thaumaturgy and the power it brings.



• **Ventrue:** The Ventrue are acutely concerned with Status and cannot bear to be without it. They are no good at advancing the Toreador argument — that it is so fashionable to be out of favor that a fall from Status is actually very hip — possibly because they could never believe it themselves and cannot state it at all convincingly. So they remain slaves to Status, but have some difficulty attaining it.

Ventrue believe that money and holdings should be the main source of Status, as they are in the mortal world, in whose affairs they meddle so often. They are bitter because this is seldom the case, and feel it is unfair that vampires refuse to play by the same rules. They also dislike their minimal clout in assigning Status. They are not as clever as the Toreador in making a case for their own greatness, and so they fall behind.

## Disciplines

*Power tires only those who do not have it.*

— Giulio Andreotti, Italian prime minister, 1992

When a vampire reaches elder age, he has had a lot of time to meditate on his Disciplines and the awe-inspiring power that flows directly from Caine. All vampires cultivate this power, for survival if nothing else. But some clans, like the Tremere, live and breathe it, and even became vampires to get more of it.

### Clan Attitudes Toward Disciplines

• **Brujah:** The Brujah neonates and ancillae concentrate on their Celerity and Potence, focusing on skill in battle and the destructive havoc they can wreak on the world. But elders have discovered that Presence, while weak at low levels, is indescribably powerful at high levels. They use Presence to keep their own childer in line, convincing the fractious young that their elders are the coolest, most admirable of rebel leaders. In fact, they are often complacent enforcers of the status quo who have sold out to the other elders for temporal wealth. Those Brujah elders who have not compromised their principles are under considerable pressure from the others to do so.

• **Gangrel:** Gangrel Disciplines help them immeasurably in the wild but do little for them in the courts of the Camarilla, where fighting is forbidden. This is another reason they shun Elysium.

• **Malkavian:** The Malkavians have vast potential to manipulate the Camarilla and have the greatest combination of courtly intrigue powers. Their Auspex gives them great insight into what is truly going on, their Dominate allows them to exert direct pressure on those they need to control and their Obfuscate gives them the power to get away with it.





Despite their awesome Advantages, Malkavians rarely take a sustained interest in Kindred politics. As the other clans note, if they weren't mad they'd be dangerous. Some elders, though, say that if the Malkavians really controlled everything and wanted to be thought mad so they would not be suspected, they could easily get away with it.

- **Nosferatu:** The Nosferatu are stronger in their combat and physical Disciplines than in courtly ones. Still, these powers give them great ability to gather data, and their skills in Obfuscate help them gain vital intelligence on the other clans. Unlike the Malkavians, they are sane enough to put crucial secrets to effective use against the other elders.

- **Toreador:** The Toreador Disciplines are built for courtly intrigue and leadership. Their *Auspex* helps them gain crucial information and their *Presence* lets them reach many of their peers. Most importantly, their *Celerity* gives them a real edge over the opposition when their scheming comes back to haunt them.

- **Tremere:** The Tremere are the clan most consumed by Disciplines as a road to power, and they are masters at their use in manipulation. Their superior *Auspex* and *Dominance* make them formidable in a one-on-one confrontation, but is *Thaumaturgy* gives them an edge no other clan has. It tips the balance of power toward the Tremere by allowing them to counter many kinds of Disciplines. They constantly try to shift the playing field to the arena of supernatural combat, because that is where they excel.

- **Ventrue:** The Ventrue's tag-team combination of *Dominance* and *Presence* is formidable in building temporal power and is useful in court. Their *Fortitude* helps them survive when the political climate turns against them.

## Influence

*The politics of the world is too serious a business to be left any more to foreigners.*

—*The Spectator*, 1970

When a vampire becomes an elder, he no longer simply has Influence in his own nation. His reach can extend around the world. As a very secretive and historically persecuted minority, vampires have just cause to be fearful of humanity. Of course, humanity has even greater reason to fear Kindred.

The elders are fearful of any people they cannot manipulate, exploit or control. All clans try to insinuate themselves into different groups in order to spy on and manipulate them, but they often only maintain enduring control of like-minded groups. When Kindred outlooks are very different from humans, they often can't keep up with the dynamic, fluid and very mortal landscape around them.

## Clan Attitudes Toward Influence

- **Brujah:** The Brujah use their Influence in society with a passion. They reach out to intellectuals, street rabble, criminals, disgruntled citizens, students — anyone who will listen. They see their agents as more than just pawns, which

often wins them the respect of these mortals. Their lack of organization, however, keeps them from using their Influence to make the kind of change they want.

While Iconoclast Brujah have great Influence with street rabble, Idealists have clout in universities and think tanks; being the most organized of Brujah, they wield the most Influence. Individualists have pull in many diverse fields, from scientists to religious communities to Hollywood. They have the most clout whenever the power base is decentralized so that groups like the Ventruue have less Influence.

• **Gangrel:** Gangrel shy away from large concentrations of human temporal power. They are more comfortable with rustic folk and travelers. They do tend to wield a lot of Influence in the countryside where they make their havens. Their connections cut across human political alliances, with Influence among groups ranging from ranchers to hunters, and from environmentalists and naturalists to miners and timber interests. Intrepid Kindred seeking the Gangrel in their lairs often find themselves stalked by xenophobic locals out to destroy any intruders. But in the city, the Gangrel is a fish out of water.

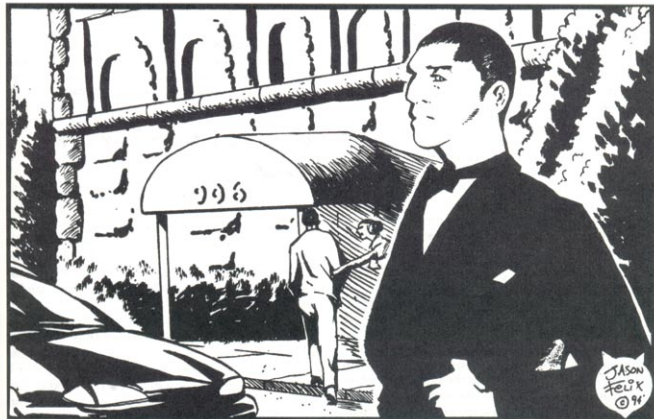
• **Malkavian:** Surprisingly, the masters of exerting Influence in the mortal world are the Malkavian elders. Their clout is indirect, and therefore very powerful. Often people they have never met will, out of the blue, take an utterly capricious action that is completely in line with the success of a Malkavian scheme.

Some Kindred say this is little more than Domination and Obfuscate in action, hidden by a false front of insanity. But others suspect there is more at work than that — that the Malkavian Madness Network has more far-reaching implications than they ever suspected. Malkavians have Influence in the unlikelyst of places, including among children and the few faeries known to exist. They don't have complete control of all these areas, but there seems to be no group they cannot reach.

• **Nosferatu:** The Nosferatu wield a very indirect control over mortals. Rather than try to manage human affairs on a daily basis, they prefer to lurk, observe and apply overwhelming pressure only when necessary. They use their Influence as a means of gaining information rather making mortals do their bidding. They have unparalleled access to the lower end of human society, with connections to the criminals, homeless people, the poor and other outcasts.

• **Toreador:** Of all the clan elders, the Toreador are the most involved with the affairs of mortals. They attend a whirlwind of social functions and become personally involved with many humans. This gives them great direct Influence, but also makes them rather vulnerable. Their connections to the worlds of art, design, theatre, architecture and marketing are unmatched by any other clan.

• **Tremere:** In their quest for greater and greater knowledge, the Tremere have forged links to many other members of the "supernatural community." They consort with mages, Lupines, and even vampire hunters who are unaware of their true nature. They seek to influence the development of magic, and all control of the world is merely a means to that end.





• **Ventruë:** The Ventruë have Earth's commercial markets sewn up. No other clan with them can compete for overall Influence in the business world. This gives the Ventruë considerable clout with every group that money can buy, and especially with those who revere anyone with large accumulations of wealth. The Ventruë often gain valuable connections without spending a cent, merely by showing off their vast holdings.

## Contacts

*Knowledge in the form of an informational commodity indispensable to productive power is already, and will continue to be, a major — perhaps the major — stake in the worldwide competition for power. It is conceivable that the nation-states will one day fight for control of information, just as they battled in the past for control over territory, and afterwards for control over access to and exploitation of raw materials and cheap labor.*

— Jean François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*

Contacts are vital to the elders, and keeping a steady stream of reliable information from within and without the Camarilla is essential to survival. The powerful deceit practiced by most vampires and many mortals makes it difficult to know what is actually going on. A network of insiders can mean the difference between triumph and failure, unlife and final destruction.

### Clan Attitudes Toward Contacts

• **Brujah:** The Brujah pride themselves on uncovering state secrets and spreading vicious rumors, but they are not the most capable information gatherers. Most Brujah have “useful” Contacts, like gun runners and gang leaders, instead of informative ones like reporters and politicians. The Idealists hold a large repository of information, though, and claim to have some ancient secrets from the days before the Masquerade.

• **Gangrel:** The Gangrel disdain the information brokering that consumes the Camarilla, but are not above buying anything that directly relates to their clan's safety. They sometimes sell crucial secrets, but only when they stand to gain from someone else's knowing them. Most of their Contacts have only limited influence in restricted areas.

• **Malkavian:** Malkavians love to barter for information, but their tips often prove unreliable, and they have no reputation to be destroyed by word of their unhelpfulness. Anyone who bargains with a Malkavian deserves what he gets. Nonetheless, the Malkavians have great access to secrets due to their Disciplines and their desire to venture into odd places. For some reason, a large number of their Contacts come from the medical profession.

• **Nosferatu:** The Nosferatu have elevated information acquisition and dissemination to a high art. They have Contacts in the oddest places, for their Obfuscate allows them to meet with anyone and as anyone. They only sell secrets that are true (unless it is their intention to utterly

destroy the purchaser). No one speaks ill of the quality of their product. They usually only sell information when they are sure that they have a way to benefit from someone's acting on it. Some vampires have, on occasion, refused to pay the exorbitant sums demanded but have still gotten the information, just because the Nosferatu wanted them to have it. However, that seldom works more than once.

• **Toreador:** The Toreador are incredible gossips and will often spill vital information entirely by accident when they get on a roll. They are so concerned with being pleasing to their audience that they can be tricked into this indiscretion. They love rumors, and will often embellish a story before passing it along. Their Contacts are generally the social elite, artists and art brokers of various kinds.

• **Tremere:** The Tremere are mainly concerned with magical lore, though they have more than a passing interest in information from the human world. They will go to extremes to track down even the most ephemeral magical information, and use their supernatural contacts to that end.

• **Ventruë:** The Ventruë prize up-to-the-minute information from the world of business and commerce. All items, no matter how seemingly insignificant, are relevant. For example, weather affects crop growth, which influences farm prices, which direct the futures markets, which impact the stock market. Still, only a rare Ventruë will have Contacts in the “lower” parts of kine society, and their information from these sources is extremely limited.

## Allies

*Union may be strength, but it is mere blind brute strength unless wisely directed.*

— Samuel Butler, *Note-books*

Allies are those groups that elders work toward common ends. They range from staunch supporters to opposing groups who agree to work with the elders against greater enemies.

### Clan Attitudes Toward Allies

• **Brujah:** The Brujah tend to be reclusive in their anarchy, though they do create links to criminal and rebel organizations. These links tend to be rough and chaotic, with their sometime Allies as likely to challenge the Brujah in fractious internal strife as to work with them. Idealist Brujah have Allies in some universities, while Individualist Brujah have been known to find friends even among Lupines and mages.

• **Gangrel:** Surprisingly, the reclusive Gangrel turn out to be the masters of gaining and keeping Allies. This comes as a shock to many of the Camarilla, who see them as the least social of all vampires. But, though the Gangrel lack sophisticated means of acquiring new connections, they tend to make enduring ones. They become close to human



families in the hinterlands around the world, and the descendants of those mortals remain loyal Allies for generations, passing along a sense of faithfulness that other clans seldom inspire.

Their relationships with the Gypsies is only part of this. They win the same trust among Lupines, faeries and other spirits. The few elders who are aware of this speculate that it is related to the Gangrel-Gypsy connection, and that the Gangrel are creating modern-era Gypsies in the desolate rural areas of the world.

- **Malkavian:** Malkavians have few, if any, very close Allies, and those they do seem to be chosen randomly. A significant minority of those Allies have at least a mild Derangement, but most do not.

- **Nosferatu:** The Nosferatu are often reclusive and prefer to keep their distance. However, when they do find a close Ally, they prize her above all reckoning and bring horrendous retribution upon any who cause her grief.

- **Toreador:** Toreador like Allies in the same way they like an audience. They usually want to be respected, admired and adored. Since they are uniquely susceptible to flattery, they sometimes get rid of valuable Allies who are not sufficiently extravagant in their admiration, and keep inferior ones who are rather unctuous. The breadth of Toreador access to humanity give them a wide set of Allies from which to choose.

- **Tremere:** The Tremere usually regard Allies as disposable resources. If an Ally's upkeep exceeds her usefulness, they do not concern themselves with protecting her and will let her passing go unmourned. Tremere may also dispassionately get rid of Allies that they deem to be no longer valuable. They see other attitudes as hopelessly sentimental.

- **Ventru:** Ventru like to form associations. They enjoy building strategic alliances and forming large operating entities. But they are also rather unsentimental, and rate Allies on performance rather than loyalty or personal factors.

## Military Force

*War is much too serious a thing to be left to the military men.*  
— attributed to Talleyrand

Few elders seek direct control of a large mass of human soldiers, preferring to work through a government or a leader to exert military clout. But sometimes they do assemble their own fighting force, which is not always human. For more on this Background, see Chapter Four.

### Clan Attitudes Toward Military Force

- **Brujah:** The Brujah elders have mastered the methods of acquiring and keeping power through violence. They have gangs and rabble they can rouse when necessary to gain cover or distraction. During the '60s and '70s, the Brujah were very successful in tapping into the burgeoning youth

movement to create armies of iconoclastic young people willing to take to the streets when stirred up. However, the Ventrue eventually defused most of this military power by appealing to naked greed.

The Brujah have often turned to cells of hardened warriors whom they can build larger forces around: terrorists, mob hitmen and union muscle. Their power is far-reaching, and they are the only clan likely to have command of die-hard warriors in gangs and police departments. They thrive on physical conflicts, and have followers among those mortals who do as well.

- **Gangrel:** The Gangrel have large standing armies of wolves, rats and other animals at their disposal. Few Kindred will challenge the Gangrel in the wilderness, or even in the rural or suburban areas. In addition, the Gangrel keep a loose network of county cops and park rangers under their control in order to keep away troublemaking mages or vampire hunters.

- **Malkavian:** Malkavians are poor fighters and have very little in the way of military power. They mostly avoid open confrontation and almost never lead armies. Nevertheless, rumors abound that when the Malkavians as a clan are threatened, a vast mob of frightening lunatics rise up from asylums and from within society to attack.

- **Nosferatu:** The Nosferatu did not make their reputations as fighters, but they are strong, determined and savage in battle. They too can command armies of animals to do their bidding. Apart from a few cases of street rabble making trouble, however, there are precious few examples of Nosferatu using Military Force for much of anything.

- **Toreador:** The Toreador compete directly with the Tremere and Ventrue for control of conventional military and police. However, they approach building Military Force as they do most things, and will lose interest if something more fascinating comes along.

- **Tremere:** The Tremere are obsessed with security and keep close ties to the police and military groups. They are very effective at keeping a cohesive force in times of trouble, but they are too insular to nurture a large standing army. They do not think like fighters, and rarely inspire the kind of unit loyalty the Brujah do.

- **Ventrue:** The Ventrue compete with the other clans for military strength through traditional organizations, but they prefer to use soldiers of fortune. They trust only those troops they hire, confident that no one else can win the loyalty of those they pay so handsomely.

## Power Sources

*Greed is all right . . . Greed is healthy. You can be greedy and still feel good about yourself.*

— Ivan F. Boesky, U.C. Berkeley School of Business Administration Commencement Address, 1986

Elders wield exceptional power in the World of Darkness because they can make deals with and exert control over virtually any group or system. They are not bound by the moral, ethical and legal restrictions that often tie the hands of governments, businesses and individuals. They are not constrained by the codes of honor and principle that impel other powerful beings like Lupines and mages.

A vampire who has reached elder status is barely restricted by the precepts of the Masquerade unless she is caught in violation, and even then only when she cannot talk her way out or use her influence to minimize the charges. This is a situation ripe for abuse, and the only check on an elder's power is the fact that many others are competing for the same sources of control. Often an elder who is losing the struggle for a prized asset will destroy it, or at least use the last of his power to make sure the rival does not gain the asset. Many pawns owe their deaths, and still others owe their freedom, to this interminable strife.

### Sources of power include:

- 1) Governments and governmental agencies.
- 2) Businesses and business associations.
- 3) Financial markets.
- 4) Unions and labor organizations.
- 5) Schools, universities and think tanks.
- 6) Political organizations.
- 7) Religious organizations.
- 8) Organized crime.
- 9) Military and paramilitary groups.
- 10) Miscellaneous supernatural creatures.

## The Power Source Sheet

Ambitious Storytellers and players can go beyond simply using the Backgrounds as they are described to actually setting out a character's assets on the sheets at the back of this book and assigning the character's Influence, Contacts and Allies ratings to each of the 10 categories. Multiply each Background rating by 10 and allocate those points among the 10 Power Sources, none of which may have a rating of more than 10. The Storyteller or player may further subdivide the total for each Power Source into specific subcategories, as set out on the sheet.

Storytellers can create specific forms for other important elders in the story, and thus track political influence for entire city. This is helpful if a character tries to increase influence over an area in which another vampire has domain. A comparison of the areas where their influence clashes can provide the basis for a chronicle in which pawns come under the conflicting interests of competing elders.

# Elders and Storytelling

*I love power. But it is as an artist that I love it. I love it as a musician loves his violin, to draw out its sounds and chords and harmonies.*

— Napoleon Bonaparte, in Havelock Ellis' *The Dance of Life*

Playing elders is an alien experience. Let's face it: none of us really know what it is like to command an army of exceptionally polite, smiling, spiteful undead. Well, OK, none of us besides former Homecoming Queens. So it's understandable that even the most egocentric Storytellers may want some tips on pulling off this incredible roleplaying challenge. (Note: these tips work just as well for players, if the Storyteller cares to share them.)

## Dominance Games

Controlling the troops means letting them know you are watching. One way to get this across is to feign indifference and heavy-lidded boredom until the one crucial issue comes up. At this point, come alive and immediately meet the players' eyes. The sudden contrast will get their attention.

## Eye Contact

Manipulating people involves pouring focused concentration at them. When you play an elder interrogating the troops, make relentless eye contact. At the very least it will creep them out with the intensity. At its best it will show that the elder is large and in charge.

## Height Advantage

As Storyteller, you can use height and placement tricks. Get a higher chair than the players, and when you play an imperious elder, straighten yourself up to full height. Loom over them. Even a slight height advantage makes a profound psychological difference. If you alter seating arrangements at the start of scenes or for live storytelling, sit as far into the room as possible. Make the lessers come into your space to petition you. Think of the Wizard of Oz: now that guy knew how to grant an audience.

## The Rule of Three

*As for Hitler ... his god was an argument at a political meeting and a manner of reaching an impressive climax at the end of speeches.*

— Albert Camus, *The Rebel*

Elders know well how to motivate followers with their words, having benefited from an immortal's lifetime of study. Fortunately, stirring oratory can be a matter of following a simple formula.

Aspiring dictators are well advised to learn the "rule of three." Petty (and not-so-petty) tyrants have made good use of this tactic for rallying the troops and stirring the masses. A speech with an ascending cadence in three increasingly intense segments sends audiences into pure rapture.

Strong Statement.

(Slight Pause)

Stronger Statement!

(Slight Pause)

Strongest Statement!!!

(Wild Applause)

There is something about this pattern that drives listeners to wild applause, even if the applause is not earned. It taps into an automatic response, a distant cousin of the eerie force that makes us laugh uproariously at a sight gag the third time, when the second is not funny and the fourth is overdone.

Hitler was a master of this. Even those who speak no German can detect this cadence in many of his best applause lines.

Here are some other examples.

A Shakespeare classic:

"Friends,  
Romans,  
Countrymen!"

A Churchillian World War II example:

"Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

A modern variation with a double whammy:

"Read

my

lips ..."

(Long pause — massive audience anticipation builds)

"No

new

taxes!"

(Wild applause as people believe it.)

These tactics are summarized here for game purposes only. How you use them outside the game is a matter between you and your conscience (and perhaps the Constitution).

## How Elders Destroy Good Ideas

*Power may be at the end of a gun, but sometimes it's also at the end of the shadow or the image of a gun.*

— Jean Genet, *Prisoner of Love*

Young vampires often solve problems in ways their progenitors did not see. Elders think of themselves as having the most penetrating view of all situations, and in some ways that's true. But ancillae and even neonates have unique perspectives and fresh minds that sometimes allow them to create inventive solutions. Elders fear the youths' rise to

power, and since power comes from attention, they feel compelled to tear down the younger vampires when they begin to put forth good ideas.

Often an elder will simply answer with the (often centuries-old) party line, and consider the case closed. If the childer persist, he may have to actually argue on the merits. If he cannot win here, he'll quickly shift tactics and ridicule the idea, scoffing and muttering to another elder that nothing will come of it. "She'll learn," he'll chortle condescendingly, though inwardly he fears that the childer will actually succeed.

## Jyhad: The Anarch War

*It is the authoritarian upbringing of little children, the teaching them to be fearful and submissive, that secures for the political power monger the slavery and gullibility of millions of adult men and women.*

— Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*

Anarchs know that elders have made little progress in putting down their rebellion. They don't know the main reason: the elders are divided over how to handle their wayward progeny. There are two main schools of thought on handling the Anarch Movement: Detachment and Resistance.

The Resistance faction maintains that the anarchists must be put down at every turn, and that allowing them to exist after detection is suicidal. The Detachment faction says elders cannot break the Anarch Movement, and that the more energy they devote to that end, the stronger the anarchists

become. Anarchs thrive on contention, they claim, and fade when the elders simply shrug off their attacks.

The Resistance school of thought finds the Detachment faction to be hopelessly naive, while Detachment finds Resistance overly reactionary. They both accuse the other of simple-mindedly bringing about their own doom. As a result, elders have not been able to present a unified front. They have been known to passively resist the anarchists, allowing the young vampires minor, transitory gains without reprisals. But often an elder overreacts and commits some atrocity, giving the flagging Anarch Movement a much-needed boost of righteous indignation.

A small faction of elders say there is little to be gained by either policy, since the anarchists can never triumph and are the least of the pawns in the Jyhad. This argument does not go very far with either of the other two groups.

## Jyhad: Mortal Pawns

*We're men of straw, we're men of sand.*

*Our castles crumble, never meant to stand,*

*We're two born losers meant to fail ere we've begun,*

*We're snowmen built for melting in the sun.*

— Nick Mahoney, "Men of Straw"

Mortals are on the very bottom rung of the Jyhad. Many elders take the position that humans need to be ruled with an iron fist, their every action tightly scripted. But others, often younger, disagree and prefer to give their mortal pawns less restrictive goals and a wide latitude to operate.



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The more ancient elders, who have the horrors of the Inquisition forever branded on their undead hearts, are terrified at this notion and fear it will cause the doom of the Camarilla. Some have even gone so far as to say that to not destroy pawns immediately after they outlive their usefulness is to violate the Masquerade. They contend that even if mortals never see a vampire, they know too much of Kindred affairs to be allowed to roam free.

But the “younger” elders maintain that most pawns can be trusted to act in their own best interest. As long as they ally that interest with their Kindred masters, they may prove valuable many times in life in a wide variety of circumstances. They contend that constantly killing human pawns would rack up high body counts that leave trails leading right back to the elders.

This way of thinking has recently gotten a boost as some aged elders have come around to it. A majority of those who came of age well before the Inquisition also concluded that mortal pawns should not be simply discarded after their short-term objectives have been accomplished. Still, they caution the “younger” ones against forming sympathetic alliances with humans, who are not only doomed to die, but could become treacherous pets. A typical statement is: “They may behave in a docile manner, but mortals can never be domesticated.”

## A Coterie of Elders

There are some serious logistical problems inherent in storytelling with a group of elders. Unlike neonates and ancillae, elders have seen their once-strong brood bonds unravel after the first 100 years of unlife. Clan politics begin to take precedence over connections that cross clan lines. Coterie break up as the members move to new territories or die.

So the Storyteller has an important decision to make — create a rationale to keep the elder characters together or allow them to operate separately. The disadvantage of the latter is that the game could degenerate into a series of solo stories.

### The Group Approach: Coterie

The brood has survived through thick and thin for hundreds of years. Now, as elders, they continue to associate. They may defer to their clans for important votes, but they still band together to solve problems and resist the Jyhah. The advantage to this approach is that the players all have a great rationale for their characters working together as a group instead of going their separate ways.

The disadvantage is that it assumes a lot. The characters must have usually been Embraced at the same time and place, which limits character creation options. If they are of different ages and backgrounds, the players must determine why and how the coterie accepted new members.



## The Free-Form Approach: Rugged Individuals

The elders are all individuals with far less connection to one another than to their clans. Politics can get nasty between them, as they have no reason to work together. This is both an advantage and a disadvantage.

The advantage to this approach is that it requires no pregenerated rationale, and there is no need to stretch credibility. The disadvantage is that the characters are not likely to work together.

Instead of creating a flimsy rationale before the chronicle begins, you may have to make even weaker ones later on to have the characters work together at all. This is fine if you want a story based largely on competition and political warfare. It can be a lot of fun, but won't be like a conventional roleplaying game in which players cooperate.

## The Synthesis Approach: Coalition

The elders are all individuals, but they often work together. They have transcended their coterie but not their need for political support. They have banded together in a coalition that is looser than a coterie but still gives them the safety of numbers and of having someone watch one's back. With the intense rivalries that go on within clans, sometimes the surest ally is someone who simply doesn't profit from your fall or death.

Therefore, elders often form non-binding alliances with like-minded Kindred from all clans. They get together at Elysium and compare notes on recent clan activities, and while they won't reveal important secrets, they often protect a coalition member from capricious attack, even from their own clan. The potential is great for abusing the relationship through deliberate misinformation, but any elder who does so will be ostracized by the rest of the coalition. In a setting as dangerous as Elysium, it always pays to have allies and support, and to make sure you don't betray them.

Sometimes coalitions form around a single issue like taking away power from a dangerous Justicar, defending a prince, resisting the Sabbat, bringing down one of the primogen, protecting Gangrel lands or just making money. Some coalitions develop when individual members find themselves on the "enemies list" of a powerful elder. A group of elders may find they are willing to vote against their own clans on certain issues. By swapping votes, they build their ties.

The advantage to the coalition approach is that it allows a degree of party unity and lets the players investigate and share information together, just as they do in a coterie. However, it is often not the most compelling alliance in their lives, as a coterie is. They have many ties elsewhere. But when it comes down to a matter of who you trust when your back is against the wall, the answer often is — the coalition.

## Disciplines

Elders have vast ability to affect the world — and each other. At the beginning of an elders chronicle, players are likely to run wild with their characters' newfound powers. This is all right, and will give them a better sense of their characters. To work this through, the Storyteller is encouraged to indulge them for the first session or two. Set these outside the gathering of elders, and allow the characters to flex their muscles against lesser opponents. Don't artificially stop them from racking up impressive gains by manipulating their world. The game can be fun even if the opposition is no match for them. They're playing powerful elders, after all.

Once the players have had a chance to get used to their characters' powers, introduce them to the halls of Elysium. Be sure to remind them that attacking other elders with their Disciplines earns the wrath of all elders. Though they have great power outside of Elysium, within the hallowed ground they must mind their behavior.

## The Borders of Power

It's also possible that characters with elder-level powers will be able to punch a hole in the storyline by taking out a crucial character, or find a way to covertly off another elder. Keep in mind that as Storyteller, you have not had 500 years to figure out the very best way to use every power, as an elder would.

If you deem it necessary, feel free to overrule an outcome, even if you don't know exactly how the elder in question would have done it. If the player uses a power with no currently known defense, assume that the elder found a secret one, possibly through Thaumaturgy or occult artifacts. For example, if it is vitally important that a character not have his Majesty thrown back at him by the Pavis of Foul Presence, simply conclude that he has an amulet that nullifies the power of the Pavis or even burns it out after the first attempt.





# Chapter Four: Elder Characters

*Those who have been once intoxicated with power, and have derived any kind of emolument from it, even though but for one year, never can willingly abandon it. They may be distressed in the midst of all their power; but they will never look to anything but power for their relief.*

— Edmund Burke, A letter to a member of the National Assembly

A chronicle involving elder characters is, in many respects, similar to the dramas played among the lesser Kindred. By the same token, the process of elder character creation is essentially the same as that established in **Vampire: The Masquerade**. The only true differences here are that characters start out at a relatively exalted level, and that the process takes a bit more time.

An elder character is not the *tabula rasa*, the blank slate, that is a starting neonate. She is already firmly enmeshed in the complex web of enmities, alliances and neutralities of vampiric society. An elder's past inexorably chains her to the world of the Kindred, and no amount of struggle may free her.

In addition, there are also some Backgrounds, Merits and Flaws unique to elder characters, unavailable to their less-powerful brethren.

## Character Creation

*He is a self-made man, and he worships his creator.*

— attributed to John Bright, speaking of Disraeli

The player should decide approximately how old her elder character is and the original social milieu of the character. Players should consult with their Storyteller about the relative age and Generation of their characters, if there is a specific power level and scope for the chronicle.

The character's prelude is conducted as described in **Vampire**, though the Storyteller should remember that most elder preludes will take place in a far distant time, and thus may well have a different flavor from those of most infant Kindred. Such preludes will likely also be longer than nor-



mal, for most elders already have a vast amount of experience as Kindred before they are truly considered "elders." The Storyteller and player should work together as they move through the early years of the character's unlife to the present day.

This type of prelude is a very good opportunity for the Storyteller to inject information about recurring enmities, loves, problems, etc. that have surfaced throughout the vampire's long existence. Plot and character devices such as long-standing grudges, secrets and early pledges to aid another Kindred may all be woven into this extended prelude.

## Elder Chronicles

The Storyteller may choose from many types of elder chronicles. The exact nature of each depends upon the interests of both the Storyteller and her players. Several types of elder chronicles are listed below. Regardless of which she uses, the Storyteller should be certain to inform her players of whatever latitude they have in creating their elders.

For instance, if the Storyteller plans to create a chronicle around a clash between the characters and the *crème de la crème* of the Black Hand, she may wish to automatically start the characters at 8th Generation instead of 10th. However, if the characters are just entering the inner circles of Elystium, she may insist that none have more than two dots in the Age Background. Then again, the Storyteller may take each player aside and tell him to be certain his character has a jilted paramour (see Flaws) in his background. If the paramour in question is the same for all the characters, she might now be on a mission to destroy or control her former lovers. There are many possibilities when the characters have such a vast amount of history and power at their disposal.

## Sample Chronicles

### Global Crisis

This chronicle involves the sordid world of Kindred and kine high finance. It is the World of Darkness' game of political and financial risk, with perhaps all eternity at stake. It is rumored that the site of the First City has been found, and that the Kindred who controls the small Middle-Eastern country in which it lies may have the bodies of several Antediluvians.

### Passion Undying

Diablerie begins to strike closer and closer as a sudden wave of elder deaths begins. Clues are left that indicate one or more of the characters may be on the list of those to be destroyed. Who or what is drinking the elders of the Camarilla dry, and will the characters be able to avoid the same fate?

## Time After Time

This is a sweeping chronicle covering at least several centuries. The characters begin as "young" elders, freshly introduced to the upper echelons of Elysium society. The characters are brought together during a crisis that threatens their newfound positions among the Kindred elders. After successfully defeating the threat, they turn to their own devices. A century or more later the characters meet again, endangered by another crisis.

This pattern repeats itself over the years until the chronicle reaches its climax in today's tumultuous world, with the characters finally confronting their ages-old enemy. Note that over the course of their separations the players and Storyteller must determine some of the important events in the lives of their characters. The Storyteller may also wish to advance the characters according to the method given in the Maturation section.

## Memoirs

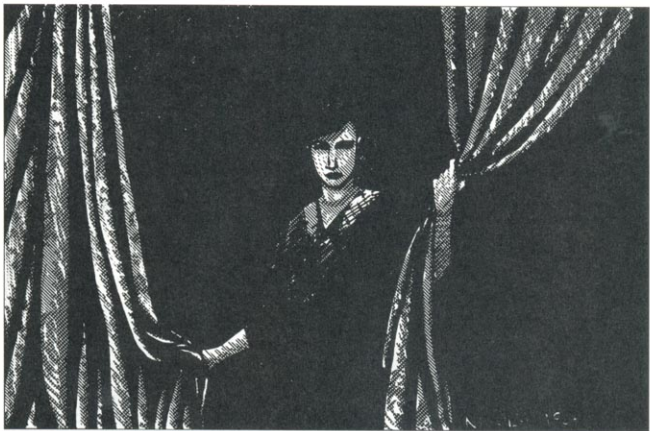
During elder character creation, players should create a journal, diary or some other form of memoirs for their characters, even if they are only Pretenders (see below). Although players are encouraged to spend as much effort and imagination as they desire on this, it is most important to establish a number of basic facts about an elder's position in the politics and power plays of Kindred and kine alike.

The simplest and quickest way is to draw up a two- to three-page timeline, outlining when and where the character has been involved in significant events throughout his existence. Of course, a player should feel free to create far more elaborate memoirs written from the perspective of the elder character, and to go into great detail about the events the character has witnessed and the people he has seduced, destroyed or perhaps saved.

Players and Storytellers alike may also wish to research both the history and mood of the cultures in which elder characters have participated. Although such detail is by no means necessary, it can add immeasurably to the richness of the character.

Although players may touch upon whatever subjects they wish within their character's memoirs, they should be certain to answer at least some of the questions and subjects given below. These will give the Storyteller important information about the characters' roles in the important events of their existences, both mortal and immortal. The players should first find out whether the Storyteller wishes them to address any additional issues (for example, the characters should have been in Berlin some time after WWII, but prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall).

The players should show the complete memoirs to the Storyteller and consult with her to determine the exact nature of various relationships, identities, etc. In addition, the Storyteller might want to add several incidents to the



memoirs (either before or after the player initially writes them). Even just a briefly sketched timeline and short consultation can add immensely to the roleplaying possibilities for elder characters. Even Pretenders value what little history they have been involved in, as they are very often convinced that whatever they take a role in must be of world-shaking proportions.

When and where were you born?

What important events did you participate in as a mortal?

Who were your mortal family, friends and enemies?

When were you reborn as Kindred, and who was your sire?

What important places in the world have you visited, and when?

What historical events, both Kindred and kine, have you witnessed or participated in?

What historical figures or events have you influenced or been influenced by?

What salons, courts and social circles, both Kindred and kine, have you participated in?

What are/were your entanglements?

Enemies — who and why? Are they still existing? Destroyed?

Allies — who and why? Are they still existing? Destroyed?

Political influence/involvement — what and where?

Prestation — who, how and when? Explain current and past incidents of Prestation, both by you and for you, and any current outstanding Prestation balances (see Prestation Merit/Flaw, below).

When and where have you gone into torpor (if at all)?

Who, if anyone, knows any of your secrets?

Whose secrets do you know?

What political powers, Kindred and kine, do you currently control or influence?

If you have childer, when and why were they sired?

Were your childer lawfully sired?

Who are your childer and what is the state of your relationship with them?

The answers to these and any other questions need not be extensive, but they should provide enough information that both player and Storyteller understand where the character stands in the worlds of Kindred and kine alike. Unless an elder vampire utterly isolates herself from all other beings, it is impossible for her to avoid entirely the tangled politics of the two (or more) worlds in which she resides. Even such vampiric hermits often find themselves slowly drawn back into these worlds. Although lesser Kindred may be able to avoid such responsibilities to some extent, elders, like members of kine royalty, find it almost impossibly difficult to maintain an unremarked or unremarkable existence.



Elders still must at least appear to obey the rules of Kindred society. The decisions of the Justicars still apply, and even elders should ask for permission to sire childer. Likewise, the character's clan will normally keep tabs on her, perhaps not asking anything of her for a century or more but never forgetting her responsibility to them. Then there are always the lurking diabolist youngsters and ancillæ, waiting for a moment of weakness in which they can destroy an elder and harvest her power.

## Character Concept

When creating an elder character, her Nature, Deemeanor and clan are all determined as outlined in **Vampire**, as are Attributes, Abilities and Backgrounds. However, the elder character may initially purchase at least five dots in any of her Abilities; vampires with the Elder Generation Background (see below) may have even fewer restrictions.

Elder characters require more preparation at the start of their creation, for they have existed as Kindred for at least a mortal's lifetime, and quite often many such spans of time. They have seen more than is possible for the brief-lived humans of their acquaintance, and though they may not have grown wise with the many years, they have undoubtedly grown in some manner.

Seeing the world rush on around them while they remain unchanged, watching generations of their families born and die in the space of an eye-blink, awaking from torpor to utterly alien surroundings, while all the time making their way in the murky world of Kindred politics is an existence that forms complex characters. When several players each create such fully fleshed, multi-dimensional personalities, mantled in the world's history, the roleplaying potential in the situation is extraordinarily rich.

### Choosing Attributes

This works as in **Vampire**, save that a player assigns 10 dots to the character's Attribute category, seven to her secondary one and five to the tertiary one. The character also starts with one dot in each Attribute.

The older a character is and the more experience she has, the greater the number of freebie points the player can expend during character creation. By taking the Age Background found in this book, vampires can receive additional points; refer to that Background for more information.

Note: If a character has a starting Attribute, Ability or Advantage of 6 or higher after spending all freebie points, she must take a Derangement for each such Trait.

### Pretenders

Pretenders are vampires who are elder in generation but not in age. Such vampires are only technically considered "elders" in the eyes of their more experienced peers, especially those who have existed far longer than any Pretender can truly imagine. However, the Camarilla emphasizes respect for purity of bloodline, and thus Pretenders are still grudgingly admitted into elder society due to the power of the vitae flowing through their veins. Pretenders are honored for their lineage, not for themselves.

Players who wish to create Pretender characters to use in an elders chronicle should follow the character creation system outlined in **Vampire**, with the following modifications:

- Pretenders start at 10th Generation. Players should purchase the Elder Generation Background found in this book if they want their characters to start with a lower generation.
- All Pretenders receive a +2 modifier to the difficulty level of all social rolls involving "true" elders.
- Pretenders may not take the Age or Elder Status Backgrounds.
- Pretenders can take the following Elder Merits and Flaws: any Childe/Childer (save Powerful Childe), any Diabolist, Matricide, Vainglorious.

### Choosing Abilities

Once again, choosing Abilities is handled as usual except for the larger number of points available, depending on the character's Generation. See **Vampire** for more information on Trait maximums by Generation. Thus, a player with a character of 10th Generation can choose up to five dots in a starting Ability, while a player with a 7th-Generation elder could choose up to six. An elder character gets 20 dots for his primary category, 12 for the secondary and eight for the tertiary one.

### Choosing Advantages

The base points that players may use for elder characters' Disciplines, Backgrounds and Virtues are listed below. Advantages are chosen as normal with the following exceptions:

**Disciplines:** Elder characters may start with up to their Trait maximum in any Discipline. Elders get 10 dots to divide up as they wish, though at least five must go into clan-specific Disciplines.

**Backgrounds:** Elder Backgrounds (Age, Generation and Elder Status) cost four points per dot. Elders have 15 points to assign to their Backgrounds. All elders must take at least one dot in Age unless the character is a Pretender. For purposes of character generation, elder vampires start at 10th Generation, instead of the normal 13th.

**Virtues:** Note that elder characters receive seven dots to spend on Virtues, though they do start with one dot in each. Freebie points can, of course, be spent on additional dots



here, but note that Virtues cost elder characters 4 freebie points per dot due to the difficulty of maintaining these throughout the long, jaded nights of their existences.

### Choosing Other Traits

**Willpower:** Base Willpower is determined normally, equaling the character's Courage rating.

**Humanity:** It is extraordinarily difficult for elder vampires to hold on to their Humanity; the endless years, the peer pressure and politics, and the seduction of great power all combine to make this a particularly fragile quality among elder Kindred. Elder characters must spend five freebie points per dot of Humanity.

Elders do start with Humanity equal to Conscience + Self-Control, but note that taking the Age Background reduces the character's initial rating.

**Freebie Points:** Players start with at least 20 freebie points to spend on their elder characters. However, dots in the Age Background significantly increase the number of freebie points available.

**Blood Pool:** Players roll two 10-sided dice to determine the character's initial Blood Pool (any dots exceeding the character's maximum Blood Pool are discarded).

## Elder Merits and Flaws

Merits and Flaws provide personality and story hooks which Storyteller and players alike may use to give characters and chronicles greater depth. Players may use freebie points to purchase Merits, while taking on Flaws gives additional freebie points. The number of freebie points gained or spent are equal to the value of the particular Merit or Flaw, and may not total more than 10.

### Elder Merits

#### Childe, Loyal (3 pt Merit)

Your childe's loyalty goes beyond any Blood Bond, being born of true affection and admiration. She would do almost anything to aid you, and you trust her as you do no other among the Kindred. You would be grief-stricken should anything happen to her.

#### Enlightened (1-7 pt Merit)

You have taken at least the first few steps on the steep and complex road to Golconda. Although you have by no means achieved this exalted state of being, you are more aware of the proper approach than the vast majority of your kind will ever be. Much of your time is spent in the quest for further information on Golconda and on attempting to progress towards this distant goal.

## Further Disciplines

Vampires of seventh generation or lower can begin to individualize the Disciplines they have learned. The Disciplines above those given in **Vampire** are not the same for every vampire who develops them, though it is not unheard of for two vampires have extremely similar high-level Disciplines.

Players and Storytellers trying to develop such powers should keep the character's personality in mind the whole time. Most Disciplines have several different ways they can be emphasized. For instance, Animalism can both control beasts and affect the Beast. Presence can affect both groups and individuals and can either create or destroy emotions. Auspex can allow for communication, perception or new powers of the mind. In each of these cases it is up to the character to decide what he will concentrate on.

Note that no Thaumaturgy Path has any levels over five. Rituals can require Thaumaturgy of up to 10, however. By the same token, higher levels of Celerity, Fortitude and Potence do not give new powers. While some vampires have used magic items like mummy amulets to give them great physical abilities, raising their Physical Attributes or Disciplines the "normal" way does not do the same.

## Love Beyond the Grave

More than one vampire has Embraced a mortal she fell in love with, and more than one vampire has come to regret that decision. Maintaining a friendship, much less passion and ardor, for a human lifetime is hard enough. Keeping the attraction alive forever is almost impossible.

Some couples resort to a mutual Blood Bond to reinforce their love, but that is never a sure thing. Neither member can ever know for sure that the other did not become bound to someone else first, and out of such worries grow worry, jealousy and hatred. Additionally, lovers who resort to the Blood Bond begin to find its emotional content artificial, inferior to the real thing. They regret their Bond — and the relationship as well.

The only other method which consistently works is love from afar. Two immortal lovers, when they find that their relationship is beginning to fray, separate. While they may maintain some contact, they usually go as far away from one another as they can and communicate indirectly, through friends and letter drops. As the years pass, the once-hot fire they felt for one another will either fade or turn into an even stronger longing.

Finally, decades or even centuries later, the lovers will meet once again. They might set up a casual meeting to reacquaint themselves or "accidentally" appear at the same place at the same time. When they find that the old desire is still there, they reignite the old passion — often hotter than before. Neonates may never know until it is too late that the elder they destroyed had such a lover.

## Base Elder Statistics

Starting Generation: 10

Attributes: 10/7/5

Abilities: 20/12/8

Disciplines: 10

Background: 15

Virtues: 7

Freebie Points: 20

Note: If a character has a starting Attribute, Ability or Advantage of 6 or higher after spending all Freebie points, she must take a Derangement for each such Trait.

You are already capable of controlling yourself far better than most Kindred and have a number of dice equal to your rating in this Merit that you may add to your rolls to resist Frenzy. These dice may only be used on yourself. You must have a Humanity of 8 or higher to have this Merit.

## Holdings (1-5 pt Merit)

You own a number of properties that have been in your possession for years. These have all been modified to provide you with protection, numerous places to rest and emergency escape routes. Although such holdings are often ancient castles, museums and the like, they can also be specially prepared apartment complexes, mountain lodges, old churches, etc. For every point taken in this Merit you have two such holdings, which can be almost anywhere in the world.

## Mummy Companion (5 pt Merit)

You have one of the world's few mummies as a companion or close associate. Your relationship is one of relative equality, with neither of you able to dominate the other, and you find this most refreshing. Although it would not be condemned by the Kindred, you both take pains to keep the association secret. Other powerful elders might wish to take advantage of your companion and the benefits he occasionally provides you. Other Kindred may even attempt to destroy the mummy or turn him against you rather than allow you access to his great stores of information and abilities.

## Paramour (3-5 pt Merit)

You have had a long-term (minimum of 75 years) relationship with a fellow Kindred. Although you may have had your disagreements over the many years, you are generally loyal to each other. You know most, if not all, of your paramour's secrets, and your paramour knows as much about you. You have both come to each other's aid several times over the years, and you would be aggrieved were anything to happen to your love. The cost of this Merit depends on the relative power and position of your paramour in Kindred society (3 for an ancilla, 4 for another elder of equal power, 5 for a more powerful elder).

### **Paranoia, Limited (2 pt Merit)**

You know that there are many vampires, hunters, Garou and the like who would love to destroy you. You go out of your way to prepare contingency plans, vary your movement patterns and habits, and otherwise make yourself a difficult target. As a result, you are less likely to be attacked unawares (-1 difficulty to spotting ambushes and the like).

### **Patience (3 pt Merit)**

You have learned the wisdom of patience in all things. Passions may burn brightly; but as they say, revenge is served best cold. Often, with enough patience, new avenues of endeavor open, enemies grow careless and favors shift. Those who wait and watch are in a position to take full advantage of the vagaries of time. Due to your mastery of patience all Frency rolls are made with a -1 difficulty modifier.

### **Powerful Childe (1-5 pt Merit)**

You have a childe in a position of power within vampiric society. This childe is loyal, and often serves as both an information font and protection. Although she sometimes asks favors of you, you are most definitely in control of the relationship, as it is right for a sire to be. The cost of this Merit depends upon the power and position of the childe (1 for leading anarch, 2 for an Archon, 3 for a primogen, etc., determined in conjunction with the Storyteller). This Merit must be taken separately for each such childe. Having this childe Blood Bound to you costs an extra two points.

### **Prestation Gifts: (2-6 pt Merit)**

One or more Kindred currently owe a boon to you. You may have gifted them with favors or material items sometime in the distant past, or just last week, but they now owe you a debt. This grants you an advantage in your dealings with these Kindred (-1 to the difficulty level of any checks to influence them). Although you would not give up your current position lightly, you may also call in this debt (or debts) should you require aid. Such aid must be commensurate with the initial value of your gift of Prestation. The number of points in Prestation Gift must be determined by both the player and Storyteller, based on the number and magnitude of the debts owed you, and the importance of the Kindred who owe them. The exact nature of this Merit should be worked into the elder character's journal or memoirs.

## **Elder Flaws**

### **Bastard Childer (2 pt Flaw)**

You have sired one or more childer without the permission of the local prince or Justicar. Under Kindred law, both you and your childer may be subject to a Blood Hunt should other vampires discover your secret. This Flaw is cumulative, and must be taken once per bastard sired.





## Childe, Vengeful (2 pt Flaw)

You have sired a childe who has grown to loathe you. Not only does your childe not aid you in your dealings with other Kindred, he actively works toward your detriment. At times you feel your childe would commit diablerie upon you if given half a chance, and you could be right.

## Death Wish (1-5 pt Flaw)

You have an unconscious wish to die the True Death. The search for blood, the politics and pain, the constant knowledge of all eternity looming ahead of you, and perhaps your own cowardice, all have their effect on you. Although you never deliberately do anything to harm yourself, you do tend to hinder yourself at awkward times. At any time during a story, the Storyteller may ask you to reroll a successful Skill check. The least successful of the two rolls is the actual result of your action. The Storyteller may do this a number of times per story equal to the number of points taken in this Flaw.

## Diabolist, Known (5 pt Flaw)

You have committed diablerie at least once to achieve your current position of power. Although not all members of elder Kindred society know of your terrible flaw, at least some elders of import are aware of it. You are certain word of your proscribed behavior is slowly making its way through society. Other elders could easily discover this at any time and, at the very least, most of society knows that you are to be shunned. Adding to the danger, there is always the possibility of a Blood Hunt despite your elder status. If they haven't already, certain elders can be expected to use their information to force you to back their causes. You receive a +3 difficulty modifier on any Social roll involving elder Kindred who know your secret.

## Diabolist, Secret (2 pt Flaw)

You have committed diablerie at least once to achieve your current position of power, but no one yet knows your secret. Should the information ever be revealed, other elders may well refuse you aid, shun you or, even worse, turn against you, perhaps even calling a Blood Hunt. It is imperative you keep this information hidden. Should your secret ever be revealed you will receive a +3 difficulty modifier to any Social roll involving elder Kindred.

## Emotional Isolation (1 pt Flaw)

You have seen too many friends and family, Kindred and kine alike, swept away on the river of time and cast into oblivion. The pain of seeing so many die while you continued to exist was horrible to bear, so horrible that you have now isolated yourself emotionally from all others. You often come across as cold and utterly without feeling, but what is that to you? You are now safe from pain. Due to your total emotional isolation, you receive a +1 difficulty modifier to any Social skill rolls involving emotions and cannot spend experience points on the Empathy Talent.

## An Acquired Taste

One of the changes which elders most fear is the time when they will have to drink vampire blood. Even if an elder was once a diabolist and developed a taste for such vitae, such a hobby is a far different thing from needing this blood to survive.

This degeneration is often tied to Humanity loss and the passage of time, but neither are essential. Some ancient monsters still prefer mortal blood while some relatively young vampires have found themselves unable to drink from anyone but mortals. Storytellers are strongly encouraged to make this sort of change a story element and not a fixed system. The following guidelines are just that — guidelines, to be used or ignored as the Storyteller likes.

Should most of these criteria be met, then the character is a likely candidate for this sort of blood exclusivity. This usually begins as an occasional deviation until the character will no longer drink anything but vampire blood.

- Diabolist
- Sire addicted to Kindred vitae
- Humanity of less than 3
- Sire a diabolist
- Active for more than 500 years
- Has a Derangement related to blood or feeding
- Has created a number of childer
- Has Blood Bound a number of younger vampires — especially one's own childer
- At odds with one's own sire
- Has almost no mortal Allies
- Has any Nature but Architect, Caregiver, Cavalier or Martyr

## Ennui (2 pt Flaw)

You are world-weary. You have seen enough to know that nothing is ever truly new: the same events and so-called passions are merely replayed again and again, with only the faces and names shifting as the many, many years go by. You rarely pay attention to those around you, assuming you know all there is to know of them once you have determined what part they play on the world stage (+1 difficulty to Perception rolls involving people you know). Due to your belief in the predictability of others, you also receive +1 to the difficulty level of the first action taken following a surprise (such as an ambush).

## Matricide/Patricide (4 pt Flaw)

You have committed diablerie upon your own sire. If this information becomes known among other elder vampires you will be shunned, or perhaps even put to the sun. You are most certainly an easy target for blackmail, and you must

always be alert to the signs of other Kindred searching for information about your sire and his untimely demise (or "disappearance").

### **Paramour, Jilted (1-3 pt Flaw)**

You had a long-term relationship (minimum 50 years) with a fellow Kindred. Although the relationship proved useful and pleasant while it lasted, you grew weary of your former paramour and ended the long-term tryst. Unfortunately, your former paramour did not take the ending of the affair well, and has apparently developed a strong antipathy for you. You both know many of each other's secrets and this has caused a stalemate thus far, but you are concerned that your ex-paramour may interfere in your affairs at some time in the future. The cost of this Flaw depends on the relative power and position of your ex-paramour in Kindred society (1 for an ancilla, 2 for another elder, 3 for a more powerful elder).

### **Paranoia, Extreme (3 pt Flaw)**

You are certain that the world is full of creatures and people who wish to see you destroyed. However, you do not worry overmuch about those individuals who loathe you from a distance. It is the ones you let get near you, the ones who profess some caring towards you, who are the real danger. Of course, not all your associates and so-called friends are actually your enemies (at least they probably *all* aren't). However, you know that no one ever does anything they don't believe to be for their own benefit. You are constantly alert for signs that one or more of your acquaintances are actually seeking to commit diablerie upon you, stake you, or worse. Whenever someone you know performs an act that appears selfless, you must make a successful Self-Control roll to resist branding them a traitorous, implacable enemy bent on your destruction (and taking appropriate actions against such a monster!). The Storyteller may also decide that your companions' actions are suspiciously altruistic and necessitate such a roll.

### **Poverty (1 pt Flaw)**

You are very poor for an elder vampire. Either you never bothered to save anything over the years, or you throw away any accumulated wealth for your own, obscure reasons. You may not take any Resources.

### **Prestation Debt (1-5 pt Flaw)**

You currently owe a boon to one or more other Kindred. This debt could have been incurred far in the past, or only last week, but the Kindred to whom you owe the debt is still extant. As such, she has gained some Status over you, and you are at a slight disadvantage in any dealings you have with her. It is also conceivable that your debt could be called in, and that you could be asked to perform some service or favor for any such vampire to whom you are indebted.

The number of points in Prestation Debt must be determined by both the player and Storyteller. The number and magnitude of such debts and to whom they are owed determine the rating of the Flaw. You also receive a +1 to the difficulty level of any checks made when attempting to influence such Kindred. The exact nature of this Flaw should be worked into the elder character's memoirs.

### **Recently Arisen (3 pt Flaw)**

You have been lying in a state of torpor until very recently. The years have left you in their wake and the world has been remade in your absence. The culture shock is very jarring, and you still find it difficult to make your way in this strange new environment. Only the general flow of Kindred politics and society remains reasonably familiar; the rest of the world is gibberish. You receive a +2 to the difficulty level of rolls involving technology and to social interactions with everyone save other elder Kindred.

### **Routine (2 pt Flaw)**

Through the ages you have settled into somewhat of a routine. You tend to go to the same places at the same time of year, and to proceed from haven to haven in a regular order. If others studied your behavior closely, they might be able to take advantage of it to do you harm. The Storyteller may lower the difficulty level for anyone attempting to surprise the character from 1-3 points depending on the specific nature of the situation.

### **Vainglorious (1-3 pt Flaw)**

You are boastful and know that you deserve any praise you receive. You are particularly fond of Kindred who realize their lesser standing in the face of your obvious superiority, although you tend to view any who speak well of you as more intelligent and deserving than most. Due to your arrogance and love of sycophants, you receive an increase of one to three points on the difficulty level for resisting any attempts at Manipulation using flattery (the modifier is doubled if the flatterer has a flattery specialty). The modifier is determined by the rating of this flaw.

## **Elder Backgrounds**

The following Backgrounds are available only to elder characters or add levels to existing ones. Generation limits to Traits (7th Generation for six dots, 6th Generation for seven, etc.) still apply.



## Age

You have survived for many, many years as a vampire. You have seen much of the ever-changing, never-changing dance of politics and pain that forms the worlds of both Kindred and kine alike. This Background does not necessarily reflect your actual age, however. Instead, it reflects the number of years you have been conscious throughout your long existence. If you have fallen into torpor, time passes you by, as does the experience and knowledge you could have gained by participating in the events of that period. Players are free to determine how many times their characters have fallen into torpor, and for how long each time. This enables players to create characters born in truly ancient times.

Every dot in this Background gains a number of freebie points to use in character creation but also costs Humanity. This can be repurchased, but elders must spend five Freebies per extra point of Humanity. Amounts given reflect cumulative totals. Note that each dot in Age grants slightly less of an experience advantage than the one before (reflected in freebie points), reflecting the difficulty an elder has in gaining new abilities as she becomes more and more set in her ways. Additionally, the older a vampire, the harder it is for her to learn new Traits. This is reflected in the optional system on character development below. Storytellers have the final say in deciding how old characters in their chronicles may be, and should feel free to limit elders to one or two dots in this Background.

- 51-200 years active: +30 Freebie points, -1 Humanity.
- 201-350 years active: +55 Freebie points, -2 Humanity.
- 351-500 years active: +75 Freebie points, -3 Humanity.
- 501-750 years active: +90 Freebie points, -4 Humanity.
- 751-1,000 years active: +100 Freebie points, -5 Humanity.

## Elder Status

You are well known among the elders who are the backbone of Kindred society. Even among the jaded elite you have carved out a name for yourself, whether in the halls of Elysium or the political arena. This Trait reflects a combination of factors including your sire's Status, your pedigree, your own actions and how well you have managed to keep the attention of other elder Kindred.

The more Elder Status you have, the more willing other elders are to treat you as an equal, or even to defer to your judgment and tastes. Elder Status is sometimes used with Social Traits when dealing with other elders, and it reflects your prestige in such instances. Elders without this Trait are often considered minor nobles in the eternal court that is Kindred society: Pretenders almost never have any dots in Elder Status.

Younger Kindred are almost always unaware of the subtle nuances of unseen power plays and alliances that make up Elder Status and are thus unaffected by it, instead recognizing only your general Status among Kindred (see **Vampire**).

Thus it is possible for an elder to be seen as of little importance by most Kindred infants, but to actually have tremendous influence among the elders of the vampiric community.

- **Known:** A recognized player
- **Respected:** Connected to many powerful elders
- **High Status:** Other elders often come to you for aid and advice.
- **Powerful:** You have the power to command respect and fear from even the most noted of other elders.
- **Luminary:** Your name echoes through the halls of Elysium the world over.

## Elder Generation

Elder characters begin as 10th Generation. Only by taking this Background can they start as more powerful, lower-Generation vampires. Characters cannot take more than five levels of this Background.

However, the blood of more ancient vampires is highly sought by those Kindred willing to commit the sin of diablerie. Characters of lower Generation are inevitably targeted by such types (or other beings equally interested) for the promise of greater power for themselves. Thus, characters with this Background have at least one enemy after their blood. This, of course, does not preclude other enemies interested in destroying the character for other reasons!

- 9th Generation: One minor enemy.
- 8th Generation: Two minor enemies.
- 7th Generation: One major enemy.
- 6th Generation: Two major enemies.
- 5th Generation: Two major enemies and several minor enemies.

## Influence

When a vampire has more than five dots in Influence, he has a reach far beyond just one country. He has the ear, or perhaps control, of some of the most influential people in the global political circus. Although other Kindred may think it ridiculous that he spends so much time on mortal affairs, he devotes a great deal of his efforts to maintaining his position as the power behind one or more thrones. He knows the importance of controlling the flighty affairs of the kine at key moments in history and does not plan to be caught unawares at any such moment.

When a character wishes to influence a country's political decisions, the player must roll Manipulation + Influence. The difficulty depends on the extent of the character's control over the country's leaders and on the amount of effort the character wishes to exert. A botch indicates the character's efforts in that country have backfired, her minions are jailed, dead, or otherwise destroyed, and she may even be in danger herself! After such a botch the character's Influence rating may drop accordingly.



- You can influence the affairs of one country.
- You can influence the affairs of two countries.
- You can influence the affairs of one continent.
- You have influence over everything except Asia.
- You have influence over the entire world.

## Resources

Certain elders have gone beyond concern over their own wealth and now concentrate on the power their wealth brings. While one human may become a billionaire during her lifetime, a vampire may have control over hundreds of billions (or even trillions!) of dollars, though they do not necessarily belong to her. More than five dots in this Background represent that degree of wealth. A character with this sort of control can have any possessions or amounts of money she desires.

When attempting to change the direction of world commerce in an area in which a character has influence, make a Manipulation + Resources roll. The difficulty is determined by the Storyteller, depending upon the extent of the desired change, tenacity and skill of your opponents, etc. A botch indicates the character has put her influence over that section of the global economy at risk, either through corporate takeovers, the collapse of the industry, or any other major disaster. Her Global Resources level may drop accordingly.

- You have influence in one global industry (steel, banking, airlines, etc.).
- You have influence in two global industries.
- You have influence in every industry in one country as well as two global industries.
- You have influence in every industry outside of Asia.
- You have influence in every industry.

## Military Force

When a vampire reaches elder status, he has a chance to gain control of human institutions that prevail through force. This includes local police, troopers, FBI, street gangs, crime bosses, biker packs and bands of thrill-seeking young people. Direct control of human mobs is always frightening to elder vampires, who remember the Inquisition as if it were only yesterday. As a result, they often band together to curtail such aspirations in their felloes. This makes attaining and maintaining a large Military Force very difficult. Usually an elder can only keep a small force before his rivals close in to stop his power grab.

The player must define who a character's forces are and where they train. They could be a subset of the U.S. military, or any of the groups listed above. At Level Six and above, the Military Force will usually require some sort of government sponsorship. Storytellers should feel free to let the character control more mortals with less combat training than is specified for that level. For instance, with two dots a character might control a 40-person mob.

- 15-person mob, generally unorganized and untrained: student rebels, street gang
- 25-person team, generally with some combat training: police, crime family
- 40-person platoon, all combat trained: SWAT team, army reserves
- 75-person troop, all veterans: mercenary soldiers, terrorist unit
- 100-person company, elite troops: special forces company, intelligence unit
- Several companies with a mix of weapons: mechanized infantry, air assault group
- Military division: thousands of trained soldiers
- One branch: a country's entire army, navy, air force or similar body
- One country: all the Military Force in that country
- Forces all over the world

# Optional System: Character Development

Although the great age and experience of elder vampires grants them wisdom, powers and knowledge unavailable to the neonates who scurry as frenetically as the kine across the face of the earth, this experience is hard-won. As patterns of thought and behavior become more and more entrenched with time, learning new concepts and abilities becomes harder and harder for even members of the Kindred. The great leaps made so easily in youth are much more difficult for beings who mark their existence in centuries and who are not as affected by the activities of a single month or year.

Thus, the more ancient a vampire becomes, the harder she finds it to advance her skills and abilities. The chart below outlines the experience cost of gaining new powers for vampires, from neonates to Methuselahs. The dots represent the number of points the elder has put into the Age Background. The only Trait which does not change its cost is Willpower, which always requires its current rating in experience to increase.

# Maturation

In some cases the Storyteller and players may wish to conduct a chronicle lasting centuries or even millennia. Each story in such a chronicle could take place during a crucial period of a different era in history. Another variation could be a chronicle based on the politics of a given empire or powerful dynasty, such as the Roman Empire or the Czars of Russia.

In such long-running chronicles, players may wish to have their characters begin as neonates and progress gradually to elder status. Below are two different methods of incorporating character maturation into a chronicle or series of chronicles. As always, the Storyteller is free to come up with other ways to handle this.

## Continual Progress

This is the method that most players and Storytellers already use in their chronicles. Simply by existing for a long period of game time, the characters gain experience, lose Humanity and perhaps even change Generation, becoming more powerful with the years. This is a natural maturation process and, given the short, intense bursts of activity (and thus experience) that are a part of most Vampire stories, it tends to yield quite powerful characters in a very short period of time.

In these chronicles, maturation of abilities comes quite swiftly, yet the characters do not gain much in the way of wisdom from experience. Torpor may be used to allow time to pass, but a vampire in torpor does not gain the benefits of true Age. Thus, only through long chronicles, with a story taking place once every few years or even once a decade, do characters have any chance of becoming elders.

## Leaps in Time

Storytellers conducting chronicles that take place over an extended period can take advantage of a technique often used by the creators of television shows, films and novels. After the characters complete a given story, the Storyteller determines how much time passes between the end of this story and the beginning of the next. The intervening time may be as long as a millennium or more, although most Storytellers will probably want to stick to a century or two.

The Storyteller should inform the players of approximately how much time passes in the interim. He should then take each player aside to conduct an interlude — a second prelude of sorts. This is actually a form of strategy session in which the player and Storyteller determine the key events that occur in the character's unlife during "down time." The Storyteller is free to invoke caveats such as "in 1653 you must find yourself in Calais, France" or "at some point during down time you went into torpor for approximately 50 years." Any caveats invoked by the Storyteller should be used to set up new storylines; they should not be used to mess with someone's character just for the hell of it.



## Elder Experience Chart

Trait	•	••	•••	••••	•••••
	Experience Cost				
New Ability	3	4	5	6	7
New Thaumaturgy Path	7	8	9	10	11
New Discipline	10	11	12	13	14
Humanity	CRx2	CRx3	CRx3	CRx4	CRx4
Virtue	CRx2	CRx2	CRx3	CRx3	CRx4
Ability	CRx2	CRx2	CRx2	CRx3	CRx3
Attribute	CRx4	CRx4	CRx4	CRx5	CRx5
Thaumaturgy Path	CRx4	CRx4	CRx4	CRx4	CRx5
Clan Discipline	CRx5	CRx5	CRx6	CRx6	CRx7
Other Discipline	CRx7	CRx8	CRx8	CRx9	CRx10

\* CR = Current Rating

As always, Storytellers should only allow players to increase their characters' Traits if there is some legitimate reason for the character to have grown more proficient in the Trait, one that can be woven into the story or chronicle (or the interlude in between). For example, if an elder embarks upon a study of the newfangled devices called "computers" after having her electronic banking accounts pilfered, then she might legitimately gain some Knowledge in Computer at the end of a story.

During this interlude the player and Storyteller should work together to determine the new Abilities, Derangements, Contacts, etc. the character develops. The amount of time that passes with the character out of torpor determines how many new experience points the player has to spend. The Maturation Chart below should be considered a general guideline as to the experience a character receives over a given amount of time spent active during an interlude. It is up to the Storyteller to determine the exact number of experience points available.

The experience cost of Traits depends upon the character's age (see the Elder Experience chart above). For purposes of spending maturation freebie points, a character is considered to be in whatever Age category he belongs to at the beginning of the interlude.

### Maturation Chart

Years	Points
10-100	15
101-250	25
251-500	40
501-750	60
751-1000+	80

# Appendix: Gehenna Cults

*Those in possession of absolute power can not only prophesy and make their prophecies come true, but they can also lie and make their lies come true.*

— Eric Hoffer, *The Passionate State of Mind*

The “official” Camarilla position is that Gehenna is a myth used to frighten childer, and the Kindred need not fear their ancestors. The elders scoff at the legend and mock their worried progeny for paying heed to anarch fear-mongering.

However, some elders who outwardly uphold the Camarilla chains of Blood Bonds are as afraid of a potential Gehenna as their progeny — and more so, since their blood is the rarest. They have formed small cells within the Camarilla where they can discuss this forbidden subject. These are the most secret of secret societies, and their carefully coded conversations take up a lot of time in Elysium gatherings. All members of Gehenna cults are sworn to secrecy, since one member caught puts the whole group at risk of exposure.

Few experiences are as terrifying and exhilarating for elders as a meeting of their Gehenna cult. They feel vulnerable, powerful and excitingly naughty all at the same time. Contradictory and uncomfortable though they seem, such

feelings are really of great value to most elders, whose emotions began to calcify long ago. There is also great comfort in cult membership. The elders feel they are doing something about the greatest danger in their universe, even though most of them secretly feel doomed to failure in an utterly impossible task.

Membership in a Gehenna cult is a risky game, since some Kindred are now so fearful of Gehenna they publicly disdain that they would betray their own clan to prevent it. That makes them vulnerable to those who say they can read signs and portents, like Gypsies, mages or Sabbat priests of the Paths of Enlightenment.

Some cults are social clubs with a secret Gehenna component known only to the highest circles, while others are completely underground. Most are exceptionally small, and none have more than a few hundred members. The ones which follow are only a sampling of those in existence.



# Royal Order of the Edenic Groundskeepers

**Founding:** 1645

**Motto:** Knowledge, Wisdom, Vigilance

This pretentiously titled group represents itself to lesser clan members as a social club for elders. Its true purpose is to resist the Antediluvians at Gehenna by arming elders against the return of their Third-Generation ancestors.

In order to see the outcome of the imbalanced struggle against the near-omnipotent progenitor Kindred as anything but the slaughter of all elders, the cult has reinterpreted the terms of the struggle. Its leaders have recast the Antediluvians as subterranean vermin and themselves as vigilant gardeners. Elders are prone to despair in even the best of circumstances: by revising the terms of the conflict, they attempt to keep their last vestiges of hope from dying.

Their scenario depicts victory growing from three sources: knowledge of the resting places of all Antediluvians, wisdom to correctly interpret the signs of Gehenna, and vigilance in the final days.

## Knowledge

Cult members collect all available information on the torpor sites of the Antediluvians and pay vast fortunes for even farfetched lore. They finance expeditions into ancient ruins to search for clues, and carefully comb archeological records. They have been known to send groups of inadequately informed neonates into long-deserted crypts in search of clues, causing clashes with Wyrms minions, Euthanatos mages and other creatures of death. This has cost many childer their undead existences, but it has yielded some solid leads.

The Groundskeepers believe that the final days are at hand, and are frantically preparing more such expeditions. They need many brave or foolhardy Kindred and ghouls for the mission and pay handsomely in favors and intercession with princes to all who accept the offer and survive.

## Wisdom

Interpreting Gehenna lore is more an art than a science. Most Groundskeeper meetings devolve into shouting matches as the members argue their reading of the *Book of Nod*. Interpretations have gone in and out of style through the 300 years of the cult's lifetime. Some reject parts of the *Book of Nod* in favor of other apocryphal texts. Others insist that most Gehenna lore is Antediluvian lies, and should be ignored in favor of Gypsy lore, Lupine tales or even communion with spirits.

## Vigilance

The Groundskeepers have dedicated ghouls and Blood Bound Kindred patrolling the areas where they believe Antediluvians lie in torpor. These agents are instructed to

report on all suspicious behavior. The Kindred servants are elite shock troops who are commanded to give their unives when so ordered. They have laid traps of fire, wood and immobilization until sunlight, in hopes of killing the Antediluvians while they are still weak from torpor.

Few elders believe their troops will succeed in this task. Their main hope is that their Kindred pawns will hinder the Antediluvians and buy the elders time to flee and arrange a real counterattack.

## The Final Battle

The Groundskeepers are pathologically afraid of meeting the Antediluvians in the elders' own havens, even though the elders would have a territorial advantage there. Instead, they prefer to take the battle to their progenitors. The elders have spent many brooding nights and long, sleepless days imagining the final fight. In their blood-fueled imaginations, they see the interval between the rising of the Antediluvians and the actual attack as a time of terrified paralysis. To stay alert, the elders feel they have to remain in motion. So they wish to take the fight directly to their ancestors, even of that means losing the tactical edge.

# Imperial Order of the Master Edenic Groundskeepers

**Founded:** 1898

**Motto:** Strike First. Strike Last.

A counter-faction of the Groundskeepers sprang up about 100 years ago. They call themselves the Master Edenic Groundskeepers, and they are far more militant. These elders do not want to wait for the inevitable day when the Antediluvians rise up; they want attack now, while their progenitors slumber.

By attacking first, they hope to catch the Antediluvians unaware and vulnerable. They think that this is the only chance they have and are planning daring raids into areas they have targeted as Antediluvian havens. They are actively recruiting younger Kindred to join these missions. None of their groups has destroyed an Antediluvian, but they have killed some very old Kindred that were suspiciously not a part of vampire society, and they have stolen some strange manuscripts.

The majority of the Groundskeepers are appalled and frightened at the ideas put forth by this faction and argue fervently against them during meetings. They believe that attacking the torpid Antediluvians will only stir up trouble where none now exists. If an Antediluvian is unable to voluntarily awaken from torpor, an attack might trigger an alarm and allow her to rise. If the attack fails, the Antediluvian is sure to come after the masterminds, and might initiate a "mini-Gehenna," in which all elders are eaten and the ancillæ placed in charge of the Kindred.



The main body of the cult believes that only total cooperation of all Kindred can stop the Antediluvians, and only the onset of Gehenna will give the elders that level of incentive. The Master Groundskeepers reject these arguments as the rantings of risk-averse cowards. They argue that all elders need to behave as if Gehenna just happened and seize the initiative.

The two groups have become exceptionally fractious since the mid-1960s, and the Master Groundskeepers are on the verge of cutting all ties with the main body. The core group would like to be rid of the upstart faction, but is too fearful of confrontation to demand they leave. They also do not want to lose their most dynamic and powerful members, many of whom are Master Groundskeepers. So they are stalling for time, forced to hope that Gehenna occurs soon, before the Master Groundskeepers grow disgusted and leave.

## Way of the Ancient Lawgivers

Founded: 1312

Motto: Repent, Return, Renew

The Way of the Ancient Lawgivers traces its origins to the Middle Ages and is purported to have roots in antiquity. Some members claim that it has grown directly from the Second City, even though none of the elders in the group existed during that era.

The cult is a fundamentalist organization that believes all Kindred must return to the values of the First City, where mortals and lesser vampires respected the Antediluvians. Even when the childer of Caine abused their own progeny and the human citizens, their victims did not strike back, or even harbor malicious intent. They thanked their betters for use and abuse.

Members of the Lawgivers, also called Enochians, believe that the Antediluvians intend to destroy their faithless and fickle progeny. To forestall or even cancel Gehenna, all Kindred must assume a compliant attitude toward the Antediluvians. They must subjugate humanity again and put an end to all vampire hunting with a swift and merciless hand.

Rebel groups like the Sabbat must be exterminated and anarchists brought to heel. There are no Brujah Lawgivers, and the cult will not admit them until the clan renounces revolution. The cult sees Gehenna as a punishment for wayward Children of Caine, and not as a "natural" process brought on by the inevitable thinning of the vampiric blood. Kindred can change the situation by swearing utter fealty to elders.

These attitudes are not popular with ancillae, who struggle for every bit of autonomy they can attain. However, they are a very seductive to elders, especially the ones who fear they are losing control of their progeny. Some elders who believe more strongly in the tenets of other Gehenna cults still keep up a membership in the Lawgivers because they believe that even if the cult is wrong about forestalling Gehenna, it is still doing the valuable work of keeping the Kindred in line.

The hard-line founders of the Lawgivers, who call themselves "Cornerstones," disdain these half-hearted members, and mock them as "Claystones." They hate the Claystones' reluctant support, but hate their own dependence on them even more.

Members of other cults argue that increased fealty to elders could backfire and actually make it easier for the Antediluvians to consume their progeny. They say that some level of autonomy is important, even though most admit that younger vampires have too much freedom. Some point out that even complete fealty did not prevent the destruction of the First City and will not prevent Gehenna.

A secret subcell of the Lawgivers wants to destroy the Masquerade and overtly enslave the human race. These ideas are heresy to the Camarilla, who have sent archons to infiltrate the cult. The Lawgivers themselves are eager to ferret out this group, since such ideas run counter to Caine's laws as set forth in the Rules of the Canaille in the *Book of Nod*. A low-level cold war is underway between the cult and the Camarilla, one that has heated up as Kindred grow to fear an imminent Gehenna.

## Servitors of Irad

**Founded:** 1456

**Motto:** Brother Kills Brother — the Faithful are Forgiven

Not all Gehenna cults actively recruit new members. Some do their work in darkness, hidden from other Kindred. The Servitors of Irad are such a secretive cult, pledged to do the work of the Antediluvians in all things — even hastening Gehenna and betraying the other elders to their progenitors. They are named for the third child of Caine, Irad the Strong, who served his sire in the First City.

The Servitors hope that if they can show that they spent their unives doing the work of the Antediluvians, they will not only be spared at Gehenna but will be the seeds of the new generation of Kindred. Since the *Book of Nod* makes it clear that certain vampires are to be singled out for destruction, they reason that others will be spared. They intend to be the latter.

The only flaw in their plan is that they are not in contact with the Third-Generation vampires, and do not know what their ancestors would want them to do. But this has not stopped them from acting on the Antediluvians' behalf. They believe that the Third Generation wish them to keep the elders weak and misinformed, so as to be less of a threat when Gehenna occurs.

Servitors attend Camarilla Conclaves to divide the gathering with vicious rumors and backstabbing lies. Their members infiltrate the other Gehenna cults to sow dissension and sunder shaky alliances. They eagerly watch for the signs of Gehenna and seek to be tools of the Jyhad.



Their greatest wish is to be in contact with the Antediluvians. They feel a burning shame that though their goal is to do the work of the Third Generation, they can't be sure they know its will.

They sum up their purpose in this chant:

Know the Will of the Ancients.

Do the Will of the Ancients.

Kill Thy Brother.

Camarilla Archons have marked members of the Servitors of Irad for extermination and are determined to destroy the sect. Other elders have gained an inkling of the existence of this cult and have done their best to stamp it out. They are so terrified of being thrown to the wolves at Gehenna that they have forgiven heinous crimes by Kindred who have been willing to reveal secret information about the Servitors. Hence, the servitors rarely meet and are exceedingly difficult to find. They have even smeared other elders by accusing them of membership.

Some of those who are aware of this group suspect that the Servitors actually are in contact with the Antediluvians and just don't know it. They believe that the cult members are pawns who are controlled from afar to cause trouble and who will be among the first to be eaten at Gehenna.

## Twilight Cult

Founded: 1550

Motto: Find Her

Members of the Twilight Cult believe the *Book of Nad* contains one stanza that holds the key to staving off Gehenna. According to these elders, the references to the "last daughter of Eve" found in that tome are not only truly the prophesies of Cainé or his childer but are the keys to safety.

The members of the cult reason that if they can either control or destroy the last daughter of Eve, they can prevent Gehenna's occurrence as simply as one can prevent the opening of a locked door by taking away the key. Other elders have acerbically pointed out that there are many ways to open a locked door, but the members of the Twilight cult insist that it is possible to divert the path of history through small, but crucial, eliminations and changes. After all, this method has worked quite adequately with canaille, neonates, princes and the like. The Twilight cultists maintain that other elders are simply incapable of the keen understanding required to recognize which pawns are most crucial in the game. Capturing the correct piece may mean the difference between check and mate.

The Twilight cult was originally formed by Ventrue and Tremere elders to determine to what people this woman would be born and the most reliable method of monitoring the kine populace to locate any mortal female who bears the mark of Eve: the crescent moon. There is some debate amongst the elders regarding the exact form the symbol will take, as the Toreador elder, Alyana, clearly showed in her treatise on the symbols of Gehenna. Certain ones claim that

the crescent moon actually refers to a woman born with certain psychic powers. Some elders interpret the crescent moon reference as symbolic of Numina. Others say the mark will take the form of a peculiar, crescent-shaped aura emanating from the Chosen One.

Most cultists, however, feel the crescent-shaped birthmark is the most probable form of the outer manifestation. Thus, the members of the cult today have operatives stationed in hospitals to keep track of any females born with such a mark. In recent years, the cult has retrieved other records through the electronic superhighway, constantly scanning for any information on a woman marked with the crescent.

Two hundred years ago a powerful vampire claiming to be a Ravnos elder approached members of the cult in Paris with startling information. The vampire insisted that the Romani, or Gypsies, were the most likely people to produce this daughter of Eve.

When questioned by a panel of cult leaders, the Ravnos produced a startling amount of "evidence" — perhaps non-evidence would be a better term — regarding the Gypsies. He pointed out that the Romani had been remarkably adept at keeping information about themselves away from not only mortals but from vampires as well. Yet at certain key points in history Gypsies were invariably present, though they did not seem to have a direct effect on the proceedings. Somehow, their presence went almost unnoticed by Kindred and kine alike save as mere nuisances or rattle-taggle gawkers.

Asked for proof of his unusual notions, the mysterious elder remarked that he had none. Gypsies kept no paperwork and other peoples always seemed to overlook the Romani in their writings, save to call them pests and criminals. At this point the panelists were almost certain that the mysterious visitor was actually a Malkavian elder attempting to pull some sort of prank on them. Then, just as the "Ravnos" elder prepared to depart, he asked the panel: "If what I have told you has no relevance, why are there no references to the Romani in your precious *Book of Nad*? How has one group of kine escaped your immortal scrutiny?"

This provoked the elders into studying the Gypsies. The more they attempted to define and categorize the Romani, the more they felt their strange visitor might have been correct. At first the cult merely attempted to monitor the Gypsies as it did the other peoples of the world. However, they eluded such scrutiny with ridiculous ease. Unused to the cult's machinations being foiled by mere kine, the panel met again and much debate ensued.

Despite the Gypsies' elusiveness, the elders had managed to gain some information that did seem to point towards the Gypsies being somehow marked by fate. The cult's conviction that the last daughter of Eve was to be born to the Rom increased when one elder overheard a tale of a woman named "Evania" (which loosely translates to "daughter of Eve") from whom the Gypsies were apparently descended.

The cult decided to destroy the Gypsies, reasoning that if there were none they could produce no daughter of Eve. The cult has attempted to manipulate governments into forcing Gypsies to settle in one place and even supported Hitler's plans to destroy the Romani along with the other objects of his hatred. Unfortunately, the Gypsies have somehow overcome all of the elders' carefully laid plans.

The uncanny ability of this rather small populace of kine to elude the elders' best efforts has further convinced the members of the cult that the Gypsies are too dangerous to let live. Many insist that there must be other vampires, perhaps the Inconnu, protecting them in order to control the pawn whenever she is born.

There are currently three factions within the Twilight cult, two of which maintain that the Gypsies will produce the last daughter of Eve. The first of these groups insists that the cult should continue its efforts at genocide, thus making a preemptive strike and keeping the pawn from ever being born. The second faction maintains that since all efforts to destroy the Gypsies have come to naught, attempting to monitor and control them, and the last daughter of Eve in particular, is the only viable option. The third, and newest, faction insists that the cult has focused overmuch on the Gypsies and that the mysterious elder probably was a Malkavian who has indeed successfully "pranked" the entire cult. After all, why would a Ravnos betray his own people? This is the faction that today monitors the hospitals and information networks of the kine, while the scope of the others' obsessive search has narrowed.

## The Ninth Wave

**Founded:** 1890

**Motto:** Suffer Not a Witch to Live

The members of the Ninth Wave (named after a Tennyson poem) believe that Gehenna will arrive when the magic in the world reaches a critical level which they term "the Flood" or "the second Flood." According to cult doctrine, the Antediluvians are currently handicapped by their own power. They are forced into torpor by the dearth of magical energies available in the current reality.

Should the amount of magic increase, however, the Antediluvians will be able to wake once again and bring on Gehenna. The cult also believes that the newly arisen Antediluvians will need to feed on the blood of the elders to maintain their strength and complete their escape from torpor.

According to these elders, the Masquerade does more than just hide the existence of the Kindred from the canaille. It also keeps the existence of vampires removed from the humans' active conception of reality (as the Tremere put it), thus helping to maintain the mortal public's credulity about matters strange or magical.

The Ninth Wave has a threefold plan for averting Gehenna. The first part involves aggressively maintaining

the Masquerade by destroying any vampires who break its conventions. The Ninth Wave loathes the Sabbat and their methods, believing they only bring the destruction of all Kindred ever closer and refuses membership to any elders of the Black Hand.

Secondly, the cult is determined to destroy most of the Earth's mages and thus keep them from opening the eyes of other mortals to other realities. Only the Technomancers have the backing of these elders, although only a few such mages actually know of this support. Most of the cult's aid comes in the form of funding for their laboratories, government cover-ups of Technocracy activities and revealing the location of Tradition mage Chantryes.

The third prong of the cult's attack centers on the destruction of the *sidhe*, or faeries. The cult is particularly vigorous in its pursuit of any information involving the return of faeries to the world. Cult members are certain that this return, which they also call the Ninth Wave, will herald the beginning of the end: Gehenna.

Pointing to certain sections of the *Book of Nod* as well as to their own theories on the nature of torpor and vampiric power, these cultists are utterly convinced of the veracity of this claim. They are driven to root out any faeries currently on Earth, as well as to discover any possible routes from the faerie realm of Arcadia (or Avalon as some elders call it). Whenever they discover such pathways they magically close, entrap or otherwise neutralize them.

Many members of the cult believe that advance faerie troops, or at least scouts, are currently active on the planet. Such faeries, or "changelings" as they are called, somehow enter unsuspecting mortal homes and are raised as mere humans. These changelings are remarkably adept at hiding from vampiric observation, although when the Ninth Wave discovers such beings it terminates them immediately.

The Ninth Wave collects information on faeries, ranging from current eyewitness accounts to ancient fairy tales and legends. Whenever the group hears reports of potential faerie activity, one or more members investigate. The members of the Ninth Wave are among the most learned of elders in matters involving magic and faerie lore.

The cult maintains an extensive library in the Scottish city of Edinburgh that contains numerous magical tomes; ancient manuscripts; vials of mage, Lupine and faerie blood for experimentation purposes; and a complete map of the Earth's ley lines. Certain of the cult's members are convinced the pattern of ley lines, if properly deciphered, is the key to determining all possible points of ingress and egress from Arcadia. If they can determine how to manipulate the lines, the elders are certain they can permanently cut off Arcadia from the Earth. Then the cult would need only destroy the faeries trapped on Earth and the threat of Gehenna would be significantly lessened, if not removed entirely.



## Cult of Enlightenment

Founded: 510

Motto: Rise

The Cult of Enlightenment is one of the smallest of the active Gehenna cults. Most of its members are ancient, even for elders. In fact, much of the cult's membership is currently in torpor.

The cult believes that the only reliable method of keeping Gehenna from occurring is for some form of semi-universal enlightenment to occur. The original protagonists of this theory were a triad composed of an elder from each of the Salubri, Tzimisce and Nosferatu clans. None of these elders has been seen in more than a millennium, and it is unknown if they are still active, in torpor or destroyed.

When the cult first formed, the members attempted to meet with all manner of enlightened beings. Conversations with Tibetan monks, aborigine wise women, powerful mages, elder Lupines and other seekers of knowledge-with-understanding produced a variety of impressions on the meaning of enlightenment to both the individual and to the world as a whole. The triad recorded these conversations and their resulting hypotheses on a series of scrolls, whose exact number has been variously recorded as eight, nine and 13.

Modern vampiric scholars do not know the true number of scrolls of enlightenment. The cult claims to have three of the original scrolls in its possession, and its members are constantly searching for more. A number of cultists believe that certain mages are in possession of some of the scrolls, and they are attempting to discover the truth of the matter. It has also been rumored that the canaille association known as the Arcanum has one of the scrolls. The current leaders of the Cult of Enlightenment hope this is not the case or, if it is, that the scroll contains no direct references to the Kindred.

In the past the Cult of Enlightenment has worked hand in hand with other like-minded individuals towards the spiritual awakening of intelligent beings of all sorts. In particular, they encourage new vampires to join the cult, and to proceed from there to Golconda. For many centuries members of the cult had great success at achieving this enlightened state. Today, however, the number of cultists reaching Golconda has dropped dramatically, and some of those reported successes may very well be shams. This marked decline is due to a combination of two factors.

The first important change occurred near the start of the Inquisition, when several prominent members of the cult were destroyed after broaching the topic of enlightenment with certain high-ranking members of the Church. Instead of achieving a new understanding of Western culture, the vampires merely confirmed their existence to the rabid hunters. This incident still causes many elders to speak disparagingly of the Cult of Enlightenment, and since then its members have gradually become more insular. Today, few



attempt to bring other elders into the fold. They are willing to allow those who make the effort to join the group but rarely initiate such a process.

The second, and more important, reason for the cult's decline is that much of the current membership is not truly interested in enlightenment. Such members espouse the general philosophy of the cult but actually joined to find some way of holding onto or even reclaiming some of their Humanity. They are terrified that they will soon lose the battle to keep the Beast in check, and that the only salvation is to show caring for others. Of course, as the reason behind this attempt is utterly self-centered, it is inevitably doomed.

These desperate elders today make up the majority of the cult's membership and may well bring about the end of the Cult of Enlightenment along with their own existence if they are not driven out by the ever-shrinking percentage of members who are truly attempting to aid all beings in reaching enlightenment.

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